

Gold: The California Story

By 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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Editorial Review

Review
"In Gold: The California Story, Mary Hill writes that well before 1848-when James Marshall unearthed a pea-size golden nugget near Sutter's sawmill and began the California gold rush-sixteenth century rumors of golden cities spurred Spanish expeditions to land north of Mexico."-Nicole LaPorte, The New Yorker "A lively and engaging book on the ecology and human history of California gold.... Addresses a complex topic clearly and comprehensively."-Rachel D. Shaw, Journal of the West "A book that should remain definitive for a very long time."-Sally Zanjani, Western Historical Quarterly

From the Inside Flap

"This is a very readable account of gold mining in California from the earliest days to the present and of its economic, social, cultural, and literary consequences. It should provide many evenings of enjoyable and informative reading."—Paul C. Bateman, U.S. Geological Survey, retired

"Mary Hill's first-rate narrative is a remarkable synthesis. She skillfully weaves together the geology, history, and romance of the gold story in a lively and informative style. Anyone interested in California history, especially the Gold Rush, will relish this book."—Martin Ridge, Huntington Library

From the Back Cover
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