

Spring 2019

# The Golden Rush to the Golden State: An Analysis of the Development of California, 1845-1960

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## Abstract

With a population of 40 million and a gross domestic product of nearly 2.5 trillion dollars the state of California on its own accounts for one of the top 10 largest economies in the world as well as one of the most diverse populations. But California's emergence on the world stage did not occur overnight. In January of 1848, a local carpenter named James Marshall found a nugget of gold in the south fork of the American River when constructing a lumber mill for John Sutter. As a result of the construction project, Marshall's discovery would be referred to as the first finding of gold in California. And almost instantly, word spread round the globe in the California gold rush was on. This thesis will explore several key aspects of California's development while keeping a central focus on the impact of Marshall's discovery, starting with the national climate toward westward expansion under President Polk and the actualization of Manifest Destiny. After the details of Marshall's discovery is fully examined, the direct impacts of the California gold rush can be observed. Specifically, this paper will be broken up into four distinct sections each analyzing specific aspects of California's early history, starting with the very beginning and those who shaped the region as well as how these communities wrestled with concepts such as law, religion, and racial diversity. Likewise, this thesis explores the state and local policies and politics up until 1852 as well as the broader implications for and the ensuing transformations to the state, including the emergence of California's timber, agricultural and mining industries.

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## Dedication

The Frickin' Fricks – Thanks for the carry, boys

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, Dr. Horten. Thank you for allowing my countless visits to your office for random questions and the hours you spent making this happen. None of this would be possible without your guidance and I cannot express in words how grateful I am for you and your dedication.

As this is the culmination of my time studying history here at Concordia, it would not be right if the appropriate dues were paid for the people that inspired me to take this path. Two teachers from El Dorado High School, Mr. Hermann and Mr. Beasley. You two instilled the passion for history that I have and without that, who knows what I would be doing.

Finally, Mom and Rusty, your countless sacrifices throughout my life are the only reason I am in the position that I am in. While it is impossible to say thank you for a lifetime thus far filled with embarrassment, support, and unconditional love, I hope this can be the beginning.

## The Golden Rush to Golden State: An Analysis of the Development of California 1845–1860

The 1800s were a turbulent period of trial and error in the United States, exacerbated by years of political upheaval. At the dawn of the century, Thomas Jefferson became the first president to reside within the newly built White House, and in 1801, John Marshall became the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.<sup>1</sup> Each step toward the establishment of an American political system led the nation forward into the 1840s. The country became divided under Martin Van Buren's administration as a result of its polarizing slavery practices.

As the decade progressed, social issues were cast aside by President James Polk. In December 1845, Polk set out to achieve the white man's dream of Manifest Destiny. The expansion of the United States was a critical issue during the 1844 election between soon-to-be president Polk and Henry Clay, who ran as the Democratic candidate under the slogan "54° 40' or fight!"<sup>2</sup> Signifying the push for the United States' territory to extend to through the current Oregon border which lies on the latitude line of 54 degrees, 40 minutes. The fulfilment of Manifest Destiny was highlighted by outsiders, who predicted that the 1844 election would decide the fate of America's westward expansion. As a result of fulfilling Manifest Destiny, there were several developments in present day California that would change the country forever. While no politician or explorer knew

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<sup>1</sup> Supreme Court History Editors. *The Marshall Court*, Supreme Court History

<sup>2</sup> Miles, Edwin. "'Fifty-four Forty or Fight'--An American Political Legend." (Bloomington, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 1957) 291-309.

the impact of achieving Manifest Destiny, it is the discovery of gold in California three years after Polk's advancements that would alter the nation's trajectory moving forward. As the west developed, the massive influx of migrant populations, the ensuing political developments and policies, and subsequent actions taken by miners painted the picture of the development of California and how it became how it is today.

Polk sought to push the US border to the southern tip of Alaska and fight for the re-annexation of Texas,<sup>3</sup> bringing the dream of extending the United States "from sea to shining sea" to the verge of realization. While the Van Buren administration had set a precedent that the United States was content with the current borders and sought no further expansion, Polk chose instead to enact the will of the people to push borders westward. However, before one can properly discuss the effects of achieving westward expansion, the framework and infrastructure laid out generations prior must be acknowledged.

The drive of American populations to the west dates back to the Louisiana Purchase, executed by Thomas Jefferson in 1803.<sup>4</sup> This polarizing move shifted the economic focus and a significant portion of the population to the west. However, the westward-bound population was concerned about Native Americans being a barrier to the settling in the newly acquired lands. Jefferson himself noted, when making the purchase, that natives are equal to their Caucasian counterparts "in body and in mind," but saw their

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<sup>3</sup> Edwin, "'Fifty-four Forty or Fight'--An American Political Legend." 291-309

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious aggrandizement in late Jacksonian America*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press. 1985) 5

lifestyle and habits as inferior to those of the Europeans.<sup>5</sup> From this idea stemmed a theory that Native Americans could be transformed from “savage” to “civilized” through the adoption of a European lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Jefferson’s belief originated in the Enlightenment-era notion of environmentalism, which argues that an individual’s environment is dictated by the surrounding culture. Essentially, he claimed that the basis of Americans’ desire to stake claim to land that had been inhabited for generations was the natives’ poor agricultural habits and usage of this land. In other words, “[t]he ideology of manifest destiny has molded the American people’s perspective about their place in the world,” and as a result of this clouded judgement, proponents of westward expansion sought to acquire land by any means necessary.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, “the land was home to many tribal nations including the Cherokee, Creek and Seminole in the south and the Choctaw and Chickasaw in the west.”<sup>8</sup>

Indian removal in favor of westward expansionism did not end with President Jefferson; rather, these arguments laid the foundation for the actualization of Manifest Destiny. In 1825, President Monroe stated the following in an address to Congress:

The removal of the tribes from the territory which they now inhabit... would not only shield them from impending ruin but promote their welfare and happiness ...

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<sup>5</sup> Hietala, *Manifest Design*, 38

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 84

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

<sup>8</sup> Smithsonian American Art Museum. *Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal*. (Washington DC: The Smithsonian, 2016) 1



in their present state it is impossible to incorporate them in such masses, in any form whatever, into our system.<sup>9</sup>

While Indian removal was idealized by Jefferson and supported by Monroe's address to Congress, it was not until Andrew Jackson issued the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that these ideas were put into motion. Jackson's eventual "trail of tears" saw countless native populations pushed further to the west.<sup>10</sup>

After several US Presidents continued their advancement to the Pacific Ocean, a new era began to take shape in California. In 1843, bills on the floor of the US Congress promised every adult male settler of the Pacific Northwest 640 acres of land, with a further 160 acres added to this allotment for the man's wife and again for each child.<sup>11</sup> While the legislation failed, it did ignite hope in the hearts of middle white Americans, who saw it as a step in the right direction toward settling American cities across the continent. As a result, the Oregon Trail saw over 1000 emigrants attempt to make the journey in spring 1843, amounting to 10 times the total of the prior year.<sup>12</sup>

Leading up to 1849, California's landscape was a shadow of its present self. While President Polk fought for the annexation of Texas that would eventually result in

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<sup>9</sup> (Richardson 2012) James D. Richardson *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*. (Washington DC: OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL REGISTER National Archives 2012) 8

<sup>10</sup> SAAM, *Manifest Destiny*, 2

<sup>11</sup> John Bicknell, *America 1844: Religious Fervor, Westward Expansion, and the Presidential Election That Transformed the Nation*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press. 2014) 14

<sup>12</sup> Bicknell, *America 1844*, 16

the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the area later referred to as California was nothing more than a “sparsely populated, remote, colonial outpost.”<sup>13</sup> In 1845, excluding the unaccounted native population, a mere 17,900 individuals had settled in the area, clustered mostly along the 449-mile coastline between San Diego and Sonoma.<sup>14</sup> Of these, 10,000 were assimilated Native Americans, 7,000 were of Spanish/Mexican descent, 700 were American, and 200 were of unknown European origin.<sup>15</sup> Most economic activity at the time revolved around the ranchos and large cattle farms producing hides and tallow, the two commodities that connected California with the outside world.<sup>16</sup> Robert Cleland and Osgood Hardy described California between 1769 and 1848 as “sparsely populated by an unambitious, pastoral people who were seemingly ... indifferent to all material progress and ... unmindful of the vast economic opportunities that surround them on every hand.”<sup>17</sup> With municipal economies based on agricultural foundations, there appeared to be little room for growth.

To effectively explain the landscape of the American West, it is crucial to begin with the policies and actions that led the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. When the Mexican-American War erupted in 1846, negotiations between the Polk administration and Antonio López de Santa Anna stalled. A series of small battles ensued in response to the Americans encroaching on foreign land, and General Zachary Taylor was ordered to

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<sup>13</sup> David St. J. Clair. "The Gold Rush and the Beginnings of California Industry." (Los Angeles California History 1998) 185-208.

<sup>14</sup> Clair, "The Gold Rush" 185-208

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 185-208

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 185-208

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Rolle *California A History*. (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell. 2014) 186

move south toward the Rio Grande.<sup>18</sup> It was not until May 9<sup>th</sup>, at the battle of Resaca de la Palma, that President Polk received a message regarding an attack on April 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>19</sup> Using the failed negotiations as justification, a formal declaration of war was drafted. After two years of fighting and extensive conflict, September 1847 saw the Mexican government concede to the American offensive.<sup>20</sup> Following the concession, the framework for the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was outlined. Once peacetime negotiations had started, Nicholas Trist, the chief clerk of the State Department, was sent to Mexico with the goal of acquiring Upper California, New Mexico, and what is known as “the Mexican Cession,” which included “present-day Arizona and New Mexico and parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to these land acquisitions, Mexico conceded that the Rio Grande would act as the southern boundary of the United States. In accordance with the treaty, the United States paid Mexico \$15,000,000 “in consideration of the extension acquired by the boundaries of the United States”<sup>22</sup> and agreed to pay American citizens the debts owed to them by the Mexican government. After the treaty was presented to President Polk, it was brought to the Senate and passed with a 34-14 vote.<sup>23</sup> The ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo fulfilled the nation’s ambition to achieve Manifest Destiny. The framework established by Thomas Jefferson, the policy constructions of President Monroe, and the execution of President Jackson each

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<sup>18</sup> Maurice Matloff, "The Mexican War and After." (In American Military History. Washington DC: Center of Military History) 163-183

<sup>19</sup> Matloff, *The Mexican War and After*, 163-183

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-183

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-183

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-183

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-183

contributed to this goal and aided President Polk in his success. The nation now extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

However, prior to these changes, a commonly forgotten aspect of western American history was the brief annexation of the land that would later become California and Texas. Following the annexation of Texas in 1845, the United States was eager to continue capturing land from Mexico.<sup>24</sup> The territorial disputes created by the Republic of Texas were compounded in California, as news of Congress' declaration of war reached the Pacific in less than a month. Control of the state's two largest ports was achieved when Los Angeles was captured by American troops. As a result, Mexican generals could no longer swiftly or effectively send reinforcements and materials to the front lines, which effectively led to America's victory in the war.

This shift, however, was not nearly as important for the foundation of the American West as the subsequent annexation of the state. In July 1846, American generals formally declared Alto California to be annexed by the US, altering the history of the nation and simultaneously laying the necessary groundwork for the seismic changes ahead. The most significant of these occurred shortly after the annexation. In 1848, John Sutter and James Marshall came to the basin of the Sierra Nevada mountains in northern California seeking entrepreneurial riches. When their gold discoveries became known, the ensuing California Gold Rush and its impacts on population influx and cultural diversity, as well as the knowledge imparted by prospectors via their actions

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 163-183

and policies, set the stage for the dramatic transformation of California, the American West, and ultimately the entire United States of America.

### The California Gold Rush: The Beginning and those who Shaped the Region

In 1839, the Swiss explorer John Sutter escaped from bankruptcy and financial failure by leaving his wife and children for the allure of California.<sup>25</sup> After convincing the Mexican land owners to grant him land along the junction of the Sacramento and American rivers, Sutter set out to establish “New Switzerland,” which became the foundation for Sacramento, the state’s eventual capital. <sup>26</sup>The pioneer later took his small colony and built Sutter’s Fort.<sup>27</sup> Despite the enormous debts owed across the board, an air

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<sup>25</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, "Empires, Frontiers, Filibusters, and Pioneers: The Transnational World of John Sutter."(Pacific Historical Review 2008) 19-47.

<sup>26</sup> Hurtado, “Empires & Frontiers”, 19-47

<sup>27</sup> (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016)

of hospitality and the promise of employment opportunities resonated from the fort. Sutter had countless natives apply to work for him; however, in his eyes, they were not as worthy as their foreign counterparts. As such, almost all were denied employment. As the colony and fort began to thrive in the valley, Sutter started to explore other entrepreneurial avenues. In search of the next venture and further resources, Sutter moved nearly 50 miles east to a town dubbed “Coloma” by the native Maidu people.<sup>28</sup> As he observed the American River roaring strongly upon arrival, an idea of how to capitalize on the resources in front of him presented itself. By building a saw mill powered by the river, Sutter would be able to expedite the extraction of resources, thus making the trek north from the fort well worth the venture. However, Sutter could not make this project feasible on his own.

In 1844, James Marshall contracted malaria in the fields of Missouri and sought out a prosperous future on the west coast, heading first toward Oregon’s Willamette Valley and eventually working his way down to Sutter’s fort.<sup>29</sup> Upon arrival, Marshall continued his work in agriculture, joining the majority of workers in the state as a cattle farmer hoping to find opportunity with the right individual. However, the Mexican-American War began soon after in 1846, and Marshall volunteered to serve during the bear flag revolt. In 1847, Marshall returned to his ranch to find that virtually all his cattle had either been stolen or wandered off,<sup>30</sup> leaving him without a livelihood. Fortunately,

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<sup>28</sup> Hurtado, “Empires & Frontiers”, 19-47

<sup>29</sup> (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 1998)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

Sutter, impressed by Marshall's craftsmanship and promise to quickly execute any project, hired him to build the mill along the river in Coloma. In exchange for the construction and management of the mill, they agreed that Marshall would receive a portion of the lumber.<sup>31</sup>

As Marshall, with the assistance of several natives and former fighters of the bear flag rebellion, diligently worked to complete Sutter's Mill, Sutter began to grow impatient, and pressure to finish the project built. Sutter described in a personal account that "[he] was very much in need of a new saw-mill, to get lumber to finish [his] large flouring mill."<sup>32</sup> Sutter, like the thousands that would flock to California in the coming years, was seeking prosperity at every turn. The mill project captained by Marshall was meant to be the catalyst for this wealth. After Sutter granted him autonomy over the progression of the mill, Marshall paid an urgent visit to Sutter in Sacramento. Sutter recounted the interaction as follows:

[Marshall] told me then that he had some important and interesting news which he wished to communicate secretly to me ... the moment when Marshall took a rag from his pocket, showing me the yellow metal: he had about two ounces of it ... he had expressed his opinion to the laborers at the mill, that this might be gold.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> General John A. Sutter, "The Discovery of Gold in California", (Sacramento, February 5. 1848)

<sup>33</sup> (J. Sutter 1854) John Sutter, "Captain Sutter's Account of the First Discovery." (San Francisco: Britton & Rey. 1854) pg 1

Sutter and Marshall immediately rushed to the nearby apothecary to acquire “aqua fortis”, or nitric acid. After running the relevant tests, Sutter concluded that the yellow metal was, indeed, gold – of at least 23 carats. This initial nugget of gold was found on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1848. The next day, Marshall and Sutter returned to Coloma for a prospecting tour of the vicinity.

Sutter requested of the workers to keep the details of the discovery confidential for six weeks to allow for the completion of another project he had undertaken. However, as time progressed, he began to worry that the secret would be revealed. Two weeks later, he sent a series of small teams to Coloma to assist in the construction of the mill. After befriending those on site, the original workers told their new colleagues about the discovery. The flood gates opened several days later, when a man, referred to as Mr. Smith in Sutter’s account, visited a small store in the outer buildings of Sutter’s Fort to purchase a bottle of brandy. Instead of exchanging paper currency with the shopkeeper, Mr. Smith paid with several small pieces of gold.<sup>34</sup> With this, the secret had been exposed to too many people for Sutter to contain it. He noted that as more people learnt of the discovery, laborers at the fort, as well as all other nearby projects, began to leave.<sup>35</sup> The exodus of workers from Sutter’s projects marked the true beginning of the Gold

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<sup>34</sup> Harvard University Library Open Collections Program. “California Gold Rush (1848-1858)”. (Periodical, Cambridge: Harvard University. 2014) pg. 4-12

<sup>35</sup> Harvard Publication, “California Gold Rush (1848-1858)”, 4-12



Rush. Cooks, clerks, mechanics, and workers from virtually every other profession left their jobs in the hopes of finding riches in the streams of the American River.

Two months after Marshall's discovery, newspaper articles reporting the gold findings began to appear in San Francisco. In March 1848, *The Californian* reported that "In the newly made raceway of the sawmill recently erected by Captain Sutter, on the American fork, gold has been found in considerable quantities ... great chances [here for] scientific capitalists."<sup>36</sup> Several key events followed that publicized the discovery of riches in the Coloma Valley. The following May, Sam Brannan – the shopkeeper credited with selling the brandy to Mr. Smith at Sutter's Fort – returned to San Francisco with a bottle of Mr. Smith's gold and some gold dust and began brandishing the contents in the streets, proclaiming, "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!"<sup>37</sup> Couple these actions with those already taking place in the Coloma Valley, and it becomes inherently clear that rapid changes to California were on the verge of coming forth sooner rather than later. A mere 17 days later, *The Californian* reported that "the whole country...resounds with the sordid cry of gold, GOLD, GOLD! While the field is left half-planted, the house half built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxes."<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the newspaper announced the immediate and indefinite suspension of publication, due to staff members vacating their jobs in favor of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4-12

<sup>37</sup> Malcolm Rohrbough, "The California Gold Rush as a National Experience." (Berkeley, California History. 1998) pg 16-29

<sup>38</sup> Digital History. n.d. The Gold Rush. Accessed September 22, 2018.

the mining opportunities to the east.<sup>39</sup> Within four and a half months of Marshall's discovery, the entire state had found out and the rush had gained momentum. The sheer magnitudes of both population influx and gold yield soon captivated the entire world.

After California learnt of the discovery, the news began to spread across the nation and eventually across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In the first known account of the news reaching the East Coast, then Military Governor Richard Mason notified President Polk of Marshall's discovery in mid-August 1848. Shortly after this report, letters and publications reached Hawaii and New Orleans. A New Orleans publication noted, "gold can be gathered by the box-full, and dipped up with a horn spoon, [it] is enough to turn the heads of half a nation."<sup>40</sup> Citizens became aware of the gold's existence almost as quickly as it was discovered. President Polk eventually released a statement to Congress confirming the federal government's understanding of the scale of the movement. Polk's acknowledgement confirmed the event and removed any doubt, bringing a tremendous wave of people to California from around the world. Population figures are discussed in the next section in order to illustrate the sheer scale of this movement. In addition, the diverse ethnic groups that began to appear in California, setting the stage for the vast influx of various ethnicities, are also analyzed.

In 1846, when the United States occupied California, there were varying inconsistencies revolving around the state's population. In early 1848, the non-native

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<sup>39</sup> Digital History, *The Gold Rush*, Accessed September 22, 2018

<sup>40</sup> (MarshallDiscoveryMuseum)

population amounted to less than 20,000 people.<sup>41</sup> This number soared to 100,000 by 1849.<sup>42</sup> The massive growth in population was attributed directly to the Gold Rush. Moreover, the immediate release of information forced each region to adapt rapidly to the dramatic influx of people and as a result, establish the necessary conditions to bring order amongst the chaos.

The Gold Rush brought massive change to California. Many of those mining the mountains and rivers came from all over the United States, as well as Chile, China, Mexico, Ireland, Germany, Italy, and other foreign countries. The greatest impact of the Gold Rush that can be observed today is the difference in population demographics. Through the course of one event, California evolved from an area sparsely populated by natives, Latin Americans, and few Caucasians (while estimates vary between sources, average population figures from 1846 show 7,000 Mexicans, 150,000 natives, and 900 foreigners) to a state made up of countless ethnicities with an equally wide range of religious beliefs.

When the Gold Rush began, those closest to California were the first to arrive at the scene. As there was already a large Latin American population in California, this meant their virtually immediate arrival in Coloma after Marshall's discovery. In September 1848, a schooner from California docked in Chile carrying 2,500 dollars' worth of gold dust. Within a month, miners from Latin America had brought knowledge,

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<sup>41</sup> Richard J. Orsi, "California History Sesquicentennial Series". (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1998) pgs 52-56

<sup>42</sup> Orsi, "California History Sesquicentennial Series", 52-56

experience, and tools to the gold mines. Aside from the experience they brought, the impact on the region of those who lived in Mexico before Sutter's discovery was twofold. On the one hand, gold had been discovered and mined in Mexico in the early 1500s, such that generations of mining expertise had been passed down to prospectors, which made Mexican prospectors the earliest cornerstone of mining communities. Unfortunately, their expertise also increased resentment toward foreigners. Due to their extensive experience, Mexican miners had immediate prospecting success on a much larger scale than their white counterparts. They led the community by teaching fellow prospectors correct technique. However, due to their staggering success, developing municipal governments felt the need to impose measures such as the Foreign Miners' Tax in 1851, to prevent non-white people from thriving under the status quo.

The more people left their homes for California, the more investment opportunities arose for wealthy individuals to profit from the rush from afar. In December 1848, the California Mutual Mining Company was established by Henry A. Kerr and B.S. Clark, two wealthy individuals from New York who were willing to finance an expedition for five people to "proceed to the Gold District without unnecessary delay and employ our time to the best advantage gathering Gold, and there to remain through two Mining or Summer Seasons."<sup>43</sup> The five prospectors were given 2,500 dollars for any and all expenses associated with the trip, and in exchange were to

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<sup>43</sup> S. Shufelt, "A letter from a gold miner, (Placerville, California, October, 1850,." San Marino: Friends of the Huntington Library.)

return one quarter of all revenue generated. While this represented an isolated incident and cannot speak to the multitudes of foreign miners' travels, it demonstrated that one did not need to be directly involved in the Gold Rush to make a profit. "Gold fever" was far reaching and affected even those that did not manage to travel to the west.

Prior to the wave of Europeans arriving in California, the native populations had a significant impact on the earliest settlers and prospectors. The Coloma Valley had always been home to three distinct Native American tribes: the Nisenan, Southern Maidu, and Miwok. The appointed military commander of the region, Colonel Richard Mason, reported in 1848 that natives comprised more than half of the mining population. In addition, each native group had a profound understanding of the land and geographical surroundings. Through the assistance of the natives, the first prospectors were able to begin the construction of the Coloma township. However, the mining success of the natives was short lived as the influx of foreign miners in 1849 saw their violent displacement from mining operations.

As more diverse groups began to pour into California, prospectors began to establish outposts and communities. There were a plethora of locations in the Sierra Nevada that could have acted as foundations for growth within northern California. However, a map of counties and townships of the central mining region shows that only six modern towns could have served to expedite the mining process. Towns such as Kelsey, Greenwood, Salmon Falls, White Oak, and Mud Springs lacked the necessary

natural benefits and geological features to support a functioning township. Only one area possessed several crucial characteristics.

This region was Placerville, formerly known as “Hangtown” or “Old Dry Diggins”. An 1880 publication of the *Sacramento Daily Union* contained a column titled “The True Story of Hangtown.” It detailed the story of three individuals “mining about a hundred yards below the crossing of the road leading from diamond springs to Placerville”<sup>44</sup> in what is now known as the Sacramento Valley in the summer of 1848. While mining, the person in charge of the tame horses or “cavaladda”<sup>45</sup> informed those in charge of a new dry digging that had similar potential to the mines previously explored within the region. However, upon exploring the new location, William Daylor, the man in charge of this operation, deemed it unimpressive compared to the area near the small water source nearby. The process through which the initial township had been established quickly became the norm. As soon as a reason to settle there was found, people of all backgrounds began to flood in.

While the emergence of cultural diversity would appear to be a positive development, for the flourishing of a group or town to occur, another must often be removed. The population boom of 1849 led to the violent displacement of native populations, which forms the main point of contention when justifying the events of the Gold Rush. To give some context, the Gold Rush was not the sole contributor of the

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<sup>44</sup> EDS. Record-Union. "The True Story of Hangtown." (Sacramento Daily Union, April 24 1880) Page 8.

<sup>45</sup> EDS, “Hangtown”, Page 8

natives' displacement. In the decades prior, European disease wreaked havoc amongst native populations, meaning that only much smaller tribes were present to oppose the new immigrants.<sup>46</sup> With their population precipitously declining and after several massacres in northwest California, the natives were forced into a position in which fighting back would only accelerate the destruction of their tribes. The juxtaposition of the relationships between the indigenous and foreign people in 1848 with those of 1851 demonstrates that the state never sought to protect or assist the very people that helped make the boom happen.<sup>47</sup>

By promising natives shelter, food, trinkets, and, in some cases, protection from traditional enemies in exchange for labor, settlers were able to quickly develop a network of exploitation, as the health and safety of an individual became intimately related to their work. Nevertheless, in 1851, California's Governor Peter Burnett stated that "a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the two races until the Indian race becomes extinct."<sup>48</sup> With this statement alone, the fate of many indigenous people was sealed. To quantify the damage done to the native population, the 150,000 present in 1848 dropped to 30,000 by 1870, representing a drop of 80% in the space of just 20 years.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the damage did not end there: while some natives were killed upon initial contact with foreigners, others were subjected to slavery-like conditions. John

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<sup>46</sup> Office of the Historian - United States Department of State. n.d. "Milestones 1830-1860: Indian Treaties and Removal Act of 1830."

<sup>47</sup> (Harlan 1888) Jacob Wright Harlan, "California '46 to '88." (San Francisco: The Bancroft Company. 1888) Pages 42-48

<sup>48</sup> Peter Burnett, "State of the State Address." (San Jose. January 6. 1851)

<sup>49</sup> Norwich University Online. Historical Impact of the Gold Rush. (Northfield: Norwich University. 2017)

Sutter is specifically noted for championing the exploitation of native labor.<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Lienard, a Swiss employee at Sutter's Fort, noted that Sutter would pay the chief of a tribe a cut of the profits in exchange for laborers, and Sutter would then have the chief allocate funds in a trickle-down system.<sup>51</sup> To supplement this, Sutter would directly pay laborers in a tin currency that could only be used for merchandise at the fort.<sup>52</sup>

The late 1840s in Europe were turbulent, as the "year of revolution" swept across France, Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire. The growing period of unrest drove a young portion of the population to California as the news of gold reached across the Atlantic. However, due to the significant distance between California and Europe, immigrants "did not start to arrive until late 1849." Many believe that the only motivation behind the excursion to California was the discovery of gold in the slipstreams of the American River; however, the chance to tempt fortune led a group from Genoa, Italy, to settle within the basin of the Sierra Nevada mountains and begin farming. Miners from Cornwall, England utilized their knowledge of mining tin and copper to begin mining hard rock gold.<sup>53</sup>

Two groups that are often overlooked in the study of ethnic groups who emigrated to California are Africans and native Hawaiians. At the beginning of the Gold Rush in 1848, there were few African Americans in the state. The earliest known immigration of African Americans to the state were those working on whaling ships that abandoned ship

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<sup>50</sup> Hurtado, "Empires & Frontiers" 19-47

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 19-47

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 19-47

<sup>53</sup> (MarshallDiscoveryMuseum)



near the port of San Francisco and escaped to have their success stories told in anti-slavery journals. When California formally became a state in 1850, it was assumed that any slave within the state would be free, since California was admitted as a free state. Of course, like many state additions during the mid-to-late 1800s, California made a plethora of compromises, and a fugitive slave law was enacted, making it illegal for slaves to escape. When John Sutter came to California in 1839, there were just eight men and two women native to Hawaii in the state.<sup>54</sup> In June 1848, news of Marshall's discovery reached the islands, as reported in Hawaiian newspaper *The Polynesian*: "The little city of Honolulu has probably never before witnessed such an excitement as the gold fever has created. Probably less than 200 will leave for California in the course of two months if passage can be procured."<sup>55</sup> Each group that came to the Sacramento Valley and the Sierra Nevada mountains created an environment that bred innovation and governmental development in the coming years. However, first and foremost, each group left its unique mark on the daily life of their peers by altering the landscape and town's infrastructure to best accommodate all people.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

## Miner Life in the Heat of the Gold Rush: Law, Religion, and Racial Diversity

To gain an understanding of life in the gold mines around California, one must investigate the rules and policies followed by the prospectors. As Coloma and then Placerville, amongst other outcrops, grew in population, a series of rules needed to be established. However, each town or outcrop sought its own set of rules that directly benefitted its residents, giving them an advantage over visitors from other towns. To combat this, a universally accepted document was written by James Hutchings in 1849, which later became known as The Miner's Ten Commandments and outlined the rules and policies that each prospector was to follow if they were to live within a mining outpost. Each "commandment" addresses a different aspect of daily life and sets ambiguous boundaries that were to be interpreted at the hands of those administering justice.<sup>56</sup> The commandments dealt with virtually all facets of life, from stealing from one's neighbor to killing one's body in the rain and a provision preventing a man from marrying if he had a significant other in his native land.<sup>57</sup> These policies were intended to serve as communal guidelines until each township had established a form of municipal government. However, these impromptu governments were not prioritized by the state as the preestablished cities of San Francisco and Sacramento had already met the necessity of local governments in the years prior.

Punishments were doled out to individuals who did not comply with the commandments based on the belief that "the justice you received was given to you, not

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<sup>56</sup> (Hutchins 1853) James M. Hutchings, "The Miner's Ten Commandments". (Placerville: Library of Congress. 1853)

<sup>57</sup> Hutchins, "10 commandments"

chosen yourself.”<sup>58</sup> Considering that crime was rampant in these societies, which were essentially lawless, “justice” was administered in practice by members of the society. In other words, vigilante justice effectively kept order in the community. For example, the earliest camps established during the Gold Rush set restrictions on how much land an individual could claim for themselves.<sup>59</sup> Those who chose to disobey the societal statute were first met with a warning to either adhere to the policy or remove themselves from the camp. Upon the second offense, harsh punishments ranging from dismemberment to death were imposed, based on arbitrary guidelines. A frequently referenced example of these punishments involves a Chilean prospector who did not comply with the law regarding limitation on land ownership and, as a result, had his ears cut off.<sup>60</sup> In investigating “vigilante committees” or groups that would fight for law and order in larger areas such as San Francisco, a common theme emerged. The merchants that would deliver goods from overseas or up and down the California coast sought to find a scapegoat. Notably, merchants set their sights on Australian immigrants, and subsequently on Irish Catholics.<sup>61</sup> This highlights that biases against immigrants were not always indicative of skin color, but rather any form of major personal difference.

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<sup>58</sup> James J. Rawls, "Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco." (San Francisco Southern California Quarterly 1986) 80-82.

<sup>59</sup> Michelle Khoury, "Wicked California: Leisure and Morality during the Gold Rush, 1848-1860." (Historical Perspectives: Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History, Series II, Santa Clara, 2012) 52-55

<sup>60</sup> Khoury, "Wicked California" 52-55

<sup>61</sup> Rawls, "Vigilantes", 80-82

The Miner's Ten Commandments and vigilante justice, while fascinating to study, prompt a plethora of questions regarding private property as well as law and order. When prospectors began to flood into the region in 1848, there emerged a pressing need for defined laws regarding property. Initially, it was theorized that in an open-access setting, those that set foot on the land and established a working claim would own the land. Effectively, "finders' keepers" became the functioning statute; the "first possession" principle became the accepted norm. This held true until both the value of the land and number of people on it increased substantially. As the population grew, questions around property rights began to arise. Since laws were minimal to nonexistent in the infant stages of the Gold Rush, some form of communal understanding about what each person could and could not do within the Coloma valley needed to be established.

The mining codes that laid the foundation for property law in California suggest that the "wild west" was not just synonymous with cowboys and saloons. Rather, violence was used against individuals that violated the unwritten rules. When law started to develop in the region, it began with the notion that an individual could claim a small area of land. If an adjacent hole existed, indicating an active site, no other individual was to interfere. Soon after, prospectors engaged with a new idea of breaking up the region based on geographic location and established mining districts in which each could determine their own laws that would serve as the standard for the region. The framework for these initial laws is described in the following excerpt:

The miners of California have generally adopted as being best suited to their particular wants, the main principles of the mining laws of Spain and Mexico, by which the right of property in mines is made to depend upon discovery and development; that is, discovery is made the source of title, and development, or working, the condition of continuance of that title.<sup>62</sup>

The establishment of terms within each district saw prospectors from distant countries better able to acclimatize to and understand the new laws, considering the laws were based on the foundations of Mexican and Spanish mining law. As such, Latin American prospectors were more familiar with the law of the land. These miners had also reached California first. Together with their extensive mining knowledge, this made them initially far more successful than other miners. With the law of the land fully established, prospectors could move past the seemingly eternal conflict revolving around legal ownership of the land and focus on the betterment of daily life.

Religion and ethnicity played an important role in Coloma's development. At one point, the town boasted up to eight different churches. With high regional concentrations of a diverse range of religions and ethnicities, California became the hub of religious development, and religious expression in western American history was at its peak. This occurred gradually with the accumulation of different cultures; the immigration of Native Americans, Latin Americans, Eastern and Western Europeans, and Asians enhanced the

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<sup>62</sup> Wright, Karen Clay & Gavin. "Order Without Law? Property Rights During the California Gold Rush". (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Melon University. 2003) Page 9

diversity of the community. The heterogeneity of these communities also represented an obstacle to conversion by Christian missionaries, though it cannot be assumed that no opposition or attempted suppression took place. No specific group opposed Christianity, but “the materialism that undergirded [the Gold Rush] provided an important challenge to traditional religious values.”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, an unnamed Catholic priest noted that it was “not only the material preoccupation of the Argonauts, but also their overwhelming male gender and perhaps their youth as facts significantly affecting the shape of religion in the Golden State.”<sup>64</sup>

One can then assume based on the large amounts of faith-based institutions present in the Coloma Valley and state that each one cannot exist within their own sphere of influence or vacuum. As a result, the most significant impact of the Gold Rush on religion was arguably that the influence from the world enveloping these religious groups blurred the line between secular and sacred. The State’s religious history is deeply rooted in Roman Catholicism, which is demonstrated in early societies’ conducting Sunday mass that included practices of former Spanish and Latin American residents. While these churches and missionaries purchased land for hospitals and schools with a theological mission, the maintaining of social harmony and influence of local politics outweighed the religious undertones. Religious influence and policy had combined as soon as gold had been discovered and laborers poured in. Missionaries immediately sought to institute

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<sup>63</sup> Sandra Sizer Frankiel, “Religious Alternatives in Anglo-Protestantism, 1850–1910”. (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1988) Page 126

<sup>64</sup> Frankiel, “Religious Alternatives”, 2

state-wide Sunday Laws prohibiting prospectors from working on the Lord's Day.<sup>65</sup>

Some believed that land and property would lose value without the church, as was remarked in San Francisco in 1849, "Property is worth more under the Gospel, life is safer, community is happier - we can't do without it."<sup>66</sup> With the establishment of each religion in the area, the onslaught of new arrivals with a religious agenda began to overshadow both native American faith and Hispanic Catholicism and eventually caused followers to distance from them.

The daily life of the forty-niners was initially expected to be one of simplicity and ease. Prospectors expected to find gold and eventually liquidate their assets, resulting in huge financial gain that could support them and their families for generations. This ideal turned out to be far from reality, as life in the goldfields and mines was filled with isolation and homesickness. Obviously, isolation was assumed as the countless backgrounds, languages, and cultures throughout the region, those from the Eastern United States could not find solace in Latino or Chinese immigrants. Each ethnic group and each religious sect lived an insular life within an established community of its own people. However, most of the population flooding into California had no community. In a journal detailing his expedition to California, Alexander Van Valen, a prospector from New York, writes a letter to his wife on day 414 that gives readers a glimpse into how isolation made him question his decision to leave home to prospect:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., page 8

“I can now see that I have done wrong. I ought to have remained at home, and endeavored to fulfil my pledge to love, cherish [a]nd protect. I know that I have erred, and hope you will pardon my misconduct and neglect, and may I never, (if permitted to return once more), be induced to follow the golden bubble again”.<sup>67</sup>

The emotional withdrawal resulting from separation from loved ones was often the most painful part of a journey to the Coloma Valley. However, even for those without a family, the impossibility of finding companionship with the opposite sex was equally as difficult. In an examination of population data from California during the early period of the Gold Rush, only three percent of the total population, or about 3,500, were women.

The scarcity of women in the area allowed for those that came with their husbands to find work and provide for the household. These women typically found employment through owning or working in laundries, restaurants, saloons, brothels, hotels, theatres, and boarding houses. Some worried that the lack of women would cause the male population to lose focus and slip into sin. Reformers in the east pushed women to leave for California to help preserve the civil nature of society.

In addition to the hardships of isolation, the early phases of prospecting were extremely challenging. Regardless of how much gold was available and how imminent success seemed, the possibility of failure loomed. A May 1849 publication of *Alta California* noted, “Fortunes are not to be made in the mines in a few weeks. Those who

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander Van Valen, "Diary 1849-1850." Alexander Van Valen Diary, 1849-1850. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Insitute Archive Center, October 27.) 11-17.



have prospered in the mines have done so by labor incessant and severe.”<sup>68</sup> Together with the risk of physical harm or disease, these challenges offset the incredible potential in a life of prospecting.

Amongst the chaos, Chinese miners that came to California initially enjoyed incredible success initially. Unlike their European counterparts, the Chinese that came through Angel Island had every intention of returning home after becoming rich. Large numbers of Chinese miners and laborers started to arrive in early 1851.<sup>69</sup> Many came in search of mainstream mining jobs, as the three-year gap between the start of the CGR and the arrival of the Chinese saw the revival of projects that had been overlooked or abandoned. Those that could not support their livelihood through mining took jobs within the community as cooks, doctors, or merchants.<sup>70</sup> As the Chinese population within the state grew, white settlers began to feel that their place in the country was being encroached upon – an escalating sentiment that eventually amounted to the government’s enactment of resentful policies. An example is seen in the Foreign Miners’ Tax, a policy passed by the first California Legislature that punished any non-American by imposing a 20 dollar monthly tax.<sup>71</sup>

This tax was the greatest obstacle in the way of meaningful success for foreign miners. However, Chinese miners were more successful than most other groups due to

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<sup>68</sup> Dr. Gayle.Olson-Raymer "The California Gold Rush and the Controversy over the State Constitution."(HST 383. Humboldt: Humboldt State University Department of History.) pg 1-3

<sup>69</sup> Coloma, History of the Chinese in. n.d. "Gold Discovery History." Coloma

<sup>70</sup> Coloma, “Chinese”, n.d.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.,

their resourcefulness and understanding that mining was not the only means of making money during the rush. They were among the first to recognize the demand for services such as blacksmithing and general mining equipment sales (picks, gold pans, shovels, among other items). The Chinese even opened general stores to sell food and herbal medicines and provide postal and banking services, as well as a place for social gathering. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, throughout the middle to later part of the Gold Rush, the Chinese became a sizeable community in California. Numbering just 500 individuals in 1850, the community grew in the space of five years to a sizeable 20,000 people. In 1861, influenced by the same notions of cultural exclusion and hatred, “a riot occurred over the right to mine under an old hotel. A mob of drunken white miners rampaged through Coloma’s Chinatown, looting and destroying buildings. The Chinese were chased away, many were beaten, and several were killed.”<sup>72</sup>

After the Foreign Miners’ Tax was repealed, it was replaced shortly thereafter with legislation that specifically targeted the Chinese. Prejudice against them continued to grow, and, in 1858, California passed a law that disallowed all Chinese immigrants from entering the state.<sup>73</sup> While this law did come into effect, it was short lived as the California Supreme Court would strike it down in the coming months. Some argue that the prejudice that developed towards the Chinese during the CGR motivated President Chester Arthur to sign the Chinese Exclusion Act 10 years later.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>73</sup> Irwin, Charles Irwin & Fred. “Irwin & Irwin records, 1853-1917”. (Berkeley: Bancroft Library. 2013) pgs. 12-26

The final aspect of miner life that played a pivotal role in the eventual granting of statehood was connected to government. Both majority rule and trial by jury became a fundamental part of miners' lives. With a seriously flawed justice system and a clear divide between foreign miners and their white counterparts, a system of universal suffrage and local autonomy needed to be instituted. Prior to the Gold Rush and following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the push for autonomy in California had begun to gain traction, and by 1848, "[A]mericans ... were accustomed to establishing unofficial grass-roots organizations to fill the void left by ineffective official institutions."<sup>74</sup> These campaigns and organizations were best exemplified within the Midwest and colonies along the western border of the United States. Settlers within these areas set up early-stage municipal governments known as claim associations, in which elected officials would keep a record of the individual claims made by each person, then use this information to resolve conflicts.<sup>75</sup> Neighborhood and district codes throughout mining districts served as much-needed manifestations of regulations within the state in the absence of state and federal laws. These practices were later used as a key argument for organizing the state to a degree that warranted a preliminary vote toward statehood.

Looking ahead to its eventual acceptance into the Union, California needed to quickly find a concise political platform that effectively represented the views of the ever-developing region. Slavery was a pressing matter at the time on every governmental

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<sup>74</sup> C. Leigh Anderson, Richard O. Zerbe Jr. "Culture and Fairness in the Development of Institutions in the California Gold Fields." (The Journal of Economic History, Washington DC, 2001)114-143.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson & Zerbe, "Culture and Fairness", 114-143

level, from municipal to federal. Prior to the foundation of California, legislators became wary of the large portion of the demographic that would not support institutionalized slavery. As most of the population was anti-slavery, there was concern that those in line to potentially represent the state were expressing views contrary to the will of the people.<sup>76</sup>

The concept of majority rule became prevalent amongst prospectors when setting fundamental rules and laws. It was, as William Leggett noted about democracy at the time, “preventing restraints on the many that will benefit the few.”<sup>77</sup> This philosophy was adapted to determining claim size and the allocation of land claims, and served as the framework for the settlement of property disputes.<sup>78</sup> Further, it became clear that this practice could be used on a much larger scale. The decree of the majority was used in a governmental sense, to suppress the use of violence to resolve conflict. Naturally, the majority rule then began to be applied to public policy. However, interestingly, the majority of those working in California in the ranching and cattle industries or as miners chose not to engage in talks regarding slavery. A delicate situation emerged in which workers had inadvertently created an apathetic society.

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<sup>76</sup> Spivak, Joshua. “Battle over slavery came to California in Gold Rush era / Pro-Southern leadership defied population as Civil War loomed.” (San Francisco, February 18, 2007) Page 2

<sup>77</sup> Thomas, Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious aggrandizement in late Jacksonian America*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1985) 22

<sup>78</sup> Hietala, “*Manifest Design*” 22

This mindset allowed the Chivs, a political group of southern sympathizers, to take control of California's early political scene.<sup>79</sup> This became possible due to most of the population not being an adequate option politically, experienced politicians from other states came to the west coast to spread their agendas. For example, William Gwin, a politician who failed to secure a seat in the US Senate representing Mississippi, ventured to California in the hopes of assisting its admission into the Union.<sup>80</sup> In retrospect, it is apparent that Gwin and his supporters were willing to do anything necessary to gain power of the state, including backing the anti-slavery movement. However, upon reaching Washington, D.C., their stance would be flipped, and a pro-southerner approach would be conveyed to the legislative branch.<sup>81</sup> This was a pertinent example of a political "flip-flop" – a tactic used by politicians involving a sudden and dramatic change in opinion toward a certain policy in order to gain votes. To win the support of the prospectors coming to the state, Gwin preached a doctrine laced with anti-slavery sentiments, only to go to Washington and vote alongside his fellow Chivs. Regardless of Gwin's political intentions, his contributions to the state were unmatched at the time, as his actions aided in California being officially recognized as a state through The Compromise of 1850.

In 1849, prior to this legislation, California had formed a convention of elected delegates to draft and ratify the first constitution. Unlike many other states, California has

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<sup>79</sup> Dr. Gayle Olson-Raymer, "The Intricate Web of State and National Politics: 1850-1860." (Humboldt, December 2014.) 1-3

<sup>80</sup> Olson-Raymer, "Web of State and National" 1-3

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 1-3

one of the longest constitutions in the world, stemming from the myriad of factors that paved the way for statehood. From the Mexican-American War to a sheer lack of faith in elected officials, there was a need for virtually every loophole for exploitation while adhering to federal precedent required through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The most pressing sections and protections addressed by the constitution were derived from the US constitution, making it practically impossible to deny the admission of California were it not for the issue of slavery.

Through the Compromise of 1850, California became the 34<sup>th</sup> state to be admitted into the Union. As with the foundation of the United States, California represented a distant land in which many could find a possibility for a better tomorrow. Having been shaped by people from a vast range of ethnic backgrounds, from Native American to Hawaiian, the desire for economic and social riches proved to be enough to warrant an official charter to be filed with the Federal Government.<sup>82</sup> The state did not have adequate infrastructure in place immediately following admission due to the population boom, thus the first capital was established in San Jose, which was then the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city.<sup>83</sup> Similar to the establishment of other states in the Union, the significant impacts of California's official statehood would only become apparent in the coming years.

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<sup>82</sup> Alexander Spoehr, "Hawaii and the Gold Rush: George Allan of the Hudson's Bay Company Reports on His 1848 Pursuit of Captain John Sutter." (The Hawaiian Journal of History. Honolulu, 1992) Page 124

<sup>83</sup> Smithsonian American Art Museum. (The Gold Rush and Westward Expansion. Washington DC. n.d.) pages 1-4

### Policies and Politics Immediately After the Rush, 1848-1852

The events and policies of the Gold Rush and California's immediate response that led to statehood paint a picture of success, albeit minimal. However, further investigation reveals California's struggle with the trials and tribulations traditionally associated with statehood and the foundation of a new political body. The critical flaws in California's early infrastructure were forgotten as quickly as the Gold Rush had started. Examples of mismanagement and concerns around sustainability plagued California's legislature and society for years following Marshall's discovery. This section describes these follies and in doing so, analyzes the most critical changes made in response to the

Gold Rush, thus creating a framework for quantifying its substantial impact. To accomplish this, this section examines the policies directly pertaining to the people, individual cities, and the society as a whole.

The policies pertaining to the people deserve a particular focus. Specifically, several policies aimed toward Chinese miners created a hierarchal system in which the value of an individual was not determined by his or her contribution, but by the color of his or her skin. From 1848 to the mid-1860s, it was reported that nearly 35,000 Chinese made the journey across the Pacific Ocean to the golden state, in the hopes of making a considerable fortune and then returning home or establishing a new life in the United States. However, the realization of these dreams was hindered for those who arrived later by a new barrier: white nativism. In previous years, white men had profited off the land and established a livelihood, in some cases even before Marshall's discovery. Those that came to California afterwards with the same idealistic goals, however, imposed a litany of hypocritical rules that varied by region. Three problems arose. First, the subjugation of Chinese miners at the discretion of the white "native" was established on the sole basis of the first possession principle. Second, the authority of these "natives", or lack thereof, presented a barrier that was inconsistent across the board. Due to the imposing of societal barriers, especially those directed toward the Chinese, the creation of a cohesive community became nearly impossible. Third, this created a dangerous scenario in which the people were geared toward hatred of a minority group, for fear of displacement and dissipation of their own cultural identity. Each of these problems stemmed both from skin



color and the cultural and religious differences between white Californians and the Chinese. Ultimately, the closed mindedness of white nativism became inseparable from Californian culture, resulting in the enacting of harmful policies.

As with virtually every large foreign power, China was well represented in the California Gold Rush. However, the Chinese possessed a work ethic unparalleled by any other group. Described as their most “conspicuous” quality, the Chinese were a people that “must” work. Even if a high wage could not be acquired, a low wage would be accepted. While thousands flocked to the riverbanks of the Coloma Valley and the hills of the Sierra Nevada mountains with aspirations to find a nugget of gold in the American River, the Chinese had other ideas. Rather than following the trend, they filled the roles of countless cooks, shopkeepers, and laundrymen, among other professions, willing and able to supply the necessary services for a growing Californian society. The contributions of the Chinese, at first, were welcomed with open arms. General McDougal noted that the Chinese were “one of the worthiest of our newly adopted citizens.”<sup>84</sup> He describes the progression of attitudes in the following excerpt:

A lot of the white miners at first willingly sold the Chinese these abandoned claims, thinking the Chinese were just simple-minded people, stupid enough to take over these mines they considered worthless ... But the Chinese worked these mines very thoroughly and it turned out they were hardly worthless, that they

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<sup>84</sup> Nina Wu, "A Retelling of Gold Rush History: The Lives of Chinese Miners." (Inside Oakland. Berkeley, March 7) <https://projects.journalism.berkeley.edu/oakland/culture/ninagr.html>.

could still, in fact, mine a lot of gold from them, at which point the white miners became envious and antagonistic.<sup>85</sup>

However, much like others who were drawn by the Gold Rush soon discovered, not everyone who succeeded would continue to be successful and welcome. It appeared that non-whites were only truly welcomed when the allure of gold was present; as the available riches diminished, so did the acceptance of minority groups – especially those who were successful outside of the mines, such as the Chinese. Frustration boiled to the surface, as “[i]n the bitterness of their disappointment they turned upon the men of other races ... and accused them of stealing their wealth. They boldly asserted that California’s gold belonged to them.”<sup>86</sup> This harsh sentiment eventually materialized, and white native began to “cry of ‘California for the Americans’”. As these attitudes began to permeate the minds and actions of the citizens, the state was forced to take measures to protect the assets and interests of their white constituency. It enacted “An Act for the better regulation of the Mines and the government of foreign Miners,” known as The Foreign Miners’ Tax of 1850.

Another group unfairly targeted by this tax and the general mining population of California were the Latin Americans. Often referred to under the umbrella term of “Mexicans,” any individual in California of Spanish Indian-origin was grouped into a blind class distinction, where a wealthy Mexican landowner had no more power in

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<sup>85</sup> Wu, “Retelling of Gold”

<sup>86</sup> Henry Kittredge Norton, “The Story of California From the Earliest Days to the Present”. (New York: Palala Press. 2015) 286

society than a Chilean with nothing. This categorization was borne of the white majority's erratic fear of foreigners stealing "American" gold. A superiority complex had also developed for many Americans in the west following the Mexican-American war. When the United States had won the war and control of the land via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a pseudo-hierarchy was established where, regardless of his knowledge or wealth, the white man was superior on the basis that the war had decided the pecking order. It is crucial to mention here that Americans did not initially see Latin Americans as a lesser group of people; resentment only arose after Latin Americans became far more successful than their white counterparts. With gold's mint power and status in this era, the idea of Mexicans holding most of the power in society was deeply troubling to the white native.

While the Foreign Miner's Tax of 1850 was short lived, it had several key ramifications that diverted the focus of many foreign prospectors. Initially, the intention of the legislation was to raise 200,000 dollars in revenue for the state by charging all foreign miners, excluding Native Americans and "free white persons", a 20-dollar monthly fee to retain their foreign miners' license. However, there was immediate backlash from the people subjugated by it. An 1850 publication of *Alta California* claimed that the tax was "decidedly unconstitutional, unjust, impolitic, opposed to every principle of our free institutions."<sup>87</sup> After all, minority groups, just like their white counterparts, came to the Coloma Valley to find and spend gold in order to better their

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<sup>87</sup> Sucheng Chan, "'A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush,'" (California History 9 (2): 2000) 44-85.

lives. Once the tax passed, foreign miners left by the thousands. Tolerance for people of color began to diminish, and racist undertones created the necessity for destructive policies. In response to FMT-1, foreign miners had three choices: to pay the monthly tax and hope to find enough gold to offset the cost, to find work in another field, or to leave.

While the tax was not aimed at Native Americans, they still became a target for white settlers and new legislature. Resentment borne of the countless atrocities that every native tribe in California had faced manifested in acts of thievery and murder. The journal of an unknown prospector in 1849 depicts the troubling actions of the whites: “The Indians were utterly defenseless; but their pitiable plight did not in the least restrain our valorous men from rushing down on the huts, plundering them of everything that was deemed of any value, and then putting the rest to torch.”<sup>88</sup> As was later revealed, the natives that were raped and murdered had nothing to do with the retaliatory attack. Nonetheless, the United States Congress used the “native aggression” as justification to pass the Indian Appropriations Act of 1851. This bill outlined designated territories for Indian reservations that were to be controlled by the federal government. Belgian explorer and miner Jean Nicolas Perlot best summarized the aim of this legislation in his journal when he noted,

By this treaty, the United States undertook to feed the Indians for three years; to get them the necessary cattle, if they wanted to raise them; to furnish them tools,

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<sup>88</sup> Unknown Prospector Letter

if they wanted to work; on the condition that they would remain, during this time, in what were called reservations.<sup>89</sup>

Reservations were used by the government as a seemingly noble intentions to secretly undermine the autonomy of each tribe. By not agreeing to the terms of the agreement, tribes would authorize the extermination of their people. The consolation offered by the American government were short lived, as with more people settling in the west every year, the reservations shrunk considerably.

In less than a year, tens of thousands of prospectors left the Sierra Nevada foothills to find work elsewhere. To protect the collective interests of the minority groups and immigrants who assisted in the facilitation of California's statehood, an unknown author published in an 1850 pamphlet:

It is time to unite: Frenchmen, Chileans, Peruvians, Mexicans, there is the biggest necessity of putting an end to the vexation of the Americans in California. If you do not intend to allow yourself to be fleeced by a band of miserable fellows who are repudiated by their own country, then unite and go to the camp of Sonora next Sunday: there will we try to guarantee security for us all, and put a bridle in the mouths of that horde who call themselves citizens of the United States, thereby profaning that country.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Perlot, Jean-Nicolas. 1985. *Gold Seeker Adventures of a Belgian Argonaut during the Gold Rush Years*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>90</sup> Chan, "People of Exceptional Character", 44-85

After the FMT-1 was passed, miners of color in California dropped their gold pans, and left to find another steady source of income. Upon realizing how difficult it was to find prosperity away from the riverbanks, the Chinese sought to find any form of work they could, given their lack of formal training and expertise.

One of the most notable ways the former miners attained work was through the opening of general stores. This became a common form of employment for the Chinese. An example of these general stores can be seen in exhibits at the James Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park in Coloma, California: The Man Lee and Wah Hop stores. The shops would hang various signs and advertisements from their buildings outlining the goods and services offered. From rice, sugar, and oil, to iron, tools, and clothing, necessities for survival became accessible, thanks primarily to the sacrifices of these immigrants.

However, no matter how much they contributed, the Chinese began to be excluded from miner society, not just in the Coloma valley but in the surrounding counties across Northern California. It was noted that "In Shasta County, the sheriff had to use force to stop a mob intent on running out a group of Orientals. In the same county in 1855 a miners' committee met and claimed that the Chinese had taken over all the placer diggings." The miners carried this sentiment as far south as Columbia (about 80 miles south of Coloma), and those who felt that the newly established state legislature was "incapable of 'any efficient action,'" took matters into their own hands and appointed a vigilance committee to exclude Asians from the mines. In order to further isolate the Chinese from Californian society, the municipal government of each county

stripped those with Chinese lineage from their right to testify in court or any legal setting. Even after California was established as a state, the Chinese were still subjugated to vigilante justice. At this point, amongst all racial groups in California, the Chinese suffered the most prejudice. As a result of their perpetual exclusion, Chinese immigrants across California were faced with two options: to leave, or to provide a service to the surrounding communities that established credibility amongst their white counterparts. In embracing the latter, the Chinese adapted from being completely excluded from society to be an integral part of it. In San Francisco, the first Chinese laundry store in the city, “Wah Lee”, opened its doors in 1851 and charged five dollars to launder 12 shirts, heavily undercutting the twelve dollars charged in Hong Kong at the time. When the allure of the Gold Rush died down in the late 1850s, Chinese immigrants still sought the opportunity to become rich in California. Thus, the US government enlisted them in the early 1860s to assist in the construction of the intercontinental railroad.

A discussion of California’s development would not be complete without mentioning the changes made to the capital, Sacramento. Teeming with opportunities for the political elite to make their mark on the west, there was seemingly no feasible way this could end poorly. The history of Sacramento dates back many years before its foundation as a city and includes the arrival of Sutter in 1839 and the establishment of Sutter’s Fort. However, the most interesting event of its history occurred shortly before California became a state. Prior to the foundation of Sacramento in 1852, there were two schools of thought dividing the locals; there were those that sought to help the charter’s passage through any means necessary, and the gamblers and criminals, who perceived

that, at a time in which Mexican autonomy still acted as the only legal precedent, the lack of government presented a number opportunities for criminals to profit. In a formal declaration drawn up by those championing the idea of a city charter, an ultimatum was proposed to the people: they could either accept the proposed charter and allow the emergence of US autonomy to overtake the dangerous practices in Sacramento, or have the full power of the state unleashed upon the city to eradicate vigilante justice and Mexican legal autonomy. Prior to the foundation of local laws, land gained by the US through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was still regulated under the legal authority of Mexican law. While there was no authority figure from Mexico to enforce these laws, the people themselves sought to preserve the status quo and enforce the de facto law of the land. This conflicted with the desires of American lawmakers, who gave the ultimatum in a final effort to force any resistance to either allow and abide by the legal transition or be forced into acceptance through the might of the military.

The developments in Sacramento (and most of the region after 1849) slowed for quite some time until the state congress relocated to the city in 1854, eventually resulting in Sacramento becoming the capital in 1879. However, two significant events occurred during this time that provided insight into the city. The first took place in August 1850, when the muddled property laws were met with an organized effort to demonstrate the flaws of the system and oppose the nonsensical policies of the bureaucracy. In what would later be known as the “Squatters’ riot”, over 800 people were found to be in possession of deeds for different segments of a 14-million-acre section of land. This event offers unique insight into how the state quickly adapted from the negative impacts



of antiquated policies and exemplifies one of the ways in which the Gold Rush influenced modern day California. The property laws regarding squatters in California were a remnant of the period prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The precedent established after the Squatters' riot suggests that the laws that had yet to be replaced from the Alta California era would stand in California until the state legislature replaced the policies.

The second of the two events related to the adverse effects of boomtowns. The Gold Rush brought thousands to the Coloma and Sacramento Valleys. In 1850, nearly 7,000 people called Sacramento home, classifying it as one of the largest boomtowns to date. However, there are dangers associated with a city's rapid expansion, and Sacramento suffered negative effects in October 1850. The most significant effect was caused by the lack of critical infrastructure to control the waste created by citizens. The buildup of urban filth in the town allowed for raw sewage to contaminate the water supply with a series of bacteria, allowing cholera to spread across the city. Due to the initial severity of the problem and lack of accurate records, the mortality figures and total financial damage of the outbreak is largely unknown. However, the city's exceptional response to the crisis prevented the disease from spreading. As a result of events such as this, it has been observed that "California, unlike other states, had no initial period of growth; the early history of the state is a record of emergencies, and the needs of the time were met in emergency fashion." The lessons learnt from this epidemic were revealed through the city's responses. First, the ballooning population required immediate

attention, so the city allotted land to those willing to work. As people began to accept plots of land, the lack of regulations allowed those with a deed to do what they pleased with the land. With no water infrastructure or sanitation, the ideal conditions were in place for the spread of dangerous bacteria. This opened the door for the cholera outbreak, so, to mitigate the damage, the city issued an ordinance requiring all residents “to burn their garbage or face a \$500 fine.” While obviously not a long-term solution, this event and those that followed immediately after provide an important insight into life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much like other small nations and villages such as those in India along that Ganges Delta or Haiti, that had been crippled by cholera, a prospector arriving in Sacramento from Alabama in 1850 noted that the city was "subject to annual inundations; the streets were filthy in the extreme; and the backyards filled with decaying vegetable and animal matter.” The substantial growth within the region further perpetuated the danger of the unsanitary and unsafe conditions, as every person sought only to protect themselves and their jobs, rather than the community and environment, from harm. These decisions set the tone for the future of California, which would have to adapt faster than anyone had imagined.

It is critical here to note the actions that were taken to fund and continue the development of California. By modern standards, agriculture plays a small role in the state’s overall GDP. However, the Gold Rush had an impact on wages and markets until the 1860s. First, state legislatures began to fear that it would be impossible to feed and provide for everyone calling California home. In 1852, it was proclaimed that the

necessary production of food and public resources would not be available for several years. Self-sufficient agriculture did not become a reality until 1854 with the first export surplus<sup>91</sup>. Further, an analysis of the census conducted in 1852 shows how dramatically the sector of California had grown. According to the census findings, agricultural production increased dramatically between 1850 and 1852. The state's wheat yield increased from 7,700 bushels to 41,622.<sup>92</sup> An even more dramatic change is seen when looking at barley, which increased from 3,500 bushels to 930,000.<sup>93</sup> These figures, coupled with the 205,000 bushels of wheat and over 1,000,000 bushels of barley in the San Francisco Bay, indicated that the future of the state would not depend on mineral deposits. This was made possible by two specific goods unknown to a large segment of domestic and foreign markets: the gold exported by foreign miners, and barley. These exports allowed the state to meet two goals simultaneously. It could now both provide the infrastructure for food production and have a presence in trade, creating avenues for foreign goods to be introduced to California.

None of this would have been possible without the mineral booms and private sector investment in technology in 1852. Before diving into the changes in California production and industry sparked by the CGR, one simple notion must be accepted. That year, specifically, saw the most significant changes to California as it was the most

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<sup>91</sup> Joshua Paddison, "Calisphere Exhibitions." Calisphere. Accessed October 21, 2018. <https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/essay/5/population-growth/>. 2005

<sup>92</sup> Paddison, "Exhibitions"

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.,

successful year of the Gold Rush and for pragmatic research. Regarding estimated gold production, the figures and output from traditional prospectors had peaked and subsequently plateaued, suggesting one of two realities: either the gold had dried up or the initial technologies of the gold pan and pick axe were no longer effective in finding it. People were unwilling to accept the former and, thus, tested the limits of the latter. With the old technologies deemed inadequate, private investors no longer sought manpower, and a slew of innovation, ingenuity, and pragmatism propelled the mining communities and economy forward. Rather, the innovations and changes will be covered to show communal development. A combination of emerging technologies, such as hydraulic mining systems and combustion methods, drove the industry forward in the following decades. In 1861, California's first historian, John Hittell, described the mining industry in the late 1850s as "characterized by corporate organization and consolidation, substantial capital investment, increased professionalization of management and engineering, hired miners working for wages instead of partners working for profits, and new technologies designed to mine lower-grade massive deposits."<sup>94</sup>

The most interesting innovation occurred when the supply of high-grade gold deposits had effectively run dry. Mining tycoons and owners would continue an operation within a given region regardless of the apparent deposit quality, in the hopes of striking gold once more. Consequently, many entrepreneurs of the time faced failure and

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<sup>94</sup> Ronald H. Limbaugh, "Making Old Tools Work Better: Pragmatic -Adaptation and Innovation in Gold-Rush Technology." In *A Golden State Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, (by James J. Rawls & Richard J. Orsi, 32-36. Berkeley: University of California Press.)

foreclosure as the intermittent findings of various ores was not enough to support the endeavor any further. The shortcomings of the industrial founders were not in vain, however, as these early industry leaders made it possible in the 1860s for hydraulic mining and stamp milling to leave a mark on the state.

### Broader Implications and Transformations Following the Gold Rush

From a contemporary perspective, January 24th, 1848 bears little significance.

Within the context of California and the American West, however, the discovery of gold by John Marshall was one of the most significant events in the west in terms of development and future stability that followed the string of one crisis after another. With emerging markets teeming with opportunity, those who previously failed at mining triumphed.

One aspect of the Gold Rush that must be considered to quantify the economic and infrastructural benefits are the markets that emerged as a result of massive population inflation. A voyage from New York to San Francisco took around four months, so it became impossible for market prices in San Francisco to match those of New York. As a result, Californians had to rely on their ingenuity and understanding of the western market place. The state hit an awkward point following the boom of the Gold Rush. Its largest port at San Francisco could not access to the east coast due to the barrier of the

Rocky Mountains, nor was there access to western European markets. Due to the lack of integration, local markets had to be created within the Pacific region, even though these were isolated. The immediate benefit of this was that there was no other competitor in the western market to impact the value of agricultural products from California. This cycle continued for the next decade. While the state would not reap the benefits of widespread market integration for several years, it allowed for farmers and those in the agricultural sector to learn about soils, climates, and shipping techniques, and start to become familiar with foreign markets.

The technological innovation that came out of the industrial revolution which had the most significant impact on California was that of steam-powered ships, which operated in the Pacific between Panama and San Francisco.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, in 1855, an overland rail route was completed to drastically reduce the time it took to travel from San Francisco to Panama. Shortly after, this rail system became San Francisco's primary connection to the rest of the world. The Butterfield Overland Mail route connected San Francisco to St. Louis beginning in late 1858; by bypassing the Rocky Mountains, this service was able to guarantee passage from Missouri to California in 25 days, reducing travel time by 75%.<sup>96</sup>

A significant development in the wake of the Gold Rush came to a head when the state had a three-headed dragon of industries with mineral mining, timber, and

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<sup>95</sup> Andrew C. Isenberg, "Mining California: An Ecological History." (New York: Hill and Wang. 2005) pgs 37-42

<sup>96</sup> Isenberg, "Mining California", 37-42

agriculture. While agriculture had only recently developed, the scale of growth and exports left the state with a difficult decision to make. To prevent conflict, knowing that both industries would inevitably compete for the same regions and resources, agriculture was confined to the central valley to the south of Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay to the west. And mineral mining was kept to the Sierra Nevada mountains to the east.<sup>97</sup> This approach allowed both industries to expand freely without encroaching on the other. With free reign of hundreds of miles of land, all three sectors were able to evolve and develop new technologies to bring the state up to the economic standard of others in the union.

The Coloma valley was home to most miners during the initial rush. However, after the peak of the Gold Rush in 1852, smaller outposts began to develop further away in the hopes of finding more resources. A notable example of this is seen in the city of Marysville. Located approximately 50 miles northeast of Marshall's discovery site, the town was accepted as a formal location in 1851. The significance of Marysville lies in its location as a natural rest stop for those traveling south to Sacramento. Potential prospectors and laborers stayed in the town, eventually raising the population to 10,000 within three years. As Marysville grew, the findings and development grew as well. Considering that the traditional excavating process for finding gold (or "placer mining") could not be carried out on the same scale in Marysville as in other locations, hydraulic mining became the only option for any operation that sought to make money at the end of

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 212-235

the Gold Rush. With heavy usage of hydraulic mining, nearly 10,000,000 dollars' worth of gold would be transported from Marysville in 1857 to the US Mint in San Francisco.<sup>98</sup>

While the mining industry in California moved into the future with hydraulic mining, the agriculture industry struggled initially to provide for its cattle. Mining outposts and towns did not have enough land available to sustain the number of cattle necessary to provide for the general public. Thus, ranchers from southern California began moving nearly 1,000 cattle at a time north along the Pacific coast and on to Stockton, Sacramento, or San Francisco.<sup>99</sup> While this was enough to temporarily placate prospectors, the exorbitant prices opposed by those in southern California made it virtually impossible for anyone to acquire cattle. Together with a drought in 1856, this left the ranchers and farmers with nothing. This resulted in competition from the Midwest, particularly Texas, and Mexico, which was trying to work its way into the California marketplace. The introduction of new suppliers stabilized the market, but the enormous amount of time needed to bring thousands of cattle across thousands of miles took a toll on the overall product. To maximize profits, ranchers began bringing lesser quality cattle to California, forcing the state to find a solution that eventually resulted in California-raised cattle sustaining the needs of the population. Unfortunately, due to

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<sup>98</sup> Kaitlin Vigars, "Buried Beneath the Legislation It Gave Rise to: The Significance of Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Gravel Mining Co." (Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review 2016) 235-237.

<sup>99</sup> Paul W. Rhode, Alan L. Olmstead. "A History of California Agriculture". (Berkeley: Giannini Foundation - University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. 2017) 5-23



several legal battles waged between farmers and miners, this did not occur until a Supreme Court ruling in 1886.<sup>100</sup>

California's mining and lumber industries acted almost as a mirror to one another. Both industries had abundant resources, but minimal money invested in them, which brought investors and corporations flocking to one or the other with the knowledge that technological innovation would lead to prosperity. Timber was extremely important in California's development as wood served two purposes: it was both the primary means of fuel and the primary construction material. The only difference between mining and timber was that early workers and investors could physically see the seemingly inexhaustible supply of resources in the timber industry. The trees in the Sierra Nevada have been described by contemporary historians as "growing on both slopes of the Sierra between elevations of 3,000 and 8,000 feet, reaching heights over 150 feet and diameters of between ten and fifteen feet, sugar pine comprised 15 percent of the timber stand in California outside the redwood region."<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the largest supply was found near the San Francisco bay with miles of old-growth redwood trees. However, there was one major problem facing laborers and investors: current technologies made it impossible to utilize the massive trees scattered throughout the state. Fortunately, it did not require a huge amount of innovation for the appropriate tools to be crafted or brought by prospectors to utilize the sugar pines in the Sierra Nevada. The real problem was the

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<sup>100</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Division of History Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation. (REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK: History Basic Data, Del Norte and Humboldt Counties, California. Humboldt. 1989) 1-13

<sup>101</sup> US Department of the Interior, Redwood National Park, 1-13

more profitable redwoods. These giant trees were far too dense and strong to be dealt with via the usual methods. Instead, their harvesting required the use of modern technology. None of this would have been possible with just the collective might of the newly arrived westerners. A number of people from Maine and the eastern shores of Canada, who had initially been drawn by the promise of gold, had experience with the pine and spruce trees native to the region. With their expertise, the first operating sawmill was established in Humboldt County in 1850. It proceeded to fail miserably, along with every following attempt at a mill until 1852. The first successful sawmill owed its success to the use of an engine removed from a steamer ship from Santa Clara to power it, allowing for a constant power supply.<sup>102</sup> By 1854, over 20,000,000 feet of lumber had been moved from Humboldt county alone without even touching the redwoods. As operations grew, so did the scale of the mills. By 1860, with the utilization of redwoods, at least 30,000,000 feet of lumber was being removed from the county each year.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-13

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-13

### The Golden Conclusion - California in 1860

By 1860, enough new technologies and industries had been developed to indicate the direction California would take in the coming century. With this in mind, it is imperative to mention the direct changes that occurred in population, cultural diversity, and the development of boomtowns once the Gold Rush had formally ended. As a result of Marshall's discovery, the population of California had grown from 100,000 in 1850 to nearly 250,000 in 1852 and numbered 380,000 by 1860. As the population continued to grow with more people settling in California every year, there was a dramatic reduction in the number of foreigners entering the state for the purposes of mining. Rather, individuals would come to California to work in sectors such as timber.

The most fascinating development stemmed from the miners who sought a new means of employment. For those that did not make it rich in the river banks in Coloma, many opportunities opened elsewhere. From 1858 to 1860, a smaller scale Gold Rush occurred in Colorado, resulting in 150,000 people seeking a second chance<sup>104</sup>. This occurred again in Northern Idaho in 1860.<sup>105</sup> These prospectors had learned from their mistakes in California and often elected to leave a particular spot for a new one rapidly in the hopes of catching the next rush.

The next logical step of looking at in the post-Gold-Rush era of California is the boomtowns. The most notable of the boomtowns were Placerville and Coloma. Placerville was the third most populated town in California: during the peak of the Gold

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<sup>104</sup> Robert Brown, *The Great Pikes Peak Gold Rush*. (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press. 1985) 3-5

<sup>105</sup> Brown, "Great Pikes", 45

Rush it housed 2,466 people.<sup>106</sup> However, this number would not increase again to above 2,000 until the 1930 census.<sup>107</sup> Coloma, on the other hand, never saw a population total higher than 1,000 after 1855.<sup>108</sup>

While boomtowns and small areas of California that had been bolstered by the Gold Rush began to fall apart, California in its entirety began to thrive in all respects. However, the two most significant aspects of California's development were the agriculture industry and its usage of migrant labor, and the increase in cultural diversity from the time of Marshall's discovery to 1860. The emergence of the agriculture sector created a situation in which the demand for labor far exceeded the initial supply. Thus, employers and large companies looked to migrant laborers who had fallen short when mining for gold. Several researchers from the University of California noted, "[a] succession of ethnic groups provided this labor, beginning with Native Americans in the 1850s and 1860s, followed by Chinese, Japanese, Hindustanis, Filipinos, and Mexicans."<sup>109</sup> The benefit of using migrant labor was that companies could easily lure people with promise of large payouts at the end of the season and false promises of continued labor even when the harvesting season ended.<sup>110</sup> While countless guarantees were not met and working conditions were far from ideal, migrant workers had no way to seek compensation. Since they were not protected like US citizens through the American

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<sup>106</sup> World Population Review. "Placerville, California Population". (Washington DC, January 1 2019)

<sup>107</sup> World Population Review. "Coloma, California Population". (Washington DC, January 1. 2019)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., "Coloma"

<sup>109</sup> Joshua Paddison, "Calisphere Exhibitions." Calisphere. Accessed October 21, 2018.

<https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/essay/5/population-growth/>. 2005

<sup>110</sup> Paddison, "Calisphere Exhibitions"

Federation of Labor, migrant laborers were obligated to adhere to the agreements made with employers. As a result, 16-hour work days and unsanitary temporary homes became the norm. While these practices appear unethical and immoral when viewed through a contemporary perspective, California's rapid growth and development would not have occurred without them.

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