

# Summary: Colonizing California

## Seeking New Routes

In the 1700s, Europeans were still looking for a route through North America to Asia. In 1728, Vitus Bering, a Danish explorer working for Russia, found a narrow body of water between Asia and North America, now known as the Bering Strait. Bering also sailed to Alaska. Later, Russian fur traders built trading posts along Alaska's coast.

The Spanish feared that Russia would set up a colony in California. For this reason, Jose de Gálvez of New Spain organized an expedition to Alta California so that Spanish settlers could build a colony in California. Gálvez's plan was to go as far as Monterey Bay. Three groups sailed from Baja California in 1768. Two more groups traveled by land. They planned to meet in San Diego, and then continue north together to find Monterey Bay.

Britain also wanted to find an easy water route to Asia. In 1778, James Cook explored the northern Pacific. He did not find a water route, because it did not exist.

## A Major Expedition

Gaspar de Portolá commanded the whole expedition. Portolá was joined by a Roman Catholic priest named Junípero Serra. He wanted to be a missionary in California. The settlers in Portolá's expedition were Spanish, American Indian, and African. The trip was difficult. One ship got lost and took three months to reach San Diego. Another ship sank. About one-third of all the people on the expedition died. The groups reached San Diego by July 1769. Portolá and some of the settlers then went on to Monterey. A priest named Juan Crespi kept a diary of the group's travels. Serra stayed behind to set up a mission in San Diego.

When Portolá's group reached Monterey, they did not recognize it. They went on to become the first Europeans to see San Francisco Bay. Lack of food forced Portolá to return to San Diego. The next year, Portolá took another expedition north and found Monterey Bay. By 1776, Spanish missions stood in San Diego, San Gabriel, Santa Barbara, Monterey, and San Francisco.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**colony** *noun*, land ruled by another country

**settler** *noun*, a person who moves to a new place

**missionary** *noun*, a person who travels to an area to teach a religion

**mission** *noun*, a settlement built to teach a religion to people who live nearby



### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why did Gálvez decide to set up a colony in Alta California? Highlight two sentences that explain Spain's concerns about other countries and Gálvez's idea to solve the problem.

**REVIEW** Why did priests join Portolá's expedition to Alta California? Underline the sentences that explain why priests joined the expedition and what they did.