

with wooden buildings including hotels and saloons going up almost overnight. In San Francisco, some people even lived on ships that were abandoned when their crews went to seek gold! Sacramento, later the capital of California, grew from four houses to ten thousand people, and San Francisco soon had fifty thousand people. By the end of 1849, California had many more than the sixty thousand people necessary to become a state.

The people of California drew up a constitution and applied for statehood that same year. This application again caused a struggle over slavery in the new territories. (The story of that struggle is told in Chapter 15.) But in 1850, California entered the Union as a free state.

Travel and Communication. California was isolated from the rest of the United States by a vast unsettled stretch of almost 2,000 miles (3,219 km). Travel and communication over this stretch were slow and difficult. Though the stagecoaches of the Overland Mail carried letters by 1857, each



Pony express riders faced many dangers. This one is being pursued by an Indian. The structure to the left is an Indian burial platform.

trip required twenty days or more. These stagecoaches also carried passengers, but travel was dangerous and exhausting. The coaches were robbed by highwaymen and plagued with accidents. A faster method of communication was needed.

In 1860, the **pony express** began to provide better mail service to California. In this system, expert horsemen galloped 10 to 15

Western Trails and Routes

