

**Expanding West****Section 4****MAIN IDEAS**

1. The discovery of gold brought settlers to California.
2. The gold rush had a lasting impact on California's population and economy.

**Key Terms and People**

**John Sutter** Swiss immigrant who started the first Anglo-Californian colony in 1839

**Donner party** a group of western travelers who were trapped crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the winter of 1846–47

**forty-niners** gold-seeking migrants who traveled to California in 1849

**prospect** search for gold

**placer miners** miners who used pans or other devices to wash gold nuggets from loose rock or gravel

**Section Summary****DISCOVERY OF GOLD BRINGS SETTLERS**

Before 1840 few Americans settled in California, although there was considerable trade between merchants from Mexico and the United States. However, after Mexico allowed **John Sutter** to establish a colony in 1839, American settlers began arriving in greater numbers. In a tragic incident, heavy snows in the Sierra Nevada Mountains trapped a group of travelers known as the **Donner party**. Half of the travelers either froze or starved to death.

When gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in 1848, the news spread across the country. During 1849 about 80,000 **forty-niners** came to California hoping to strike it rich. Most of them arrived in the small port town of San Francisco. Within a year, the population of San Francisco grew from around 800 to more than 25,000.

Mining methods varied by the time of year and the location of the claim. **Placer miners** would

**What country was California part of in 1840?**

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**Section 4, *continued***

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**prospect** by using pans or other devices to wash gold nuggets out of the loose rock and gravel. Richer miners established companies to dig shafts and tunnels. Many individual success stories inspired prospectors. However, the good luck that made some miners wealthy never came to thousands of gold seekers. Most of them found little except misery and debt.

Mining camps sprang up wherever enough people gathered to look for gold. Among the gold seekers were thousands of immigrants from Mexico, China, Europe, and South America. Many found that they could earn a living by supplying miners with basic services like cooking, washing clothes, operating boardinghouses, or even providing legal services. Biddy Mason and her family, slaves brought to California by a forty-niner from Georgia, gained their freedom and managed to buy some land near the village of Los Angeles. Soon Mason became one of the wealthiest landowners in California.

**IMPACT ON CALIFORNIA**

The forty-niners brought a population explosion and an economic boom to California. It became the 31st state of the Union in 1850. As the gold rush faded, many Californians took to farming and ranching. However, California remained isolated from the rest of the country until the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences** Design and write a brochure inviting easterners to come to Sutter's colony in California and start a new life.

**Would mining experience have helped the average forty-niner? Explain your answer.**

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**Who had more "job security," the miners or the service providers? Why?**

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**What consequence of the gold rush made California eligible for statehood?**

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Donner party	forty-niners	Biddy Mason	prospect
Levi Strauss	John Sutter	Sutter's Mill	

**DIRECTIONS** Write two adjectives or descriptive phrases that describe the term given.

1. forty-niners \_\_\_\_\_
2. prospect \_\_\_\_\_
3. Biddy Mason \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS** On the line provided before each statement, write **T** if a statement is true and **F** if a statement is false. If the statement is false, write the correct term on the line after each sentence that makes the sentence a true statement.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Levi Strauss arrived in California as a slave, but gained freedom and became one of the wealthiest landowners in California, a community leader, and a well-known supporter of charities.  
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- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Swiss immigrant John Sutter was given permission by Mexican officials to start a colony in California.  
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- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The Donner party was a group of western travelers that became lost in the Sierra Nevada mountains.  
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- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When it was learned that gold was discovered near Biddy Mason, the California gold rush began.  
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