California!  
What is California?  Write your answer below.

Did you say it is a state, your home, a part of America? Yes, if you live in California, it is all of these. But it is more. California is people, land, homes, farms, cities, schools, churches, and rivers. They are all part of California. What are some other parts of California?

_____________________  ___________________

_____________________  ___________________

So California is not just a space on a map or a name on your address!

Have you been outside of California? Have you been in any of these states? (Circle the ones that you have been in.)

Arizona  Nevada
Oregon

Look at a map of America. What is special about these states?

_____________________  ___________________

You are right if you said that they all touch California. They are our neighbor states.

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Arizona  Nevada
Oregon

Look at a map of America. What is special about these states?

_____________________  ___________________

You are right if you said that they all touch California. They are our neighbor states.

What about these? (Circle any you’ve been in.)

Alaska  Hawaii
Texas  Maine
Florida  Washington

Find them on your map? What is special about them?

They are far away from California. In fact, two of these states are so far away that they may not be on your map! Which two are they?

1.  __________________  2.  __________________

How are all of these states alike? (Mark ‘X’ by the right answers.)

_____1. They are part of America
_____2. Everyone there is over 18 years old
_____3. People there love their families and state
_____4. They have a history
_____5. They have jungles and swamps

If you marked ‘X’ on #1, #3, and #4, you are right. #2 is wrong because there are young people in every state. Why is #5 wrong?

California is part of America

While we live in California and love California, we also live in and love America. We are Californians and Americans. We are proud of both.

In this newspaper you will especially learn about California. You will learn about her past and the people here first. You will also study the land and how it was discovered and explored. You will learn what it was like then and what has happened since. It is the story of our California heritage.

It is a tale of adventure filled with heroes and villains, good times and bad, success and failure. Sometimes we may wish we could change it, but we can’t. But if we pay close attention, we can learn from it. Then maybe we can make the future better. Are you ready? Let’s go.
Short way to India!

It was 2:00 in the morning of October 12, 1492, when a crewman on the “Pinta” sighted an island off the southeastern coast of what is now America. A cannon shot announced the discovery and soon Columbus landed, threw himself to his knees, and returned thanks to God. He named the island “San Salvador.”

When Columbus returned and word of his discovery reached Spain, there was much excitement. He believed he had reached islands near Asia called the “Indies.” He thought he was close to the country of India where Spain traded for things not available at home. He thought he was near India, but he was mistaken. Columbus had sailed west but had reached the farthest lands of the east!

Today the islands Columbus discovered are known as the “West Indies.” He never did see the mainland of America and he never did know he was still halfway around the world from India!

Columbus returned three more times to look for India. Once he thought he was too far north so he sailed farther south. Finally he landed on the coast of South America. He thought it was Asia. He never did visit our North American mainland.

Understanding your world

For this lesson you need a globe. A globe is a model of the earth we live on. It is a replica, a likeness in small size. It is round like the earth is round. It has a map on it that shows where the land is and where the sea is. The sea is usually colored blue. The land is in many shapes and probably has countries marked in different colors. The different land shapes are called continents. The seas between them are the oceans.

Look at your globe. Can you find America? Turn the globe and look at the top half until you find it. Do you see how America fits into the middle of a large continent? Now look above America to find Canada. Next look below America to find Mexico.

Look left of Canada and find the state of Alaska. Look in the ocean below Alaska and find Hawaii. Alaska and Hawaii are two of our United States. What separates Alaska and Hawaii from our other states?

1. ___________________ 2. ___________________

Altogether, America, Canada, and Mexico form most of the continent of North America.

“North” is a direction. It means toward the top of the globe. “South” means toward the bottom of the globe. Since your globe probably tilts slightly, the top and bottom are really where the pole sticks out that the globe spins on. Find the north pole and the south pole. Spin the globe slowly. The line made by the pole through the globe is the axis. The world, like your globe, spins on its axis. It makes one full turn each day.

Look at the thin line of land below Mexico. Today this is called “Central America.” Follow it down and to the right until you come to the country of Colombia. Colombia is on another continent called “South America.” Find a few other countries on this continent. Find Brazil, the biggest country in South America. Why do we call this continent “South America” and our own “North America?” Yes, because one is south and the other north.

Set your globe on a table. Look for a doorknob in the room. Imagine the doorknob is the sun. Turn the globe slowly so that California moves to your right. (This is toward the east.)

As you turn it, imagine you are standing on the globe in California like you are standing on the earth. Imagine looking for your doorknob-sun. Sometimes you will face toward it. Other times you will face away. Our earth is just like that and that is why we have day and night.

Look again at your globe. Canada is north of America. Mexico is south of America. But Mexico is north of Brazil. “Well,” you say, “Mexico is not straight north. Straight north of Brazil is an ocean.” Find its name. It is the Atlantic Ocean. America is left of the Atlantic Ocean. We call this direction “west.” The Atlantic Ocean is right of America. We call this direction “east.”
To tell directions we use these four names: north, south, east, and west. These are called the “cardinal directions.” They are the four basic directions.

Sometimes we use them together for a direction in between. If we use two of them together, we always use the north or south name first.

We may even use three together. For example, the direction between north and northeast is called north-northeast. These directions are called the “16 points of the compass.” Look in the box above. Count them. You should find sixteen.

**ACTIVITY**

Look at the compass above. Count the named directions. Do you see that there are eight? Now look between them. Do you see the thin lines? These are the eight other directions that make up the 16 points of the compass.

Find the line for NORTH-NORHEAST. (It is between NORTH and NORTHEAST.) Label it NNE.

Find the line between NORTHEAST and EAST. Label it ENE. This stands for EAST-NORTHEAST. NOTICE: The first direction used for three together is the “cardinal” one.

How should you label the direction between EAST and SOUTHEAST? (Now see the upside-down answer box at right.)

Label the remaining directions.

**Where is California?**

Find California on your globe. Look on the Pacific coast of North America. What part of America is it in? “The west.” You may also say “the south” because it is also on the border of Mexico. Really, it is in the “southwest.” (We never say “westsouth!”)

Find the state of Washington, north of California. What part of America is it in? Look in the southeast and find Florida. Find Spain. It is not in America. It is a country on another continent.

To find Spain, from Florida go straight east on your globe, across the Atlantic Ocean. When you come to land you should be in Morocco on the continent of Africa. The country north of Morocco is Spain. It is in the southwestern part of the continent of Europe.

Spain is where Christopher Columbus lived. It is far east of America, across the Atlantic Ocean. No one in Spain had ever crossed that ocean. Some even thought it was flat and that if you sailed far enough, you would go right off the edge. They imagined demons and dragons out there.

Columbus believed they were wrong. He believed he could sail all the way around the world and come back to Spain. He thought he would get to India and China that way. But Columbus didn’t know it was so far and he didn’t know North and South America were in the way! No one knew that but the people living there. Who were they?

Yes, the native Americans, the Indians. (In the next issue, you will begin learning about these interesting people.)

But the Indians didn’t know about the people in Spain! They were an isolated people. Neither people knew or understood the other.

So why was Columbus looking for a shorter route to India? The answer is “trade.” This word is important because trade is very important to us.

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**ANSWER BOX**

Did you say ESE?
Many people lived in Europe. Some were farmers. Others worked in factories. There were fishermen, miners, lumbermen, and many other trades. Some countries raised lots of food, while other countries had lots of coal. People in one country needed what people in other countries produced. So they would buy what they needed. Likewise, those other countries needed products too and they would buy them. This buying and selling between countries is called “trade.”

But there were some things that couldn’t be found in Europe. There were spices and tea from India and silk cloth from China. Caravans would go all the way to India and China to deliver goods from Spain and come back with goods from China.

On your globe, find India, east of Spain. The first trade routes to India were over land. Then ships began to sail there. How could ships sail between Spain and India?

Today the Suez Canal goes between the Mediterranean and Red Seas. What difference do you suppose that makes?

Vespuccia, Vespuccia, God shed His grace on thee...

Do you know that song? Maybe you know it as “America, America...” Did you know you could be living in Vespuccia?

America is named for Amerigo Vespucci. He was an Italian explorer in Columbus’ time. Like Columbus, he traveled to the “Indies.” But when he came along the coast of South America, he decided he had found a new continent, not Cathay. He was sure these were not the Indies!

Later, when he was proven right, the continents of North and South America were named for him. They named them America for Amerigo, his first name. But his last name was Vespucci. So they could have named them North and South Vespuccia! How would you like that?

There is another name also used for America. It is “Columbia.” There is a song that calls America, “Columbia, the gem of the ocean.” Where do you think the name Columbia comes from?

Balboa discovers the Pacific

Eleven years later, about September 25, 1513, an explorer named Vasco Núñez de Balboa went to the top of the Central American mountains in what is now Panama. (Find this on your globe.) Now, for the first time, Europeans saw the Pacific Ocean. Balboa named it the “Great South Sea.”

Balboa sent three scouts down to the shore. One was the first European to ever actually enter the sea. Four days later, Balboa claimed the whole sea and all the lands it touched for Spain.

The Pacific is the biggest ocean on earth. It forms all of the western boundary of California, Oregon, and Washington. When Balboa discovered it, he had no idea how big it actually is. He also had no idea how many countries it touches.

What did Balboa’s discovery prove?
BOULDERS OF SILVER FOUND

REPORTED TO WEIGH 3,500 LBS!

Arizona, Mexico, 1736

According to a report just received, huge boulders of nearly pure silver have been discovered nearby. Some are reported to weigh almost two tons, maybe more. If this report is true, this will become one of the richest mining regions in all of Mexico!

Anza explores Arizona

In 1736 Juan Bautista de Anza heard of great silver deposits in far northern Mexico. Silver was very valuable. Anza was told that huge boulders of pure silver could be found there. One was reported to weigh 3,500 pounds and be almost pure silver. Many were reported to weigh over 500 pounds.

Anza began to explore the area and traveled over the mountainous deserts along today’s Arizona-Mexico border.

ANZA VICTIM OF APACHES

Arizona, 1739

Juan Bautista de Anza has fallen victim to a surprise attack by a band of Apache Indians near here. It was a tragic end to his noteworthy career as an explorer of our desert southwest. It is hoped that his son will carry his father’s name to new frontiers.

Anza might have found his way to California, but he was killed by Apache Indians in 1739. It would be left to his son to find a way. We will read about him in issue #8 & 9.

The reports of silver attracted others to seek riches in the region. But the Indian natives were members of unfriendly tribes. The Yaquis, Pimas, and Apaches often raided other tribal villages. It was part of their culture.

Before Spanish explorers and colonists could safely travel from Mexico to California, they would have to make friends with these Indians. What do you think they did?

We will learn the answer in issue #10.

Geography of California

We have seen the first explorers coming to the edges of our state. Soon others will enter the interior. Trappers and hunters will follow. Gold will be found. Settlers will come. In order for them to do this, they will have to understand our “geography.” They will have to find ways through the mountains and across the deserts. It is important that we too, understand our California geography.

Mountains

In some respects, the mountains of California are like the bones in a body. The biggest, longest, and roughest mountains in our state are the “Sierra Nevada.” They are like the spine with California facing west. The Sierra run much of the length of our state.

To the west, like ribs, are the various mountains of the Coast Range. In the north, at the head, are the Siskiyous and the Klamath. In the south, at the feet, are the “Transverse” ranges including the San Gabriels and the San Bernadinos.

The tallest mountain in California is in the Sierra. It is Mt. Whitney. It is 14,496 feet high. It is also the highest peak in America outside of Alaska.
The Sierra Nevada and some of our other mountains were formed very long ago by the movement of giant areas of the earth’s surface called “plates.” These plates move very slowly and push against each other. Sometimes they push each other up to form mountains. This movement often causes earthquakes.

As thousands of years pass, weather wears the mountains down. So the oldest mountains are usually not so rough and jagged. Most of our mountains are “young.” They are tall and rough.

There is another important kind of mountain in California. It is formed by molten rock and gas inside the earth trying to get out. What do you think it is?

Yes, volcanos are like ports for gas and melted rock to escape. When this happens, we say they erupt. Large amounts of gas and ash may blow out of them. If melted rock comes out, we call it lava.

We have many volcanos in California. The best known two are Mt. Shasta and Mt. Lassen. They are both in northern California.

There are three different types of volcanos. They are defined by how active they are.

1. Active: Erupting now or may erupt anytime.
2. Dormant: Not active now, but may yet erupt.
3. Extinct: No longer likely to erupt.

Most people think of Mt. Shasta and Mt. Lassen as “dormant.” They are really considered “active” even though right now they are not erupting. Mt. Lassen last erupted from 1914 to 1916. Now they both look peaceful.

Mt. St. Helens in Washington looked very peaceful before 1980. But it was only sleeping. Then on May 18 it came back to life with a horrible explosion. So we should not take our California volcanos for granted either!

In northeastern California and the southeastern deserts, there are the remains of many very old extinct volcanos. Sometimes their eruptions just created lava flows across the valleys. Lava Beds National Monument is like that.

In east central California there is another kind of volcano. It is the “cinder cone.” This is a port in the earth where gasses, ash, and rocks are blown out. Fragments of the glassy rock called “obsidian” were used by the Indians for arrowheads.

There are many names on our mountains. Each ridge and each peak has its own name. We have only mentioned five major ranges. What is the name of the mountain range nearest you?

What is the nearest peak to you?

What kind of mountain is it?

(You may need to discuss this in class.)

Lakes

California has many lakes. Lakes are formed by drainage when water from rain and melting snow flows into them through rivers. Sometimes lakes are formed by springs where water from under the ground comes up.

Most lakes are natural. They occur in valleys where the water collects until it is deep enough to run out. Some lakes are man-made. Usually these are called “reservoirs.” This means that they store up water behind dams built on the rivers. The water may be used by farms or go through man-made rivers called “aqueducts” to our cities in drier places. Some dams just act to control floods in times of heavy rains. Often these dams do not have lakes behind them.

A few lakes are called “salt lakes.” They are lakes that receive water but have no way for the water to get out except by evaporation. They get saltier and saltier from the salt that comes in but
can’t evaporate like the water. The Salton Sea is such a lake. (This lake also has a very interesting history. It was “man-made” by accident in 1905. We will read about this later.)

Rivers

As snow melts in the mountains and rain falls, it runs off into our rivers. Most California rivers eventually run into the Pacific Ocean. The area that a river draws water from is called its “drainage basin.” The basin collects the water, and the river drains it.

Between the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Range we have a great valley called the “Central Valley.” This is a huge drainage basin. Three big rivers and many smaller rivers drain it. The Sacramento River drains from the north. The American River drains from the east. The San Joaquin River drains from the south. These rivers all enter the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco Bay.

On the west side of the Central Valley below San Francisco, the Coast Range is really composed of two ridges. Between them is the Salinas Valley and the Salinas River which drains it into Monterey Bay. Many other rivers on this side of the state, like the Eel River and the Russian River, drain directly into the Pacific Ocean.

On the east side of the Sierra and all the way across Nevada and Utah is what is called the “Great Basin.” This huge area gets little rain and snow. Water from the Sierra and the mountains of eastern California mostly drains into this area through rivers like the Truckee and the Mojave. This water goes into “sinks.” They are named for the fact that the water sinks into the sand there and goes into underground rivers. Some of this water reaches the Gulf of Mexico through the Colorado River.

The Truckee, Walker, and some other rivers drain into the Carson Sink in Nevada. A Nevada river, the Humboldt, also sinks nearby. The sinking water leaves residue of salt and alkali. Alkali is a concentration of chemicals from the rocks which is poisonous to man and animal. Pools of water in the desert sinks sometimes contained this. Later you will learn what a problem this was for the immigrants.

On the Modoc Plateau you can find fields covered with volcanic cinders. These are sometimes called “scablands.”

Deserts

The areas of our state that receive very little rain or snow become very dry. They are arid. These are the deserts that explorers like de Anza had to cross if they were to enter California from Mexico.

Look at the map on page 3. What is California’s biggest desert?

Plateaus

Another important geographic feature of California is the plateau. A plateau is a high, relatively flat area. In northeastern California we have the Modoc Plateau. It is drained by the Pit River and the Klamath River and is generally 4000 to 5000 feet above sea level.

VOCABULARY

Look up any of these words that are new to you:

- alkali
- aqueduct
- arid
- dormant
- drainage basin
- extinct
- plate
- plateau
- reservoir
- sink
- transverse

REACTION TIME

1. Why were some Indians unfriendly?
2. How does geography affect us?
3. Describe the geography of your area.
4. What is the most important geographic feature of your area? Why?
5. How did the Great Basin affect the Indians of California?
**Founding of San Diego**

**California’s first mission colony**

In 1765 King Charles III of Spain sent José de Gálvez to New Spain (Mexico) as a special deputy to reorganize the government. Gálvez quickly decided to expand Mexico’s control over Alta California. The 167-year-old reports of Vizcaíno showed San Diego and Monterey Bays as the best places for settlement.

In 1768 Gálvez went to Baja California where he carefully planned a “sacred expedition” to settle San Diego. It would not only establish a colony, but a mission to the Indians as well. Gálvez placed the expedition under the direction of Captain Gaspar de Portolá and a Franciscan padre by the name of Junípero Serra.

Fr. Serra was born in 1713 on Majorca, an island of Spain. In 1748 he was a professor of philosophy at a college when his faith in God compelled him to give up his teaching position and become a missionary. His new goal became martyrdom. He wanted to give his life for his faith. He said this would be the true “gold and silver of the Indies” that he would search for. With such a solid faith, he had no fear.

The expedition to San Diego would take place in two groups. One would go by sea using three ships under Capt. Vicente Vila. The other, a land party, would go in two sections. One would be under Capt. Fernando Rivera, and the other under Capt. Portolá. Father Serra would join the second party. (Remember these names!)

The first of the ships left Mexico on January 9, 1769, from the Baja port of La Paz. A supply ship left one week later. A third ship sank on the way with the loss of all aboard.

The first group to travel over land left northern Baja on March 24. They drove herds of cattle, horses, and mules along with them. The land section under Portolá left on May 15 accompanied by Serra.

It was not expected that the supply ship would arrive at San Diego first, but it did. The first ship to depart, the San Carlos, did not arrive for another three weeks. When it did, all aboard were very sick with scurvy.

The first land party arrived on May 14 and the second, under Portolá, on June 29. Father Serra arrived in San Diego a little before noon on July 1, 1769. About half of the expedition died en route and many more died from scurvy afterward.

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**What is “scurvy”?’**

Throughout the early years of sailing, “scurvy” was the most common shipboard illness. The sailors did not know where it came from. Years later it was learned that scurvy was caused by a lack of vitamin ‘C’ which comes from some foods, especially citrus fruit like oranges. Since these foods quickly spoiled on the ship, they were not available and scurvy was a big problem.

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**Mission San Diego de Alcalá**

The mission bell tower at San Diego is one of the most beautiful of all.
On Sunday, July 2, Fr. Serra dedicated the new colony. It might be said that Fr. Serra’s arrival was the birthday of California.

The expedition to San Diego had one basic purpose: to establish a “way station” along the route to Monterey. From San Diego, Portolá was to lead a further expedition. The bay at Monterey was the ultimate goal.

So two weeks after arrival in San Diego, Portolá and a party of about 60 men left overland to find Monterey. They traveled north into today’s Orange County. There, near the Santa Ana River, they felt several earthquakes. They named the river Río de los Temblores. These may have been the first California earthquakes felt by the “white man.” By August 2, they were at the site of today’s Los Angeles. They named the river there Río de Porciúncula in honor of a holy day on the calendar of their church.

The expedition continued north up what is now called the Salinas Valley, along the Salinas River. In later years this route would become “El Camino Real,” the king’s highway. It is very close to our modern highway 101. Many missions would be established along it. (We will learn more about this important road soon.)

**Discovery of San Francisco Bay**

When Portolá came to Monterey Bay, it looked nothing like what he expected. He thought he was at the Bay of Pines that Cabrillo had discovered. He kept looking for Monterey. On November 2, one of his men sighted a very large bay to the east and southeast. It was on the wrong side of their route. They didn’t know what to think!

They were very confused. This was a new bay. They decided they must have gone by Monterey. What they had done was discover San Francisco Bay. They were between it and the ocean.

This discovery should have seemed more important to Portolá. Father Juan Crespí, who was with him making notes, wrote, “It is a very fine and large harbor, such that...all the navy of all of Europe could take shelter in it.” But Portolá simply wrote that he “found nothing!” The new bay they had found did not seem important to him.

Since Portolá was looking for Monterey, he continued searching. Then winter rain, cold, diarrhoea, scurvy, and hunger finally forced him to turn his party back toward San Diego.

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As they traveled, they wondered what would be there when they returned. They were gone for six months! Would the colony still be there? Would the settlers have been killed by Indians?

**PORTOLÁ RETURNS**

San Diego, California, January 24, 1770

A very discouraged Captain Gaspar de Portolá today returned from his overland journey to the north. He and his men had a very difficult journey looking for the Bay of Monterey. They never did find it. He vows to try again.

**Portolá’s second attempt**

It must have been very frightening for Portolá and his men as they returned to San Diego. If the colony were gone, surely they too, would die.

On January 24, 1770, they reached San Diego. They had not found Monterey. When they got back to San Diego, everything was okay, but little work had been done. The first mission had been started in a mud hut. Fr. Serra named it Mission San Diego de Alcalá. But none of the Indians had accepted the padre’s faith.
When a supply ship arrived with fresh provisions, Portolá decided to go back and look again for Monterey. He sent Fr. Serra and Lt. Pedro Fages with others on the ship north to Monterey. (“Lt.” is the abbreviation for lieutenant.)

Then Portolá left a small group at San Diego and went north again by land. When he got to Monterey Bay, he discovered that the boat with Fr. Serra and Lt. Fages was not yet there. It did not arrive until June 1, 1770. It took over a month for them to sail those 400 or so miles from San Diego!

Portolá realized now that he had actually been at Monterey on his first journey but had not known it. The description from Vizcaíno was very different from what he found. The bay was not very well protected from the sea.

Portolá made Lt. Fages “Governor” of the new province of California. He was our state’s first real governor, but it was a state in Mexico at the time. Then he returned to Mexico to give his report. He said it would be very hard to supply the new missions. He never came back to California again!

After Portolá left, Father Serra had trouble getting along with Gov. Fages. He decided to move his mission to a beautiful little stream about five miles away from Monterey. He would have his headquarters there. He named it Mission San Carlos Borroméo de Carmelo. Today we simply know it as Carmel Mission.

**NEW MISSION AT MONTEREY**

*Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo, June 3, 1770*

Believing this will become the center of the new California colony, Father Serra has dedicated the second of his missions. He intends to make his headquarters here.

Let the Russians have it!

**Portolá says, “They deserve it.”**

Capt. Portolá returned to Mexico very disappointed with what he had seen in California. He was so disappointed that he told the viceroy Spain should let the Russians have California if they wanted it!

The Russians were getting closer to California. They were in Alaska. They were hunting and fishing there. Soon they might come to California. Portolá said the Russians deserved California “as a punishment for their desires.” If Portolá had his way, California might be part of Russia today!

Man behind the man

**Juan Bautista de Anza**

A southern California state park, Anza-Borrego, bears the name of an important pioneer of California history. He was Juan Bautista de Anza. His father had the same name and was one of the first explorers of Arizona. He had been killed by Apache Indians in 1739. (We read about him in our last issue.)

The younger Anza explored and traveled the first overland route to California from the east. To go from Baja California to Alta California as Portolá and Serra had done still required a difficult voyage up the Mexican coast. Anza wanted to find a better route.

But before he could do this, another man laid the foundation for Anza’s accomplishment. He was a padre from the Mission San Xavier del Bac near Tucson, Arizona. (It is still there and you can go see it.) His name was Fr. Francisco Garcés. He was the “man behind the man.”

Father Garcés was a man with a vision. He saw the possibility of travel far to the west, toward California. But this was unknown territory. It was hot, dry, desert. Still he was convinced it could be crossed.

In August 1768 Garcés traveled half way to the Colorado River. In 1770 he tried again, getting even farther. On his third try, in 1771, he reached the Colorado River. The route he took became known as Camino del Diablo, “The Devil’s Road!” He traveled down the Colorado to its mouth at the Gulf of California. Then he set out northwest across the desert. He came within sight of the San Jacinto Mountains, more than half way to the ocean, when he turned back.

Garcés’ experience and reports gave hope that a route to Monterey might be found overland from...
the southeast. Then supplies and colonists could come into California from Sonora in Mexico. Sonora had good overland connections with the east coast of Mexico and the gulf.

Here is a kind of cactus that is common in our Southern California desert. Can you name it?

This is a ___________________________ cactus.

NEW MISSION DEDICATED
Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, California, September 1771
Continuing his effort to establish mission stations over the length of California, Father Serra has recently dedicated this newest site. The location at the foot of a high mountain range will act as a rest stop between the missions at San Diego and San Antonio. The desert that surrounds the mission site is one of the driest on the route Serra calls “El Camino Real.” The entire region down to the Bay of Smokes will probably never amount to anything.

Three new missions added
After Father Serra started his missions in San Diego and Carmel, he placed three more in between. Locate them on the map on page two. What do you notice about them?

INDIAN UPRISING
Mission San Diego de Alcalá, California, November 1775
An Indian uprising has occurred here. All mission buildings were burned and most residents have been killed. Over 800 Indians took part in the attack.

Indians in revolt
When the first explorers visited California, most of the Indians were friendly. Pedro de Unamuno had been beaten in a battle with Indians at Morro Bay in 1587 (Issue #4). There had also been other fights. But the first big battle with Indians was at San Diego in 1775. Over 800 Indians attacked the mission and killed many settlers. They even killed the Mission Padre, Luis Jaime.

The American Revolution

AMERICAN PATRIOTS REBEL
Lexington, Massachusetts, April 19, 1775
More than 100 American colonists and English soldiers fell in an unexpected battle here today. Many fear this will lead to an all-out war for independence. Of course, no one believes such a war can be won by the colonies.

While the native residents at San Diego were rising against the Spanish mission priests and soldiers, another rebellion had just begun. It was a continent away in an American colony called “Massachusetts.”

The citizens of England’s American colonies had come to stay. Many had been oppressed by their government because of their religious beliefs. They already distrusted the king. Now they believed they were being unfairly taxed as well.

That rebellion would soon lead to a newly independent nation in North America. The English colonies would become the United States of America. How do you think Spain would feel about that?

VOCABULARY
Look up any of these words that are new to you: padre scurvy way station

REACTION TIME
1. Why did Father Serra come to California?
2. Why was Captain Portolá looking for Monterey?
3. What did Portolá think of the bays at Monterey and San Francisco?
4. What did Portolá mean when he said the Russians deserved California?
5. Describe the journeys of Portolá and de Anza. What was travel like?
In 1843 California was still a state in Mexico. Texas had won independence from Mexico and was a republic. There was talk of independence for California as well. Many in America wanted Texas and California to become states in the Union.

Why do you suppose America wanted California?

Lieutenant John Fremont was sent west on a secret mission. He was sent to survey and map a route that could be used to cross the Rocky Mountains and go to California. Then it would be safer and easier for settlers going west. That is why he was later called “The Pathfinder.”

Kit Carson had been to California along with Ewing Young. (See issue #14.) He was an experienced trail guide. Fremont hired him to lead his men through the mountains. They became good friends. Together they crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the middle of winter! (Much like Jed Smith.)

There was another reason why Fremont came to California. The Mexican government of California was very weak. Russia, France, and England were also interested in California. The American government was worried that one of these other countries might move in and take it over. Then the United States could be cut off from the Pacific.

The American government also believed that war was likely between America and Mexico. They expected it to start before Fremont arrived in California. So Fremont was also ready to fight Mexico to win California for America.

The map above is from about 1830. The bold outline on it is the border claimed by the United States. Fremont was sent to survey the western part. Look closely and find the boundary between Oregon and California. Fremont crossed back and forth here.

Fremont, the flag-raiser!

How would you like to come to school one day and see some other country’s flag flying over it? That is what happened in California in March of 1846, only the flag was not at a school, but on top of a mountain!

Promoted to captain, Fremont came back to California a third time “on a survey.” He probably was hoping for war so he could take control. When Texas became an American state in December 1845, Mexico called it an “act of war.” So Fremont was sure war would come soon.

But it did not come soon enough for him. With his troop of men, Fremont moved about near Monterey waiting for the war. California General
José Castro ordered him to leave at once. It made Fremont so mad that he took his men to the top of a nearby hill and raised the American flag!

Of course, this was not right. After several days of argument, Fremont removed the flag and took his men north. They went just across the line to Oregon and waited there.

**War with Mexico**

In Texas another argument was going on. It was over the boundary between Texas and Mexico. On May 13, 1846, America declared war on Mexico. But Texas was 1000 miles away from California. **Nobody** here knew about it!

Californians were more concerned about where their state capital should be. Sureños, like Governor Pío Pico, wanted Los Angeles. Norteños, like General José Castro, wanted Monterey.

**Looking for a new home**

When the very first settlers came to California, they had no friends here to greet them. There were no cities, no homes, no farms, and no jobs like they knew at home. Can you imagine going to such a new place to live?

The first settlers knew they would have to do everything for themselves. They would have to build or find everything they needed.

In the list below, circle the things these settlers would need to survive.

- Food
- Ice cream
- Soap
- Shoes
- Water
- Radios
- Footballs
- An axe
- Pots and pans
- Toys
- Houses
- Clothing
- Computers
- A shovel
- Newspapers

The items you circled should be things you almost have to have to live. We call them “basic necessities.” For example, how would you live without food or water?

So when the first settlers came, how did they decide where to live?

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Many pioneer farm families on the plains lived in houses built of sod. They were called “soddies.” The sod is cut into bricks and assembled into a very solid wall.

**Crossing the Sierra**

Today a modern superhighway crosses the Sierra Nevada Mountains at a place called Donner Summit. It is on Interstate 80 in Nevada County between Sacramento and Truckee. (This is at D-4 on your map in Issue #5. Cars, trucks and busses go whizzing through. There are also trains carrying freight and passengers across the mountains there.

In 1844 there were no tracks, highways, or even wagon roads across these mountains. In fact, no one had figured out how or where to take a wagon across.

If you have been in the Sierra, you know how big they are. You know about the tall granite cliffs and the rocky streams. You may know about the deep snow that falls there in the winter.

In 1844 the first wagon train made it all the way to California over the mountains. It was led by Elisha Stevens. It was a very hard journey.

The Stevens party followed the same trail used by Walker until reaching the Sierra. There they were told by an Indian named “Truckee” about a river they could follow to the west. It was up this river they took their wagons. They named the river for the Indian.
By the time they got over the pass it was snowing. They couldn't take the wagons farther. They had to divide their party into several groups. One group of men made its way down on foot through the snow to Sutter's fort. Another group of men took a different route and did the same thing.

Two men, with the women and children, stayed with five of the wagons in the snow to wait until the spring thaw. While they were waiting, a baby was born there in the high mountain snows! Soon they ran out of food and some had to eat ox hides.

One of the younger men stayed with the other six wagons below the pass where he waited alone. He set traps and caught a few coyotes and foxes. He said the foxes tasted very good but he could hardly stand to eat the coyotes!

In March the men were able to get back through the snow to rescue those who had stayed with the wagons. Everyone had survived and the wagons were brought down too.

**Donner Party**

The worst experience of all was in 1846 when an early winter storm caught a wagon train in the high Sierra. George and Jacob Donner were leading when they became trapped in the snow.

They had left Illinois for California in early spring. They had plenty of time to complete their journey. But they made the mistake of following bad advice! They took a “shortcut” called the “Hastings Cutoff” into Utah. It was a terrible trail. They fell far behind and did not reach the Sierra Nevada Mountains until November. There they were caught by an early snowstorm. They had to camp there until February.

In order to survive, they had to eat their animals and even the bodies of dead companions. Of the original 87, only 47 survived.

**Shortcuts and cutoffs**

What is a shortcut?

As pioneer families prepared to depart for California, they eagerly sought suggestions about the best way to go. They wanted to get there as fast as they could, but more than anything else, they wanted to get there safely.

Sometimes, when we want something fast, we take shortcuts. Because we are so anxious to get what we want, we may not be careful enough.

That is what happened to the Donner Party. They took the “Hastings Cutoff,” a shortcut they were told of. They trusted bad advice and followed it without checking first.

This is a lesson we can learn from history. Taking bad advice, blindly looking for shortcuts, not checking what is best; these are proven ways to meet disaster.

**Life on the trail**

Beginning with the Stevens Party in 1844, many families came to California in covered wagons. (See the map on the next page.) Most of the wagons were called “Conestogas.” People liked to call them “prairie schooners” for their boat shaped body and the way they sailed across the plains.

The Conestoga wagon was designed by Dutch immigrants in the Conestoga Valley of Pennsylvania. The front wheels were made smaller than the back wheels so it would be easier to steer. The bigger back wheels helped it go over bumps better.

Because it was shaped a little like a boat, lower in the middle than on the ends, things loaded in it tended to shift to the middle. This made it drive better.

Canvas was stretched over hoops to protect the cargo from the weather. Often the cargo included the boys and girls! Sometimes it even included a piano or organ.

**It sounds like a lot of fun . . .**

Doesn’t it? Wouldn’t you like to ride a covered wagon west across the mountains and plains to California?

Wouldn’t it be fun to eat by an open fire every night and let the wind blow through your hair?
Wouldn’t you like to spend five or six months living on the trail with only a few friends.

Wouldn’t it be neat to listen to the wolves at night and wonder if they were Indians about to attack?

Wouldn’t it be great to leave your wagon and starving cattle and walk out across the desert with no water? You could hope that over the next hill there might be a spring!

Wouldn’t it be nice? No, sometimes it was very “not nice.” Sometimes mothers had babies that didn’t live and fathers caught cholera or small pox and died along the trail. Often wagon wheels broke and couldn’t be repaired and wagons, pianos, organs, dishes, chests, and priceless heirlooms had to be left behind. Pets died. Cows and horses died. Children and babies died. Sometimes it was very, very bad.

But there were good times too

It wasn’t always bad. Families would gather by the fire at the end of the day and, if the weather was okay, they might sing songs and tell stories. There were games they could play.

Everybody had work to do, stock to feed, chores to do, preparations for the next day. But that was the way it had always been.

There was the excitement of a new home

Have you ever moved to a new home? If you have, you probably had good and bad feelings about it. Maybe you were sad to leave old friends behind. Maybe you had some favorite places you liked to go and things you liked to do there. But I’ll bet you got excited about your new home too. Didn’t you, just a little?

There would be new friends and a new school. You would have new places to go, things to do, and sights to see. Didn’t you begin to think about that? Didn’t you begin to get excited about your new home?

Buffalo!

When the first wagon trains left for California, buffalo were expected to provide much of the food they would eat along the way. But soon the buffalo were almost gone. Then they realized they couldn’t depend on this.

Finding food on the trail was not always easy. Sometimes they had to eat their own horses, mules, or oxen. Do you think you would like that? Would you make a good pioneer?

Vocabulary

Look up any of these words that are new to you:

- basic necessity
- sod
- survey

Reaction Time

1. Why do you suppose Fremont’s mission was kept a secret?
2. Why did Fremont leave California but just go a little way into Oregon?
3. How do “shortcuts” sometimes hurt us?
4. Explain how you would feel being a pioneer and going into a new, unknown land. Are you?
5. Why did buffalo almost disappear from the plains?