



California State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

California State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of California

The name *California* originates from the Spanish conquistadors, taken from "Las Serges de Esplandian," a Spanish romance written about 1510 which describes an imaginary island; an earthly paradise. *Baja California* (lower California - now in Mexico) was first visited by the Spanish in 1533. Present-day California was called *Alta California* (upper California).

People who live in California or who come from California are called Californians.



Map of California – Capital, Major Lakes and Rivers

STATEHOOD

With the gold rush came a huge increase in population in California and a pressing need for civil government. After a heated debate in the U.S. Congress, arising out of the slavery issue, California entered the Union as a free, non-slavery state and was admitted to the Union as the 31st state on September 9, 1850.

STATE CONSTITUTION

The California Constitution is the document that establishes and describes the duties, powers, structure and function of the government of California. The state's first constitution was adopted in November 1849 in advance of California attaining U.S. statehood. California was admitted to the Union on September 9, 1850. The constitution of 1849 was superseded by the current constitution, which was ratified on May 7, 1879.

California's constitution can be amended through statewide votes of the electorate on legislatively-referred constitutional amendments and initiated constitutional amendments. It can also be amended through a process beginning with a constitutional convention.

PREAMBLE: We, the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this Constitution.

STATE GOVERNMENT

California's state government is organized into three branches of government: executive branch, consisting of the Governor of California and other elected constitutional officers; legislative branch, consisting of the California State Legislature which includes the Assembly and the Senate; and the judicial branch constituting of the Supreme Court of California and lower courts. Government is exercised through state agencies and commissions as well as local governments consisting of counties, cities and special districts including school districts.

The Governor of California is the chief executive officer of the state and is elected by citizens for a four-year term and may serve for two consecutive terms. The governor's responsibilities include making annual State of the State addresses to the California State Legislature, submitting the budget, and ensuring that state laws are enforced. The position was created in 1849, before California became a state.

The California State Legislature is a bicameral body consisting of the lower house, the California State Assembly, with 80 members, and the upper house, the California State Senate, with 40 members. New legislators convene each new two-year session, to organize, in the Assembly and Senate Chambers, respectively, at noon on the first Monday in December following the election. After the organizational meeting, both houses are in recess until the first Monday in January, except when the first Monday is January 1st or January 1st is a Sunday, in which case they meet the following Wednesday.

Members of the Assembly are elected from eighty districts, serve two year terms, and since 1990 are limited to being elected three times. Members of the Senate serve four year terms and are

limited to being elected twice. There are forty Senate districts, with half of the seats up for election on alternate (two year) election cycles.

The judicial system of California is the largest in the United States that is fully staffed by professional law-trained judges; a person must be admitted to practice law before they can become a judge in California. Today, California's system is divided into three levels, with the Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal serving as appellate courts reviewing the decisions of the Superior Courts.

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.

Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of California elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and 52 people, based on California's current population, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE SEAL



The Great Seal of California

Eureka!

Under the gaze of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, a miner works near the Sacramento River. A grizzly bear rests at her feet and ships ply the river. The Sierra Nevada Mountains rise in the background. Wildlife, agriculture, natural beauty, commerce, and opportunity are all represented on California's Great Seal.

The state motto, *Eureka*, sits over the mountains. A Greek word that means "I have found it," *Eureka* refers to the discovery of gold in California. The miner, working with a pick, is another reference to the gold that was found in California. A pan and a rocker are also depicted on the seal near the miner. The pan was used to separate the gold from the dirt; just add water. The rocker is a larger and more sophisticated "pan." It allowed miners to process more dirt and sand faster. At the time the seal was designed, people were coming from all over the world looking to "strike it rich" in the gold fields.

Virtually all of the products coming in and out of California were carried over water routes at the time the seal was designed. Mining supplies, letters from home, luxuries, household items, and gold were all carried on ships. From the eastern United States, ships sailed south around Cape Horn and north to California. The ships, on a representation of the Sacramento River, symbolize the commercial greatness of California.

A sheaf of grain in the foreground represents California's agricultural wealth. In fact, many who came looking for gold found farming to be more profitable. Today, California is an agricultural giant among the states.

At the feet of Minerva, stands the California grizzly bear. A symbol of strength and independence, the grizzly bear is the Official State Animal and is the prominent feature on the California State Flag. Grizzly bears were, at one time, common in the state but the mass movement of people into California during the gold rush strained their habitat and caused their numbers to decline sharply. Today there are no wild grizzly bears left in California.

The seal was designed by Major R. S. Garnett of the U.S. Army, and adopted at the Constitutional Convention of 1849 before California became a state in June 1850. At the time of the seal's adoption, thirty states comprised the United States. Near the upper edge of the seal are 31 stars, anticipating California's admission. The original 1849 design is depicted to the right.



In 1937 minor changes were made to the seal.

STATE CAPITAL (Sacramento)



The **California State Capitol** is home to the government of California. The building houses the bicameral state legislature and the office of the governor.

Located in Sacramento, the Neoclassical structure was completed between 1861 and 1874 at the west end of Capitol Park, which is framed by L Street to the north, N Street to the south, 10th Street to the west, and 15th Street to the east

The Capitol and grounds were listed on the office of the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and listed as a California Historical Landmark in 1974, with a re-dedication on January 9, 1982 to commemorate the close of the bicentennial restoration project

The building is based on the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C. The west facade ends in projecting bays, and a portico projects from the center of the building. At the base of the portico, seven granite archways brace and support the porch above. Eight fluted Corinthian columns line the portico. A cornice supports the pediment above depicting Minerva surrounded by Education, Justice, and Mining.

Above the flat roof with balustrade are two drums supporting a dome. The first drum consists of a colonnade of Corinthian columns; the second, Corinthian pilasters. Large arched windows line the drum walls. The dome is 64 m (210 ft) high, matching that of the U.S. Capitol, and supports a lantern with a smaller dome capped with a gold-leafed orb fin.

The California Senate chamber seats its forty members in a large chamber room decorated in red, which is a reference to the British House of Lords, also the upper house of a bicameral legislature. The chamber is entered through a second floor corridor. From the coffered ceiling hangs an electric reproduction of the original gas chandelier. A hand-carved dais caps off a recessed bay framed by Corinthian columns.

The Latin phrase "*Senatoris est civitatis libertatem tueri*" ("It is the duty of a Senator to protect the liberty of the people") lines the cornice. A portrait of George Washington by Jane Stuart, the daughter of Gilbert Stuart, is on the wall above. The State Seal hangs above.

Gilded Corinthian columns support the gallery above, and dark red curtains that can be drawn for privacy are tied back along the columns. High arched windows run along the bottom below rectangular pane windows. Behind the rostrum, there are two chairs with red velvet cushions, reserved for the president *pro tempore* of the senate and the speaker of the assembly, but are never used.

The California Assembly chamber is located at the opposite end of the building. Its green tones are based on those of the British House of Commons, the lower house. The dais rests along a wall shaped like an "E", with the central projection housing the rostrum. Along the cornice

appears a quotation from Abraham Lincoln in Latin: *legislatorum est justas leges condere* ("It is the duty of legislators to pass just laws"). Almost every decorating element is identical to the Senate Chamber.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_State_Capitol

STATE MOTTO

"Eureka...I have found it!"

California's state motto, "*Eureka... I have found it!*" refers to the discovery of gold in California. The California state motto also appears on the state seal.

The Greek word *Eureka* means "I have found it" (the famed Greek mathematician Archimedes is said to have exclaimed "Eureka!" when he finally discovered a method for determining the purity of gold).

STATE FLAG

The Bear Flag was first raised on June 14, 1846, at Sonoma by a group of American settlers revolting against the rule of Mexico. The original flag was painted by William Todd.

Pioneer John Bidwell recorded many of the events surrounding the "Bear Flag Revolt" and about the raising of the Bear Flag he wrote,



"Another man left at Sonoma was William L. Todd who painted, on a piece of brown cotton, a yard and a half or so in length, with old red or brown paint that he happened to find, what he intended to be a representation of a grizzly bear. This was raised to the top of the staff, some seventy feet from the ground. Native Californians looking up at it were heard to say 'Coche' the common name among them for pig or shoat."

Unfortunately, the original Bear Flag, held by the Society of California Pioneers perished in the Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906.

The current California State Flag, adopted by the state legislature in 1911, is based on the original Bear Flag raised by pioneering Americans over Sonoma in 1846. The star was taken from the lone star of Texas. The Bear was representative of the numerous Grizzly Bears in the state and the words "California Republic" testify to the feisty American pioneers who settled in the territory.

Today the identity of the animal depicted on the flag is not likely to be mistaken for a "coche."

STATE NICKNAMES

The Golden State

California's long association with gold makes this a natural nickname for the state. From the naming of the state in the 16th century to the California Gold Rush of 1848 and the fields of yellow poppies (official state flower) that bloom in the springtime, gold, in one form or another, has been intertwined with the history and development of California. The state legislature made "The Golden State" the *official* nickname of California in 1968.

"The Golden State" is not the only nickname that has been associated with California. Over the years, California has been referred as "The Land of Milk and Honey" and "The El Dorado State" and "The Grape State." These nicknames served at various times to promote business and tourism for the state of California.

The Land of Milk and Honey

"The Land of Milk and Honey" is a nickname promoting California as a land of opportunity with connections to "The Promised Land" of the *Bible*.

The Grape State

Referencing the large quantities of table and wine grapes grown in California, the nickname The Grape State is based in the business of agriculture.

The Eldorado State

A first nickname for California was "The Eldorado State." This nickname was used for California after the discovery of gold in 1848

STATE BIRD



Adoption of the Official Bird and Avifaunal Emblem

It was the Audubon Society that selected the **California Valley Quail** (*Lophortyx californica*) as an appropriate symbol of California and recommended its official adoption to the California Legislature. It was Assembly members Eleanore Miller and Charles W. Fisher who brought the legislation to the California Legislature.

On January 21, 1931, Assembly Bill No. 776 (AB 776), was introduced and read for the first time in the California General Assembly. AB 776 proposed that the California Valley Quail be adopted by the State as "the official bird and avifaunal emblem of the State of California".

Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

