

## = California Gold Rush =

The California Gold Rush ( 1848 ? 1855 ) began on January 24 , 1848 , when gold was found by James W. Marshall at Sutter 's Mill in Coloma , California . The first to hear confirmed information of the gold rush were the people in Oregon , the Sandwich Islands ( Hawaii ) , and Latin America , and they were the first to start flocking to the state in late 1848 . All in all , the news of gold brought some 300 @, @ 000 people to California from the rest of the United States and abroad . Of the 300 @, @ 000 , approximately half arrived by sea and half came overland on the California Trail and the Gila River trail .

The gold @-@ seekers , called " forty @-@ niners " ( as a reference to 1849 ) , often faced substantial hardships on the trip . While most of the newly arrived were Americans , the Gold Rush attracted tens of thousands from Latin America , Europe , Australia , and China . At first , the prospectors retrieved the gold from streams and riverbeds using simple techniques , such as panning . More sophisticated methods of gold recovery were developed and later adopted around the world . At its peak , technological advances reached a point where significant financing was required , increasing the proportion of gold companies to individual miners . Gold worth tens of billions of today 's dollars was recovered , which led to great wealth for a few . However , many returned home with little more than they had started with .

The effects of the Gold Rush were substantial . San Francisco grew from a small settlement of about 200 residents in 1846 to a boomtown of about 36 @, @ 000 by 1852 . Roads , churches , schools and other towns were built throughout California . In 1849 a state constitution was written , a governor and legislature chosen and California became a state in 1850 as part of the Compromise of 1850 .

New methods of transportation developed as steamships came into regular service . By 1869 railroads were built across the country from California to the eastern United States . Agriculture and ranching expanded throughout the state to meet the needs of the settlers . At the beginning of the Gold Rush , there was no law regarding property rights in the goldfields and a system of " staking claims " was developed . The Gold Rush also had negative effects : Native Americans were attacked and pushed off their lands and the mining has caused environmental harm . An estimated 100 @, @ 000 California Indians died between 1848 and 1868 as a result of American immigration .

## = = History = =

The California Gold Rush began at Sutter 's Mill , near Coloma . On January 24 , 1848 , James W. Marshall , a foreman working for Sacramento pioneer John Sutter , found shiny metal in the tailrace of a lumber mill Marshall was building for Sutter on the American River . Marshall brought what he found to John Sutter , and the two privately tested the metal . After the tests showed that it was gold , Sutter expressed dismay : he wanted to keep the news quiet because he feared what would happen to his plans for an agricultural empire if there were a mass search for gold .

However , rumors soon started to spread and were confirmed in March 1848 by San Francisco newspaper publisher and merchant Samuel Brannan . The most famous quote of the California Gold Rush was by Brannan ; after he had hurriedly set up a store to sell gold prospecting supplies , Brannan strode through the streets of San Francisco , holding aloft a vial of gold , shouting " Gold ! Gold ! Gold from the American River ! "

On August 19 , 1848 , the New York Herald was the first major newspaper on the East Coast to report the discovery of gold . On December 5 , 1848 , President James Polk confirmed the discovery of gold in an address to Congress . Soon , waves of immigrants from around the world , later called the " forty @-@ niners , " invaded the Gold Country of California or " Mother Lode " . As Sutter had feared , he was ruined ; his workers left in search of gold , and squatters took over his land and stole his crops and cattle .

San Francisco had been a tiny settlement before the rush began . When residents learned about the discovery , it at first became a ghost town of abandoned ships and businesses , but then boomed as merchants and new people arrived . The population of San Francisco exploded from

perhaps about 1 @, @ 000 in 1848 to 25 @, @ 000 full @-@ time residents by 1850 . Miners lived in tents , wood shanties , or deck cabins removed from abandoned ships .

In what has been referred to as the " first world @-@ class gold rush , " there was no easy way to get to California ; forty @-@ niners faced hardship and often death on the way . At first , most Argonauts , as they were also known , traveled by sea . From the East Coast , a sailing voyage around the tip of South America would take five to eight months , and cover some 18 @, @ 000 nautical miles ( 33 @, @ 000 kilometres ) . An alternative was to sail to the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama , take canoes and mules for a week through the jungle , and then on the Pacific side , wait for a ship sailing for San Francisco . There was also a route across Mexico starting at Veracruz . Many gold @-@ seekers took the overland route across the continental United States , particularly along the California Trail . Each of these routes had its own deadly hazards , from shipwreck to typhoid fever and cholera .

To meet the demands of the arrivals , ships bearing goods from around the world came to San Francisco as well . Ships ' captains found that their crews deserted to go to the goldfields . The wharves and docks of San Francisco became a forest of masts , as hundreds of ships were abandoned . Enterprising San Franciscans turned the abandoned ships into warehouses , stores , taverns , hotels , and one into a jail . Many of these ships were later destroyed and used for landfill to create more buildable land in the boomtown .

Within a few years , there was an important but lesser @-@ known surge of prospectors into far Northern California , specifically into present @-@ day Siskiyou , Shasta and Trinity Counties . Discovery of gold nuggets at the site of present @-@ day Yreka in 1851 brought thousands of gold @-@ seekers up the Siskiyou Trail and throughout California 's northern counties . Settlements of the Gold Rush era , such as Portuguese Flat on the Sacramento River , sprang into existence and then faded . The Gold Rush town of Weaverville on the Trinity River today retains the oldest continuously used Taoist temple in California , a legacy of Chinese miners who came . While there are not many Gold Rush era ghost towns still in existence , the remains of the once @-@ bustling town of Shasta have been preserved in a California State Historic Park in Northern California .

Gold was also discovered in Southern California but on a much smaller scale . The first discovery of gold , at Rancho San Francisco in the mountains north of present @-@ day Los Angeles , had been in 1842 , six years before Marshall 's discovery , while California was still part of Mexico . However , these first deposits , and later discoveries in Southern California mountains , attracted little notice and were of limited consequence economically .

By 1850 , most of the easily accessible gold had been collected , and attention turned to extracting gold from more difficult locations . Faced with gold increasingly difficult to retrieve , Americans began to drive out foreigners to get at the most accessible gold that remained . The new California State Legislature passed a foreign miners tax of twenty dollars per month ( \$ 570 per month as of 2016 ) , and American prospectors began organized attacks on foreign miners , particularly Latin Americans and Chinese .

In addition , the huge numbers of newcomers were driving Native Americans out of their traditional hunting , fishing and food @-@ gathering areas . To protect their homes and livelihood , some Native Americans responded by attacking the miners . This provoked counter @-@ attacks on native villages . The Native Americans , out @-@ gunned , were often slaughtered . Those who escaped massacres were many times unable to survive without access to their food @-@ gathering areas , and they starved to death . Novelist and poet Joaquin Miller vividly captured one such attack in his semi @-@ autobiographical work , Life Amongst the Modocs .

= = Forty @-@ niners = =

The first people to rush to the goldfields , beginning in the spring of 1848 , were the residents of California themselves ? primarily agriculturally oriented Americans and Europeans living in Northern California , along with Native Americans and some Californios ( Spanish @-@ speaking Californians ) . These first miners tended to be families in which everyone helped in the effort . Women and children of all ethnicities were often found panning next to the men . Some enterprising families set

up boarding houses to accommodate the influx of men ; in such cases , the women often brought in steady income while their husbands searched for gold .

Word of the Gold Rush spread slowly at first . The earliest gold @-@ seekers were people who lived near California or people who heard the news from ships on the fastest sailing routes from California . The first large group of Americans to arrive were several thousand Oregonians who came down the Siskiyou Trail . Next came people from the Sandwich Islands , and several thousand Latin Americans , including people from Mexico , from Peru and from as far away as Chile , both by ship and overland . By the end of 1848 , some 6 @, @ 000 Argonauts had come to California .

Only a small number ( probably fewer than 500 ) traveled overland from the United States that year . Some of these " forty @-@ eighters " , as the earliest gold @-@ seekers were sometimes called , were able to collect large amounts of easily accessible gold ? in some cases , thousands of dollars worth each day . Even ordinary prospectors averaged daily gold finds worth 10 to 15 times the daily wage of a laborer on the East Coast . A person could work for six months in the goldfields and find the equivalent of six years ' wages back home . Some hoped to get rich quick and return home , and others wished to start businesses in California .

By the beginning of 1849 , word of the Gold Rush had spread around the world , and an overwhelming number of gold @-@ seekers and merchants began to arrive from virtually every continent . The largest group of forty @-@ niners in 1849 were Americans , arriving by the tens of thousands overland across the continent and along various sailing routes ( the name " forty @-@ niner " was derived from the year 1849 ) . Many from the East Coast negotiated a crossing of the Appalachian Mountains , taking to riverboats in Pennsylvania , poling the keelboats to Missouri River wagon train assembly ports , and then travelling in a wagon train along the California Trail . Many others came by way of the Isthmus of Panama and the steamships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company . Australians and New Zealanders picked up the news from ships carrying Hawaiian newspapers , and thousands , infected with " gold fever " , boarded ships for California .

Forty @-@ niners came from Latin America , particularly from the Mexican mining districts near Sonora and Chile . Gold @-@ seekers and merchants from Asia , primarily from China , began arriving in 1849 , at first in modest numbers to Gum San ( " Gold Mountain " ) , the name given to California in Chinese . The first immigrants from Europe , reeling from the effects of the Revolutions of 1848 and with a longer distance to travel , began arriving in late 1849 , mostly from France , with some Germans , Italians , and Britons .

It is estimated that approximately 90 @, @ 000 people arrived in California in 1849 ? about half by land and half by sea . Of these , perhaps 50 @, @ 000 to 60 @, @ 000 were Americans , and the rest were from other countries . By 1855 , it is estimated at least 300 @, @ 000 gold @-@ seekers , merchants , and other immigrants had arrived in California from around the world . The largest group continued to be Americans , but there were tens of thousands each of Mexicans , Chinese , Britons , Australians French , and Latin Americans , together with many smaller groups of miners , such as African Americans , Filipinos , Basques and Turks .

People from small villages in the hills near Genova , Italy were among the first to settle permanently in the Sierra Nevada foothills ; they brought with them traditional agricultural skills , developed to survive cold winters . A modest number of miners of African ancestry ( probably less than 4 @, @ 000 ) had come from the Southern States , the Caribbean and Brazil .

A number of immigrants were from China . Several hundred Chinese arrived in California in 1849 and 1850 , and in 1852 more than 20 @, @ 000 landed in San Francisco . Their distinctive dress and appearance was highly recognizable in the goldfields , and created a degree of animosity towards the Chinese .

There were also women in the Gold Rush . They held various roles including prostitutes , single entrepreneurs , married women , poor and wealthy women . They were of various ethnicities including Anglo @-@ American , Hispanic , Native , European , Chinese , and Jewish . The reasons they came varied : some came with their husbands , refusing to be left behind to fend for themselves , some came because their husbands sent for them , and others came ( singles and widows ) for the adventure and economic opportunities . On the trail many people died from accidents , cholera , fever , and myriad other causes , and many women became widows before

even setting eyes on California . While in California , women became widows quite frequently due to mining accidents , disease , or mining disputes of their husbands . Life in the goldfields offered opportunities for women to break from their traditional work .

= = Legal rights = =

When the Gold Rush began , the California goldfields were peculiarly lawless places . When gold was discovered at Sutter 's Mill , California was still technically part of Mexico , under American military occupation as the result of the Mexican ? American War . With the signing of the treaty ending the war on February 2 , 1848 , California became a possession of the United States , but it was not a formal " territory " and did not become a state until September 9 , 1850 . California existed in the unusual condition of a region under military control . There was no civil legislature , executive or judicial body for the entire region . Local residents operated under a confusing and changing mixture of Mexican rules , American principles , and personal dictates . Lax enforcement of federal laws , such as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 , encouraged the arrival of free blacks and escaped slaves .

While the treaty ending the Mexican ? American War obliged the United States to honor Mexican land grants , almost all the goldfields were outside those grants . Instead , the goldfields were primarily on " public land " , meaning land formally owned by the United States government . However , there were no legal rules yet in place , and no practical enforcement mechanisms .

The benefit to the forty @-@ miners was that the gold was simply " free for the taking " at first . In the goldfields at the beginning , there was no private property , no licensing fees , and no taxes . The miners informally adapted Mexican mining law that had existed in California . For example , the rules attempted to balance the rights of early arrivers at a site with later arrivers ; a " claim " could be " staked " by a prospector , but that claim was valid only as long as it was being actively worked .

Miners worked at a claim only long enough to determine its potential . If a claim was deemed as low @-@ value ? as most were ? miners would abandon the site in search for a better one . In the case where a claim was abandoned or not worked upon , other miners would " claim @-@ jump " the land . " Claim @-@ jumping " meant that a miner began work on a previously claimed site . Disputes were often handled personally and violently , and were sometimes addressed by groups of prospectors acting as arbitrators . This often led to heightened ethnic tensions . In some areas the influx of many prospectors could lead to a reduction of the existing claim size by simple pressure .

= = Development of gold @-@ recovery techniques = =

Four hundred million years ago , California lay at the bottom of a large sea ; underwater volcanoes deposited lava and minerals ( including gold ) onto the sea floor . By tectonic forces these minerals and rocks came to the surface of the Sierra Nevada , and eroded . Water carried the exposed gold downstream and deposited it in quiet gravel beds along the sides of old rivers and streams . The forty @-@ miners first focused their efforts on these deposits of gold .

Because the gold in the California gravel beds was so richly concentrated , early forty @-@ miners were able to retrieve loose gold flakes and nuggets with their hands , or simply " pan " for gold in rivers and streams . However , panning cannot take place on a large scale , and industrious miners and groups of miners graduated to placer mining , using " cradles " and " rockers " or " long @-@ toms " to process larger volumes of gravel . Miners would also engage in " coyoteing " , a method that involved digging a shaft 6 to 13 meters ( 20 to 43 ft ) deep into placer deposits along a stream . Tunnels were then dug in all directions to reach the richest veins of pay dirt .

In the most complex placer mining , groups of prospectors would divert the water from an entire river into a sluice alongside the river , and then dig for gold in the newly exposed river bottom . Modern estimates by the U.S. Geological Survey are that some 12 million ounces ( 370 t ) of gold were removed in the first five years of the Gold Rush ( worth over US \$ 16 billion at December 2010 prices ) .

In the next stage , by 1853 , hydraulic mining was used on ancient gold @-@ bearing gravel beds

on hillsides and bluffs in the goldfields . In a modern style of hydraulic mining first developed in California , and later used around the world , a high @-@ pressure hose directed a powerful stream or jet of water at gold @-@ bearing gravel beds . The loosened gravel and gold would then pass over sluices , with the gold settling to the bottom where it was collected . By the mid @-@ 1880s , it is estimated that 11 million ounces ( 340 t ) of gold ( worth approximately US \$ 15 billion at December 2010 prices ) had been recovered by " hydraulicking " .

A byproduct of these extraction methods was that large amounts of gravel , silt , heavy metals , and other pollutants went into streams and rivers . As of 1999 many areas still bear the scars of hydraulic mining , since the resulting exposed earth and downstream gravel deposits do not support plant life .

After the Gold Rush had concluded , gold recovery operations continued . The final stage to recover loose gold was to prospect for gold that had slowly washed down into the flat river bottoms and sandbars of California 's Central Valley and other gold @-@ bearing areas of California ( such as Scott Valley in Siskiyou County ) . By the late 1890s , dredging technology ( also invented in California ) had become economical , and it is estimated that more than 20 million ounces ( 620 t ) were recovered by dredging ( worth approximately US \$ 28 billion at December 2010 prices ) .

Both during the Gold Rush and in the decades that followed , gold @-@ seekers also engaged in " hard @-@ rock " mining , that is , extracting the gold directly from the rock that contained it ( typically quartz ) , usually by digging and blasting to follow and remove veins of the gold @-@ bearing quartz . By 1851 , quartz mining had become the major industry of Coloma . Once the gold @-@ bearing rocks were brought to surface , the rocks were crushed and the gold separated , either using separation in water , using its density difference from quartz sand , or by washing the sand over copper plates coated with mercury ( with which gold forms an amalgam ) . Loss of mercury in the amalgamation process was a source of environmental contamination . Eventually , hard @-@ rock mining wound up becoming the single largest source of gold produced in the Gold Country . The total production of gold in California from then till now is estimated at 118 million ounces ( 3700 t ) .

= = Profits = =

Recent scholarship confirms that merchants made far more money than miners during the Gold Rush . The wealthiest man in California during the early years of the rush was Samuel Brannan , a tireless self @-@ promoter , shopkeeper and newspaper publisher . Brannan opened the first supply stores in Sacramento , Coloma , and other spots in the goldfields . Just as the rush began he purchased all the prospecting supplies available in San Francisco and re @-@ sold them at a substantial profit .

Some gold @-@ seekers made a significant amount of money . On average , half the gold @-@ seekers made a modest profit , after taking all expenses into account ; economic historians have suggested that white miners were more successful than black , Indian , or Chinese miners . Most late arrivals made little or wound up losing money . Similarly , many unlucky merchants set up in settlements which disappeared , or which succumbed to one of the calamitous fires that swept the towns that sprang up . By contrast , a businessman who went on to great success was Levi Strauss , who first began selling denim overalls in San Francisco in 1853 .

Other businessmen , through good fortune and hard work , reaped great rewards in retail , shipping , entertainment , lodging , or transportation . Boardinghouses , food preparation , sewing , and laundry were highly profitable businesses often run by women ( married , single , or widowed ) who realized men would pay well for a service done by a woman . Brothels also brought in large profits , especially when combined with saloons and gaming houses .

By 1855 , the economic climate had changed dramatically . Gold could be retrieved profitably from the goldfields only by medium to large groups of workers , either in partnerships or as employees . By the mid @-@ 1850s , it was the owners of these gold @-@ mining companies who made the money . Also , the population and economy of California had become large and diverse enough that money could be made in a wide variety of conventional businesses .

== Path of the gold ==

Once extracted, the gold itself took many paths. First, much of the gold was used locally to purchase food, supplies and lodging for the miners. It also went towards entertainment, which consisted of anything from a traveling theater to alcohol, gambling, and prostitutes. These transactions often took place using the recently recovered gold, carefully weighed out. These merchants and vendors in turn used the gold to purchase supplies from ship captains or packers bringing goods to California.

The gold then left California aboard ships or mules to go to the makers of the goods from around the world. A second path was the Argonauts themselves who, having personally acquired a sufficient amount, sent the gold home, or returned home taking with them their hard-earned "diggings". For example, one estimate is that some US \$ 80 million worth of California gold was sent to France by French prospectors and merchants.

As the Gold Rush progressed, local banks and gold dealers issued "banknotes" or "drafts"? locally accepted paper currency? in exchange for gold, and private mints created private gold coins. With the building of the San Francisco Mint in 1854, gold bullion was turned into official United States gold coins for circulation. The gold was also later sent by California banks to U.S. national banks in exchange for national paper currency to be used in the booming California economy.

== Near @-@ term effects ==

The arrival of hundreds of thousands of new people in California within a few years, compared to a population of some 150,000 Europeans and Californios beforehand, had many dramatic effects.

== Development of government and commerce ==

The Gold Rush propelled California from a sleepy, little-known backwater to a center of the global imagination and the destination of hundreds of thousands of people. The new immigrants often showed remarkable inventiveness and civic-mindedness. For example, in the midst of the Gold Rush, towns and cities were chartered, a state constitutional convention was convened, a state constitution written, elections held, and representatives sent to Washington, D.C. to negotiate the admission of California as a state.

Large-scale agriculture (California's second "Gold Rush") began during this time. Roads, schools, churches, and civic organizations quickly came into existence. The vast majority of the immigrants were Americans. Pressure grew for better communications and political connections to the rest of the United States, leading to statehood for California on September 9, 1850, in the Compromise of 1850 as the 31st state of the United States.

Between 1847 and 1870, the population of San Francisco increased from 500 to 150,000. The Gold Rush wealth and population increase led to significantly improved transportation between California and the East Coast. The Panama Railway, spanning the Isthmus of Panama, was finished in 1855. Steamships, including those owned by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, began regular service from San Francisco to Panama, where passengers, goods and mail would take the train across the Isthmus and board steamships headed to the East Coast. One ill-fated journey, that of the S.S. Central America, ended in disaster as the ship sank in a hurricane off the coast of the Carolinas in 1857, with approximately three tons of California gold aboard.

== Impact on Native Americans ==

The human and environmental costs of the Gold Rush were substantial. Native Americans, dependent on traditional hunting, gathering and agriculture, became the victims of starvation, as gravel, silt and toxic chemicals from prospecting operations killed fish and destroyed habitats. The

surge in the mining population also resulted in the disappearance of game and food gathering locales as gold camps and other settlements were built amidst them . Later farming spread to supply the settlers ' camps , taking more land away from the Native Americans .

Miners often saw Native Americans as impediments to their mining activities . Ed Allen , interpretive lead for Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park , reported that there were times when miners would kill up to 50 or more Natives in one day . Retribution attacks on solitary miners could result in larger scale attacks against Native populations , at times tribes or villages not involved in the original act . During the 1852 Bridge Gulch Massacre , a group of settlers attacked a band of Wintu Indians in response to the killing of a citizen named J. R. Anderson . After his killing , the sheriff led a group of men to track down the Indians , whom the men then attacked . Only three children survived the massacre that was against a different band of Wintu than the one that had killed Anderson .

The Act for the Government and Protection of Indians , passed on April 22 , 1850 by the California Legislature , allowed settlers to capture and use Native people as bonded workers .

In some areas , systematic attacks against tribespeople in or near mining districts occurred . Various conflicts were fought between natives and settlers . The factors of disease , however do not minimize the tone of racial violence directed towards California Indians . Peter Burnett , California 's first governor declared that California was a battleground between the races and that there were only two options towards California Indians , extermination or removal . According to demographer Russell Thornton , between 1849 and 1890 , the Indigenous population of California fell below 20 @, @ 000 ? primarily because of the killings . In contrast , according to the government of California , only some 4 @, @ 500 Native Americans suffered violent deaths between 1849 and 1870 . Furthermore , California stood in opposition of ratifying the eighteen treaties signed between tribal leaders and federal agents in 1851 .

After the initial boom had ended , explicitly anti @-@ foreign and racist attacks , laws and confiscatory taxes sought to drive out foreigners ? not just Native Americans ? from the mines , especially the Chinese and Latin American immigrants mostly from Sonora , Mexico and Chile . The toll on the American immigrants was severe as well : one in twelve forty @-@ miners perished , as the death and crime rates during the Gold Rush were extraordinarily high , and the resulting vigilantism also took its toll .

= = = World @-@ wide economic stimulation = = =

The Gold Rush stimulated economies around the world as well . Farmers in Chile , Australia , and Hawaii found a huge new market for their food ; British manufactured goods were in high demand ; clothing and even prefabricated houses arrived from China . The return of large amounts of California gold to pay for these goods raised prices and stimulated investment and the creation of jobs around the world . Australian prospector Edward Hargraves , noting similarities between the geography of California and his home country , returned to Australia to discover gold and spark the Australian gold rushes . Preceding the Gold Rush , the United States was on a bi @-@ metallic standard , but the sudden increase in physical gold supply increased the relative value of physical silver and drove silver money from circulation . The increase in gold supply also created a monetary supply shock .

Within a few years after the end of the Gold Rush , in 1863 , the groundbreaking ceremony for the western leg of the First Transcontinental Railroad was held in Sacramento . The line 's completion , some six years later , financed in part with Gold Rush money , united California with the central and eastern United States . Travel that had taken weeks or even months could now be accomplished in days .

= = Longer @-@ term effects = =

California 's name became indelibly connected with the Gold Rush , and fast success in a new world became known as the " California Dream . " California was perceived as a place of new beginnings , where great wealth could reward hard work and good luck . Historian H. W. Brands

noted that in the years after the Gold Rush , the California Dream spread across the nation :

Overnight California gained the international reputation as the " golden state " . Generations of immigrants have been attracted by the California Dream . California farmers , oil drillers , movie makers , airplane builders , and " dot @-@ com " entrepreneurs have each had their boom times in the decades after the Gold Rush .

Included among the modern legacies of the California Gold Rush are the California state motto , " Eureka " ( " I have found it " ) , Gold Rush images on the California State Seal , and the state nickname , " The Golden State " , as well as place names , such as Placer County , Rough and Ready , Placerville ( formerly named " Dry Diggings " and then " Hangtown " during rush time ) , Whiskeytown , Drytown , Angels Camp , Happy Camp , and Sawyers Bar . The San Francisco 49ers National Football League team , and the similarly named athletic teams of California State University , Long Beach , are named for the prospectors of the California Gold Rush .

In addition. the standard route shield of state highways in California is in the shape of a miner 's spade to honor the California Gold Rush . Today , aptly named State Route 49 travels through the Sierra Nevada foothills , connecting many Gold Rush @-@ era towns such as Placerville , Auburn , Grass Valley , Nevada City , Coloma , Jackson , and Sonora . This state highway also passes very near Columbia State Historic Park , a protected area encompassing the historic business district of the town of Columbia ; the park has preserved many Gold Rush @-@ era buildings , which are presently occupied by tourist @-@ oriented businesses .

= = Cultural references = =

The literary history of the Gold Rush is reflected in the works of Mark Twain ( The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County ) , Bret Harte ( A Millionaire of Rough @-@ and @-@ Ready ) , Joaquin Miller ( Life Amongst the Modocs ) , and many others .

The Gold Rush is referred to in the Neil Young album After the Gold Rush .

= = Gallery = =