By the end of the year, the non-native population of California was estimated at 100,000, (as compared with 20,000 at the end of 1848 and around 800 in March 1848). To accommodate the needs of the ’49ers, gold mining towns had sprung up all over the region, complete with shops, saloons, brothels and other businesses seeking to make their own Gold Rush fortune. The overcrowded chaos of the mining camps and towns grew ever more lawless, including rampant banditry, gambling, prostitution and violence. San Francisco, for its part, developed a bustling economy and became the central metropolis of the new frontier.

The Gold Rush undoubtedly sped up California’s admission to the Union as the 31st state. In late 1849, California applied to enter the Union with a constitution preventing slavery, provoking a crisis in Congress between proponents of slavery and abolitionists. According to the Compromise of 1850, proposed by Kentucky’s Senator Henry Clay, California was allowed to enter as a free state, while the territories of Utah and New Mexico were left open to decide the question for themselves.

When mercury got into water near the mine sights it would form with other bacteria and become an even more toxic substance which poisoned the environment and the Indians themselves. the mercury would usually end up in insects first, when the fish ate the insects they too became infected with the toxin, and then it was finally passed on to the Indians, who developed dangerous symptoms and in most cases they died.  Mercury was used in mining to separate the precious metal from other debris. When the white prospectors left the areas they had surface mined treeless, it often created floods which wiped out even more plant life and wildlife, which in return was killing a lot of the Indians main food sources.

The Native Americans were deeply scarred from the California Gold rush more than anyone could imagine other than the people who lived the nightmare. The population of Indians was an estimated 150,000 in 1845; 25 years later and 22 years after the beginning of the Goldrush an estimated number of only 30,000 Indians were living. The estimated number of Indians killed by new diseases passed on by settlers is around 60% of all the Natives living combined.

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| 1837, economic crisis in East and South. Banks collapsed, people lost their savings. Businesses failed and thousands became unemployed. Unemployment was at 25% in many areas, wages were cut by 40%. People headed west for better wages and employment. | **Some feared religious persecution**  The Mormons were a religious group that were shunned by other Christians because of their beliefs (e.g. polygamy). They were met with violence and forced to leave the East. E.g. in 1845, their leader Joseph Smith was murdered. They headed to Salt Lake Valley, Utah for safety. |
| The Oregon Trail started at Missouri and travelled West, through the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains to Oregon. It allowed wagons to travel across the difficult terrain. Between 1836 and 1869, over 400,000 people had used it. It could cope with large groups of people at one time e.g. 1843 a part of 900 people used it. | Traders and fur-trappers had brought back stories of rich, fertile land west of the Rocky Mountains. Many saw this as a perfect opportunity for a fresh start. |
| US government wanted Americans to settle in Oregon, rather than Brits. In 1841, the US government provided $30,000 to allow the Oregon Trail to be mapped for travellers. This encouraged people to use it, as it seemed less dangerous. | In 1849 – 100,000 men travelled to California in the hope of becoming rich. They came from all over the world across the Oregon Trail. By 1855, California’s population was over 300,000. Others went to profit off the gold rush by selling equipment to prospectors, or provide services such as alcohol and prostitution. |
| Whites believed God had put them on Earth to expand from sea to shining sea. They had to bring civilisation and modernity to the west – including the Native Americans. |  |