



California Becomes a State

California was once a part of Mexico. After the Mexican-American War, however, Mexico ceded California to the United States in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. At that time, California was a vast and mostly uninhabited region with a population of just over 7,000 people. Unknown to Mexico was that a mere nine days before this treaty was signed, gold had been discovered at Sutter's Mill. Although John Sutter tried to keep the gold a secret, word quickly spread, and the California "gold rush" had begun.

Around 6,000 people had arrived in California by the end of 1848, many from Oregon, the Sandwich Islands, Mexico, Peru, and Chile. By 1849, people were arriving from all over the world. an estimated 90,000 hopeful miners. By the time the gold rush ended in the mid-1850s, the population of California had swelled by 300,000.

California became the 31st state in the union on September 9th, 1850, while still in the midst of the gold rush, which allowed California to quickly exceed the population of 60,000 people required to become a state. California's admittance to the union as a new free state as part of the Compromise of 1850, without having to first go through the formality of being a territory satisfied northern opponents of slavery with another free state, while the South was granted a stronger Fugitive Slave Law.

1. When California was ceded to the U.S., it had a population of about:
A. 7,000 B. 60,000 C. 90,000 D. 300,000
2. What happened nine days before California was ceded to the U.S.?
3. California became the _____ state in the union on September 9th, 1850:
A. 21st B. 30th C. 31st D. 49th
4. What social issue played a role in California becoming a state so quickly?
A. U.S./Mexico relations B. fear of losing gold
C. slavery D. women's rights