

Gold, God and Glory

The history of humanity's global
quest for riches



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The Spanish Conquest of Latin America



During the earliest years of European expansion onto the American continents, the search for gold was one of the driving factors in the exploration and colonization of the vast lands. The Americas first became known to the Europeans in October 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed on an island in the Caribbean while searching for a quicker route to the Indies. At the time, explorers such as Columbus were driven by the writings of Marco Polo in his Travels which spoke of the island of Cipangu in Japan that was said to have endless amounts of gold. Believing the area to be near the famed Cipangu, Columbus claimed the island for his sponsors, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain.

Rumors spread of the vast wealth that could be found in these foreign lands, and by 1519 Hernán Cortés traveled to Mexico along with several hundred men in his company. The Aztec king Motecuhzoma (Montezuma II) heard of the voyaging Spaniards, and in an attempt to prevent their arrival to the capital city of Tenochtitlan, sent extravagant gifts of gold and silver as tribute to the Spaniards. These gifts however, did not dissuade the Spanish, who marched on to Tenochtitlan, where Cortés imprisoned Motecuhzoma and sacked the city's treasury, sending most of these spoils back to Spain.

A similar fate fell upon the Incas of Peru at the hands of adventurer Francisco Pizarro. The Spanish monarchy named him governor of the region covering the Pacific coast of Columbia in 1529, and at the time, Inca Peru was the richest kingdom in the Americas. Pizarro gained access to this fortune in 1532, when he and his men ambushed the Inca ruler, Atawallpa (Atahualpa), and held him for ransom. Despite a ransom being provided, Pizarro went on to strip the entire kingdom of its wealth at an estimate of \$15, 000, 000 worth of precious metals; it was here in Peru that the Spanish finally found the land with seemingly endless riches.



The First Opium War 1840-1842



The first Opium War was fought between the Qing dynasty of China and Britain. Foreign traders, primarily British, had been illegally exporting opium mainly from India to China since the 18th century, but that trade grew dramatically from about 1820. The resulting widespread addiction in China was causing serious social and economic disruption. In spring 1839 the Chinese government confiscated and destroyed more than 20,000 chests of opium—some 1,400 tons of the drug—that were warehoused at Canton, Guangzhou by British merchants.

Hostilities broke out later that year when British warships destroyed a Chinese blockade of the Pearl River (Zhu Jiang) estuary at Hong Kong. The British fleet proceeded up the Pearl River estuary to Canton, and, after months of negotiations there, attacked and occupied the city in May 1841. Subsequent British campaigns over the next year were likewise successful against the inferior Qing forces, despite a determined counterattack by Chinese troops in the spring of 1842. The British held against that offensive, however, and captured the city of Nanjing in late August, which put an end to the fighting.

Peace negotiations proceeded quickly, resulting in the Treaty of Nanjing, signed on August 29. By its provisions, China was required to pay Britain a large indemnity, cede Hong Kong Island to the British, and increase the number of treaty ports where the British could trade and reside from one to five.



The Taiping Rebellion

1851-1864



The Taiping Rebellion was a radical political and religious upheaval that ravaged 17 provinces in China and took an estimated 20 million lives under the rule of the Qing dynasty. The rebellion began under the leadership of Hong Xiuquan, a disappointed civil service examination candidate who, influenced by Christian teachings, had a series of visions and believed himself to be the son of God, the younger brother of Jesus Christ, who was sent to reform China. A friend of Hong's, Feng Yunshan, utilized Hong's ideas to organize a new religious group, the God Worshippers' Society (Bai Shangdi Hui), which he formed among the impoverished peasants of Guangxi province. In 1847 Hong joined Feng and the God Worshippers, and three years later he led them in rebellion. On January 1, 1851, he proclaimed his new dynasty, the Taiping Tianguo ("Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace"), and assumed the title of Tianwang, or "Heavenly King."

Their credo—to share property in common—attracted many famine-stricken peasants, workers, and miners, as did their propaganda against the foreign Manchu rulers of China. Taiping ranks swelled, and they increased from a ragged band of several thousand to more than one million totally disciplined and fanatically zealous soldiers, organized into separate men's and women's divisions. Spurred on by visions, Hong rampaged across China, taking Nanjing in 1852, which he governed for 12 years. Under the Taipings, the Chinese language was simplified, and equality between men and women was decreed. All property was to be held in common, and equal distribution of the land according to a primitive form of communism was planned. After years of bloodshed, Hong was found poisoned in 1864, effectively ending the rebellion. Afterwards, the Qing dynasty was so weakened by the rebellion that it never again was able to establish an effective hold over the country.

The Second Opium War 1856-1860



In the mid-1850s, while the Qing government was embroiled in trying to quell the Taiping Rebellion, the British, seeking to extend their trading rights in China, found an excuse to renew hostilities. In early October 1856 some Chinese officials boarded the British-registered ship Arrow while it was docked in Canton, arrested several Chinese crew members, and allegedly lowered the British flag. Later that month a British warship sailed up the Pearl River estuary and began bombarding Canton, and there were skirmishes between British and Chinese troops. Trading ceased as a stalemate ensued. In December, Chinese in Canton burned foreign trading warehouses and tensions escalated.

The French decided to join the British military expedition, using as their reasoning the murder of a French missionary in the interior of China in early 1856. After delays in assembling the forces in China, the allies began military operations in late 1857. They quickly captured Canton, deposed the city's governor, and installed a more-compliant official. In May 1858 allied troops in British warships reached Tianjin (Tientsin) and forced the Chinese into negotiations. The treaties of Tianjin, signed in June 1858, provided residence in Beijing for foreign envoys, the opening of several new ports to Western trade and residence, the right of foreign travel in the interior of China, and freedom of movement for Christian missionaries. In further negotiations in Shanghai later in the year, the importation of opium was legalized.

Chinese and the North American Railroads



The political climate in China led to mass immigration of Chinese settlers into North America by the mid 19th century. Initially many of these settlers were attracted by the job opportunities that could be found with the railway companies that were beginning to emerge across the continent. The first mechanical passenger train was constructed by the South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company in 1830, marking the beginning of the railroad industry. Within the next five years, dozens of local railroad networks were put into place, and by 1850, over 9,000 miles of track had been laid.

Before the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, it cost nearly \$1,000 to travel across the country. After the railroad was completed, the price dropped to just \$150. From 1863 to 1869, roughly 15,000 Chinese workers helped to build the transcontinental railroad, making up the majority of the workforce. The backbreaking manual labor required to build these railroads consisted of workers shoveling 20 pounds of rock over 400 times a day.

These immigrants were put through exceptionally difficult circumstances, being paid about half of what the American workers were earning and forced to live in tents while the white workers were given accommodation in train cars. In 1867, 3,000 laborers went on strike in an attempt to demand equal wages with white workers. However, due to their remote location, the strike proved to be unsuccessful.

In 1885, immediately after construction on the Canadian Pacific Railway was complete, the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which stipulated that, with almost no exceptions, every person of Chinese origin immigrating to Canada had to pay a fee of \$50, called a head tax. No other group in Canadian history has ever been forced to pay a tax based solely on their country of origin. In 1900, the head tax was raised to \$100. Then, three years later, it went up to \$500 per person. Between 1885 and 1923, approximately 81,000 Chinese immigrants paid the head tax, contributing millions of dollars to government coffers.



California Gold Rush



On January 24, 1848, James Wilson Marshall, a carpenter originally from New Jersey, found flakes of gold in the American River at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Coloma, California. At the time, Marshall was working to build a water-powered sawmill owned by John Sutter, a German-born Swiss citizen and founder of a colony of Nueva Helvetia (New Switzerland, which would later become the city of Sacramento). Days after Marshall's discovery at Sutter's Mill, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the Mexican-American War and leaving California in the hands of the United States. By mid-March at least one newspaper was reporting that large quantities of gold were being turned up at Sutter's Mill. By mid-June, some three-quarters of the male population of San Francisco had left town for the gold mines, and the number of miners in the area reached 4,000 by August. As news spread of the fortunes being made in California, some of the first migrants to arrive were those from lands accessible by boat, such as Oregon, the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), Mexico, Chile, Peru and China.

Throughout 1849, people around the United States (mostly men) borrowed money, mortgaged their property or spent their life savings to make the arduous journey to California. In pursuit of the kind of wealth they had never dreamed of, they left their families and hometowns; in turn, women left behind took on new responsibilities such as running farms or businesses and caring for their children alone. With this sudden boom also came gold mining towns that had sprung up all over the region, complete with shops, saloons, brothels and other businesses seeking to make their own Gold Rush fortune. By the end of 1849, the non-native population of the California territory was some 100,000 (compared with the pre-1848 figure of less than 1,000). More than 750, 000 pounds of gold, totaling some \$2 billion worth of precious metal was extracted from the area during the Gold Rush, which peaked in 1852.



Colorado Gold Rush



Rumors of gold had been in circulation in the Rockies since the sixteenth century, with minor discoveries by several individuals, including explorer Zebulon M. Pike in 1807, who later became the namesake for the Pikes Peak region. However, it wasn't until 1858 that an expedition led by William G. Russell, comprised of miners from the goldfields of Georgia and California, followed reports of gold discoveries to Ralston Creek, and after heading upstream towards Little Dry Creek, discovered notable quantities of placer gold.

Hundreds of miners made their way towards this location by summer of the same year in hopes of making their fortune, leading to the founding of several towns in Colorado including, Auraria, Denver, and Golden. However, this discovery was just the beginning. A man named George Jackson discovered a substantial deposit in Chicago Creek the following January, as well as a deposit of lode gold (veins of gold embedded in rock) at Gold Hill. Another man by the name of John Gregory found an additional deposit of lode gold near Black Hawk around the same time. With these discoveries, tens of thousands of prospectors flooded to the region during the spring and summer of 1859, travelling deep into the Rockies.

For several weeks in April and May, newspaper editors in the major Missouri River towns reported the passage of forty, seventy-five, or 100 teams of gold seekers per day travelling west along the Missouri River. However, by early May there were reports of prospectors reaching the Cherry Creek settlements to pan for gold and coming up empty handed; as others experienced the same disappointment, it is estimated that as many as 40, 000 people had abandoned the pursuit of gold in Colorado within half a year.

The Colorado Gold Rush had one final surge when John Gregory made his discovery near the North Fork of Clear Creek. After the findings were confirmed in the Rocky Mountain Newspaper, a frenzy took place that was later referred to as "Gregory Fever" as thousands made their way to this location. in the hopes of making their fortune.



Montana Gold Rush



There were three major gold strikes that hit Montana. The first was in 1862 along Grasshopper Creek near the town of Bannack. News of this gold discovery travelled quickly across the United States, leading to the greatest gold rush in the West since the Colorado Gold Rush of 1848. One unique aspect of this gold rush was the purity level of the gold found at Grasshopper Creek: the gold at this location was 99-99.5% pure, whereas the gold of most other locations was at 95% purity. With this, Bannack quickly earned the title of the New Eldorado of the North, with up to 3000 prospectors flocking to the area. However, with the increase of residents came lawlessness; most notable was a group of over bandits who called themselves the "Innocents" which consisted of over 100 men resulting in the formation of the "Montana Vigilantes" who attempted to seek their own justice. However, the gold findings had more or less dried up by 1870 and the population diminished to just a few hundred individuals before eventually becoming a ghost town.

The second major gold rush to hit Montana was at Alder Creek in 1863. A group of six men had left Bannack in hopes of discovering their own gold strike. After a unsuccessful and grueling journey, the men decided to make the four day journey back to Bannack, continuing to prospect the areas in which they made camp. After panning along a gulch, the men had recovered nearly an ounce of gold after only three pans; by the end of the following day, they had found another ten ounces of gold in dust and nuggets, an approximate present-day value of \$9000. The men had named the gulch Alder Creek and staked out twelve claims, agreeing to keep the news of this finding to themselves, before returning to Bannack to resupply. However, word quickly spread of this new location and within a few weeks, hundreds of miners had made their way to Alder Creek, and the original founders went their separate ways. At it's height, up to 15,000 miners occupied the creek, with up to \$90 million worth of gold having been extracted by 1900.

The final gold rush in Montana was at Last Chance Gulch in 1864. A small group of miners, who later became known as "the four Georgians", had decided to try their luck one last time before heading back home to Georgia after several attempts to make their fortune had failed. By sheer luck, these four men had discovered a location that they appropriately named "Last Chance Gulch", which contained a significant amount of placer gold. With the arrival of thousands of miners, the original four founders began building a city named Helena, one that would last well past the initial gold rush and become the capital of Montana. Over the course of just four years, the gulch ended up supplying more than \$19 million in gold.

Gold, God and Glory

The history of gold in British
Columbia





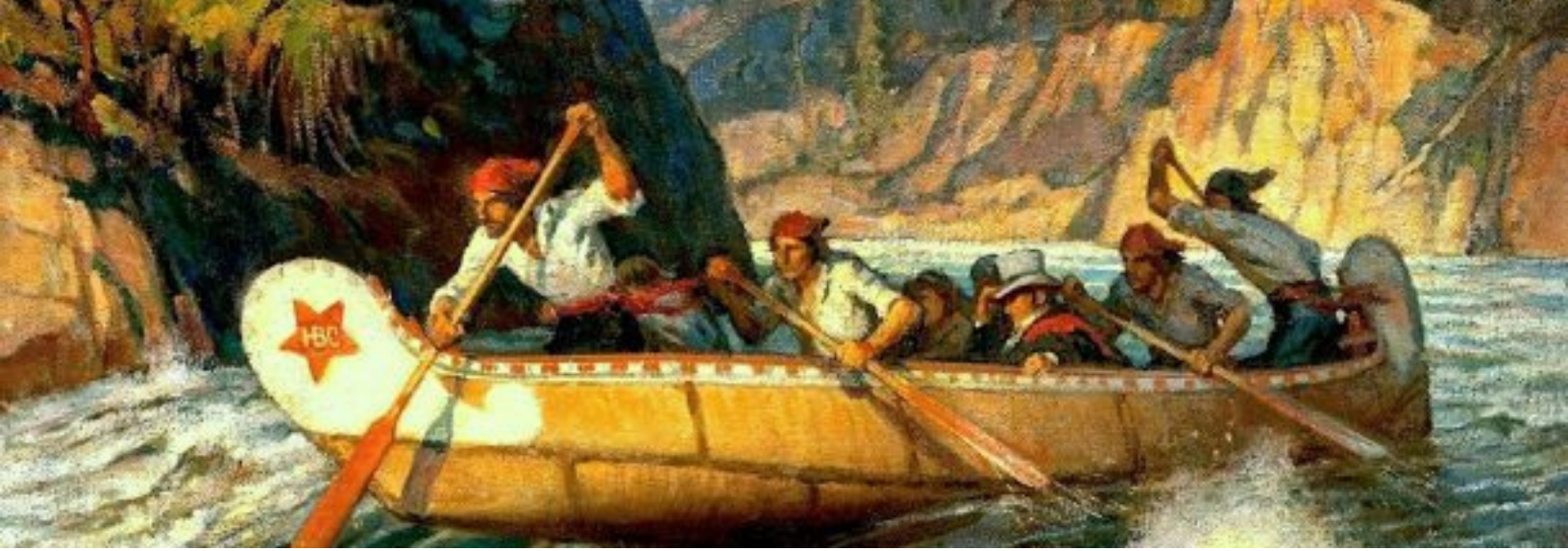
New Caledonia



New Caledonia ("New Scotland"), was a name given in 1806 to the central and highland plateau area of British Columbia by Simon Fraser, a partner, trader and explorer in the North West Company, a major force in the fur trade. Britain established Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island in 1849 to assert its sovereignty in the West after the loss of territory in the 1846 Oregon Treaty, which established the American/British boundary at the 49th parallel. Only a few hundred settlers were located at Fort Victoria, most of whom were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. By the 1850s, placer mining in California had depleted free gold, and the miners of the area were replaced with hydraulic mining, leaving hundreds of men unemployed and desperate to find another means of making their fortune.

It was during that same decade that the Nlaka'pamux people first found gold along the Fraser River. Due to the delicate nature of the Fur Trade between the European settlers and First Nations peoples, the Hudson's Bay Company was attempting to suppress any news of gold strikes in order to maintain this favorable relationship. Sir James Douglas, the governor of the British Colony of Vancouver Island and chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, feared that the arrival of miners from America would initiate a bloody conflict with the Nlaka'pamux peoples and other surrounding First Nations communities.

There were several routes that miners took to gain access to the gold rush in British Columbia: while the majority came to Victoria before crossing over to the mainland, others came by the Columbia River route following the Okanagan Lake, with many of these miners later diverging up the Similkameen.



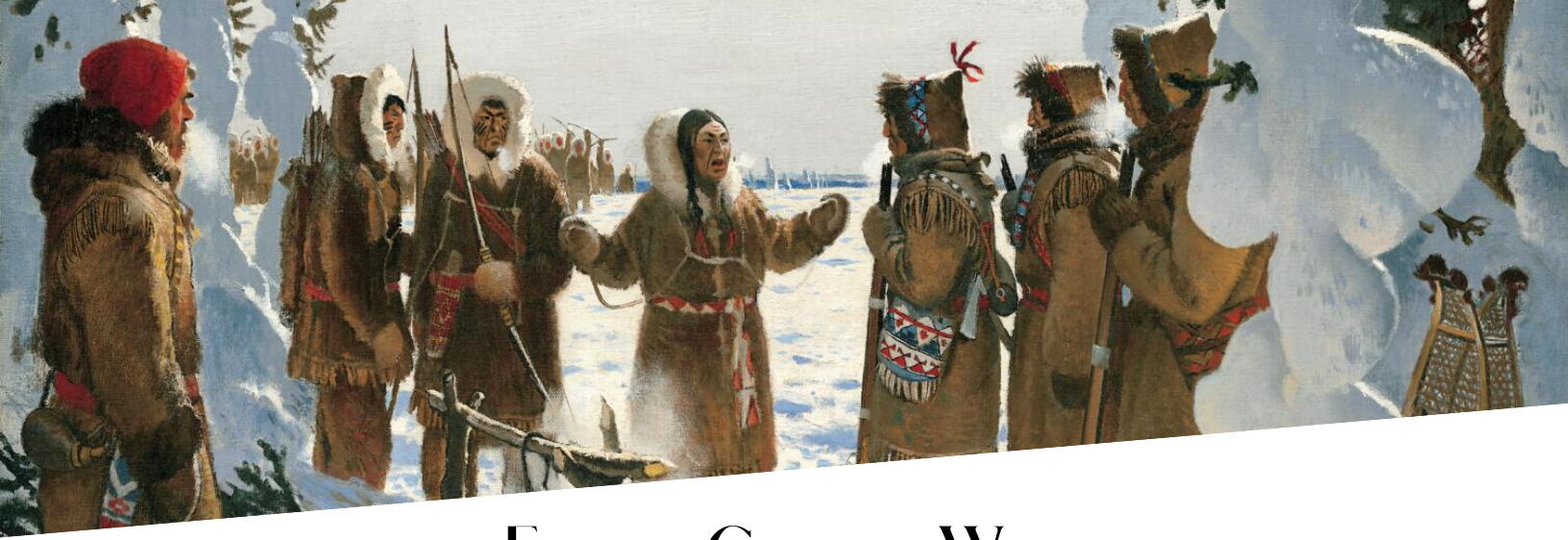
Hudson's Bay Company



The presence of gold was kept secret until the Hudson's Bay Company sent a sample of 800 ounces to San Francisco in February 1857 to be surveyed. Prior to this discovery, the population of New Caledonia was between 40,000-50,000, consisting of mostly First Nations peoples. When newspapers in California picked up the story, a gold frenzy took hold of San Francisco's population, triggering a sudden mass migration of between 30,000 and 100,000 miners to British Columbia within the year. By June 1858, thousands of miners from the United States had made their way to the lower reaches of the Fraser River, congregating at the small Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post of Fort Yale, just downriver from Nlaka'pamux territory.

Despite the warning from Douglas, the British could not respond fast enough to restrict the miners' entrance into the country. Under his direction, a British navy ship was stationed at the mouth of the Fraser River, charging each miner a 10-shilling mining license before they were granted entry to the region, thereby declaring the mainland a British colony and affirming the British claim to the resource-rich land.

*Description taken from Canadianencyclopedia.ca - Fraser River Gold Rush



Fraser Canyon War



After the sudden arrival of American miners following the discovery of gold in the Fraser River, tensions quickly rose as various confrontations of increasing severity began to arise with the First Nations peoples. Not only did the men mine gold without consulting Nlaka'pamux leaders for permission, but there were also instances of sexual violence against First Nations women. However, most critically was the miner's disruption of the Nlaka'pamux salmon fishery, a critical economic activity that took place at the end of each summer, by occupying fishing sites and diverting many rivers, creeks and lakes to wash gravel through mining sluices. In the process, they ruined crucial spawning grounds, jeopardizing the future of the salmon fishery.

In response to these confrontations, some members of the Nlaka'pamux nation took up arms to defend themselves. However, it wasn't until two French Miners were found dead in early July near Fort Yale that things drastically escalated. On August 9th 1858, a military company was formed amongst the miners to exact revenge on the Nlaka'pamux people who they believed were responsible for the deaths of the two miners. Although the exact number of civilian Nlaka'pamux deaths is unknown, between 9 and 17 August, they killed upwards of 36 people, five of whom were chiefs, with many others wounded and three taken as prisoners. The miners then retreated down river, burning five Nlaka'pamux villages in their path.

Rumors of Nlaka'pamux attacks upriver from Fort Yale began spreading, and soon the miners formed themselves into military companies consisting of several hundred men and prepared for more conflict out of fear of losing access to the goldfields. It wasn't until Captain Henry Snyder, a leader of one of the military companies, suggested holding a peace council with Nlaka'pamux communities in an attempt to secure their access to the goldfields that progress was finally made. On August 22nd 1858, Captain Henry Snyder held council with the Nlaka'pamux Chief David Sexpinlhemx and 11 other chiefs at Kumsheen, now Lytton, British Columbia. It was here that an agreement was met: Chief Sexpinlhemx agreed to split the land, with the Nlaka'pamux people remaining on one side, and the miners on the other. Following the meeting between Snyder and the Nlaka'pamux chiefs, there was no further violence.



Cariboo Gold Rush



Following the Fraser River Gold Rush, after the area had been depleted of placer gold, miners soon discovered gold on the Horsefly River which triggered what would become known as the Cariboo Gold Rush. The Cariboo Gold Rush took place in the remote regions of the Cariboo Mountains during the early 1860s.

Williams Creek proved to be the area richest in free gold and quickly became the centre of mining operations for the Cariboo district. From here, towns geared towards supply, service, and administration were established by the names of Richfield, Camerontown and Barkerville. To improve transportation of goods to the Cariboo gold fields, Governor James Douglas arranged for the construction of the Cariboo Road, a 650 km route that stretched from Barkerville to Yale.

One of the biggest distinctions between the Cariboo Gold Rush and the Fraser River Gold Rush were the miners that worked in these distinct regions: while the Fraser River was predominantly populated with American miners, the Cariboo Gold Rush had instead attracted many Canadian miners. Among these miners was a group of roughly 150 settlers who travelled from Fort Garry, now modern-day Winnipeg, to the interior of British Columbia following the Cariboo Gold Rush. This group later became known as the “Overlanders of 1862,” and was composed of individuals from Ontario and Quebec, as well as New York State, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

By the late 1860s, the Cariboo Gold Rush had reached an end, with approximately \$50 million worth of placer gold having been mined from the area. As for the towns that were established nearby, Barkerville proved to be the only one in the Cariboo region to outlast the boom of the gold rush, its rich deposits being worked all the way into the 1930s.



Granite Creek



Although gold was initially discovered on the Tulameen River in 1860, it was quickly forgotten as miners flocked to the Cariboo, an area that promised richer gold deposits. It wasn't until 1885 that a man by the name of John Chance discovered gold in the river of Granite Creek, and before long the word had gotten out about the wealth this area had to offer.

By the late 1880s, Granite Creek had become the third largest town in British Columbia, beaten only by Victoria and New Westminster. At its peak Granite Creek was home to 2000 residents, with many of these individuals being Chinese Canadians and American immigrants. A town was built on the bench above the river to accommodate the sudden arrival of these new residents; some of the buildings that could be found here included several saloons, restaurants and gambling houses, typical of a Wild West town.

The gold in this area was described as generally coarse, with the occasional one- or two-ounce nugget being found. Granite Creek is responsible for producing 26, 000 ounces of gold, approximately 60% of the reported production of the entire district. It is believed that the actual amount of gold produced from this area was actually much higher, since the crown tax placed on gold prevented many foreign miners from disclosing accurate numbers.

Although racial tensions were high, the Chinese miners were also among those to benefit from the riches of Granite Creek. In 1887, the spring runoff from the mountains into the river made conditions unfavorable for gold panning; while many of the white miners grew impatient and abandoned the area, the Chinese miners simply waited for more favorable water conditions that inevitably appeared in late July. The Chinese also demonstrated their diligence by sifting through areas that were already cleared of nuggets and instead collecting the gold dust that was left behind, a task that proved to be too tedious for other miners.

However, by 1889 gold production had dropped sharply and many of the miners had left Granite Creek for more prosperous areas. A major fire in 1907 had caused significant damage to the town and despite being partially rebuilt, the population of the town continued to dwindle. The Granite Creek Post Office officially closed its doors on March 31st of 1918, and although there were still reports of people residing in there in 1925, Granite Creek ultimately became a ghost town.



Hedley Gold Rush



Gold was first discovered in Hedley at Twenty Mile Creek of the old Dewdney Trail in 1898. Initially three claims had been staked in the area in 1894 on behalf of Governor Edgar Dewdney and J.L. Coulthard, however, both men seemingly lost interest in the area and the rights to these claims reverted to the Crown. It was at this point that three men, Peter Scott, C. Johnston and Albert Jacobsen began prospecting the area; after promising results, Johnston and Jacobsen staked the Copper Cleft and the Mound for their sponsor W.Y. Williams, and Scott staked the Rollo on behalf of Robert R. Hedley. By the end of 1898, every inch of the area had been claimed and registered with the gold commissioner.

By 1900, a man by the name of M.K. Rodgers had formed the Yale Mining Company, buying and consolidating all claims on Nickel Plate Mountain; from here a settlement was built on top of the mountain and large scale mining soon commenced. At the end of 1902, a third of an ounce of gold could be found in each ton of rock that was dug out of Nickel Plate Mountain, and while the resource was still prosperous, it was exceedingly expensive to haul these ore findings to Penticton for further processing. Instead, Rodgers obtained a provincial charter for the Daly Reduction Company, Limited to build and operate a concentration mill, generate power, install and operate a tramway and a mining railway, and mine ore.

By 1907, Hedley had become the most important mining operation in the Similkameen, and Nickel Plate Mine functioned as one of the largest producers in Canada with approximately 42,000 tons of ore going to the mill. However, in 1929, new ore could not be located; over twenty miles of diamond drilling had been done but the results proved to be disappointing. After closing the mine for several years, Hedley Mascot Gold Mines Ltd. gained new owners and reopened the mine with an additional 31 crown-granted claims.

The total ore removed from the Nickel Plate Mine was 3,289,000 tons, with an average ore grade of .34 oz per ton. Of those tons, 46 of them were of gold alone; by the time the mine closed in 1955, the gold was valued at \$37,000,000. In 1995, the Mascot Mine site was officially declared a designated Provincial Heritage resource and underwent an extensive restoration process to preserve this important history.



Klondike Gold Rush



On August 17th of 1896, gold was discovered on Rabbit Creek, later renamed Bonanza Creek, a Klondike River tributary that ran through both Alaskan and Yukon Territory, by an American prospector named George Carmack, along with two members of the Tagish First Nation, Keish (aka Skookum Jim Mason) and Káa Goox (aka Dawson Charlie). Due to the remote location of this discovery, communication with the outside world was limited and as a result, word didn't get out about the Klondike gold discovery until 1897. However, once gold was discovered the community within the Yukon River basin quickly rose to roughly 1600 prospectors by 1896.

There were two trails that led to the gold discovery, both with their own challenges; the Chilkoot was steep and covered in ice and snow, while the White Pass trail was narrow and slippery with mud. An estimated 3000 horses had perished on the White Pass trail after becoming stuck in the mud, earning it the nickname "The Dead Horse Trail". The Chilkoot Trail allowed for the animals to carry the stampeder's supplies for a longer stretch, however once they reached the trail they had to abandon the animals and carry their supplies the rest of the way. This usually required making several trips up and down a frozen slope which included 1,500 steps carved of snow and ice known as the "golden staircase". After crossing either pass, prospectors had to build or rent boats and brave hundreds of miles of winding Yukon River rapids to reach Dawson City in the Yukon Territory, Canada, where they hoped to set up camp and stake their claims. Many people died during the river trip.

Only about 30,000 weary stampeder's finally arrived in Dawson City. Most were disappointed to learn reports of available Klondike gold were greatly exaggerated and immediately returned home; others took advantage of the steady arrival of new miners and opened saloons, supply stores, banks, brothels and restaurants. The miners who came to the Yukon in the winter had to wait months for the ground to thaw. Soon after they set up makeshift camps in Dawson, there were too many people in such a small area, and sickness and disease quickly took its toll within the community. Other negative outcomes to result from the gold rush included mass amounts of soil erosion, water contamination, deforestation and loss of native wildlife. In the end, the Klondike Gold Rush led to a population boom in Yukon Territory, Alberta and British Columbia. It is also credited for aiding the United States, pulling it out of a depression.



Environmental Effects of the Gold Rush



The Gold Rush had a significant impact on the surrounding environment of these sights. One of the most immediate side effects was the drastic deforestation that took place at each large discovery. Since miners would often migrate by the thousands from one location to the next, trees would be cleared from large areas in order to accommodate for mining camps, cabins and railroads, as well as for use in mining equipment such as flumes and sluices. As a result, deforested hillsides would begin to rapidly erode, as roots and moss are what hold the soil in place; without them, dirt washes off during rainstorms and flash floods, making these hills more prone to landslides. With this runoff, aquatic plants can begin to grow out of control from the excess nutrients and choke the water flow. However, as the plants thrive this causes the fish to struggle with the sediment filled water, making it difficult to see both their predators and their prey, as well as making it difficult to breathe as the sediment clogs their gills.

Large quantities of rock would also be relocated during the mining process, resulting in less stable hillsides that made it easier for dislodged sediments to clog streams, affecting the local wildlife. In some extreme circumstances, such as in Colorado, exposure of buried rock to oxygen initiated a process known as acid mine drainage in which the sulfides in the metal lodged within the rock begin to break down into sulfuric acid and drains into local water sources once exposed to air. Serious instances of this have occurred as recently as 2015, when the US Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released a torrent of water contaminated with liquefied metals into the Animas River.

Other toxic side effects include the use of mercury in hydraulic mining. The California Wildcat Miners alone used an estimated 10 million pounds of Mercury, releasing enormous amounts onto the landscape. A century later, high concentrations of mercury can still be found in water, soil and sediments of nearby mining locations. Studies have also shown that the fish, birds, and other wildlife that live in these areas have exceptionally high mercury concentrations in their bodies.

Lastly was the over harvesting that was a direct result of the over population of each area. Similar to the damage caused by the fur trade, animals that were once hunted seasonally were suddenly being hunted year-long, including moose, caribou and mountain goats, causing their populations to rapidly disappear as a result. While some of these species eventually recovered, others were nearly or entirely wiped out.



Effect of the Gold Rush on the First Nations



While some First Nations groups across North America found ways to benefit from the Gold Rush, such as making money by working as guides and helping haul supplies for miners, these same First Nations tribes were also faced with various negative impacts of increasing severity as a result of these events.

Often when word of a gold discovery spread, hundreds or even thousands of miners would flock to a location and drastically effect and alter the landscape. As a result, many of the issues brought on by the Gold Rush that were of a concern to the First Nations were environmental based. The function of the First Nations tribes revolved around the cycles of nature; when these cycles were disrupted so too were their daily lives, and therefore putting the population of these tribes at risk. First Nations people were pushed out of their land and forests decimated by miners in pursuit of gold along the riverbanks, animals such as caribou and moose were over-hunted almost to the point of extinction, and rivers were disrupted and diverted to the point of ruining spawning grounds for local fish and jeopardizing future generations of the species.

In addition to the infringement of their land for the pursuit of gold, the sudden mass influx of American, European and Chinese miners suddenly exposed these First Nations groups to entirely new illnesses, such as smallpox, of which they had no immunity to. Sporadic outbreaks of disease would often wipe out large percentages of tribes, who had no form of defense against such viruses, and with the loss of population was also the loss of crucial aspects and traditions of their culture that could never be recovered.

And finally, the increase of foreign miners on Canadian soil in search of their fortune led to the establishment of forts and cities within the country's borders, and thus greatly expedited the colonization of Canada and its original inhabitants. Over time, these relationships grew increasingly hostile as the First Nations tribes gradually lost control over the land.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Klondike Gold Rush, Canadian authorities required every stamper to have a year's worth of gold mining equipment and supplies before crossing the Canadian border, this included:



Warm Clothes



Moccasins and Boots



Blankets and Towels



Mosquito Netting



Personal Care Items



Candles and Matches



First Aid Items



Medicine



Soap



1000 lbs. of food



Mining Equipment



Camping Equipment

John Fall Allison

John Fall Allison was born in Leeds, England in 1825. After moving to the United States at the age of twelve, Allison later joined the gold miners of California in 1849 in an attempt to make his fortune. However, within a decade the centre of the gold rush had shifted from California to British Columbia.

In 1858, after arriving at Fort Victoria, Allison was introduced to Governor Douglas who initially sent him to prospect gold in the Fraser River. However after the results proved to be disappointing, Allison returned to Victoria where he was asked by Douglas to cross the Hope Mountains to investigate reports of rich placer ground by Hudson's Bay Company employees at Tulameen, then known as the north fork of the Similkameen.

Despite news of gold discoveries in Cariboo, Allison decided to remain in the Similkameen under the employment of Governor Douglas in search of the shortest route across the Hope mountains. It was at this point that John Fall Allison entered a partnership with an American named Hayes, buying a band of Durham cattle and settling down as a stock raiser.

After the discovery of gold at Rock Creek in October 1859, there was a sudden influx of over 500 miners in the area, leading Douglas to arrange for the building of a trail from Hope to the Rock Creek digging sites by way of the Similkameen.