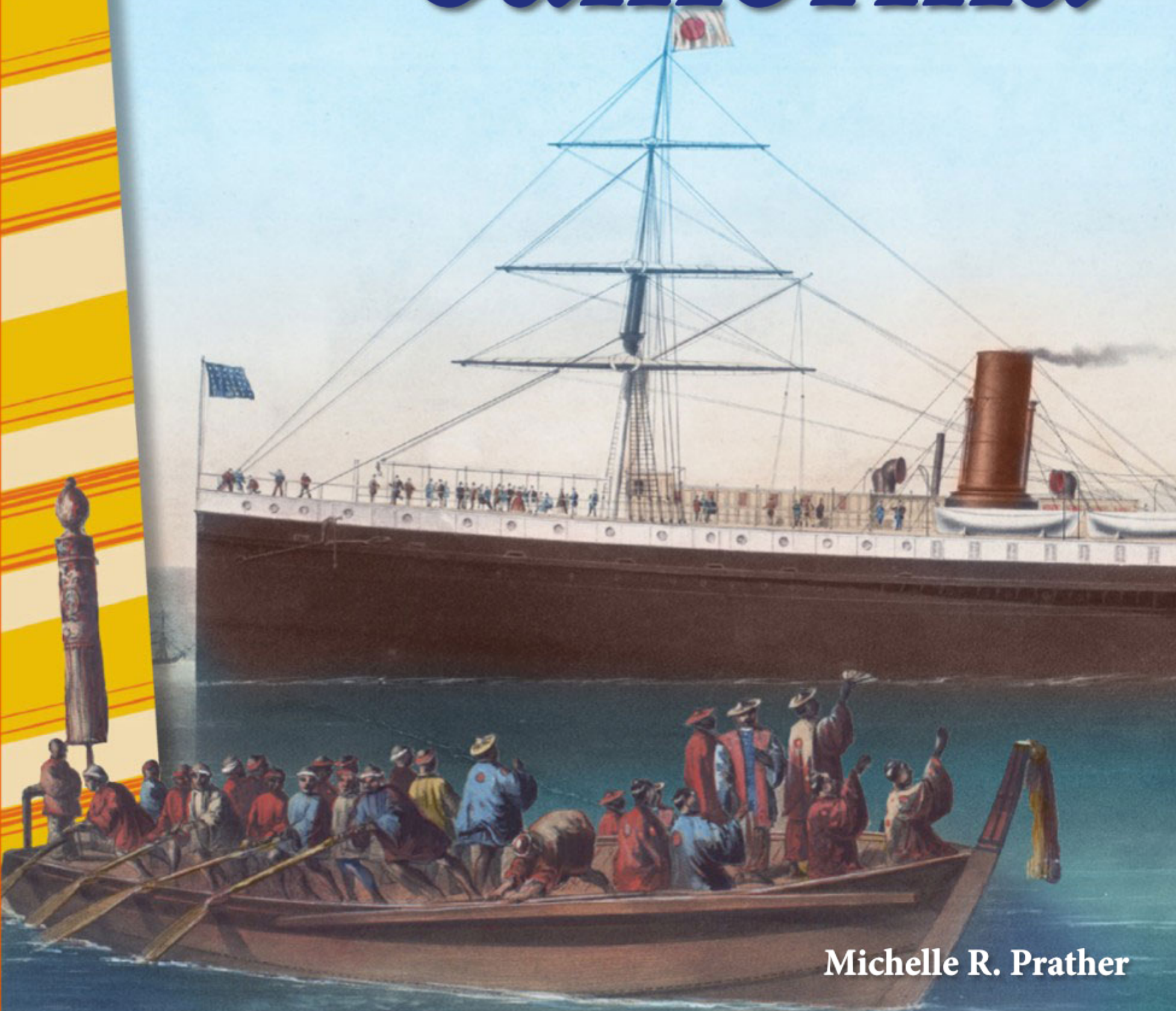


*Crossing Oceans*  
**Immigrating**  
*to* **California**



**Michelle R. Prather**

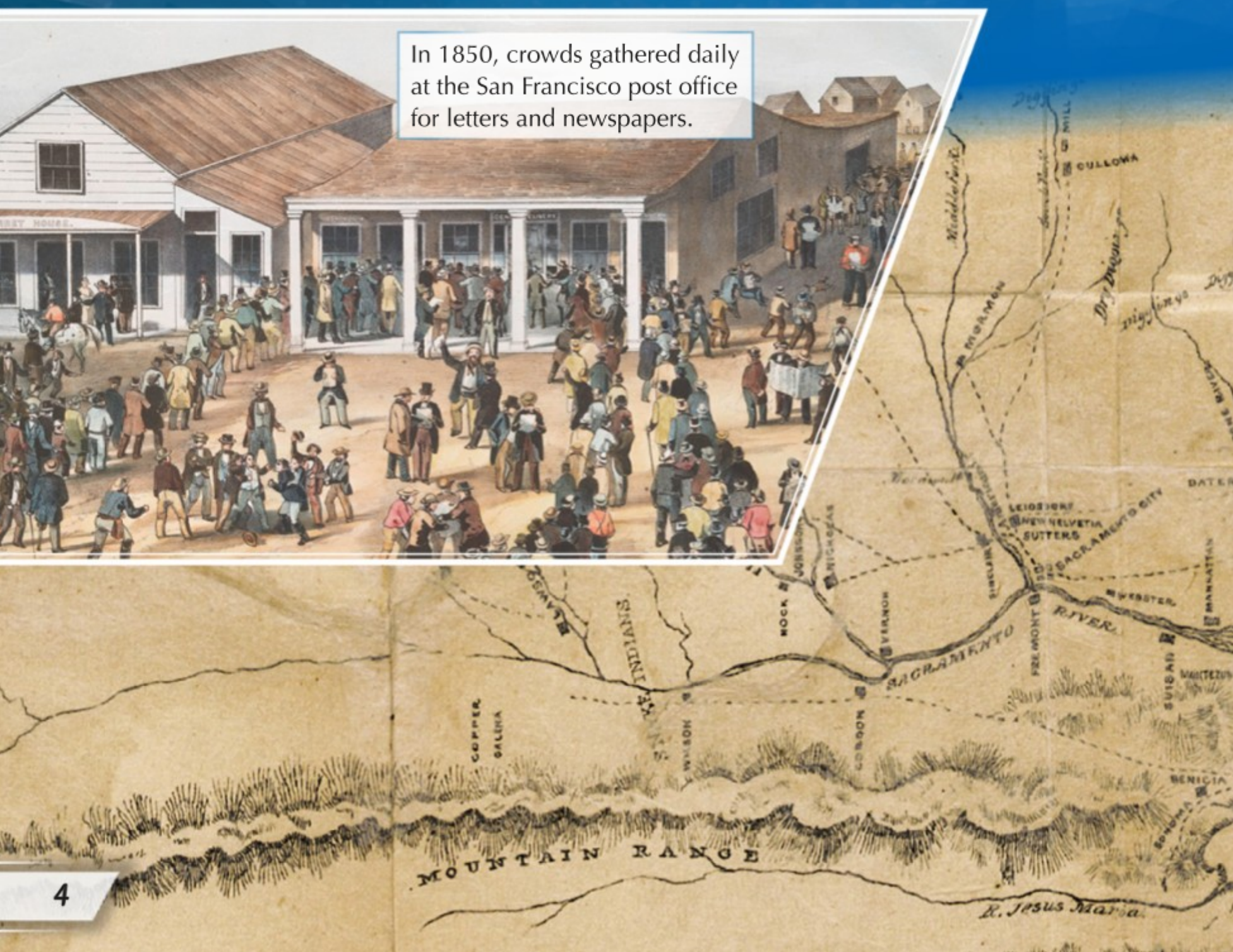
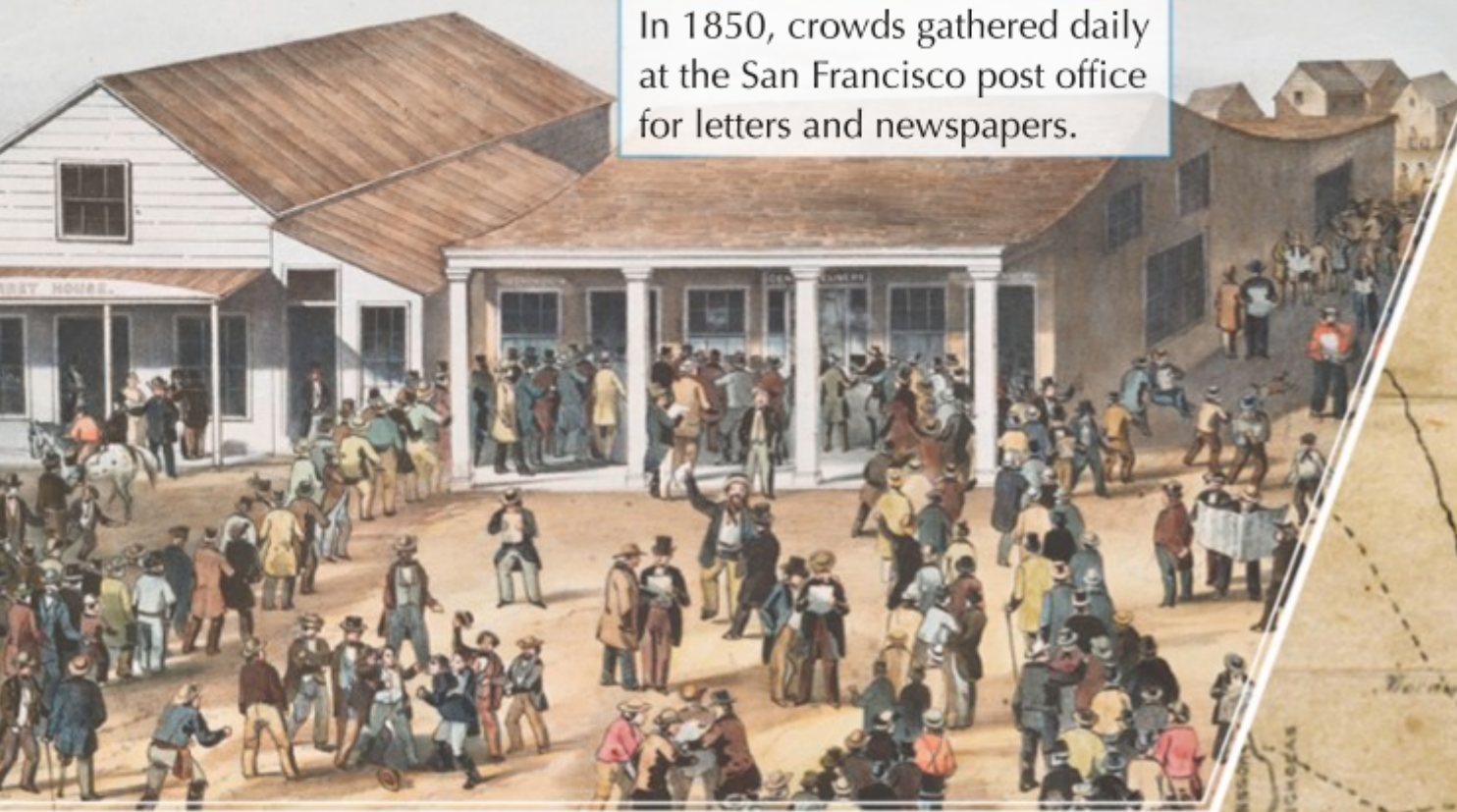
# The Rush to California

*You're going to the place that they say is all gold,  
California's the name, for so I was told.*

—Ballad from 1851

Every year, millions of people leave their homes and move to new countries or states. Some move to other countries because there is trouble in theirs. Maybe there is a war. Or maybe work is hard to find in their state. Sometimes, other places offer more freedom or hope.

In 1850, crowds gathered daily at the San Francisco post office for letters and newspapers.



Gold had been discovered in Northern California in 1848. People in the United States and around the world were hopeful they would become rich. Where you came from didn't matter. This was a new and exciting idea.

California began to grow—fast. It needed workers. People could work in farming or on the railroad. It did not become known as “The Golden State” until 1968. But people believed it was golden long before that.

### What's the Difference?

*Immigrate* means to enter a new country and live there permanently. *Emigrate* means to leave a country to live in a new country. *Migrate* means to move from one country or region to work or live in a new one.

### The State of Things

Politicians asked for California to become a state in 1849. At this time, slavery was a hot topic. Tensions were high. It took a long time to debate what should be done. California was admitted to the Union the next year as a free state.

Civics



an 1850 map of California's gold region

## The Gold Seekers

People traveled far and wide to reach California. The **climate** was great there. And there was money to be made. But first, they had to **endure** the long trip.

Americans from all over the country left their jobs and homes. They came from the North, the Midwest, the South, and the East. Some people went to California by ship. Others traveled by wagon. Both ways took around six months.

People came from other parts of the world, too. There were few laws stopping **immigrants** from moving to the United States until the late 1880s. People from China, Mexico, and South America were some of the first to come to California. As the news about gold spread, Europeans made the long trip as well.

### Slavery in a Free State

California was a free state. But, enslaved people were brought by Southerners to mine for gold. If they tried to flee, they could be sent back to the South.

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