



Gold: The California Story

Mary Hill

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The discovery of gold in 1848 catapulted California into statehood and triggered environmental, social, political, and economic events whose repercussions are still felt today. Mary Hill combines her scientific training with a flair for storytelling to present the history of gold in California from the distant geological past through the wild days of the Gold Rush to the present.

The early days of gold fever drew would-be miners from around the world, many enduring great hardships to reach California. Once here, they found mining to be backbreaking work and devised machines to help recover gold. These machines pawed gravel from river bottoms and tore apart mountainsides, wreaking environmental havoc that silted rivers, ruined farmlands, and provoked the world's first environmental conflict settled in the courts. Native Americans were nearly wiped out by invading miners or their diseases, and many Spanish-speaking settlers—Californios—were pushed aside.

Hill writes of gold's uses in today's world for everything from coins to coffins, gourmet foods to spacecraft. Her comprehensive overview of gold's impact on California includes illustrated explanations of geology and mining in nontechnical language as well as numerous illustrations, maps, and photographs.

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