

American History

Talk 15: California and Gold Rush



Talk	Title	Time Period	Date of Talk	
8	The early Republic	1792-1800	October 30th	✓
9	Jefferson's America	1800-1808	November 6th	✓
10	War of 1812 and its impact	1808-1815	November 20th	✓
11	The Era of Good Feelings	1816-1828	December 4th	✓
12	Jacksonian 'democracy'	1828-1840	January 15th	✓
13	New Spain, Mexico and the Texas Republic	1820-1836	January 29th	✓
14	Manifest Destiny and the Mexican War	1840 -1850	February 5th	✓
15	California and the Gold Rush	1700-1850	February 19th	

Overview

- 
- A quick tour
 - Pre Gold Rush California
 - Gold!
 - 1849
 - The Golden State
 - Women during the Gold Rush
 - Legacy and Impact on culture
- 

California



Multiple climates

Water in the north
& mountains

South & Central
Dry, hot, flat

Mediterranean
Climate coast to
10 miles inland

Sierra Nevada Mountains



San Joaquin Valley, Central California



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Credit: halbergman

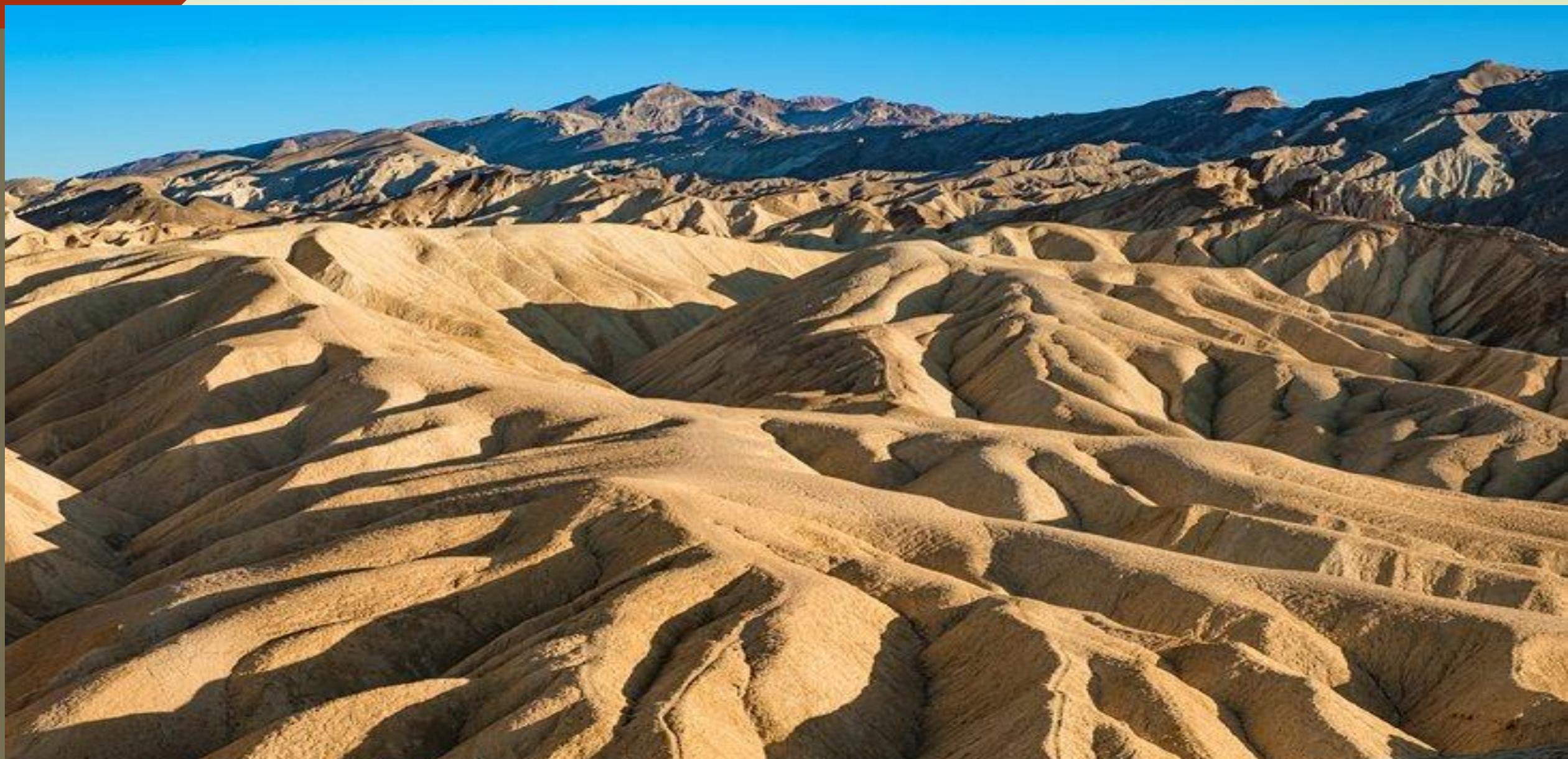
Napa Valley, Central California



High Desert Joshua Tree National Park



Zabriskie Point Death Valley



Mojave Desert: low desert



Laguna Beach Southern California





California before the gold

California Indigenous peoples



Inhabited for 19,000 years +

Most densely populated area of
Pre European America

350,000 inhabitant, 500 tribes

Bands ranging from 50-500

A managed landscape: Forest
gardening via controlled
burning & diet of processed
acorns and fish

Settled communities with
agreed boundaries and
substantial trade, no evidence
of warfare...abundance of
land & wildlife

Many cultures, mountain, forest,
temporary thatched housing



Ocean going plank canoes...densely populated islands...Polynesian influence?



Spanish California (1769-1820)



Discovered and claimed by Spain 1540's... 'Alta California' too remote to colonise

No return till 1769... Spanish learn of Russian presence in Alaska

Viceroy orders expedition of Franciscans/ Spanish soldiers/Bahia California Indians

Objective 'make Indians 'Spanish'
Working class of settlers for 'Dons'....ruling class .. land grants

Build 23 Missions/ Praesidios/ Puer
1769-1833 where most Indians live
Interior left unexplored

Mission, Pueblo, Presidio Complex @ 1830



Praesidios: garrison (no
More than 10 Spanish
soldiers plus Indian
converts)

Pueblos: Indian housing
Unmarried women separate
From husbands,

Mission: worship,
Administration and
place of work

Mission San Juan Capistrano



Mission San Juan Luis Rey (rec



Mission abandoned 1830'
And turned to ruin

Restored in 1930's during
Depression as tourist
attractions

Ongoing restoration to
Recreate 1800 look

Key facts about Missions & Indians

- ▶ Indians persuaded not forced to enter Mission and live in Pueblos
- ▶ Entering the mission an irrevocable decision
 - ▶ Indian required to abandon lifestyle, diet, language, religion
 - ▶ No one allowed to leave. Escapees chased and recaptured ..rejected by non Mission Indians....fear of disease
 - ▶ Discipline harsh and enforced by Indians themselves
- ▶ Missions places of work: farming, Construction, Vineyards, ..cattle ranching early 1800
- ▶ Indian population collapsed due to lack of immunity to disease, living closely together, change in diet, and culture shock....not intentional

Mission life 1770-1830



A network of
Communities that
lasts only 60
years

Interior unoccupied...
And 80% colony
not explored

Cattle introduced
1790's as Spanish
seek to make colony
Profitable. Ranchos
Set up across colony

Mexican California (1820-1846)

- Mexican revolution 'mostly anti clerical'....close Missions 1830
- 450 land grants issued to 40-40 Mexican wealthy 'creoles'
- Mission Indians become vaqueros to support cattle and farm workers
- Population in 1846 less than 10,000, centred on 40-50 key families

Lords of the Rancho Culture



Vaqueros



Vast estates, elite
Land owners
Across South &
Central California

Casual lifestyle
Centred around
ranchos

Famous of horses
& horsemanship

Hides hauled to off-shore traders

Meat left to rot...no consumption
Or transport

Cattle reared for Hides and
tallow...Hauled to coast
and stacked

Ships patrol coast looking
For hide stacks..approach
And collect...and pay

Shipped to China, Hawaii
East Coast of USA



Los Angeles 1830



Los Angeles
Largest 'town'...
...300 inhabitants

It's changed.....



Arrival of the 'Anglos'

- Settlers from United States begin arriving 1830's...settle in North to farm...Russians building forts along coast...
- The problem for Mexico: how to develop & keep remote place
- Mexican governor needs contractor to develop area and keep it loyal.....need Contractor (like Steve Austin in Texas)

Johann Augustus Sutter (1803-1880)



Swiss born son of foreman, store clerk, marries rich widow...takes money, abandons wife & children, emigrates to US...with her money

Joins missionaries to California, to Hawaii, trades with Russians ...back to California... Has a dream to create “Agricultural Empire”

Rebrands as “Captain Sutter” Swiss Guard

To Mexico, meets Viceroy with plan of Agricultural Empire....secures 48,000 acre Land grant ‘Inland’ to develop area and act as “buffer” to block American settlers moving from East and North

New Helvetia 1848



New Helvetia....employing 600
Indians...slave labour...

Creates “army” 150 strong
Indians in Swiss uniforms...

Organises massacre of Indians
Stealing cattle. Relies on
execution & starvation to control

Ignores contract, encourages
Anglo settlers. Mexican suspect
Slavery...child molestation

Supports ‘Bear Flag’ Republic &
Celebrates US victory vs Mexico
Decides to expand works

Feb 1848 sends employee
Mormon John Marshall to build
saw mill 40 miles from New Helv

Gold confirmed



Marshall finds gold nugget, allows men to find more during non working time

Marshall to New Helvetia...leaves men to continue building saw mill

Test gold with Sutter, consult Encyclopaedia & woman to test by heat....confirmed

Sutter swears Marshall and employees to secrecy...Sutter wants to secure lease of Land to protect from miners ..sends Marshall to San Francisco to secure land

Too late..

Samuel Brannon



Mormon newspaper man hardware store owner and church member...

Marshall employees pay for Goods with gold dust

Brannon rushes to San Francisco
Buys all shovel and pans for cents

Runs through town shouting
“Gold” “Gold” sells pans for \$15
Shovels \$20..makes \$36,000
(\$1.4m in 2 weeks. California's
First millionaire

News spread by steamship

Spreading the news

San Francisco March 1848

New York June 1848

CALIFORNIAN
BY D. R. DUCKELEW.

SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 15, 1848.

XY ———— 000 ————

GOLD MINE FOUND.—In the newly made raceway of the Saw Mill recently erected by Captain Sutter, on the American Fork, gold has been found in considerable quantities. One person brought thirty dollars worth to New Helvetia, gathered there in a short time. California, no doubt, is rich in mineral wealth; great chances here for scientific capitalists. Gold has been found in almost every part of the country.

XY

INTERESTING FROM OUR NEW TERRITORY
IN THE PACIFIC.

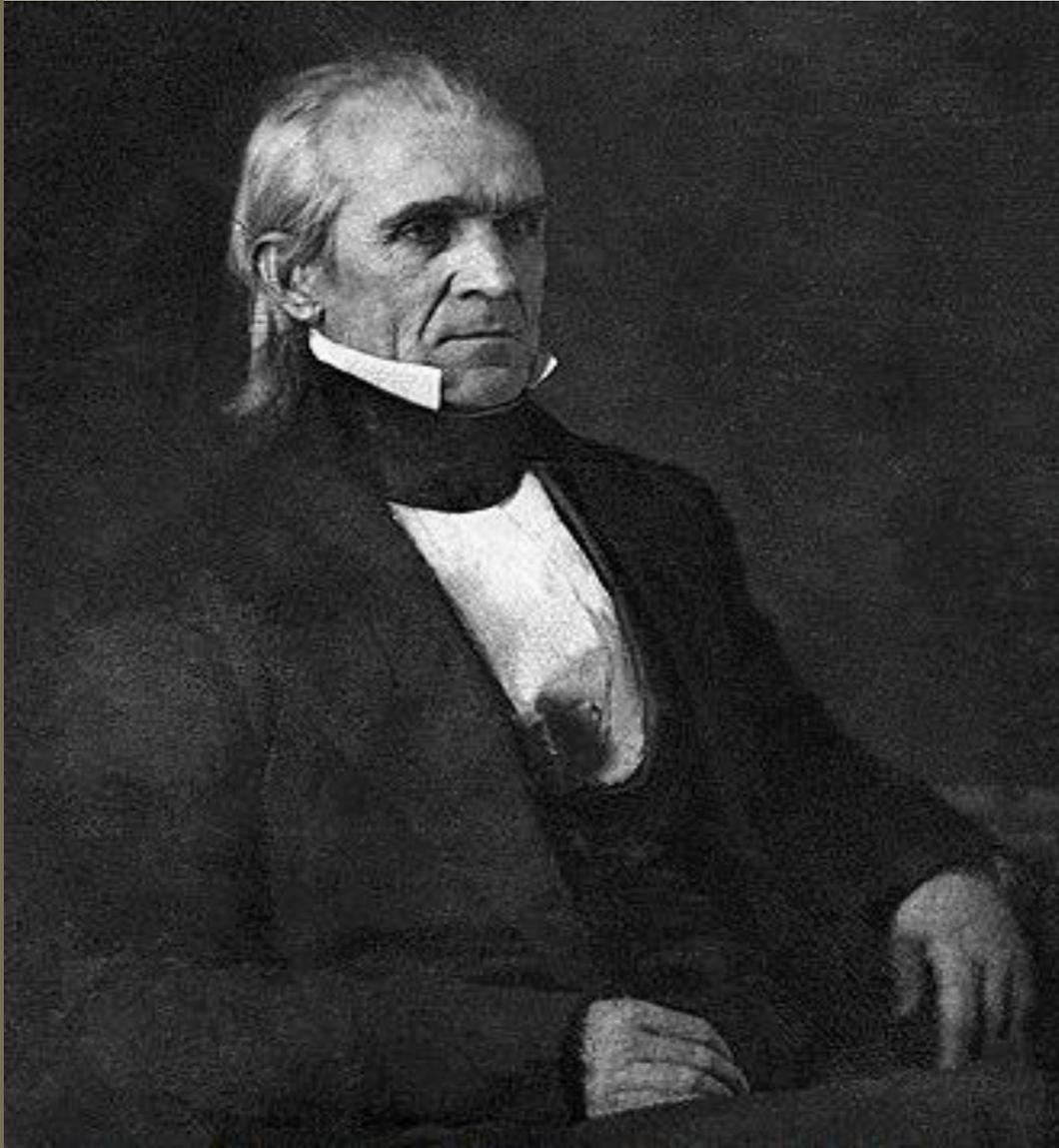
Continuance of the Gold Excitement,
Extraordinary Condition of Affairs.
&c., &c., &c.

SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE 1, 1848.

The whole of this part of California is in the highest state of excitement (and the southern part will soon become so) relative to the Placera, or gold regions, recently discovered on the branches of the Sacramento river. Three-fourths of the houses in San Francisco are actually vacated; even lawyers have closed their books, and taken passage, with a spade and wooden dish, to make fortunes by washing out gold from the sands on the Sacramento. Cooks and stewards have refused fifty dollars a month to remain under their former employers. Clerks' wages have risen to a

Official Confirmation Required

President Polk



The key trigger in “age of deference”
...voice of authority

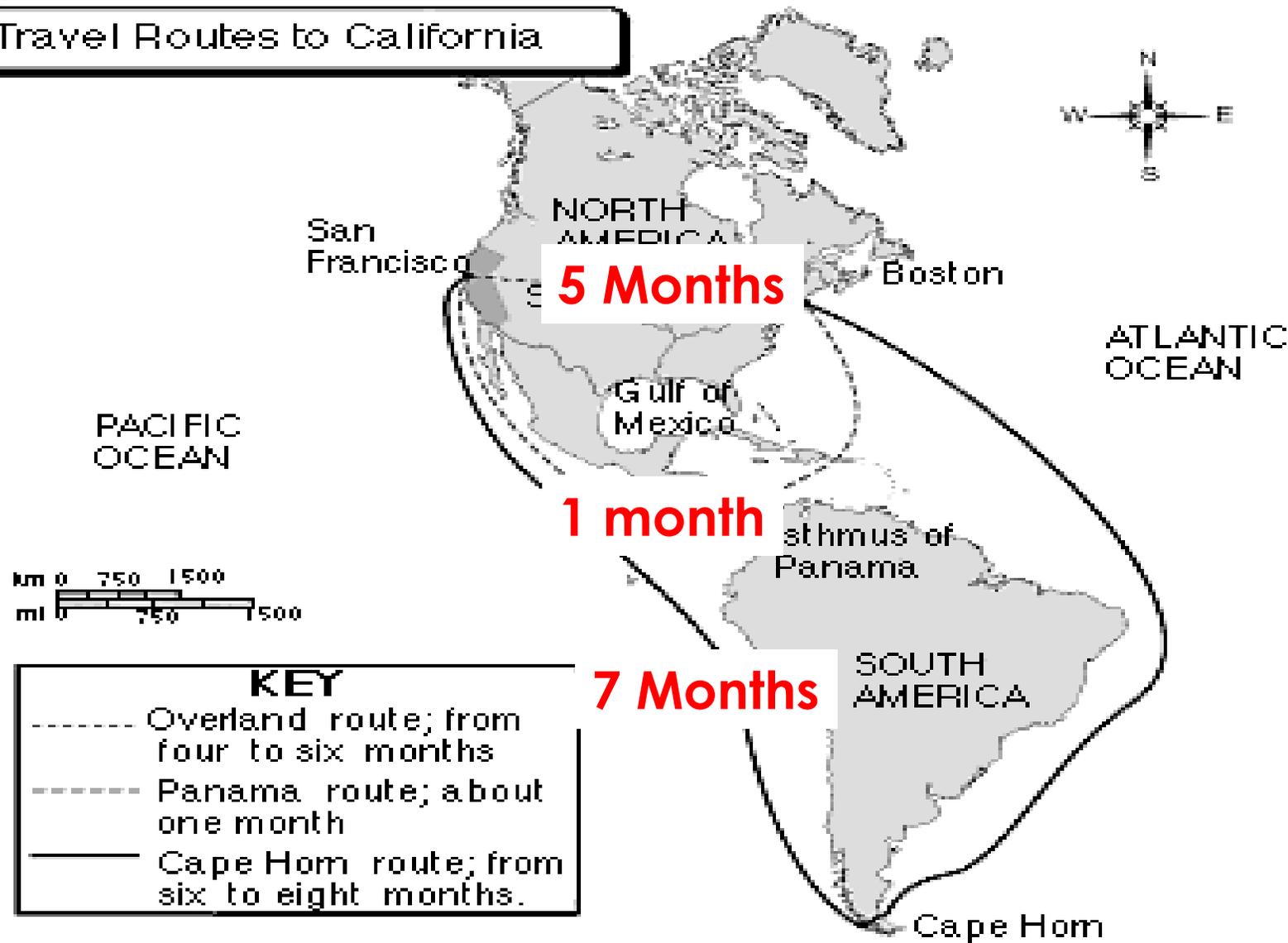
“The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service who have visited the mineral district and derived the facts which they detail from personal observation. ”

President Polk, State of Union Jan 1849

The race to California was on.....

The Great Ocean & Land Migration

Travel Routes to California



1848....6,000 most by sea 200 Chinese & Hawaiians

1849...90,000 gold seekers
Arrive ...60,000 Americans
.....rest European. Chileans
& Mexican50% by land
50% sea

300,000 arrive by 1852
including 20,000
Chinese & Hawaiian
islanders

Overland Route



Travelled by steam boat
to assemble on Mississippi
Scores, if not 100's of
wagons

Organized into "Companies"
...dissolve on arrival

Journey of 1,500 miles
Moving 10-15 miles per day
...race to beat snowfall
In Sierra Nevada

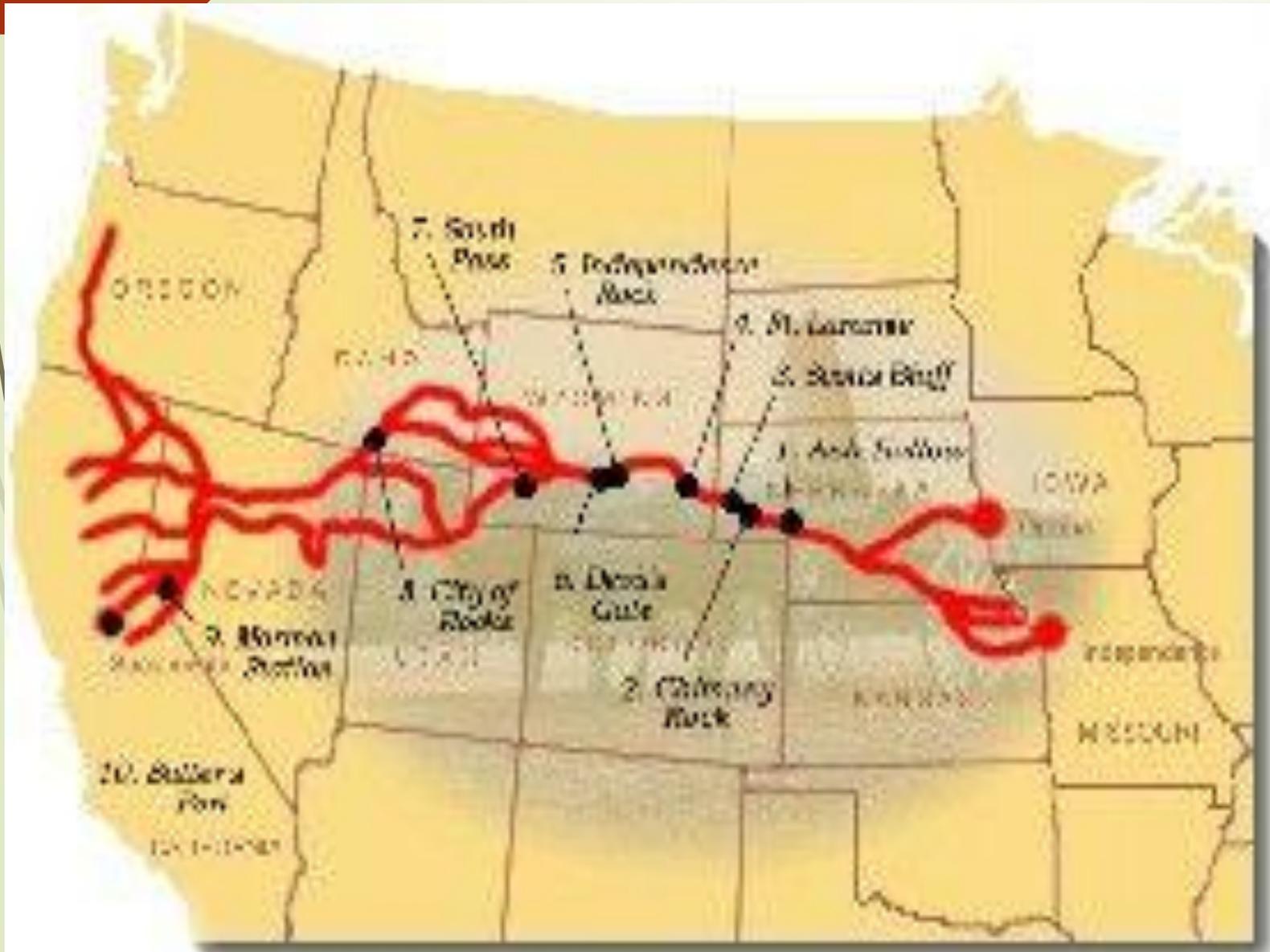
The overland route

30,000 made this journey 1849
150,000 by 1852 ...

Cholera arrives in US 1830's
...from India...10% die on route
95% by disease less than 350
from Indian raids...

Indians raid but few attacks
on wagon trains... and kill
350 travellers 1849-1860

Emigrants kill off wildlife,
contaminate rivers
...spread cholera among
Tribes...30% death rate



Overland route



30% wagon trains turn back
Due to conditions or decided
To settle on route

Travellers mostly men, but
Some entire families
....searching for a new life...

Steam ship advertisement

Boom in shipping across Europe & USA \$400..\$600 (\$24,000 today)
for 'luxury' via Panama route ... \$200....'cattle class" round Horn

A NEW AND MAGNIFICENT CLIPPER FOR SAN FRANCISCO.
MERCHANTS' EXPRESS LINE OF CLIPPER SHIPS!
Leading now but First-Class Vessels and Regularly Dispatching the greatest number.
THE SELENDIP NEW OUT-AND-OUT CLIPPER SHIP



CALIFORNIA
HENRY BARREN, Commander, AT PIER 15 EAST RIVER.

This elegant Clipper Ship was built expressly for this trade by Messrs. Hall, Esq., of East Devon, the builder of the celebrated Clippers "Albatross," "Gambier," "Java," "Lion," and others. She will fully equal them in speed! Unusually prompt dispatch and a very quick trip may be relied upon. Engagements should be completed at once.

Agents in New York
Wm. D. T. & Co. 111 N. 2d St.

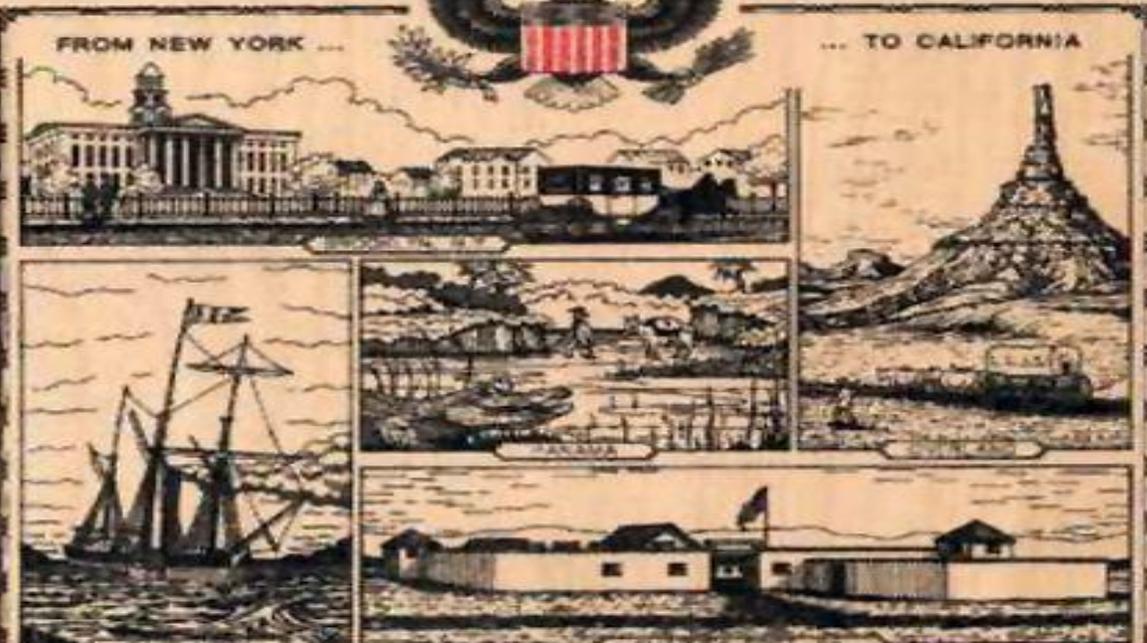
RANDOLPH M. COOLEY, 89 Wall Street, Tenth Floor Building.

FRANK & CO., PRINTERS.

CALIFORNIA
GOLD RUSH!
18 49



FROM NEW YORK ... TO CALIFORNIA



GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN!

The Sea voyage

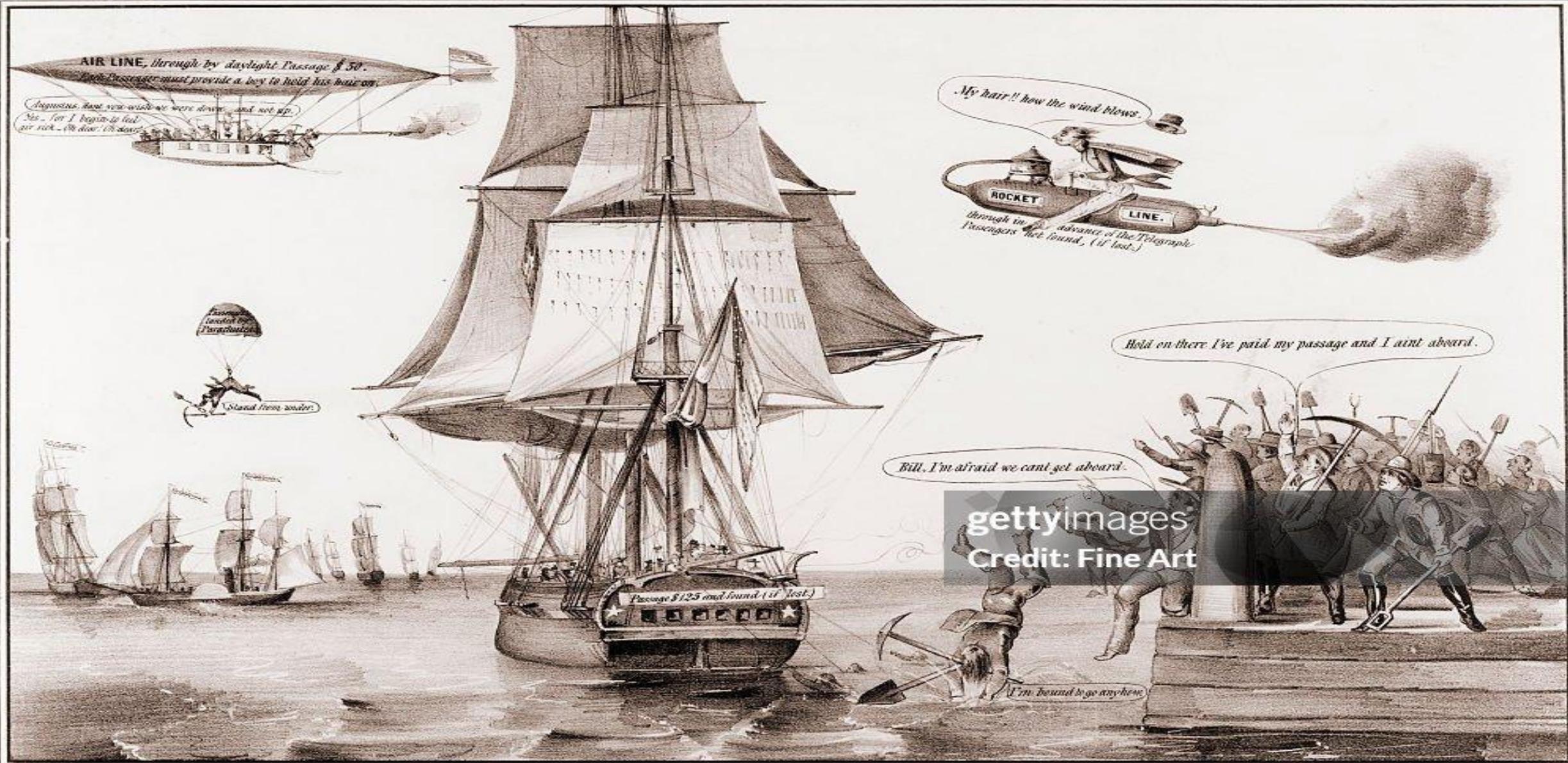


Segregated by income..
Weeks of gambling &
drinking

97% men, usually in
companies as land ..but
dissolve on arrival

4% death rate on voyages
Around Cape Horn....20%
travelling across Isthmus to
Pacific

Gold Fever ridiculed



LITH. & PUB. BY N. CURRIER,

544263562

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1849 by N. Currier in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of N. Y.

152 NASSAU ST. COR. OF SPRUCE N. Y.

THE WAY THEY GO TO CALIFORNIA.

"Old stick in the Mud! I'll lam yer, if I dont cuss me, if you git in over my berth!"

Do you feel comfortable me Dear!

"Drive up Sykesy if we dont go to California well spile."

"Oh you villain! Come back and pay your board bill, here I've been feeding you Six months, and got nothing but promises, - Courting me at the same time, and such a Sittuation too as I'm in all owing to you."

"D'n them Creditors, I thought I was clear of them."

"Oh my dear John Peter what will become of me !!!."

Och! Now Teddy Darlint, and would you be after lavin your poor wife and the ten Childer all alone in the wide World, wid divil a rap to buy the pratoes wid. Och home! an whose to keep the Back of me warmin this could weather!"

To H-H, wid you, and yer Childer, if yer dont let go o' me, I'll pitch yer in the Dock.

Robem! Lay therior the Chap with the Shawbasi! His Woman's in the draw, and instead of going off he'll have to go up.

Stop him Cook Robin, he owes me \$1000!!!!

I'll nab him, M' Graspall.



Manning

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Credit: Bettmann

For CALIFORNIA DIRECT. This Side up WITH CARE.

For CALIFORNIA DIRECT. This Side up WITH CARE.

OFF FOR CALIFORNIA.

Did you ever hear tell of Sweet Betsy from Pike,
Who crossed the wide mountains with her lover Ike,
Two yoke of cattle, a large yeller dog,
A tall Shanghai rooster, and a one-spotted hog.
Singing too-ra-li-oo-ra-li-oo-ra-li-ay.

They swam the wide rivers and crossed the tall peaks,
And camped on the prairie for weeks upon weeks.
Starvation and cholera, hard work and slaughter--
They reached California 'spite of hell and high water.
Refrain

The wagon broke down with a terrible crash,
And out on the prairie rolled all sorts of trash.
A few little baby-clothes, done up with care,
Looked rather suspicious, but all on the square.

Refrain

Sweet Betsy and Pike (2)

Refrain

The Shanghai ran off, and the cattle all died,
That morning the last piece of bacon was fried.
Ike got discouraged, Betsy got mad,
The dog drooped his tail and looked wonderfully sad.

Refrain

Long Ike and Sweet Betsy attended a dance.
Ike wore a pair of his Pike County pants.
Betsy was covered with ribbons and rings.
Says Ike, "You're an angel, but where is your wings?"

Refrain

This Pike County couple got married, of course,
But Ike became jealous, and obtained a divorce.
Betsy, well-satisfied, said with a shout,



Intermission



Year One...the golden time

San Francisco ...before gold 1847



300 residents

Ships carrying
agricultural products

US warships
patrolling coast
...threat of British,
& Russians

Capt. W.F. Swasey

San Francisco
FORMERLY YERBA BUENA, BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD, 1846-47

San Francisco year 1850

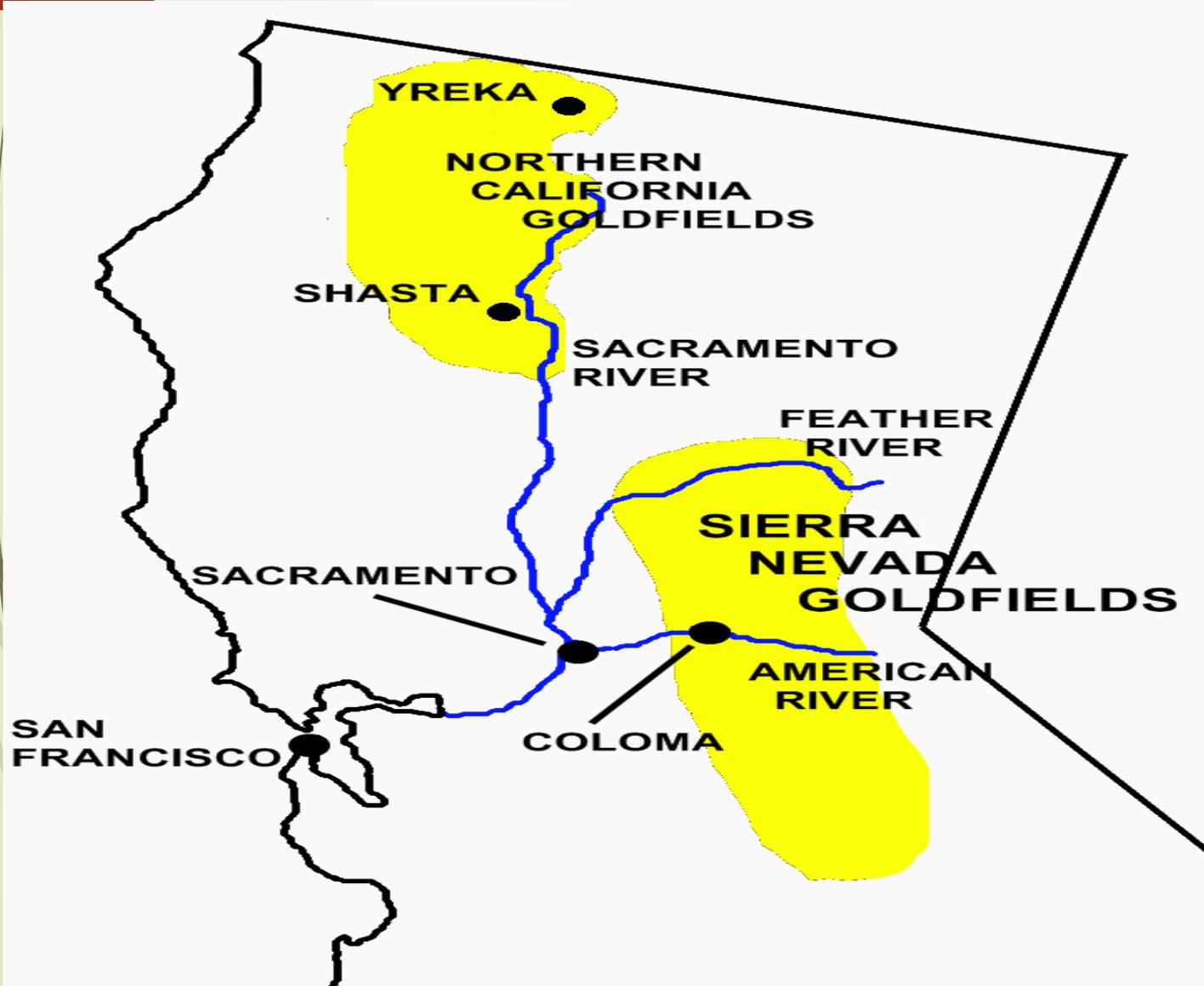


Population 25,000 by 1851

Crews desert ships as they
Arrive ...and head for mines,
Soldiers abandon army

Empty ships brought on
Shore...converted to
Warehouses, lodgings
..and brothels

The Gold fields



Gold found in many places
Along inland mountains
....coast and South unaffected

Most early finds exposed
on river beds and easy to get

More land than people,
collaboration not competition
....no property law....claims
established by physical presence

California 1849

- ▶ Military Government....no legislature or regulations and no one to enforce them...all gone to join mines
- ▶ No Civil Service or land offices.....squatters occupy Sutter's Empirespends rest of his life trying to get it back....and failing
- ▶ 1849 relatively peaceful...limitless opportunity.....'lawless order' of manners and rule by vigilantes, 'justice' swift, lethal and uncertain
- ▶ Mountain Wild life (Including Grizzlies) exterminated
- ▶ Indians starve, succumb to disease, or become 'slaves' to miners

49ers: young, optimistic, many heavily armed...





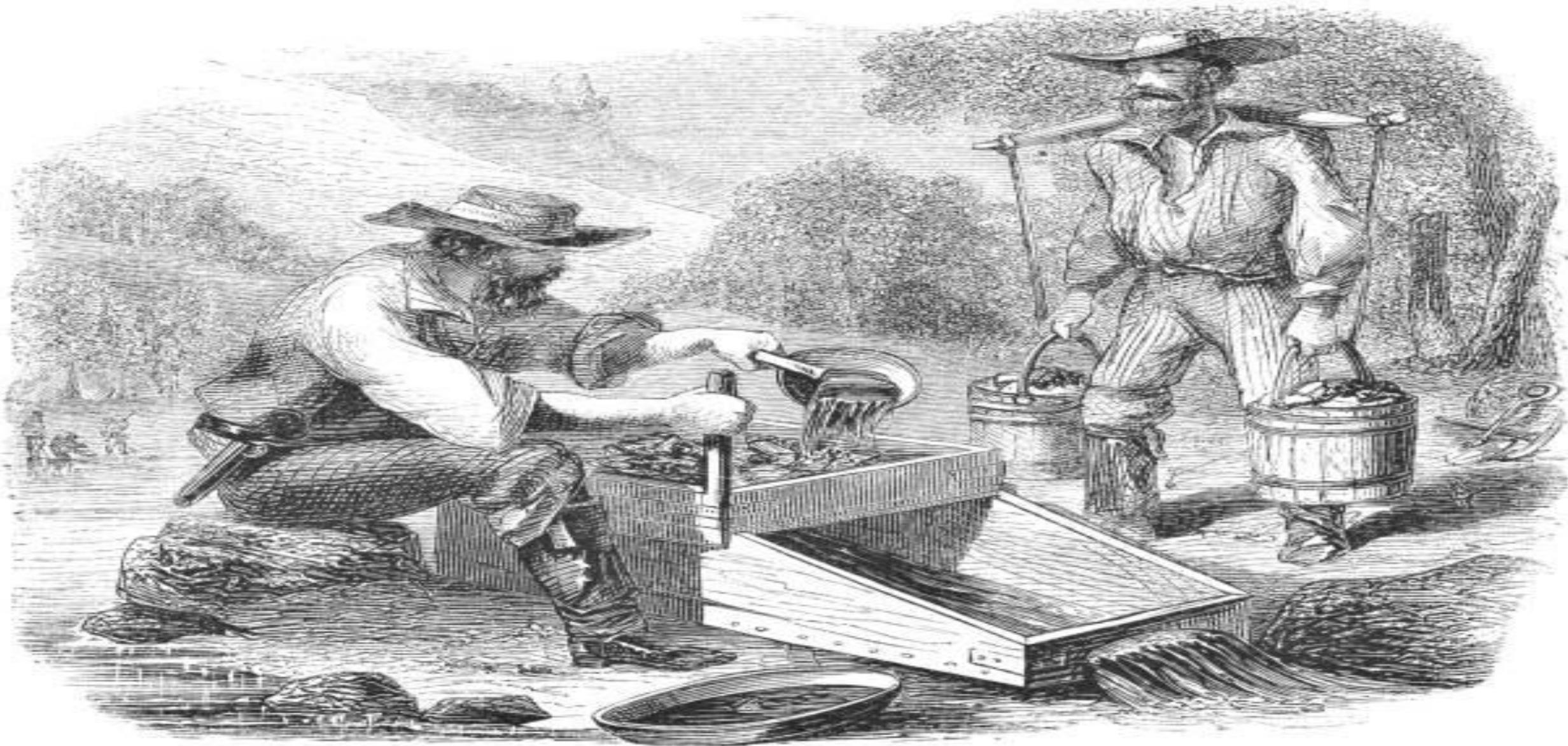
...subject to ridicule..."The complete gold miner"... (Samuel Brannon customers?)



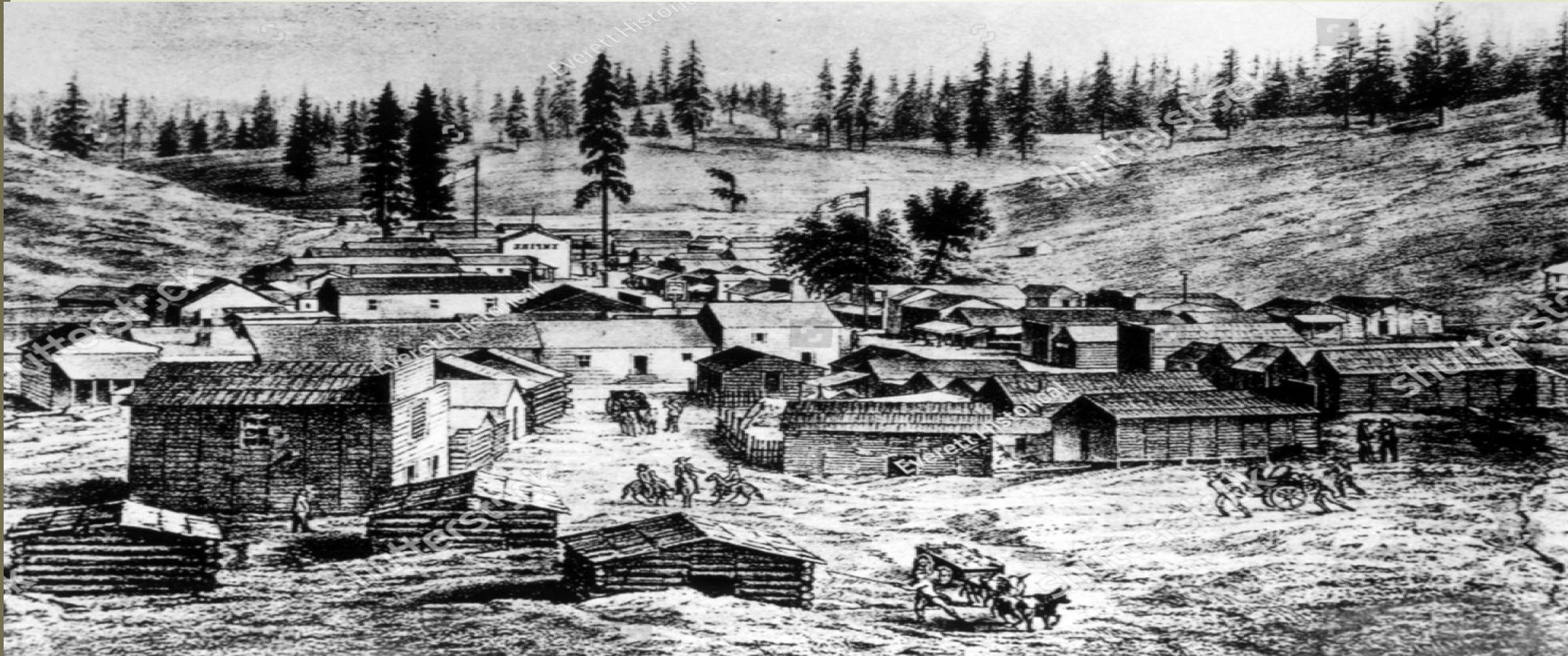
Panning for Gold



Early machines. Cradles...gold caught in sieves



Instant cities.....abandoned when mines run out



Chinese Gold mining



Working togetherat first



Southerners bring slaves to recreate their economy...tolerated by 'free miners'.....at first



Communal effort: plenty for all, collaboration on a great adventure....20% become prosperous, 5% rich



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Credit: Hulton Archive

Emerging Tensions

- ▶ Good feelings of 1849too good to last
 - ▶ Huge population young white men, away from mums and sisters, strange place multi cultural an abundance of booze and guns
 - ▶ Inflation...all goods imported, nothing made ...males quit jobs to work the mines
- ▶ Mining yields decline/ population soars during 1850's...everyone a threat
 - ▶ Indians forced to steal to avoid starvation
 - ▶ Chinese work too hard and retain corporate organisation
 - ▶ Southerners seek to replace miners with slave labour
 - ▶ Californios ..many become bandits as lands often seized by Anglo settlers

Gold fields become a murder zone...bad for businessand life expectancy



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Credit: Universal History Archive

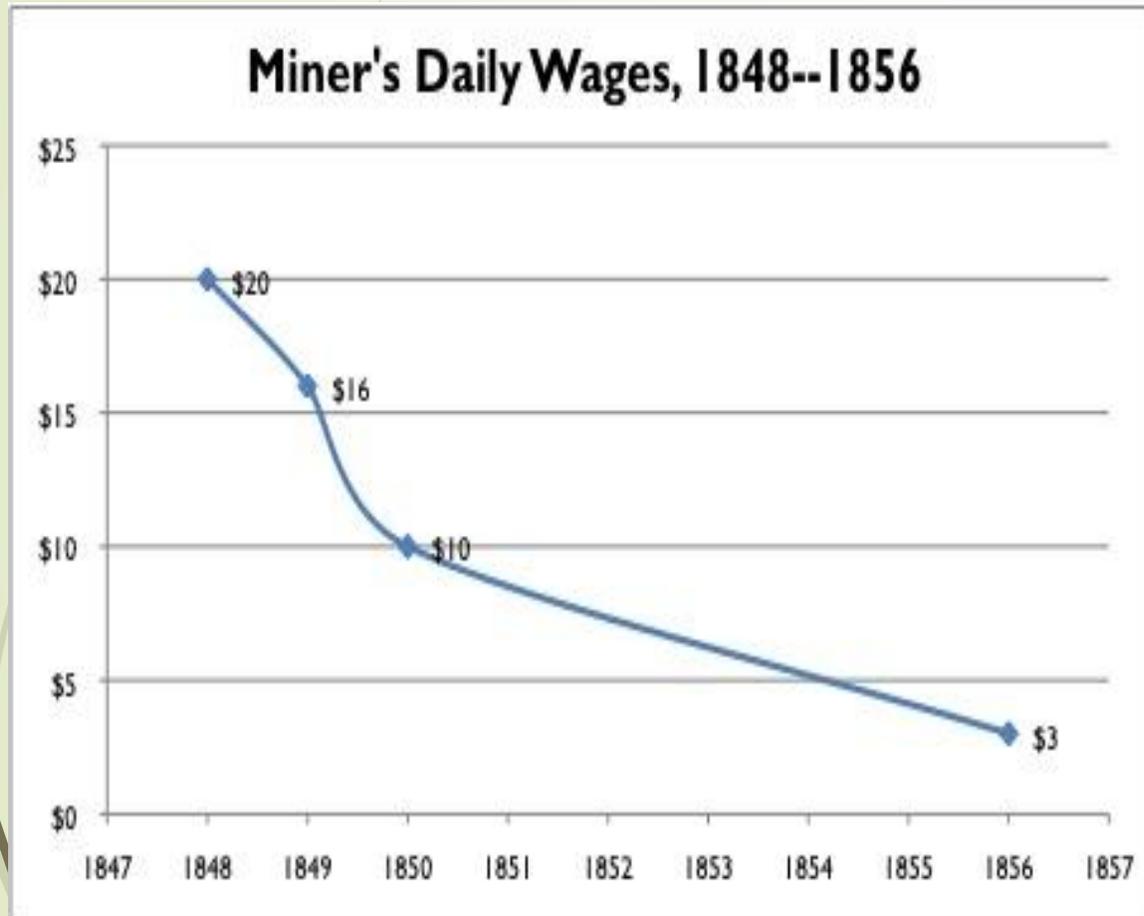
Business interests requires Order
.....the creation of a Golden State



The Golden State



Increased population/ declining yield/arrival of corporations.



Declining Yields		
Year	Population (excl Indians)	Gold Yield (tons)
1848	20,000	5
1849	90,000	50
1850	150,000	100
1851	250,000	80
1852	300,000	75

(Average daily wage US industrial worker \$2)

Rule of “Judge Lynch”

Sites self regulating, problem of “claim jumping” ...rising poverty as fewer get rich and population increase...trials ‘fair’, fast, and lethal



How violent? (homicides per 100,000..100 = 1% chance of getting murdered each year)

	England	USA
1700	8.9	30.0
1800	5.0	20.0
1850	3.0	15.0
2020	1.0	7.0

Average for California 1850.....65.0 per 100,0000

...Mining communities87.00....several 100+

...British Columbia 1855-1857....2.5

(Ohio State University...Homicides in US Randolph Roth 20210)

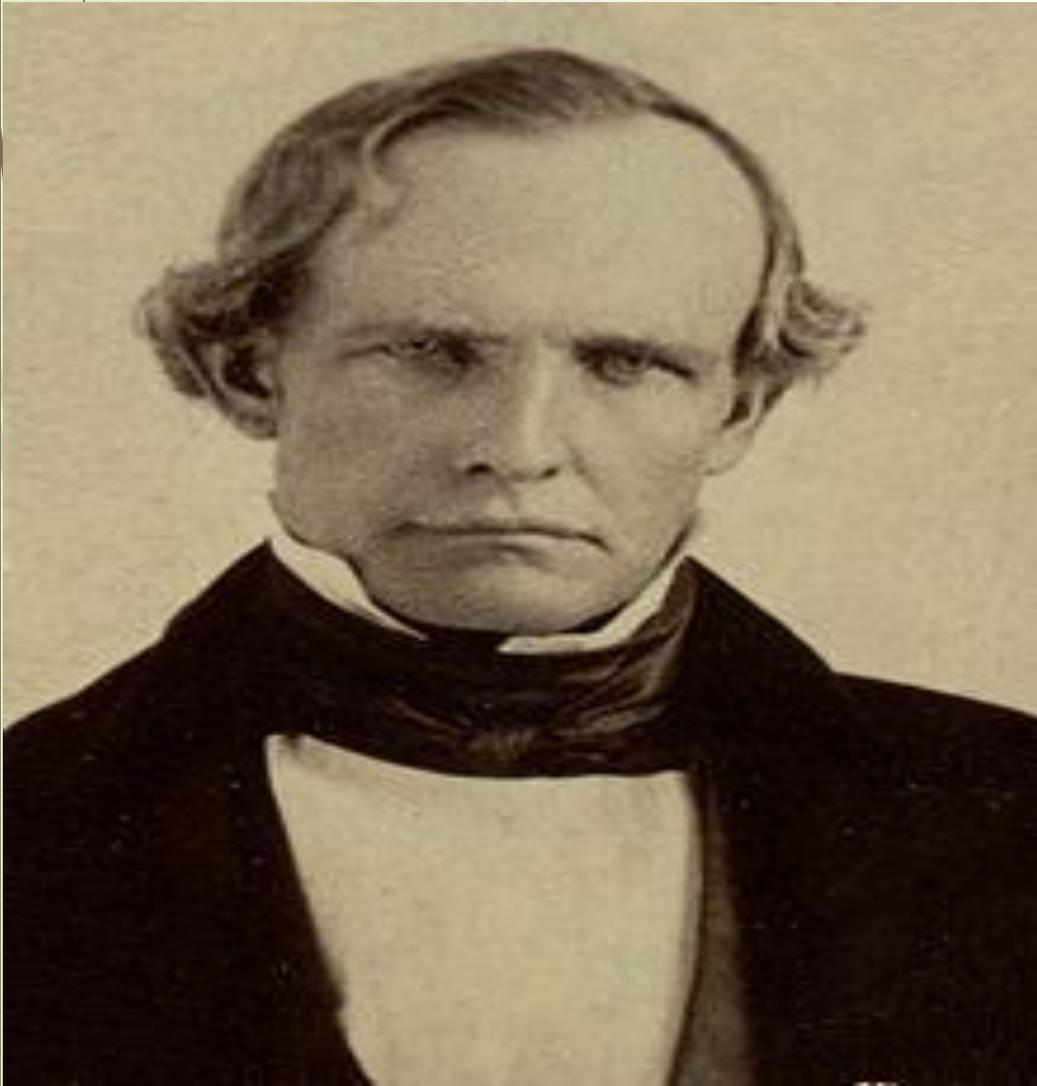
Ecuador, Venezuela ...today 120.0, Mexico 75.0

State Government established...fast

- Constitution written 1849 and ratified same year,...approved by Congress...California “free state” 1850
 - Universal white male suffrage
 - Slavery “outlawed”.....existing slaves become indentured servants
 - Women allowed own property, get divorced...state needs women
 - Public education, taxation, civil service
 - Property and corporate law systems. State Supreme Court
- State Government turns attention on enforcing “Manifest Destiny”

Golden State Governance

Peter Burnett (1807-1895)



Missouri slave owner, moves to Oregon to escape debt ...authors "lash law"...whipping free blacks who do not leave state

Moves to California, elected Governor 1849-1851

Passes "Act for the Preservation and Protection of Indians" 1850

.....children to be removed from parents

.....adults to moved to reservations ..or shot

.... no Indian legal representation

.....funds State Militia to enforce

The politics of Manifest Destiny.....

Act of Preservation and Protection of Indians in practice

“that a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected.”

Foreigner Miners Act....non white miners to pay \$20 (\$500 a month in 2024 money) ...reduced to \$5....removes Chinese from mines ...move to cities. Laundry, services, banking, trade. Legislature moves To remove from state....until railroads and need for workers

Regarding free and enslaved blacks...attempts to impose “lash law” ...but fails since most blacks already indentured servants...and valuable

State Policy: Mass Killings and random murder

“Protecting the Settlers”
(Harpers Magazine 1874)



Hidden history

..not taught in schools. Till now
..documented, not reported

Massacres occur throughout
Sierra Nevada

....Old Shasta Tow -300,

....Bridge Gulch....150,

....Yontocket Massacre....500.

Exposed by “California Genocide”
Benjamin Madley `2016



Yontocket Massacre...memoirs of Militia member

“The people got all around them... Every time someone go out, never come back in... they set fire to the house, the Indians' house. You could see them just cutting heads off. They stick them things into them; pretty soon they pick them up and throw them right into the fire. Some of 'em tried to get away, run down the slough. Soon as they get down there, if they don't get 'em right away, they get 'em from the other side when they come up. Shoot 'em right there, waiting for them”

California Genocide

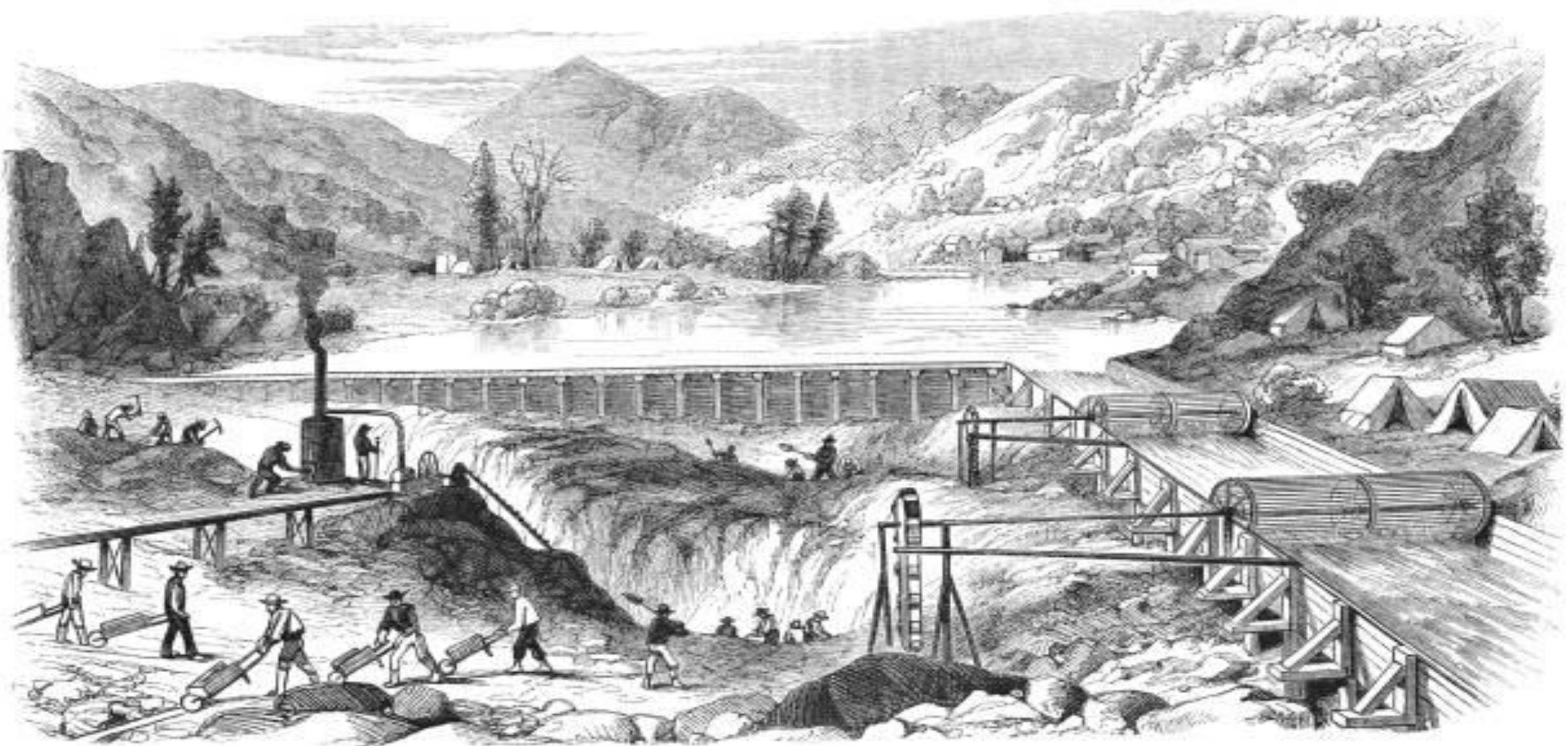
Indians become slaves and resist...murder some overseers...State funds militia of 30,000 to relocate to Indians to reservations)...easier to kill

- Newspapers (East Coast)report crimes but zero prosecutions
- Shasta and other towns offer “head bounties” . \$25 for male corpse \$5 woman or child,
- Most killings those of individual Indians and families and not recorded
- Killings continue to 1870's.....moral repulsion + lack of Indians to kill and intervention by Grant Administration.
- Native Indian population declines from 150,000 1848 to 15,000 1870



Industrialised mining and land “wars”

Corporations divert rivers to access river bottoms



New Technologies introduced as miners become employees ("Long Tom" Sluice)



Mining goes underground



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Credit: Kean Collection

Hydraulic mining: pioneered
1850's...blast hillsides to recover gold



Expanded to remove sides of mountain ranges



gettyimages
Credit: Gado

Mass introduction 1870's....



Wildlife exterminated...hillsides made barren...150 years later



Rivers silt up...land made toxic



Hydraulic legal “war”

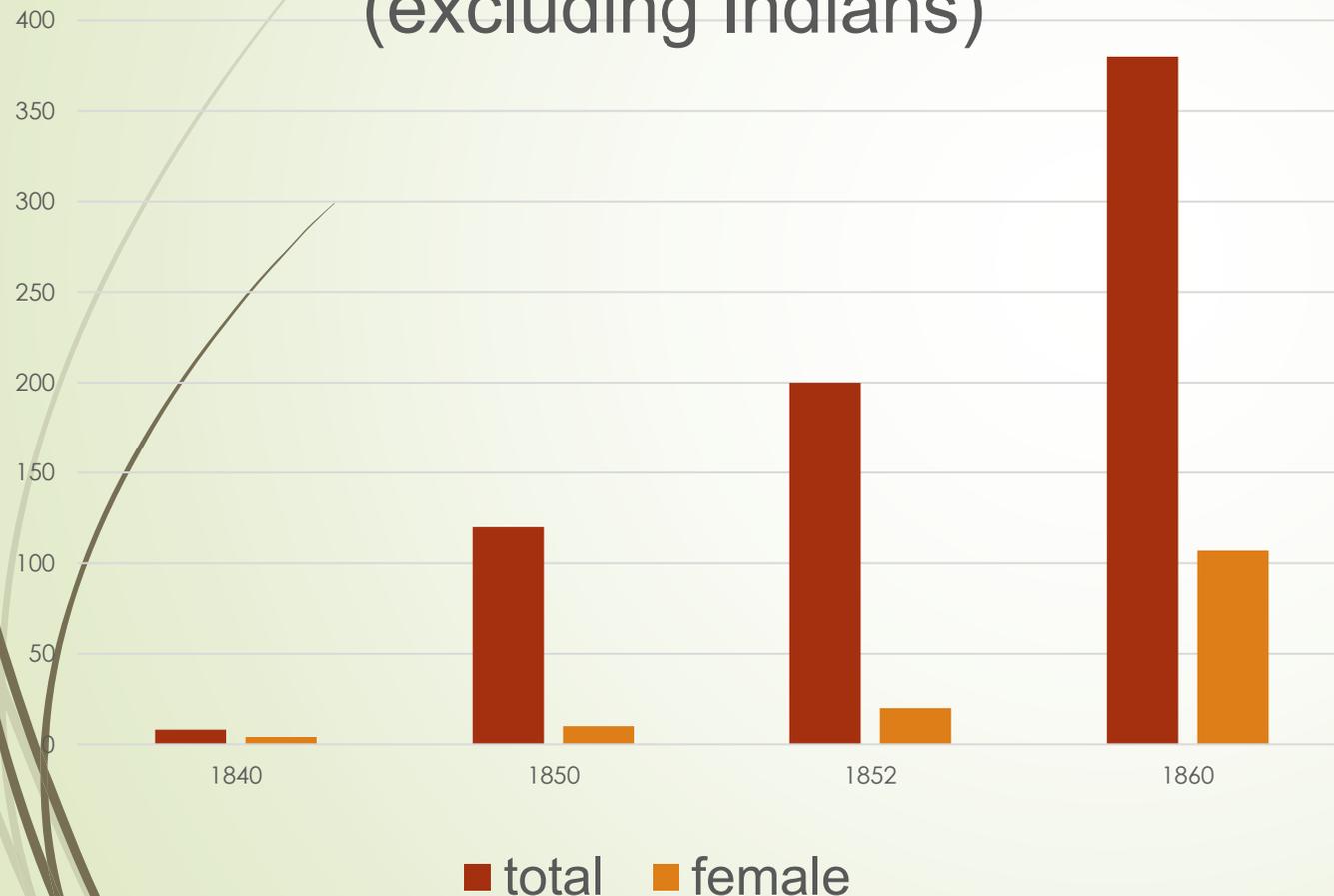
- 3,000 square miles farmland made toxic by metre thick “slickens”, towns flooded by rising rivers
- Legal disputes 1860-1880
- Farmers become more dominate than miners as Citrus, cotton, salads and other crops become “new gold” as railroads and refrigeration enables California to ship products east
- Hydraulic Mining banned 1882,,,,reintroduced 1900’s but regulated



Women during the Gold Rush

A Land of men

California Population in thousands
(excluding Indians)



Limited options for mid 19th century women: marriage, Domestic service, factory work, teaching, prostitution

California was the place for Independent woman to be

Women allowed...but very few



Eliza Farnham (1815-1864)



Brought up in New York foster home....marries lawyer...Intellectual phrenologist and Prison reformer, husband joins gold rush, goes to California 1849 to settle husband's estate on his death

Wrote "California indoors and out"..
...streets of men watching her as only Woman present

Returns to New York establishes Institutes to support destitute women In West,
Dies nursing in civil war...consumption

Luzena Wilson (1820-1902)



Walks to California with husband and two children 184

“The road was lined with the skeletons of the poor beasts who had died in the struggle ... Sometimes we found the bones of men bleaching beside their broken-down and abandoned wagons.

he buzzards and coyotes, driven away by our presence from the horrible feasting, hovered just out of reach”

Husband goes to mines, creates restaurant in Sacramento ...\$10 biscuits...makes fortune.. flood. Moves to mining camp, buys hotel...fire

Moves to another camp. Buys hotel....recovers Fortune. Husband disappears.. retires wealthy, brings up children. Lives to 82

Lola Montez (1821-1861)...part 1



- Born Maria Dolores Gilbert Ireland. Father soldier to India. Father dies & mother returns to Ireland,.
- Elopes to India with lieutenant at age 16..separates 5 years later. Becomes “Spanish Dancer”new name +”spider dance” ...entertains soldiers....secures promoter
- European tour... mistress to Listz, & Alexander Dumas, courtesan to Bavarian ‘mad king’ Ludwig...radical reformer.. Flees revolution 1848, liberal reformer and hated by church....Revolution of 1848...flees to England

Lola Montez Part 2

Remarries.. Accused of bigamy...separates from 'husband'
...who later drowns

Moves to New York...advertises herself as the "Countess"

Moves to California 1853....marries publisher . Accused of adultery,
accuser killed...needs to leave the state

Moves to Australia to join new Gold Rush. Attacked by church
...dance considered " 'utterly subversive to all ideas of public morality

Returns to New York and dies of consumption age 39

The nameless 'entertainers'

San Francisco Bordello....early 1860's



Thousands migrate to California as waitresses, domestics, future Wives and prostitutes

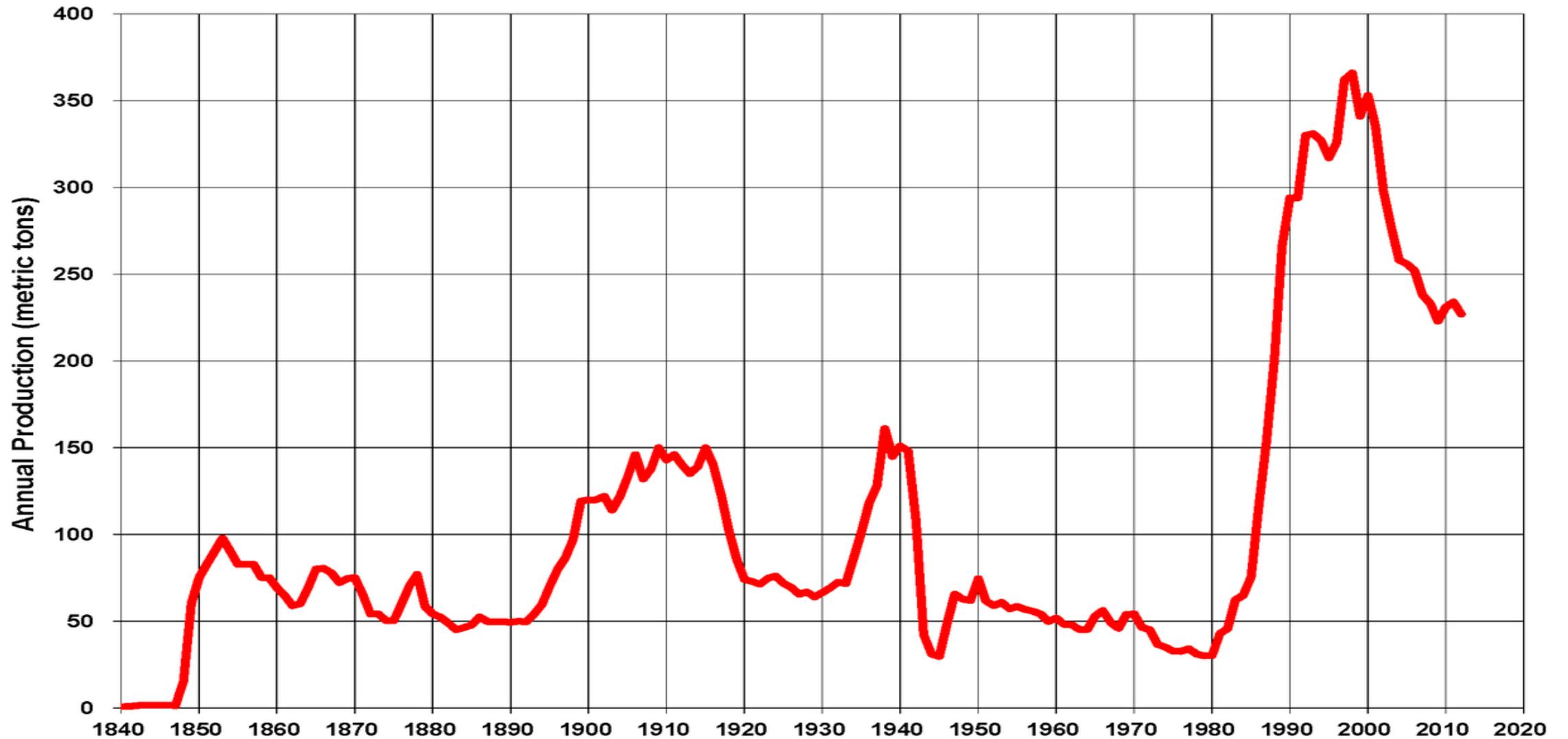
No rules or prejudice till late 1850's...called "Entertainers" ...many hired for company only \$14 to attend dinner

Some become wealthy ..more die from diseases within 2 years of arrival



Legacy & Cultural Impact

Gold mining continues.....underground



California Indian Reservations today



Few, small, most
In low desert
.... little water
.....vegetation
.....wild life

Rejuvenated
by development
Of Casino industry
In 1990's...Reagan
& Tribal Sovereignty
Act...

Morongo Indian Gaming Resort



Impact on USA

- \$17 Billion dollars in gold (2020 prices) by 1860...increase in money supply invested in US...and most to industrialising north and east
- Supports “Manifest Destiny”
- Get Rich quick culture.. “survival of the fittest”...a new American culture
- Power shift to East Coast Finance Centres
 - Intensifies slavery issue....California a free state.
 - South needs to expand to keep up



USA 1850's Continental Superpower victorious in war and more wealthy than its founders could imagine with all issues resolved except one
.....SLAVERY

Resolving that issue and the conversion of America from Continental to World Power is the subject of Module 3