**PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

“No corn, provisions scarce, men all deserting and going to the gold mines! Everybody crazy on the subject, rather hard for us to contemplate upon! Four fine companies, with nearly two hundred horses, all to be now lost! Men for gold, horses for want of forage! The mania that pervades the whole country, our camp included, is beyond all description or creditability.... Naked and shirt tailed Indians and Mexicans or Californians, go and return in 15 or 20 days with over a pound of pure gold each, per day, and say "they had bad luck and left." In Los Angeles and San Diego a man in fitting out a party of 5 or 10 men for the mines has only to go to a merchant and borrow from one to two thousand dollars and give him an "order on the gold mines." Nothing apparently sells for less than an ounce of gold. If the Government manages it properly, or luckily, it will be the richest nation on earth, if unluckily, California will prove an ulcer that will follow her to her long unhappy home. We will make our fortunes! Not a doubt of it! All is cut and dried!”

Diary of Cave J. Couts San Diego

The discovery of gold on the America River changed much about California. San Diego’s population of non-Kumiyaay remained fairly constant. Cattle from the rancheros found a lucrative market in northern ports and the gold fields. Many of the first miners were from this area and Mexico. Some had experience with placer gold deposits in the San Fernando mountains near Los Angeles.

The lure of gold brought many people via land or sea. Most ships traveling north stopped at San Diego for water and provisions. Some came around Cape Horn. Others ferried between the west coast of Panama and the Bay Area. Captains and ship owners could make fortunes in transporting people and cargo to the ever growing population of Argonauts and entrepreneurs. That’s if they had a crew to sail the ships. San Francisco harbor was crowded with derelict ships.

The Gold Diggers program takes place in 1851. The ship, the *Euterpe*, has pulled into San Diego harbor with a crew decimated by yellow fever. She needs a crew to continue on to San Francisco. The Captain hopes to recruit sailors who will continue on to the Sandwich Islands. He communicates his love of the sea and advocates the relative security of a sailor’s life.

The first person you meet is the Agent. You must negotiate with him for your passage north. He is looking for paying passengers or able-bodied sailors for the Captain. Since you have neither money nor experience you must work to convince him you will learn fast and agree to work hard as sailors for the voyage to San Francisco. The Agent is concerned with the security of the ship’s cargo and has the sailors assist him in stowing the merchandise that he hopes to sell for profit.
The third crew member on the Euterpe is the Second Mate. He is a common seaman who has no intention of remaining on board once the ship reaches San Francisco. He teaches the sailors how to pan for gold (without the Captain’s knowledge). He would like the sailors to follow him to the gold fields as his mining crew.

At the conclusion of your journey, your crew will have to decide on their destiny. They must decide between remaining onboard Euterpe as sailors and jumping ship to head for the gold fields with the Second Mate.

"When the house was built, General Moreno owned all the land within a radius of forty miles,—forty miles westward, down the valley to the sea; forty miles eastward, into the San Fernando Mountains; and a good forty miles more or less along the coast. The boundaries were not very strictly defined; there was no occasion, in those happy days, to reckon land by inches. It might be asked, perhaps, just how General Moreno owned all this land, and question might not be easy to answer. It was not and could not be answered to the satisfaction of the United States Land Commission, which, after the surrender of California, undertook to sift and adjust Mexican land-titles; and that was the way the Senora Moreno now called herself a poor woman. Tract after tract, her lands had been taken away from her; it looked for a time as if nothing would be left. Every one of the claims based on deeds of gift from Governor Pio Pico, her husband's most intimate friend, was disallowed. They all went by the board in one batch, and took away from the Senora in a day the greater part of her best pasture lands...No wonder she believed the Americans thieves, and spoke of them always as hounds. The people of the United States have never in the least realized that the taking possession of California was not only a conquering of Mexico, but a conquering of California as well; that the real bitterness of the surrender was not so much to the empire which gave up the country, as to the country itself which was given up. Provinces passed back and forth in that way, helpless in the hands of great powers, have all the ignominy and humiliation of defeat, with none of the dignities or compensations of the transaction. Mexico saved much by her treaty, in spite of having to acknowledge herself beaten; but California lost all. Words cannot tell the sting of such a transfer."

Ramona, pg. 15 - 16 Helen Hunt Jackson