THE THIRTY-FIRST STAR:

THE UNIQUE STORY OF CALIFORNIA AND THE EASTERN REACTION, 1835 - 1850

PRESENTED TO

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SUBMITTED BY

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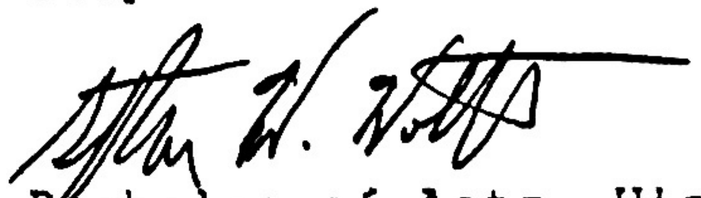
PREFACE

From the "Big Bang," to "Primordial Soup," to Divine Creation, or the multiple other beliefs that exist concerning the beginning of our planet, life has been one big story. This is an obvious fact, but one must remember that life, history, often repeats itself. The root of the word alone expresses a "story." The acquisition and development of California offers a unique American tale of life in the nineteenth century. The procession of events instilled pride in many people. There were, however some mars on the surface. The Mexicans were stripped of much of their land, and many of the pristine regions of the West Coast were developed. Almost a hundred years later history repeated itself in the form of Japanese containment. Instead of being stripped of their land, they were stripped of human rights. The inspiration underlying this project arose from the appeal and romance of California's early history. The original intention of this thesis began as a study of California's early propagandists. This topic, however, is not an original contribution to history. Discovering this, I decided to attempt the flip side of the coin. New England and Washington City, on the other side, controlled much of this new land's destiny. Their reaction was important to California's development and reputation. My thesis investigates the reaction expressed in the New England and Washington presses towards California's expansion from 1835 to 1850. Reviewing this period, I provide examples and analysis of the articles, and also supply the story of California's rapid admission into the Republic. Along the way several interesting antecdotes have been included for the readers' enjoyment. With this I hope my project was accomplished. For his help in this study I would like to thank Professor Oglesby, who was always there complete with a world of knowledge in this subject. Professor Lindemann, too, deserves much thanks not only for running the History 195H show, but also sympathizing with my fequently upbeat method of writing. Professor Kalman merits much thanks for continually spreading a humorous light on our projects as well as providing some important revisions. The experience proved valuable.

Stephen W. Wolcott



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INTRODUCTION

The diagnosis was in, and the result was not what the patient expected. Richard Henry Dana, who suffered from measles and chronic problems with his eyesight, was told by his physician to escape on a journey at sea to regain his health. Dana boarded the vessel Pilgrim in Boston on August 14, 1834 and began an adventure that lasted over two years. As he traveled around the tip of South America and up to the coast of California, Dana recorded firsthand the realities of life at sea. However, what really excited his eastern friends were his memoirs of the mysterious land of California, a land at this time largely unknown to Americans.

Dana's writings, later compiled into his book, Two Years Before the Mast, would place him in American history books forever as one of the first easterners to write a description of the Far West. He helped initiate what soon became a rush of western publicity flowing eastward, publicity that contributed to a unique eastern reaction. The son of a prominent Cambridge family and a student at Harvard University, Dana was one of the first English speaking men to visit California and share his observances through the pen. He was the first to to a large eastern audience.

Upon touching the shores of Santa Barbara, Dana was amazed at what he saw. He immedlately noticed a land bountiful with vegetation and teeming with livestock. As abundant as this appeared, however, Dana observed what he thought were some obvlous flaws. He stated, "Day after day the sun shone clear and bright upon the wide bay roofs of the houses, everything being as still as death, the people hardly seeming to earn their sunlight." Compared to thrifty old New England, the lax lifestyles of the Californios (Mexican people in California) disappointed Dana.

After a lengthy visit in Santa Barabara, Dana arrived at a very interesting conclusion. Dana stated, "the Californios are an idle, thriftless people, and can make nothing for themselves." He wondered what could be done with this wonderful land if Americans along the East Coast were to apply their hardworking minds and bodies toward progress. Years later, Dana's curiosity was satisfied on his second voyage to California in 1859. Propaganda from the West had excited the East, sparking a flurry of journalism, migration and popular opinion that would change California forever.

Publicists like Dana came to play large roles through their communications with the East. Their, which fell on both truthful and fictional levels, stimulated a movement in the East that helped create popular public opinion, shape Congressional sentiment and contribute to an obsession with

what would soon be called "manifest destiny". The reaction of the Eastern presses that will constitute the focus of this study, derives primarily through the investigation of several of the major newspapers at this time.

How the East responded to western expansion is important because it contributes an understanding of the associations between both ends of the country in a period of dynamic change. This was a time when America was changing. The United States soon acquired large amounts of land in which thousands of easterners settled in hopes of building new lives. Obvious political implications followed, and new economic markets became available to the ambitious merchant. This news often took second page to other domestic situations.

Certain topics tended to dominate the eastern newspapers at different times from 1835 to 1850. There was obviously a duration when the East Coast was not reacting to California at all. When the first Americans visited California there was little or no reaction from the eastern newspapers. Excitement remained low because few people knew of California, or let alone cared. In time, reaction to California grew as more people settled the region and its wealth was discovered. In the periods where reaction to western news is minimal, an attempt will be made to analyze why, and what other subjects dominated the printers. An understanding of their importance will help reflect the

eastern mentality of the time. When California booms in the late 1840's it will finally capture the elusive spotlight.

Understanding how the East Coast publishers were reacting to the expansion is easiest and most complete when certain subjects are included in the investigation. First, a general background of the domestic scene provides valuable, and interesting, information as to why the United States took certain steps in its course for western expansion. The story of California's rapid acquisition and admission into the Republic will be provided for the readers interest and understanding of early western history. Knowing why certain steps were taken helps us comprehend the mentality in the United States during this period. Secondly, examples of the journalism that was flowing eastward from the West Coast contribute an understanding of why the East held certain beliefs, and why they were of a certain nature. Numerous books have been written on the western journalists and the information, both factual and fictional, that they contributed to the East. They are important for their historical mapping of the Far West, and the information they provided the rest of the country at this time. Finally, I try to provide several interesting antecdotes for the readers enjoyment.

The term "the East" is very broad to define in an historical analysis. The literal use of this phrase constitutes more area than is possible to study. Whereas

"the West" is easier to define in terms of the western expansion to California, the East is difficult to grasp in regards to the eastern reaction to the western explosion. In this paper, the East will be defined as the New England region and the nation's capital. I have chosen these areas for two reasons. First, these areas constitute the major political regions of the time. Much of this nation's wealth dwelt in the industrial, merchant society of New England.

Today, it is easy to imagine what would be considered a stereotypical "Californian." The media has popularized this person as a tan, healthy, independent adventurer. These often mythical views, however distorted, can in many ways be traced back to the early journalism associated with the mystery and romance of the West. The type of person moving West was often portrayed by the eastern media. The people were interested their lifestyles. Included in this paper are several articles and antecdotes that help distinguish this fact.

The discovery of gold in 1848 caused the stereotype of the West to become even more exaggerated on the East Coast. Many people made fortunes almost overnight and wild stories spread across the rest of the United States. Not only was the land an excellent place for settlement, but the opportunity to become a part of this rich circle became a large drawing card. Hundreds of thousands of people migrated West in hopes of obtaining this wealth, and, though

often disappointed, most remained and wrote back to relatives about California's unique benefits.

This study, which attempts to understand eastern sentiment, faces some obvious difficulties. First off, newspapers of this age are not readily available in most research centers. The easiest newspapers to attain were form the New England and Washington areas. Secondly, articles on California were not indexed at this time, and the difficulty lies in the fact that they must be hand searched from the microfilm. Regarding journalistic interpretation, it is impossible to know the sentiment of all elements of the population on the East Coast. One newspaper's views, or for that matter one writer's views, do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all newspapers on the East Coast. With these difficulties understood, it is now time to begin the subject at hand.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST AMERICAN VISITORS

When Richard Henry Dana first arrrived in California in 1834, he visited a land largely untouched by American merchants. Americans knew few details of this land, and were, for the most part, almost entirely unaffected by any developments it might undergo. Slowly, however, more and more U.S. businesses came into contact with California and began realizing its potential for profit. These merchants relayed the first bits of information concerning this foreign land to the East Coast.

THE FIRST TASTE OF CALIFORNIA

It is impossible to determine exactly when the first American set foot in what is now California. The first American contacts with this area can be traced back to merchant ships cruising the coast for modest trading in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1776 English Captain James Cook, already famous for his voyages to the South Pacific, went to explore the northern reaches of the western ocean. An American member of his crew, John Ledyard, carried the exciting news of rich otter pelts to such distinguished persons as John Paul Jones, Robert

Morris, and Thomas Jefferson, besides publishing in 1783 a journal of the voyage. It was through these sorts of men that the good news of opportunity was broadcast eastward.

THE EARLY ADVENTURERS

In 1784 the first American venture in the China trade was completed. A Boston vessel, the Empress of China, pioneered the route to what would be a prosperous trading market. Although some New England ships supplemented their cargos with goods acquired from South Sea Islands, many appreciated the high value of furs and therefore swarmed to the North American coast.1 The richness of this new land quickly became apparent as the traders' profits continued climbing. James O. Pattie in his book, The Personel Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky, describes what he saw on his trip to the West Coast in the 1830s. He kept extensive journals of his visit and and contributed to the first American knowledge of California. Concerning the fur trade Pattie stated, "We hunted up and down the coast, a distance of forty miles, killing sixteen otters in ten days. We sold their skins, some as high as seventy-five dollars, and none under twenty-five."2 There was a profit potential to men who were willing to go west and seek it.

Whaling, too, became a thriving business off the coast of California. Whalers began to appear during the epoch of the fur ships. Equally important in realizing the value of this land was the use of unoccupied bays to prepare ships for their long voyages. The bays could later be used for American trading if the coast was settled by pioneers. Aside from the Hawaiian Islands, California became the next favorite stopping place for reprovisioning the vessels before sailing back around Cape Horn. A few whalers utilized Monterey, but a much larger number went to San Francisco Bay. Avalon Bay, at Catalina Island, was often used for barnacle scraping before embarking home. The most important contribution of these merchants to this study is that information about California traveled back to New England through journals, letters and word of mouth. New information contributed to the interest in the Pacific coast.

Hide and tallow (a soap producing material) traders, who were centered on the West Coast, capitalized on the need of New England shoe and boot factories for California's most abundant commodity, cowhides. Because most of the dealings for the hides had to be done in the interior, many of the American agents acquired a better knowledge of California and its people than their commercial predecessors.[3] From the early twenties until the Gold Rush the trading methods remained much the same. Dana described the New England

ships, which carried every concelvable commodity the Californios might want, as "floating department stores." The goods they carried were soon exchanged for the valuable cargo that would eventually end up in New England's factories.

Some of the hide and tallow men remained in California. Alfred Robinson, for example, chose to remain an extra year during his voyage to act as resident agent for his firm, Bryant and Sturgis, and then married into the Noriega de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara. Robinson's book, Life in California, is one of the best early descriptions of the West Coast. His memoirs circulated eastward and were eventually compiled and published as a book in 1846. Those who had contact with Robinson's memoirs transmitted news of his thoughts and experiences of the West.

Robinson often described California in expansive terms. He believed that nowhere in the world yielded a greater amount of agricultural produce, especially wheat, than the immensely productive soil to be found north of San Francisco Bay.4 He described the bay as "one of the largest and most valuable harbors in the world." Although centered in Santa Barbara because of marital ties, he knew of the northern geography. Robinson believed, "A country like California requires robust and enterprising men-- accustomed to labor in the field, and to a life of simplicity and economy."5 Such a description tempted the tough American pioneers who

had already made a garden of the mid-west, and were on the verge of arriving with the first wagon trains to California.6

Concerning business practices in California, Robinson described Mexican commerce as "confined principally to American ships, direct from the United States; for they have but two or three small vessels of their own, and not more than twenty or thirty on the whole extent of the Mexican Coast!"7 Many eastern businessmen felt they they might be able to exploit this trading situation. Such news of an open market encouraged to the enterprising American. As this new information traveled eastward, more and more eyes focused on the West Coast, especially as the first Americans began to enter the region.

MOUNTAIN MEN

The earliest American voyages to California were inspired by the sea otter; however, the earliest American overland expeditions, complementing the approach by fur ships, whalers and hide and tallow traders, were due to another special animal, the beaver.8 As the beaver was trapped out in the Rocky Mountains, the mountainmen began making their way into Mexican California. The emergence of these men alarmed Mexican officials, who saw them as a possible threat to their control. Today, the names of many

of these men, such as Peter Lassen, Joe Walker, Jed Smith, and Kit Carson, are preserved in the names of rivers, lakes, peaks, and other landmarks in California.

Jedediah Smith, who initiated the entry of the trappers into the territory in 1826, has long symbolized the spirit of adventure carried by the mountain men. After being mauled by a bear, Smith was patched up by a companion James Clyman. Clyman described his repair as follows:

> I asked the Cap (Smith) what was best he said one or 2 [go] for water and if you have a needle and thread git it out and sew up my wounds around my head which was bleeding freely...one of his ears was torn from his head out to the outer rim...I told him I could do nothing for his Eare O you must try to stich up some way or other he said Then I put in my needle stiching it through and through.9

Such heroic tales, which were often spread by word of mouth, helped arouse the curiosity and romance of California.

As the mountain men traveled through California it was not uncommon for them to discuss their travels with other Americans, who in turn often documented what they heard. Kit Carson, who first entered California in 1829, became a very popular figure and is today still considered a legend for his adventures. Discussing the San Gabriel area, Carson stated, "They had about eighty thousand head of stock, fine fields and vinyards-- in fact it was a paradise on earth."10 This term, "paradise on earth," could become a tempting phrase to someone considering taking the risk of starting a new life in a different region. Acclaimed men like Carson

knew many people that he could share this knowledge. The desire for new land and better income tempted people on the fringes of the frontier.

In search of the beaver, the mountainmen covered large amounts of territory in California. During their travels they blazed and mastered the major transcontinental trails to the West Coast. They became experts in crossing the complex mountain ranges, and were therefore the most competent guides for all others who wished to move into these areas.11 The mountain men became the major outlets for information about the path West and about the Mexican province of California. As merchants discovered the wealth of the West Coast, and as Americans increasingly traveled by land into this region, news in the East began to make its way into print.

THE EAST REACTS

The East had actually been reacting to news of California since the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was the sharp merchant who first recognized the profit potential of this land's abundant coastline and interior. As America increased its fleet in the Pacific, and fur traders blazed the overland trails, more people took notice of its benefits. The Boston mercantile house of Bryant and Sturgis, with whom Dana made his travels, was one of the

first American companies to exploit the richness of the coast. Returns of up to 300% on investments attracted these companies into the trade, and spread news along the East Coast.

The initial reactions to California appeared to have been primarily on the economic level. The mercantile houses had the most at stake along the West Coast.

As peoples' interest in economics developed in the West Coast, their hopes for acquisition did as well. It was desirable to have American control of such a valuable economic region. The U.S. was evolving as an industrial power, and along with England was dominating the Pacific Coast. When rumor surfaced about the possiblity of acquiring Mexican California surfaced, the eastern presses wasted no time showing their approval. In an article published in the New York Tribune entitled "Movements at Washington, California & c.", the author showed such hopes. He stated, "A report was rife in the City of Mexico that the arrangement which our minister in that city had concluded with the Mexican government, for the payment of our claims against her, includes the offer of California to the United States in payment of these debts."[12] Realizing the value of the coast he continued, "An arrangement, if really made, is of vast importance to the United States, particularly as it will affect our position upon the Pacific coast in regard to England."[13] People recognized that the U.S. was the second

strongest naval power in the Pacific, and understood that the acquisition of California would help alter this fact.

Building our fleet on the West Coast was important, but so was expanding the economic market. In an article titled "From California," one author stated, "A letter from San Diego dated March 2d states that all participation in the coasting trade of Mexico and California by foreign vessels is prohibited."14 Although the Mexican government tried to impose regulations on foreign trade, it was largely unsuccessful due to bribery of port officials and smuggling by the trading vessels. The procurement of California eliminated this unpopular decree altogether and further promote commerce. Clearly, eastern newspapers were interested in California, and their reactions, though limited in number, portrayed an optimism about the future acquisition of California.

Not all reports of California, however, were on the positive side. In a letter from San Diego, one author wrote about the problems he saw:

> The country is in a deplorable state, in consequence of drought. There has been no rain yet below San Francisco, excepting two or three showers a few days since; and, to add to the distress, the country from Sonoma to San Diego has been burnt over. The fire is still raging in many places, and has destroyed numbers of cattle and horses. There is now neither grass nor water for them except in very small quantities.15

Droughts and fires were nothing new to California.

Economically speaking, California was a profitable land, but

not flawless. This unflattering report, however, did not stop the migration of Americans willing to take a chance.

There were not many articles printed about California from 1835 to 1844 in the eastern newspapers. It is not that people were not interested in other parts of the world, but more commercially developed regions commanded more interest. News from China, Europe were frequently in print. Also, some regions such as Africa held exotic interest desired by the press

Domestically speaking, other issues enjoyed the spotlight in the news. The question of the National Bank had still not died down since it was destroyed in 1836. In the early 1840's an increase in the number of articles regarding American relations with Mexico became more apparent. Eastern newspapers were concerned with this issue, and continuously informed the public of its developments. On a moral level, temperance and slavery were frequently in print. The slavery issue escalated continually until the Civil War dethroned the "peculiar institution." There were not many articles about Califonia, however, their existence portrays an eastern interest in the region.

NOTES

[1]John Walton Caughey, California, p. 173.
[2]James O. Pattie, The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky, p. 387.
[3]Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, p. 553.
[4]Charles B. Churchill, Adventurers and Prophets: American Autobiographers in Mexican California, 1828 - 1847, p. 42.
[5]Ibid., p. 42.
[6]Ibid., p. 43.
[7]Ibid., p. 21.
[8]Caughey, p. 183.
[9]Robert G. Cleland, From Wilderness to Empire, p. 146.
[10]Harvey Carter, 'Dear Old Kit,' The Historical Kit Carson, p. xiff.
[11]Caughey, p.199.
[12]New York Tribune, December 13, 1842, p.1.
[13]Ibid., p. 1.
[14]New York Tribune, May 11, 1841, p. 1.
[15]Ibid., p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

RECOGNIZABLE SETTLEMENT

In the early 1840's groups of Americans began settling in California, sometimes alarming Mexican officials, who feared foreign settlement. Hearing what California had to offer, these people packed up their belongings and started a new life on the West Coast. They often said their final goodbyes to family and friends, sold nearly all their possessions, and packed only what they needed into a small wagon or ship compartment for a long, tiresome journey. After arriving in California, the immigrants had to cope with living under the Mexican flag, in close relationship with people of a foreign culture. Some people, like Alfred Robinson, married and remained for a while to enjoy the Californio way of life. Many other overland pioneers, however, would have preferred to remain under the U.S. government's jurisdiction. Reactions to U.S.- Mexican relations increased in the eastern newspapers as the westward push continued.

THE DOMESTIC SCENE

The early trappers, traders and explores had entered California, and people were now realizing what this land had to offer. The first waves of "recognizable settlement"

entered California in the early 1840's. These are small groups of Americans who began permanently settling in California in hopes of better lives. Americans such as Robinson had settled in California before, but they were not in distinct groups. They were simply agents, or merchants for eastern based businesses that liked what they saw and decided to live in another culture. The recognizable American groups entered California and hoped to introduce their culture. They were predominantly people who lived on the fringe of the frontier, and wished to avoid the numbers of western settlers pushing into their region. As more pioneers arrived in California, more eyes looked to this region for possible acquisition. The remarkable burst of expansion that carried American pioneers into Texas, Oregon, and the Great Basin during the 1830's and 1840's also led to the settlement of Mexican California.1

Eighteen forty-four was an American year of decision. The American people came to realize what many believed was their role in a divine plan. Many people adopted the concept that the American way of life must be carried westward to the Pacific. It was after the annexation of Texas that popular opinion expressed its desire for the area of California in its quest for the western shores.

The first area outside the United States in which substantial numbers of settlers moved was Texas.[2] Mexico had already twice rejected the U.S. government's offer to

purchase Texas, but during the 1820's she welcomed Americans who would live by her laws and accept her jurisdiction. Soon the Mexican government would live to regret its invitation. On March 2, 1836, Texas declared its independence from Mexico. After defeating Mexico and General Santa Ana, the new Republic of Texas drew up a constution, but in September 1836, when the voters ratified it, they also indicated overwhelming support for annexation to the United States.3 For political reasons Presidents Jackson and Van Buren avolded annexing Texas, but President Tyler, through a joint resolution, eventually brought this state into the Union. With Texas now a state, many eyes now looked westward toward California, eyes that watched in hope as the border strife between Texas and Mexico worsened.

As the famous frontier historian, R.A. Billington, points out, the desire for expansion expressed itself in the election of 1844. Henry Clay, who opposed the annexation of Texas because it would be "dangerous to the integrity of the Union," was viewed by many as an opponent to expansion. The Democratic candidate, James K. Polk of Tennessee, was an outspoken expansionist-- so much so that he campaigned with the famous slogan "Fifty-four Forty or Fight!" This latitudinal line was what Polk desired to separate the English in the North from the United States below. Polk's nomination in 1844 appeared to signal that both he and the

nation wanted expansion, an expansion that seemed inevitable.

With this attitude spreading across the United States, a catchy phrase developed that would sum up the Americans' faith in themselves and their desire for expansion.4 This phrase was contributed by the editor of the Democratic Review, John L. O'Sullivan, who in December, 1845, wrote of "our manifest destiny to overspread and to posess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government intrusted us."5 Manifest Destiny. This interesting concept portrayed Americans who felt God had a hand in America's growth and success. Overnight these two words swept the nation.

Before the end of his term, President Polk had fought his war with Mexico, and the Bear Flag Republic was annexed by the United States. Mexico was stripped of nearly half its territory, and the United States had truly found its destiny. The protective cover of the U.S. government was now, at least in name, covering California. The path to the West Coast was clearly less obstructed with the removal of Mexican rule. New settlers continued to move into this area with increased fervor, and the eastern presses continued to print more on California. The prospect of profit brought Americans to this land, and the recognition of its resources

combined with its acquisition by the United States contributed to the increase in pioneer settlement.

WHAT THE WEST WAS SAYING

The pioneers who took the initiative to move into California were not silent. Many were anxious to write to their relatives in the East and explain their experiences. Though many difficulties were expressed in their correspondence, a substantial number of pioneers wrote of the positive attributes in this land. The United States had become obsessed with expansion, expressing manifest destiny and welcoming the news from this foreign land. The writings of several enterprising men have become noted pieces of early California conditions and settlement. These writings served to feed the curiosity of the East.

In the Spring of 1841 John Bidwell, who ogranized the Western Emigration Society, left with sixty-nine people for the West Coast. Not wanting to go to Oregon, Bidwell and one third of the group split from the party for California. Bidwell went north to Sutter's Fort, which had become the center for pro-American sentiment. Bidwell enjoyed living in California and often praised it as the place to go. He wrote friends and editors praising this region. Bidwell's book, Echoes of the Past, is an excellent example of the often unique praise he placed on California. From favorable

climate to friendly native Californians, Bidwell applauded the land and corresponded with friends on the East Coast..

Thomas Oliver Larkin,another notable man who pushed the settlement of California, served as United States consul in Monterey from 1844 to 1848, and became not only one of the richest but one of the most highly respected men in the state of California.6 He was so well known that as interest increased in the States regarding California, prominent newspapers like the New York Herald, Sun, and Journal of Commerce made him their correspondent.7 Aside from his eastern correspondence, Larkin also prompted his friends in California to write about this land. In a letter to John Marsh, an American California resident, Larkin requested him to write East. Larkin wrote:

> I should like you to shake off your apathy and idleness, come forth into the field, and write for the Country you intend to live. You are a good writer, know well the country...Do by all means sit down to the task, write every thing and every thing you can regarding the Country and I will have it published in the N.Y. Papers.8

The results Larkin had hoped for eventually came to light. One of Larkin's business associates, W.D.M. Howard, wrote a friend and stated, "I am afraid we shall see a great deal of trouble in California this year. There are 7 or 8000 emigrates from the U.S. expected and this Hastings who has written a book about California is determined, I think, to kick up a row."9

Lansford Hastings, of whom Howard wrote, is often accredited, in great measure, to the arrival of a considerable number of Americans in California. His book, The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California, is a good example of the term "boom advertising." This type of writing brought out the merits of both Oregon and California, albeit with many inaccuracies.10 Probably the one most famous aspect of his book was Hastings's cut-off, which was a direct path through the middle of the Salt Desert. Hastings's inaccuracies about this cut-off cost many pioneers their lives and and considerable hardship to many others. Here is one instance where a propagandist hurt many hopeful Americans.

THE EASTERN PRESSES RESPOND

As American settlers crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains, more information on this land traveled eastward. News also hit the Oregon territory and induced people there into trying California's promise. Frontier forts were organizing parties to move into the West Coast as more and more people signed the wagon train lists. The eastern newspapers included some bits of the news of this migration.

In an article entitled "From Oregon," the New York Daily Tribune reported that Lansford Hastings had returned

from this region. The author wrote, "This gentleman, induced to believe that it was a complete Paradise, took 140 settlers from Missouri; but they all found their way to California."[11] In Hastings's book he offered much promise from the Oregon territory, yet the settlers found their way into California. California seemed to posess something that was very attractive to the pioneers. Some reasons were the quantities of available land and their inherent favorable qualities.

Political cartoons also appeared in the eastern newspapers concerning the annexation of Oregon and California. In a cartoon entitled "The Whole or None" published on January 4, 1846, the reader sees a man on horseback frantically galloping to Washington D.C. (see cartoon). In the caption the artist explained that the man is rushing to the capital to vote "whole or none." He expained, "With the question, whether or not California, Cuba, Mexico, and Canada, as well as the whole of Oregon, to 54 40, are to be annexed, comes up for decision, this philosopher will be found in his seat, No. 228, voting with the "ayes."[12] The cartoonist clearly desired the annexation of Oregon, California and the other areas. Like the frontiersmen, New Yorkers, too, desired the expansion which was to include California.

Seven days after the above cartoon was published, another one headed the front page of the Herald. This

cartoon was titled "The Balance of Power," and portrayed an Uncle Sam-like character stopping the English bull and kicking out the Mexican frog (see cartoon). Above the man flew the American eagle carrying the four ribbons of California, Oregon, and Texas. The caption below the engraving said, "The position of the United States, relative to all other parts of the world, has infused a fresh inspiration into our artist, and he has produced the above spirited engraving, representing the "balance of power" on this continent."13 It continued, "And these views will be sustained through all time to come in the most energetic manner." This last statement exemplifies the effect of manifest destiny. California was simply a part of this destiny the U.S. must attain. New Yorkers were not so much interested in going to California, but were more interested that the United States posess it.

As time approached California's monumental year, more and more articles appeared in the newspapers. California had, for a long time, been a second page topic. By June 13, 1846, California became a front page item. In and article entitled, "From California," an author stated "the Herald has the following letter from the coast of California, which contains some additional particulars of the trouble with Lieut. Fremont in January last."14 Not only was this article a front page item, but it was published in the New York Tribune. The Tribune deemed the topic of California

important enough to borrow a letter from the editor of the New York Herald.

Concerning immigration into California, one interested author wrote on the subject. He said in an untitled article in the Tribune, that:

> A large immigration is being made here by our citizens. I saw wagons and oxen from Missouri-- half of the town of Monterey is made up of Americans, and are likely to very soon outnumber the Mexicans, who are becoming jealous of their numbers."15

Americans were now coming to dominate the population of California. The author, and probably most New Yorkers, was excited to hear this news. To many, American civility had now reached the West Coast.

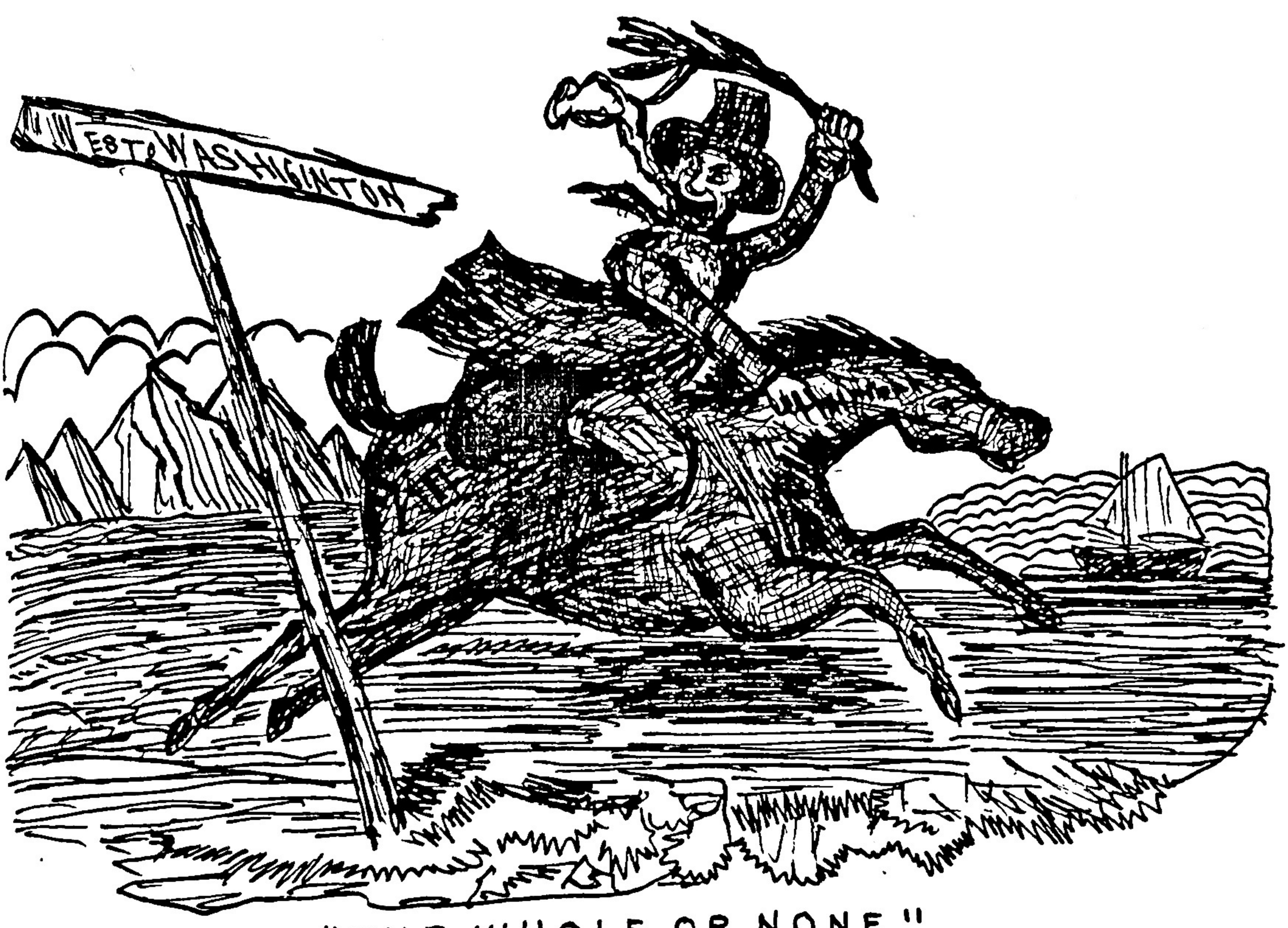
As touched upon earlier, military importance was also a key issue on the East Coast. In an article dated June 22, 1846, an author wrote about about his concern. He said:

> For several years past it had been publicly proclaimed on the behalf of this country that if Great Britain should attempt to acquire California, we should oppose her by War if necessary...yet it is not pretended by any that we have the shadow of a claim to California-- only that it would be convenient to us to possess it and very inconvenient that another great power should have it.16

Although Britain was the most superior naval power in the world at this time, the author recommended going to war, if necessary, to preserve California. This showed the extent easterners now held towards the West Coast. He felt America should fully claim California despite Mexican rule. The eastern reaction had clearly changed.

How did the people feel about the new governmental situation in California? This question was answered in an article in the Tribune dated January 1, 1847. He talked about a letter from Walter Colton, a famous settler and propagandist from California. Colton said that the people in California were pleased with the change of rulers and that California must never be surrendered to Mexico.17 Californians felt more secure now that they were under the thumb of the United States government. Immigration could now procee at an even quicker rate.

For a long time California was a second page topic. In 1846 it became a front page headliner. It was not often on the first page because other issues dominated the domestic scene, but at least easterners were taking a serious look at the West Coast. Little did the newspaper writers imagine, however, that California would consistently become a front page topic. This transition occurred with the discovery of gold.



"THE WHOLE OR NONE"

"BALANCE OF POWER"

NOTES

[1]Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, p. 551.
[2]John M. Blum, et. al., The National Experience, p. 274.
[3]Ibid., p. 275.
[4]Billington, The Far Western Frontier, 1830 - 1860, p. 149.
[5]Ibid., p. 149.
[6]John A. Hawgood, First and Last Consul: Thomas Oliver Larkin and the Americanization of California, p. XXIV.
[7]Billington, p. 562.
[8]Hawgood, p. 25.
[9]Ibid., p. 54.
[10]Lansford W. Hastings, The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California, p. viii.
[11]"From Oregon," New York Daily Tribune, March 14, 1844.
[12]"The Whole or None," New York Herald, January 4, 1846.
[13]Ibid., January 4, 1846.
[14]"From California," New York Daily Tribune, June 13, 1846, p. 1.
[15]Untitled, New York Tribune, April 19, 1846, p.2.
[16]"About California," New York Tribune, June 22, 1846, p. 2.
[17]"California," New York Tribune, January 1, 1847, p. 1.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GOLDEN EXCITEMENT

On the eve of the United States' seventh decade of existence its domestic scene was one of diversity and expansion. The vast land that stretched from Missouri and Arkansas to the Rocky Mountains was at one time labeled by many of its explorers as the "Great American Desert." Most agreed that this land would become a permanent gift to the Indians. It was Texas, the Oregon Territory , and California that appeared ripe for expansion.

THE STATE OF THE NATION

This belief that America had an ample supply of land lasted until the 1840's, when the concept of manifest destiny gripped the nation. Texas developed into a huge issue in the domestic arena and became a state in December 1845. Florida and Iowa, too, were admitted into the Union, and Wisconsin soon followed. The Mormons, a religious group of emigrants, had no interest in manifest destiny, but sought to escape the jurisdiction of the United States.[1] In 1847 they crossed into Mexican territory and established a colony in the Great Salt Lake basin. This barren land soon became a thriving city known as a part of the Utah Territory. Areas were quickly developing as the United States reached for the West.

The Oregon country had already grown rapidly as large numbers of merchants, fur-trappers, and missionaries announced the land's potential. The U.S. had a solid claim in the Oregon region, but it was not exclusive. The British, too, had been involved in this area since Alexander Mackenzie made the first overland trip to Oregon in 1793 for the purpose of exploration. The English claimed they could date their associations to this area as far back as the discovery of the Oregon coast by Sir Francis Drake in 1579. On June 15, 1846 this question of possession was finally settled. Polk's "Fifty-four Forty or Fight!" slogan was satisfied. A treaty signed between the United States and England named the 49th parallel as the official boundary between the two countries.

After the annexation of Texas in 1845 by the U.S., Mexico broke off diplomatic relations. The question of Texas' boundary, however, had not been answered. The United States wanted the southern boundary to be the Rio Grande River, not the Nueces. President Polk sent John Slidell of Lousiana to negotiate this question and investigate the possibility of purchasing California and New Mexico. The new government of Mexico decided not to receive Slidell, who complained to the President. President Polk used this, the unpaid claims of Americans against Mexico, and a skirmish north of the Rio Grande to make a declaration of war which was ratified by Congress two days later.

After the American victory the United States was sitting at the bargaining table with Mexico. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which was completed on March 10, 1848, increased the territory of the U.S. by great proportions. The United States acquired California, New Mexico and the Rio Grande boundary for $15 million dollars and the assumption of the claims of U.S. citizens against Mexico. Manifest destiny quickly became a reality, as Mexico handed over more than a half-million square miles of territory.

With California now a possession of the United States, there appeared to be no major difficulties in its settlement. Rather, there was still the journey across the often treacherous Rocky Mountains. To many, however, this trip was a small obstacle in the hopes of a new way of life. Americans continued to migrate into California, and to the suprise of the nation, this area would become the thirty-first state in the Union in less than a decade.

THE DISCOVERY

After the war with Mexico, California experienced a rapid influx of immigrants, most of whom needed lumber to build their homes and businesses. Ever the entrepeneur, John Sutter recognized a chance for profit and sent out an exploring party headed by James Marshall to look for good timber, water-power, and a good location. Supplied with equipment, excellent Indian guides, and some sturdy men,

Marshall travelled forty miles east of Sutter's Fort to an area that appeared to have potential.

Sutter and Marshall entered into a business agreement to build the mill. By January, 1848 the mill was able to cut its first timber. Problems developed in moving the water from the wheel, which turned the saw blades. To solve this problem Marshall built what is referred to as a "tail-race," which diverted the river channel by means of a small dam.

On the morning of January 24, 1848, James Marshall examined the race to see what effects the river had on it. While looking at the equiptment Marshall noticed several yellow grains sticking in the crevices of the rocks in the bed of the tail-race. With some examination he found these yellow grains to be of some sort of metal, and it occurred to him that it might be gold.

Late that night on the 24th, Marshall arrrived at Sutter's Fort and confidentially related his discovery to Sutter. Sutter at first was quite doubtful, but after he conducted a small nitric acid test on the metal it became obvious that it was indeed gold. To guard against a leak of the news, Sutter asked his employees to keep the matter a secret for six weeks, which he felt would give him enough time to complete unfinished business and prepare for the upcoming rush.

How could a secret this good be kept for long? It could not. Rumor has it that the word got out because of one man, Samuel Brannan. Brannan, who owned a neighborhood store not far from Sutter's Fort, was working one day when a teamster employed by Sutter entered and requested some whiskey. After having a quantity of gold dust flashed at him, Brannan let the man have the whiskey and asked where he got the gold. At first the man refused to tell his secret, but after drinking heartily of the liquor he began to talk. The news of the discovery at the mill had leaked out. There is controversy regarding the truthfulness of this story, but nonetheless the news did surface.

The news spread along the coast of California like fire. Many who heard the report waited for future information, and many others simply stopped what they were doing and searched for the precious metal. The news crossed the continent and sailed the seas, and within months was known throughout the globe.

THE WRITTEN EXCITEMENT FROM THE WEST

The excitement spurred by the discovery of gold spread quickly along the West Coast. The people involved in the rush began writing east about their experiences. The monetary figures of the gold produced in California helped shed light on why the West would be writing of the incredible wealth. In 1848, the first year of the strike,

$245,301 worth of gold was mined from the land. This number seems like a large amount; however, the following year $10,151,360 was taken! At the height of the rush, only two years after the last figure, over $81 million was contributed to America's gold supply.2 Much of this specie later flowed eastward.

John Bidwell's Echoes of the Past, quotes the saying that "facts are stranger than fiction" while discussing the numerous incredible accounts of the strike.3 He implies that the truth is sometimes more outrageous than incredible lies. One letter relayed from Colonel R.B. Mason, stationed in San Francisco, to Brigadier General R. Jones, then in a session of Congress, described such circumstances. On November 24, 1848, Mason wrote, "Any reports that may reach you of the vast quantities of gold in California can scarcely be too exaggerated for belief."4

Thomas Oliver Larkin, one of the most famous observers of the West, wrote about the gold mania sweeping through San Jose. In his letter to Colonel Mason, Governor of Califonia, dated May 26, 1848, Larkin wrote:

> Every body is in the greatest state of excitement. We can hear nothing but Gold, Gold, Gold. An ounce a day, two a day or three-- every one has the gold or yellow fever. Last night several of the most respectible American residents of this town arrived home from a visit to the gold regions. Next week they will with their families, and I think ninth tenths of every foreign store keep, mechanic or day labourer of this town and perhaps San Francisco leave for the Sacramento....5

Reports like this to the governor were not uncommon, and like Col. Mason's letter to Brig. Gen. Jones, these reports made their way eastward.

THE EASTERN REACTION

The East first heard of Marshall's discovery on August 19, 1848, when the New York Herald printed a letter which described the event and reported that prospectors were making thirty dollars a day. This article, however, sparked little interest in the East. Easterners had heard tales from California before, and were not quick to overly react. It was mostly the frontiersman who was interested in California. The easterners needed some form of proof before they would react in force.

Not until President Polk's message to Congress on December 5, 1848, was the whole nation filled with golden excitement. "The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory," the President reported, "are of such and extrordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corrobórated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service."6 Strengthening the president's declaration, a messenger sent by Governor Mason of California reached Washington two days later carrying a teapot filled with 230 ounces of pure gold.

The day of President Polk's famous message, the writers were hard at work, and the eastern presses were soon

rolling. One journalist for Washington's Daily National Intelligencer wrote on December 6, 1848:

> The effects produced by the discovery of these rich mineral deposits, and the success which has attended the labors of those who have resorted to them, have provided a suprising change in the state of affairs in California. Labor commands a most exorbitant price, and all other [tasks] but that of searching for the precious metals are abandoned.7

People in the area of the strike were frantic searching for the metal. Leaving one's occupation to take up the pick and pan was not unusual for someone living near the gold region.

People understood that there was excitement occurring in California, but how exactly did that translate? In an article entitled "The Gold Mines of California," printed in the Intelligencer on December 9, 1848, a Journalist wrote, "There are now about three thousand persons, white and indians, at work in the mines...they get out at the lowest computation, over a million dollars in gold per month, and this quality will in all probability be doubled by the time this letter reaches you."8 The author interpretated the vast wealth when he stated, "the discoveries which are made, and the quantity of gold taken out, throw fiction into the shade, and casts 'Aladdin's lamp' into darkness."9 The precious metal was dominating the presses.

In New York the articles were similar if not more outrageous. The New York Herald wrote on May 30, 1849, that "there was no end to the gold...its richness and abundance more than confirmed all previous accounts." The piece also

included an curious account from a Lieutenant Beale, who was stationed in the gold region. It stated, "Although he himself bought a piece weighing eight pounds, Lieut. Beale assures us that he has seen a lump actually weighing twenty-five pounds."[10] Not many people had seen one pound of gold in their lives, but twenty-five pounds was almost unimaginable.

Along with articles in the local newspapers came advertisements to travel to the West Coast. "FOR CALIFORNIA AND THE GOLD REGION-- A valuable opportunity to settle. The fine brig Cordelia will leave from New York about the 10th of January."[11] Messages like these were frequent in the travel sections of newspapers all along the East Coast. In a section of the New York Herald entitled "HO! FOR CALIFORNIA" one person advertised himself in the paper in an attempt to get to the gold fields. He wrote, "A respectable young man with a small amount of money, wishes to join some company going to California...a note addressed to Enterprise, Herald office, would meet with immediate attention."[12] This is only one of many examples of a young man about to become a part of the mass emigration headed west.

"The spirit of emigration, which is carrying off thousands to California, so far from dying away, increases and expands every day."[13] Such was the situation as "the 49ers" were leaving for California. Emigration had become a

huge topic as thousands of peoples' neighbors, relatives and fellow tradesmen were packing up and leaving. On the character of the emigrants one journalist wrote, "The emigrants now leaving for California appear to be remarkably orderly, respectable, and intelligent. They are men of energy and enterprise, and full of enthusiasm."14 This fact could be debated by many people, but there was a certain attitude of the emigrants, one of hope and adventure.

As a point of interst, not eastern reaction, America was not the only place that was experiencing the rush. In Europe there was excitement as well. The New York Herald reported, "It's probable that immigration to our shores from Europe will be immense this season...the California excitement will definitely swell the tide."15 The possibility of fortune was enough to lure people across the Atlantic and across a continent. "The excitement about California, and the desire to rush to that place, according to the last accounts, are exhibiting the same symptoms all over Europe which we have been experiencing in this country for some months past."16 Although separated by the Atlantic Ocean, the Europeans had the same desire for adventure and wealth. California was now finally the place to be.

NOTES

[1]John M. Blum, Bruce Catton, Edmund S. Morgan, Aurthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Kenneth M. Stampp, and C. Van Woodward, The National Experience, p. 279.

[2]Rodman W. Paul, California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West, p. 345.

[3]Milo Milton Quaife ed., Echoes of the Past About California, p. 117.

[4] Paul, p. 54.

[5]Rodman W. Paul, The California Gold Discovery, p. 84.

[6]Ray Allen Billington, The Far Western Frontier, 1830 - 1860, p. 223.

[7]"From California." Daily National Intelligencer, December 6,
1848, p. 2.

[8] "The Gold Mines of California," Daily National Intelligencer, December 9, 1848, p. 3.

[9]Ibid., p. 3.

[10]"Highly Important From California. Fifteen Days Later From San Francisco. Arrival of the California and Oregon at Panama. Opening of Regular Communication With the Gold Region. Special Dispatches for Government. Abundance of Gold in California. Immense Lumps of Precious Metal. The Excitement in Wall Street," New York Herald, May 30, 1849.

[11]"Ho! For California," New York Herald, December 30, 1848.

12"Ho! For California," New York Herald, January, 8, 1849.

13"Emigration to California," New York Herald, January 10, 1849. -

14"The Character of the California Emigrants," New York Herald, January 17, 1849. -

15"The California Excitement in Europe," New York Herald, April 11, 1849.

16"The California Excitement in Europe," New York Herald. February 1, 1849.

CONCLUSION

The Voyage Again

On August 13, 1859, the steamship Golden Gate arrived in San Francisco Bay after a long trip originating from the Isthmus of Panama. On board this boat was a man who had visited the shores of California twenty-four years earlier. This man was Richard Henry Dana. Dana, who was still in his forties, once again took to the sea after having his health give way. Now a more experienced and acclaimed writer, Dana recorded his return visit to California in a small essay entitled, Twenty-four Years After. In this piece he compared the two different Californias of 1835 and 1859.

Dana most admired San Francisco when he visited in 1835 because of its large bay and tranquil setting. When Dana returned he was shocked to see the incredible difference in how the city had changed. "How strange and eventful has been the brief history of this marvellous city, San Francisco."[1] He reflected on how the town went from a one house adobe in 1836 and became a major coastal city of one hundred thousand inhabitants in 1859. With this population came "all the accompaniments of wealth, culture, and now (in 1859) the most well-governed city of its size in the United States."[2] This statement was clearly a matter of opinion, but Dana was obviously impressed. In a mere twenty-four

years San Francisco grew and developed into what many would consider a booming metropolis.

Were the developments that took place really an improvement upon the land? Dana wrote:

> I wished to be alone, so I let the other passengers go up to the town, and was quietly pulled ashore in a boat and left to myself. The recollections and the emotions were sad, and only sad. The past was real. The present, all about me, was unreal, unnatural, repellant.3

Dana quite definitely downplayed the progress that had been made by the American development of San Francisco. Comparing Dana's quotation in Two Years Before the Mast, a distinct change had occurred in his opinion regarding the impact of Americans. Despite these changes, Dana continued to look back and love the California coast for the memories of beauty and peacefulness it held.

As Dana passed through the Golden Gate for the eighth time, he said his final goodbyes to California. He had made a famous mark on the literary world with his observations of this coast, and as he departed he felt sadness:

> "As the shores of California faded in the distance, and the summits of the Coast Range sank under the blue horizon, I bade farewell-- yes, I do not doubt, forever-- to those scenes which, however changed or unchanged, must always possess an ineffable interest for me."4

In the twenty-four years since he last visited California the land had undergone massive changes. Journalists like Dana aided in transmitting information to the East Coast that would stimulate reaction. Unlike most propagandists,

Dana continued to write when he returned East. He became a part of the eastern reaction, the reply to the California explosion.

In the period termed "pre-recognizable American settlement," eastern newspapers printed very little about California. People were interested in what was happening around the globe, but other more developed and commercially active regions held the spotlight. Domestically speaking this region was often excluded by the newspapers simply because it was not under American control. When the American frontier expanded to the point that settlers began moving into Mexican California in sizable numbers, more people (and newspapers) began taking notice of the migration that occurred. Now population, not simply economics interested the East.

It was the overland adventurers who brought the first early settlers into California, not the eastern schooners. Trappers and traders relayed their information overland, back to the fringes of the frontier where they began their journeys. Easterners were not packing up to begin new lives in California; rather, it was the frontiersmen who were continually looking to push West away from the growing populations. Easterners were happy remaining in their industrial regions. This fact becomes important when considering the extent eastern newspapers were reacting to American growth in California. Easterners made up a very

small portion of the California settlers, therefore, the eastern presses rarely covered West Coast news.

If emigration only attracted infrequent coverage of the West Coast, then what about California earned space in the presses? Militarily speaking, the West Coast held strategic positions in the Pacific. San Francisco, alone, could be developed into an incredible stronghold. With the United States becomming a greater world power many people were looking to further its strategic positions in the northern hemisphere. The eastern presses printed reports of a frail Mexican government, who was constantly portrayed as a weak protector of California.

When the term "Manifest Destiny" surfaced in 1844 in a New York newspaper, California was a target of its impact. Mexico was simply an obstacle in the way of settlement. This point was often made made clear by eastern journalists, who made U.S. - Mexican relations a popular topic. Manifest destiny soon extended to the western shore, now consolidating its valuable ports. When gold was discovered in 1848, California now had the justification needed to dominate the news.

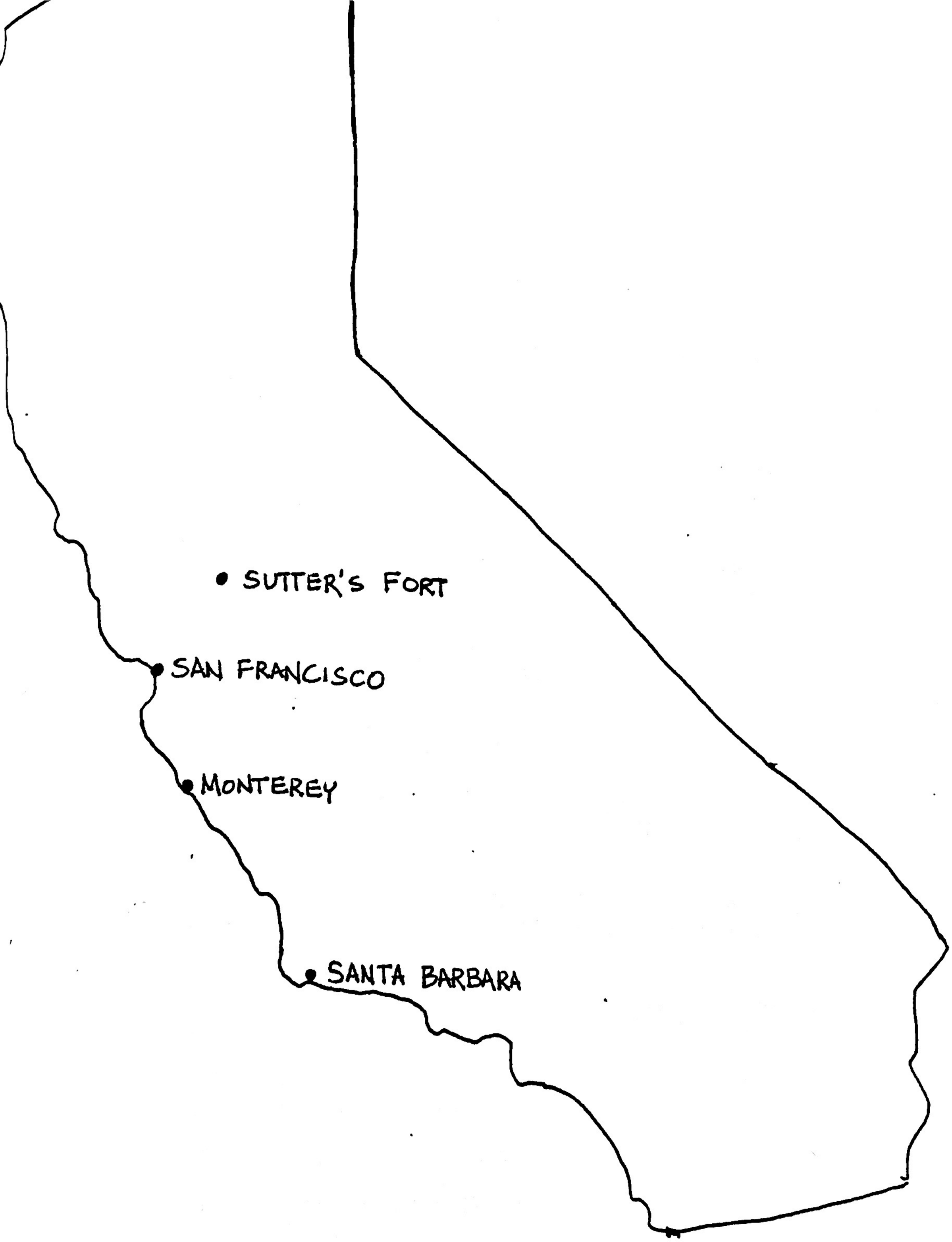
It was not until President Polk's message to Congress months after the initial discovery that the East caught "gold fever." When people realized the discovery was of momentous proportions, the presses quickly jumped on the topic. The wealth that stemmed from the discovery was

incomparable to anything yet mined in the U.S. and continued to grow in the decade following the strike. The newspapers were quick to describe the riches many people were taking out of the ground, and the large numbers that were moving into the gold regions.

Large numbers of easterners now moved to the West Coast. Wealth, the same drawing card that brought numerous Spanish explorers to the New World, was also luring hopeful easterners. Emigration was common news in the newspapers, as cities emptied when friends, neighbors and families packed up and left. Daily want-ads advertised ships leaving for the West Coast, as well as people hoping to earn their way across. The situation in California had now merited eastern response in the newspapers. Eastern attention was the most flattering reaction adorned on California. California became the thirty-first state in the Union in 1850.

Richard Henry Dana saw two very different worlds in his voyages to California in 1835 and 1859. What was once a sparsely populated Mexican territory was now a buzzing state. The dramatic change in California was not overlooked by eastern newspapers. The press reacted accordingly to the events in California. The eastern newspapers were not responsible for California's growth, but they did play a factor in its recognition. California's unique circumstances produced the growth of the state. There was

definite economic and military interest concerning California prior to 1849, but when gold lured thousands of easterners in hopes of wealth, the eastern presses made California a major topic of the times. California became the wealth and headline of the nation.


SUTTER'S FORT
SAN FRANCISCO
MONTEREY
SANTA BARBARA

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