

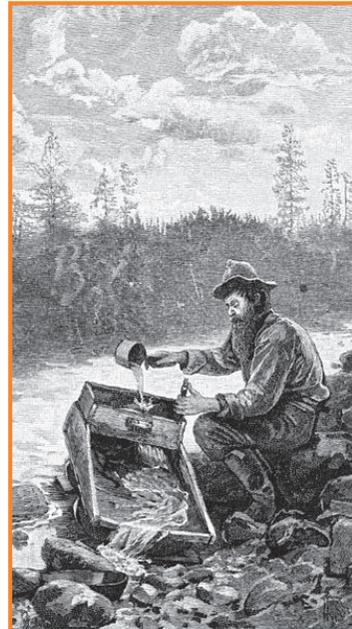
## Key Terms

<b>Cherokee</b>	An Indigenous nation in the Georgia region.
<b>forty-niner</b>	The miners that flooded California in the gold rush are often known as Forty-Niners, as most of them arrived in 1849.
<b>mining rights</b>	The legal rights to mine in a particular area.
<b>panning</b>	Sifting through sediment with a metal pan to separate gold particles from other elements.
<b>rocker box</b>	An invention that made panning easier, a box with a rocking mechanism is used to speed up the panning process.

## Life in a Mining Town

The life of a miner was not easy. The practice of finding gold involved heavy mining or **panning**. Hydraulic mining was widely used; a method that blasted rock with pressurised water to extract the gold. Most poor miners had to rely on panning for gold by using a pan or, later, a **rocker box**. Mining in both ways was difficult, time-consuming and usually led to no success.

Early mining towns often had no law enforcement and theft and other crimes were common. With no reliable government intervention, miners would fight over who had **mining rights**. This, in addition to differences between cultural groups, could often lead to violence.



## California

Before 1850, California was not a state, although it was under American control from 1847. Won from Mexico in the Mexican-American War under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, California was a fertile coastal area that proved to be a lure for farmers thanks to its excellent soil and climate. In 1848, it was discovered that good soil was not all that California contained.



## Discovery of Gold, 1848

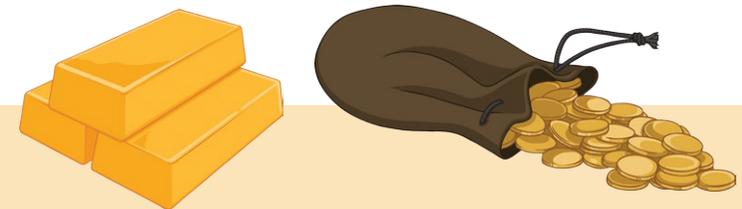
Gold was discovered in the Sierra Nevada hills by a carpenter in 1848. Word was spread by newspapers across America and then around the globe. Gold was so valuable that a relatively small find could make any man rich. Hopeful people started to stream to California to make it rich quick.

## The Georgia Gold Rush

Gold rushes had occurred in America before 1848. North Carolina had seen a small rush in the 17th century and Georgia struck gold in 1830.

The **Cherokee** of Georgia were forced away from their traditional lands by the rush, leading many of them to despise Americans.

When gold was found in California, gold was becoming scarce in Georgia. Most of the Georgian miners left for California, including many Cherokee who had been taught to mine by the Americans.



### A Worldwide Phenomena

The first miners to descend on California were Americans from states such as Georgia, (where many gold miners lived already), and Oregon, where two-thirds of healthy men were said to move to California to mine.

It was not only white Americans who came to mine. Indigenous peoples, Ex-Slaves and Latinos from Mexico and Central American came too.

These groups were followed by fortune-hunters from Europe, Russia, China and Australia. Most countries in the world had people who travelled to California to join the rush.

This mixing of races, ethnicities and social classes gave the California gold rush a truly international atmosphere which sometimes led to conflict but more commonly led to a vibrant, accepting culture which can still be seen in California today.

### The Rocky Mountains, 1858

1858 saw a new gold rush begin, this time in the Rocky Mountains. Many miners that had become jaded by mining in California left to mine the new seams. By 1861, 100,000 people had moved to the area to mine gold. The Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains (Plain Indians) in Colorado and Kansas had been promised no interference from miners, but this promise was broken, angering groups such as the Sioux.

### Conflict with Indigenous Peoples

Mining, wherever it occurred across America, led to Indigenous peoples being displaced, their lands destroyed by industrial mining works and buffalo or other game herds disrupted and destroyed by new settlements.

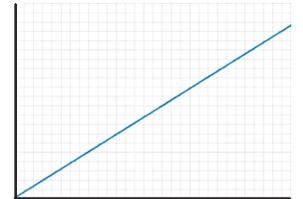
In some cases, Indigenous people and Americans attacked each other and fought over land use or even mining rights. The displacement of Indigenous people from lands promised to them by the government broke treaties and led to conflict, such as in the Rocky Mountains.

### Driver of Change

Mining greatly improved the economic value of California to the government in the east. The gold rush led to the growth of towns and cities, improved trade routes with foreign countries and spurred on the creation of the transcontinental railway. This impressive engineering feat would see the east and west coasts linked by the longest railroad in the world. It was completed in 1869.

### California Becomes a State

California became the 31st American state in 1850, mainly due to the huge population increase the state saw during the gold rush. The American population rose from around 15,000 in 1848 to 250,000 in 1852.



### Environmental Damage

Hydraulic mining destroyed huge swathes of California's land. As hillsides were hosed with water they were eroded and broken down. The resulting loose rock and sediment would cover farmland and kill crops. The water used led to floods. River courses were changed to supply the mines and to support the huge number of miners.

Mining also demanded a large amount of wood to make mining equipment and build the booming mining towns. Trees were destroyed across California, including the giant sequoia. The source here shows 36 people dancing on the stump of one such tree.

Following the initial rush in 1849, dynamite was widely used to blast apart rockfaces.

Complaints from farmers who lost their land to the effects of hydraulic mining led to its ban in 1884, although it continued on a small scale for some time later.

