

MISSION

LABOR

a short history
by Bill Morgan

Illustrated by Jos Sances

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**California Federation of Teachers
Labor in the Schools Committee 2011**

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Introduction

HISTORY

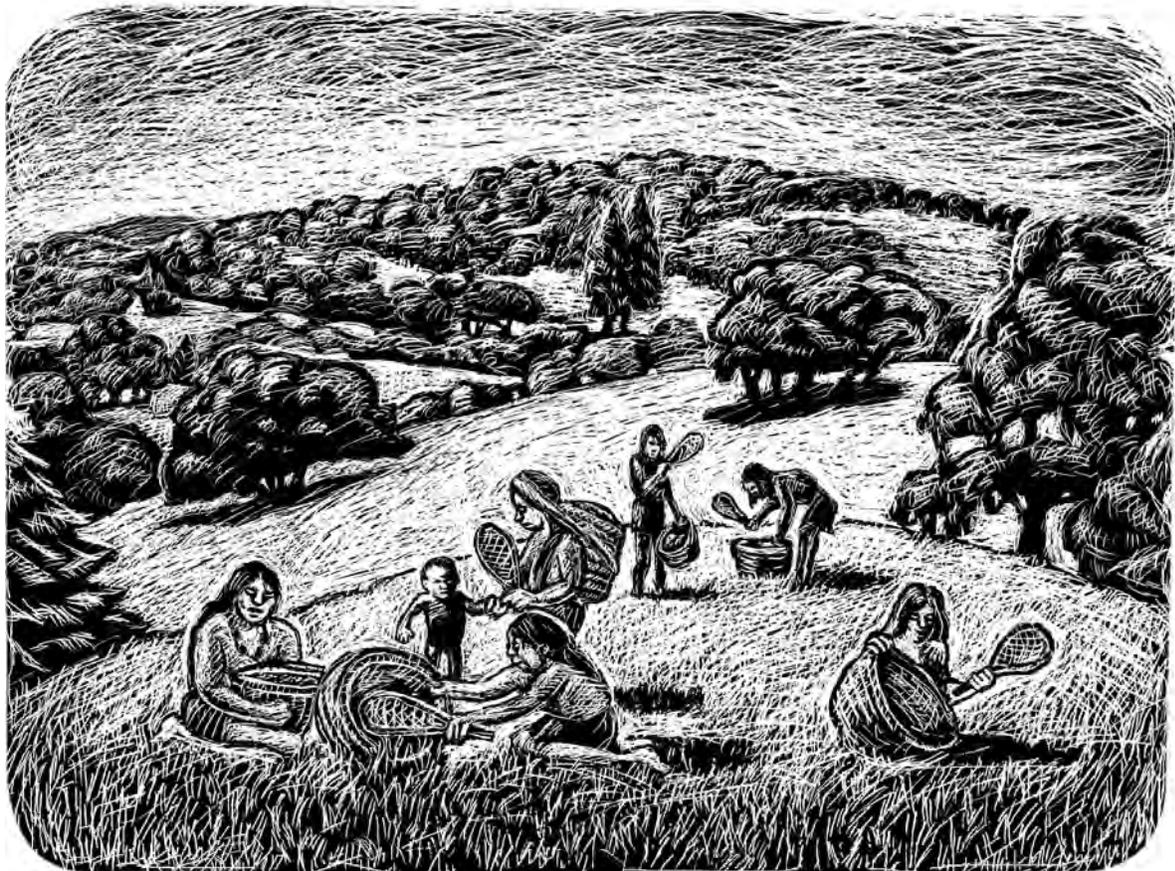
AND WORK

History happens because time passes. We know that time passes because things change, like the hands or numbers on a clock. As time passes, people change, too. They are born, become children, then teenagers, and then adults. They grow up and grow older. While they are alive, people try to make their lives better. They sleep and eat. Everyone has to do those things. But if they are fortunate, people can use some of their time to do things they want, like go on a vacation, or visit a friend or just spend time in their homes.

People use part of their lives to work. People work to get the things they need, like food, clothing, a place to live, and everything else

they need to buy. If you look at the world around you, almost everything you see came from people's work. In a city, everything—all the stores and houses and big buildings, the streets, the sidewalks, the signs, the cars—were made by people's work. The natural things in the world—rivers and oceans, deserts, mountains and the other landforms—were not made by people, but they have been changed by people's work. People build dams, cut down forests, make bridges and buildings, and use the land to grow things. People's work has changed the Earth.

History is a story of the changes people have made in the world up to now. You can even take the word "history" apart, and see what it



Because most history books do not even mention the lives of working people, or the lives of women and children, they make you feel that only the rich and famous men are important.

first meant. *His story.* A story told by a man, or about men.

And it's true that most history books you read tell about rich, powerful, European men and their lives. The stories in them usually tell about the ideas, the discoveries, the governments, the wars and business of such men. These men are the heroes and the main characters.

The books don't tell much about the lives and ideas of working men and women, or non-white men and women, even though they are the people who actually build the buildings and roads and bridges, who fight and die in the wars, who raise the children and grow the food that everyone eats. And there is usually nothing at all about the lives of children.

For example, you might read in a history book that "General Lee won a big battle," or, "The businessmen known as 'The Big Four' built

the railroad." Is this true? Of course not! General Lee didn't actually fight in the battle. He ordered other people—soldiers—to fight and die in the battle, but it is he, the general, who gets famous and has his name in the history book.

The "Big Four" were rich men who didn't know much about how to actually build a railroad, or lay track, or drive a train. They got rich because of the work of thousands of working people. But because most history books do not even mention the lives of these working people, or the lives of women and children, they make you feel that only the rich and famous men are important.



LAND AND LABOR



Much of the history you hear and read is about how kings and rich and powerful men got land and how they got other people to work the land, protect the land, and fight wars for them. Throughout history, kings, rich people and businessmen try to control valuable things like land. For example, the first thing Columbus said when he arrived at Bohio in 1492 was, “I claim this land for the King of Spain.”

“Claim” is another word for “take.” He was taking the land. Did he ask the Tainos, who lived there, if he could take it? No. Europeans and their kings took the land so they could get rich. They might find gold on the land, or grow things, like sugar or tobacco, that they could sell for gold in the form of money. Later, the European people who

“owned” land would sell it to other people who wanted it, and make money that way.

This was different from what the Tainos and other Native Americans thought. They believed that if you had lived on the land and used it, and your people had lived there for a long time, then the land belonged to your people, and you could keep using it and living on it. But it was not yours to sell.

However, there was another thing Columbus and the Europeans like him needed in order to get rich: labor. Labor is people’s work. They needed people who would actually do the work to make them rich. They needed soldiers to fight and die and kill the Indians so they could get and keep control of the land. They needed people who would actually

go down under the ground to take the gold and silver out. They needed people to plant, grow and harvest the food, tobacco and sugar so the owners could sell it and get rich. They also needed people to build the cities and towns where everyone would live.

At first, they forced the native people to work for them. But because of the diseases the Europeans brought, many Indians just died. Many were murdered or died in wars against the Europeans. And many Indians died because they were so sad they didn't want to live anymore just because they were slaves. So the European landowners brought African slaves and working people from Europe and other places to work for them.

Again, think of Columbus. Right after Columbus claimed the land, he forced the natives to work and find gold for him. The Tainos became slaves of the Spanish. If they didn't find gold, Columbus and his soldiers would kill them or punish them. Many other Tainos died from the diseases the Spanish brought. Columbus took many natives back to Spain with him and sold them. He had taken the land and he had taken the labor by forcing people to work for him.

What about California? It was the same way in California. In 1542, the Spanish explorer Cabrillo claimed (took) all of California for Spain. Since there were no big cities, or gold and silver statues, like there were in Mexico, the Spanish stayed away for 200 years. Later,

the king sent soldiers and Catholic priests to California and forced the native Californians to work for them in little church communities called "Missions." In the Missions, the priests controlled and used Indian labor.

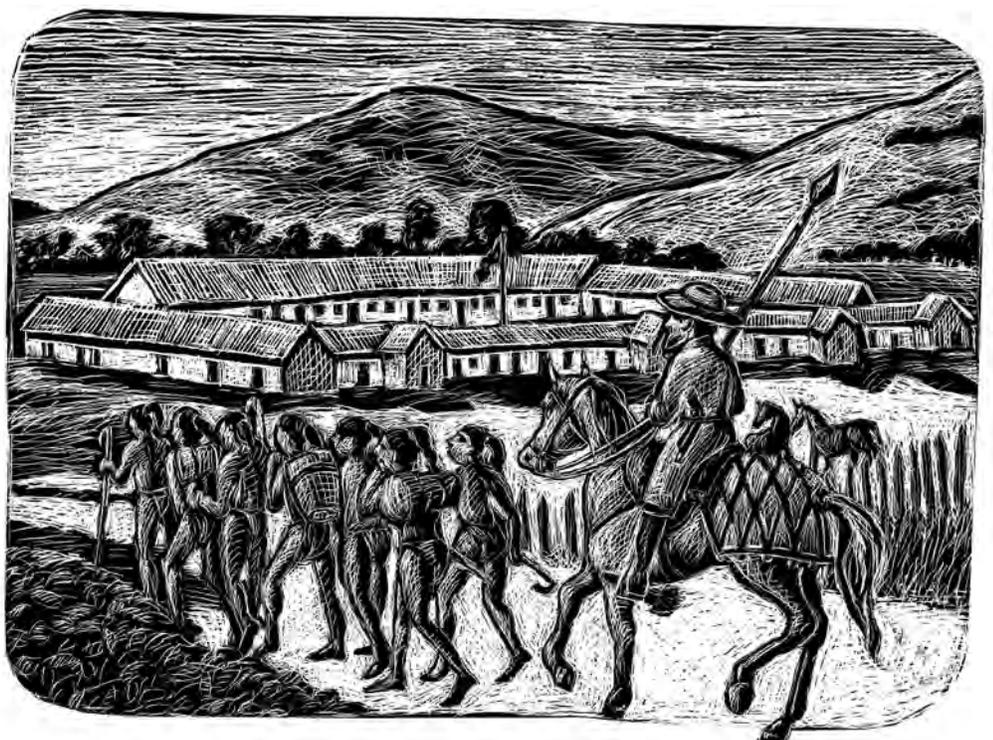
Land and labor. That is what this book is about. In this book we ask questions. How did people get to control and own land? Who did the work? What were the lives of the workers like? Probably, your parents are working people, and, like them, you will have a job, too. Your work, until you get older, is school. (Millions and millions of children your age all over the world already work jobs and can't go to school!) So, in a way, this book is about working people like you and your family. It is your story.

As you live every day, look at the world around you. Ask questions about the things you see and hear about and read about:

How did it get there?

Why was it made?

Who did the work?

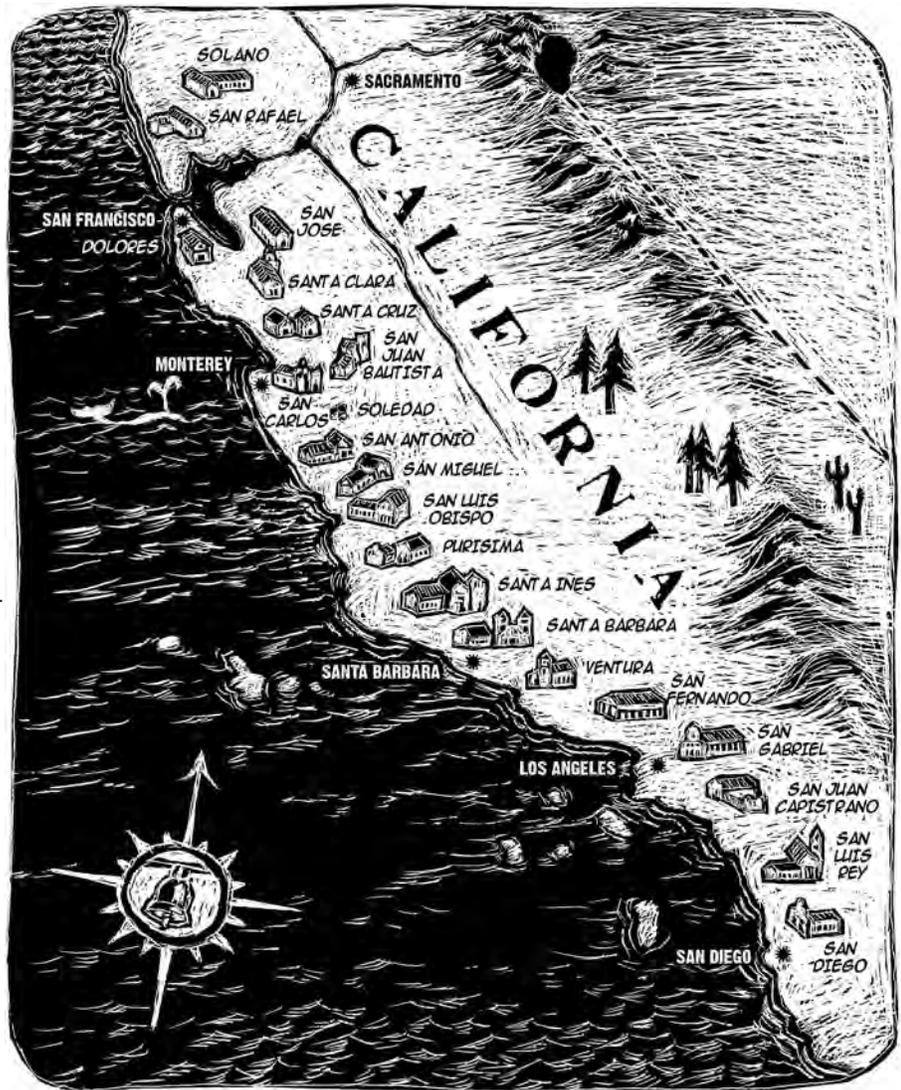


THE MISSIONS OF ALTA CALIFORNIA

If you live in Central or Southern California near the Pacific coast, you probably live near a Mission. The Missions are 21 small Catholic churches that were built by Mexican and Indian workers hundreds of years ago, when Spanish priests and soldiers first came to California. The Missions are the oldest buildings that are still standing in California. If you get a chance, go visit a Mission and see what it looks like. There are lots of books written about the Missions, too.

The Missions were built because the King of Spain decided that he wanted to protect the land of California from other countries. He also wanted to “colonize” or control the land of California. He wanted Spanish and Mexican people to move there and live there so everyone would know that California and Mexico were part of Spain. If other countries sent soldiers or ships to take over California, the people living there would defend California for Spain. Besides, big ships called galleons coming from Spanish colonies in the Philippines needed a place to land their ships in California. The galleons needed a safe port where they could get away from storms and pirates.

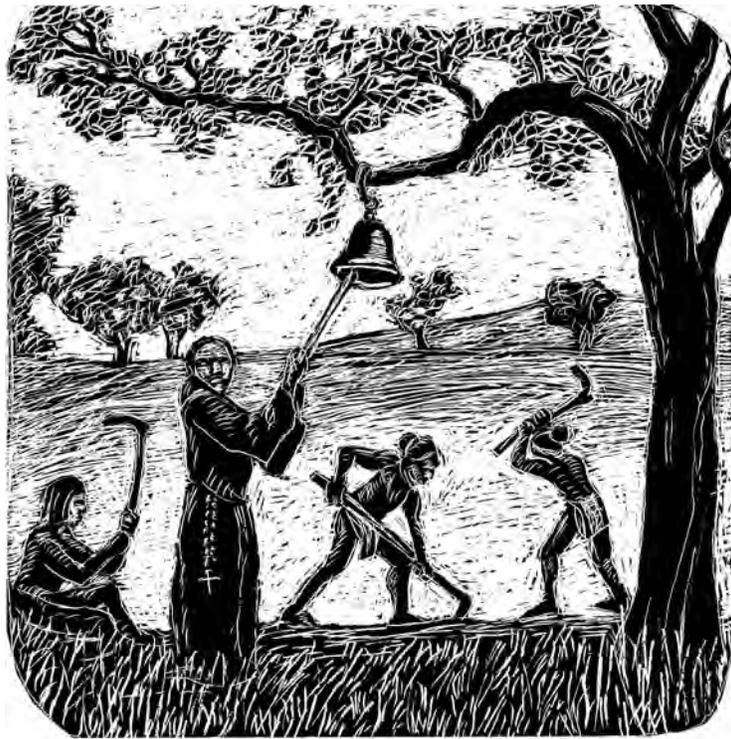
But there were already people living on the coast in California, about 70,000 people. The Spanish called the native people “Indians.”*



Their ancestors had lived there for thousands of years in small groups called tribelets. They spoke many different languages, and at the time the Spanish arrived, they lived by fishing in California’s rivers and lakes, by gathering nuts, seeds, and berries, and by hunting deer and other animals. Some grew food of their own. Sometimes they fought battles and a few people were killed, but mostly they traded and lived in peace.

The Indians in California produced what they needed to make clothes and places to live. They worked about 10-15 hours a week. Sometimes, depending on the season, they

worked more than that. Each tribal group had its language and its stories about God and the beginning of things. There was usually enough food for everyone.



a way to “save their souls” and use their labor to grow crops and raise animals.

“Forget your way of life,” the priests said, “Come and live in the Missions and you will

But the king of Spain had a problem. Hardly anyone from Spain or Mexico wanted to live in California. The first Spanish explorers had not found big cities like in Mexico or Peru. They didn’t see much gold in California either, like in some of their other colonies. So for more than 200 years, the Spanish didn’t do very much in California. California, they decided, had lots of land and native people who lived on the land, but that was all.

learn about the real God and go to Heaven when you die.” The Spanish priests brought their own book about God and the beginning of things, called the *Bible*, and they told the Indians that those who believed in the old traditional stories were savages, but if they believed in the *Bible*, they would be saved and go to Heaven. The priests thought that being a Christian was so great that it was all right to force people to be Christians. That is what they did to the California natives. Soldiers went out and hunted for natives and forced them to live in the Missions. If they tried to leave, the soldiers brought them back and beat or tortured them.

All that changed in 1769, when the king sent the first Spanish missionary priests to Alta California* in 1769 to start the first Mission, which they called San Diego de Alcalá. This is where the city of San Diego is today. The Spanish wanted the “Indians” of California to live like farmworkers in Europe called serfs. They wanted the native people to do the work at the Missions and become obedient Christians and believe in God and Jesus and do what the Spanish priests said. It was both

One member of the Kaima tribe remembered and told someone later who wrote it down:

I was at the beach catching clams and some men on horses came and lassoed me and dragged me for a long way. They took me to a mission and locked me up for

a week. They said they would make me a Christian. They threw water on my head and said I was a Christian and my name was Jesus. The next day, they made me go out and cut corn, but I cut my foot. They whipped me every day because I could not finish my work.

One day, I escaped, but the soldiers hunted me like a fox and caught me. They whipped me until I passed out. I still have the marks on my back...

Once they were in the Mission, the Indians usually couldn't leave. The priests forced them to give up their own religion, their celebrations, and their

The ones that stayed in the Mission were called "neophytes," and treated like children. The priests even called them "My child," and the Indians had to call the priests, "Father."

customs. Sometimes the priests made friends with the Indians and convinced them to stay at the Mission and work there. Sometimes, members of a tribe would come and see what the Missions were like. But if Indians tried to leave the Mission, Spanish soldiers almost always forced them to stay. The ones that stayed in the Mission were called "neophytes," and treated like children. The priests even called them "My child," and they had to call the priests, "Father." For most Indians, the Missions were just like prisons.



INDIAN LABOR

The natives who lived in the Missions were treated like children and also like slaves. If they worked too slowly or refused to work at all, the priests and Spanish soldiers might beat them, torture them, or put them in prison. The same thing would happen if they tried to go back to the country and live in the way they had lived before. They were forced to work even if they were tired or hungry or sick. According to the words of people who actually lived in the Missions, some Indians died from being worked to death. Work at the Missions was different from work with the tribe.

Before, everyone had worked together for the tribe, so there would be enough food and places to live for everyone. A man from the Chumash tribe told about making a canoe:

With their tools the Indians were united in spirit. They had plenty of time to work on their canoe. No one hurried them up. It was not like the Whites. The Indians wanted to build good canoes, and they did not care how long it would take.

At the Mission, the work was different. It was your job to work all day long, and sometimes more. Someone told you what to do, and you had to do it. You had to wake up at a certain time and work for the whole day. The work was not your own. And you weren't working together for your whole tribe. You were working for the boss. You had to do what you were told and do it in a certain time, or else you would get punished. There was lots of work to do, every day. Cleaning, making adobe bricks, building things, tending the cattle, tanning hides, growing food, making clothes, making candles, fixing things. And on and on and on. There was always more to do.





If you get a chance to visit a Mission, look around at all the things there and ask, “Who did the work?” Some things were done by Mexican workers, but mostly the Missions were built and kept going by Indian labor. All they got for it was some clothes, a little food (usually a hot drink made out of corn called *atole*) and a place to stay. They didn’t get paid for their work. We call this type of labor “forced labor.” You couldn’t say they were slaves, because they were not bought and sold. (Later, when the North Americans came, the Indians *were* slaves. They were bought and sold.)

But if you are the worker, forced labor is not very different from slavery. Every part of their lives was controlled by the priests. The

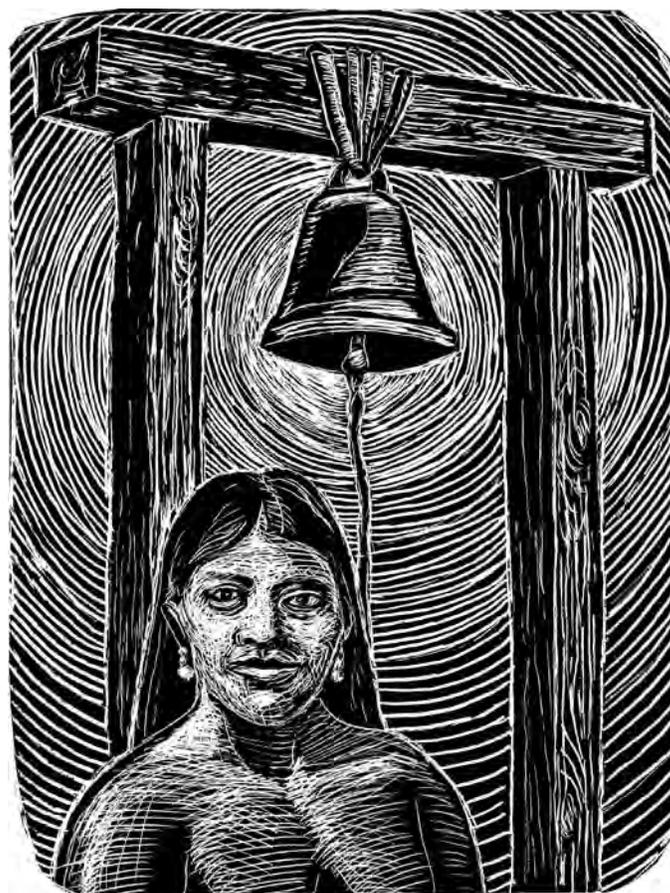
places where the workers stayed were dark, dirty rooms with locks on them. Men and women could not usually stay together.

People bossed you around, and you couldn’t say anything about it. In the morning, there were bells to wake you up, like an alarm clock. Bells rang to tell you to go and pray. There were bells for eating, bells for going to work, bells when to go to sleep, and you had to do it, or you would be punished.

The worst thing was that many, many Indians died when they lived in the Missions. They caught diseases from the Europeans, and in the Missions, with everyone living so close together, when one person got sick, almost all got sick, and died. *One half of all the*

babies born in the Missions died before they were five years old. So many people got sick at Mission Dolores in San Francisco that a whole new mission was started at San Rafael, just to take care of all the sick people! The food the priests gave the neophytes to eat often wasn't good for them, and many died from that. Some were killed by soldiers. Some probably died because they just didn't want to live like that. Many times, women refused to get pregnant because they didn't want their children to have to live at a mission.

But some didn't give up. From the very beginning, the natives of California fought back against the priests and soldiers. They burned down Mission San Diego twice and several times destroyed other missions. They resisted and fought with cruel priests. They refused to work, or worked slowly, just to show they didn't agree with their bosses. In 1795 the Miwoks and Costanoans who lived at Mission Dolores in San Francisco got together and just walked away and went back to their



villages. The Spanish soldiers went to get them back. The soldiers had guns and swords and armor and the Miwoks only had bows and arrows, so the soldiers forced the Indians to go back to the Mission. In 1826, Indians made the first farmworkers' strike in California history when they stopped working at Mission San Juan Capistrano because they were being treated so badly.

A woman of the Gabrielino tribe named Toypurina organized the Indians who were outside Mission San Gabriel to join together with those who were working inside the Mission. They had a plan to burn the Mission down and go back to live in the country, like before. But the soldiers caught her. At her trial she angrily told the judge that it was wrong for the Spaniards to come and live there. Stories have passed down among her people that she yelled at the Spanish judges and spit on them. She was later forced to become a Christian and sent far away to another Mission because the Spanish were afraid of her power among the Indians.

From the very beginning, the natives of California fought back against the priests and soldiers.

WHEN AND WHERE

The first Mission was started in San Diego by a Catholic priest named Junipero Serra, with soldiers commanded by Juan Gaspar de Portola. The buildings were built out of stones the Indians carried by hand. The Spanish left some soldiers and priests at the new Mission and moved further up the coast. The second Mission was at Monterey Bay. Its name is San Carlos Borromeo, but everyone calls it Mission Carmel. In all, they started 21 Missions in Alta California, from San Diego in the south (1769) to Solano in the north (1823). Some of the names you already know, because cities grew near them: San Jose, Santa Clara, Soledad, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, etc. Along the way, Indians and mestizos* built a long road, called El Camino Real. The idea was that you could ride by horse from one Mission to the next in one day, so you would always have a place to stay.

In November of 1769, from a place that is now in Pacifica, called "Sweeney Ridge," Spanish soldiers first saw a huge bay where hundreds of ships could come in from the ocean and be safe from storms and pirates. A few years later, Serra came north to the Bay. He called it "San Francisco" Bay, because of Saint Francis. He started a Mission in a little village named Yerba Buena. He called the Mission Nuestra Senora de los Dolores, which is one of the names for Mary, the mother of Jesus. Nowadays, everyone calls it Mission Dolores.



Many of the Missions were started by Serra, who was a priest from the Franciscan order of the Roman Catholic church. Between 1769 and 1784, Serra started several Missions. "My heart was broken that the Indians were deprived of the Holy Ghost...we look upon them as a father looks upon his family," Serra wrote to another priest.

To many people, Serra is a hero. Everywhere you go in California, you find his name. On Highway 280 near San Francisco, there is a giant statue of Serra, pointing to the west. Some people even think that Serra should be made a saint because he taught so many of the California natives to believe in Jesus.

Other people disagree. They say that Serra caused the death of many people by starting the Missions. What do you think?

Another problem with the Missions is that some people don't think about the way the natives were treated. By doing this, they

can make it seem like the Mission Time in California was a calm, peaceful life, where everyone was happy to be at the Mission and the priests were all good, kind men. It makes the Missions sound like wonderful places, and life at the Missions sound like some happy dream.

But remember? In 1769, the year of the first Mission, there were about 70,000 California Indians living on the Coast. In 1834, just 65 years later, there were only 18,000. That means that 54,000 more coastal natives died than were born. Three out of every four of them died.

By 1834, Mexico had won independence from Spain and was its own country. The Mexican government passed a law to close all the Mission farms and ranches and let all the Indians go free. But these Mission Indians had forgotten how to live in the traditional way, out in the country, and the

Missions where they had always lived were closed. Many Indians moved into the towns or villages. Right away, though, the owners of the big ranches realized that the Natives who had worked at the Missions knew how to do ranch work. They knew how to farm and ride and care for horses. They knew how to herd cattle and make things out of leather, and do all the other jobs at a ranch. The natives became workers and servants at the big ranches. Their labor built the ranches, just as it had built the Missions.

And what about the Mission land? We said in the Introduction that much of history is about getting land and controlling labor. The new Mexican law said that Mission lands should be given to the Mission Indians, so they could have their own little farms. Soon, however, this land was taken from them by Mexican ranchers and businessmen, who saw a chance to use it for themselves. Most of the land became part of big ranches and farms where the workers had very little freedom to

do what they wanted or go where they wanted. They were serfs, who might have had their own places to live but could not leave their jobs because they were always in debt to the owner of the farm or ranch. You can see the legacy of the Missions today in the huge farms of the Central valleys and the small towns where farm workers live.



ARGUING ABOUT THE MISSIONS

Remember the argument about Serra, whether he should be a saint or not? There are arguments about whether the Missions were a good or a bad thing. Some say the Missions were a good thing. Some say the Missions were a very bad thing. If you could hear two people arguing about the Missions, it might go like this:

A church historian might say:

“Look, I know lots of Indians died in the Missions and sometimes priests and soldiers treated them cruelly. But there were cruel Indian chiefs, too, and besides, this way, the Indians got to know Jesus and the True God and when they died, they went to Heaven. They also learned a lot about farming, ranching, and making things. A lot of them got good jobs after the Missions stopped and the ranchos came, because of what they had learned to do at the Missions.”

**There are
arguments about
whether the
Missions were
a good or a
bad thing.**

An Indian historian might say,

“What are you saying? You mean it’s OK for some people to come in your country and force you to live their way? It’s OK for someone to tell you which God to believe in and how to believe in God? No, the Missions were prisons. If you didn’t follow the Europeans’ rules they would beat you or torture you. Tens of thousands of Indians died in those Missions. All those people didn’t die for nothing. People died because the Missions were terrible places for them to live.”

What do you think?

How did the Missions get there?

Why were the Missions started?

Who did the work at the Missions?



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

****Why are Native American people called “Indians?”***

“Indian” is the name given to the Americans by Christopher Columbus. He thought he was in India, so by mistake, he called the people “Indians.”

****How can you figure out how long ago something happened?***

Take the number of the year you’re in. Then take away the number of the year the thing happened in. Like, how long ago did Columbus arrive in the Caribbean? So you start with the year you are in, like 2011, and take away the year Columbus landed, 1492. $2011 - 1492 = 519$ years ago.

****What do you mean by “Alta” California?***

California has two parts—Alta, or Upper California, and Baja, or Lower California. Alta California is the part that is now in the United States. Lower California, “Baja California,” is the part now in Mexico. So

sometimes you have to say “Alta California” or “Baja California” so people know what part of California you mean.

****Why was it called “The New World?”***

That is what Europeans called it. The Americas were just as old as the rest of the world. This land was only “new” to the Europeans. They didn’t even know the Americas were there!

****What are “mestizos?”***

The Mexican people who came to California were part Indian, because when the Spanish soldiers came to Mexico, there were no Spanish women with them. Often, they would kidnap the Indian women and force the women to live with them, because the Indian women were usually slaves. The children from these women were part Indian and part Spanish, and they were called “mestizos.” Most people from Mexico and Central America are mestizos.

“Indian” is the name given to the Americans by Christopher Columbus. He thought he was in India, so by mistake, he called the people “Indians.”



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SELECTED STATE HISTORY STANDARDS

3.2 Students describe the American Indian nations in their local region long ago and in the recent past.

- 1. Describe national identities, religious beliefs, customs, and various folklore traditions.*
- 2. Discuss the ways in which physical geography, including climate, influenced how the local Indian nations adapted to their natural environment (e.g., how they obtained food, clothing, tools).*
- 3. Describe the economy and systems of government, particularly those with tribal constitutions, and their relationship to federal and state governments.*
- 4. Discuss the interaction of new settlers with the already established Indians of the region.*

3.3 Students draw from historical and community resources to organize the sequence of local historical events and describe how each period of settlement left its mark on the land.

- 1. Research the explorers who visited here, the newcomers who settled here, and the people who continue to come to the region, including their cultural and religious traditions and contributions.*

- 2. Describe the economies established by settlers and their influence on the present-day economy, with emphasis on the importance of private property and entrepreneurship.*

4.2 Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

- 1. Discuss the major nations of California Indians, including their geographic distribution, economic activities, legends, and religious beliefs; and describe how they depended on, adapted to, and modified the physical environment by cultivation of land and use of sea resources.*
- 2. Identify the early land and sea routes to, and European settlements in, California with a focus on the exploration of the North Pacific (e.g., by Captain James Cook, Vitus Bering, Juan Cabrillo), noting especially the importance of mountains, deserts, ocean currents, and wind patterns.*

- 3. Describe the Spanish exploration and colonization of California, including the relationships among soldiers, missionaries, and Indians (e.g., Juan Crespi, Junipero Serra, Gaspar de Portola).*

4. Describe the mapping of, geographic basis of, and economic factors in the placement and function of the Spanish missions; and understand how the mission system expanded the influence of Spain and Catholicism throughout New Spain and Latin America.

5. Describe the daily lives of the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the presidios, missions, ranchos, and pueblos.

6. Discuss the role of the Franciscans in changing the economy of California from a hunter-gatherer economy to an agricultural economy.

7. Describe the effects of the Mexican War for Independence on Alta California, including its effects on the territorial boundaries of North America.

8. Discuss the period of Mexican rule in California and its attributes, including land grants, secularization of the missions, and the rise of the rancho economy.



OTHER LABOR EDUCATION RESOURCES FROM THE CFT

Golden Lands, Working Hands Award-winning ten-part, 3-hour video history of the California labor movement. Designed for high school and union education settings. With binder or CD of lessons, readings and materials. **Video series only, \$20 DVD; with lesson plan CD, add \$5.**

California Labor History Map A large full color wall poster (44 x 33) map of California with the locations and brief explanations of more than 250 key labor history events. Perfect for classroom wall. **\$5**

Work, Money and Power: Unions in the 21st Century Pamphlet explaining what unions are and do, including an overview of labor history and compelling evidence for the continuing importance of unions in workers' lives. High school and up. 24 pages. Single copy free; 2-99 copies \$1.25 each; 100 or more copies, \$1 each.

The Yummy Pizza Company: A Labor Studies Curriculum for Elementary Schools Ten lesson plans for elementary students (grades 1-5) introducing them to the world of work in a pizza factory simulation. Students learn how to apply for jobs, to work cooperatively on an assembly line, to retail their wares, to bank their earnings and—most importantly—to resolve conflicts through organization and negotiation. Available with student handouts in Spanish. 30 pages. **\$2**

I, Tomato A booklet for fourth graders, chronicling the life of a tomato—from the point of view of the tomato, with an emphasis on its interactions with workers who nurture it from inception to your table. Gives children a sense of the work that goes into food production and distribution. With study questions. 24 pages. Spanish/English. **\$2**

Trouble in the Hen House: A Puppet Show A flexible elementary curriculum based on a play/puppet show about hens organizing against a mean farmer. It can be read as a story to K-1 students; grades 2-3 children can stage the puppet show; for grades 4-5, it can be used in a 'readers theater' format or students can stage the play for a younger group. In each case, students can make the puppets themselves and learn about the potential for power in collective action. 20 pages. **\$2**

Along the Shore A coloring book (grades K-3) presenting scenes from the lives of working people, focusing especially on longshore workers, but including many others, and simply but effectively showing the importance of unions in workers' lives. Excellent for geography lessons on the East and West coasts as well. Spanish/English. **\$2**

Autoworks A full color comic book on the early history of the United Auto Workers, appropriate for fourth grade and up. 24 pages. **\$2**

Let Me Tell You About This Man: Cesar Chavez, Union Organizer A biography of the most successful farm labor organizer in American history, the man who founded the first farm worker union that lasted. 24 pages, Spanish/English. **\$2**

Safe Jobs for Youth Knowledge of their rights and protections on the job for teens is critical for their safety and health. Teaching curricula, fact sheets about labor laws, and other free resources available at www.youngworkers.org. For more info, 510-643-2424.

Collective Bargaining Education Project Workshops and inservices led by the most experienced high school labor educators in the country. Available to train teachers or lead classroom role plays in labor history or contemporary collective bargaining simulations. Call 626-233-2284 or email <ltubach.cbedproject@yahoo.com>. Lesson plan binder available for **\$10**.

THE CFT LABOR IN THE SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

...assists teachers in providing students with accurate information about the history and current efforts of the labor movement in American society. The members of the committee are classroom teachers as well as faculty from community college and university labor studies programs. The committee meets several times a year to plan, develop, and implement various programs. These include:

- a clearinghouse of curricular materials and labor education activities;
- development of lesson plans on labor subject matter, meeting academic standards, across all subject matter areas and grade levels;
- workshops for teachers and trade unionists to give them access to these materials and tips on teaching about labor; and
- assisting with work on three long term projects: *Golden Lands*, *Working Hands*, *Safe Jobs for Youth*, and the Collective Bargaining Education Project.

Learn more about the CFT Labor in the Schools Committee on its web page,
www.cft.org

