WESTWARD EXPANSION: 1820-1890
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Presented by:
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Questions to consider:

• Why did so many people leap at the chance to travel to the West?
Consider these points:

1. Many were from the Illinois – Iowa – Missouri – Ohio area. They had a family history of moves to improve their lives.
REGIONAL HISTORY

Consider these points:

2. Malaria continued to make annual rounds in the lowlands near the rivers.
Questions to consider:

• I asked, what can we gain looking at the past?
The Oregon Trail, and the California Trail.
Recognize what we tell ourselves isn’t always the whole truth:

We have always heard about the ‘self reliant’ westerner, the rugged individualist.
Without the American Army forts, the survey teams of Kearney and Fremont, the laws allowing the registering of deeds, etc.. – does this work?
1. **The reality:** The sectionalism of the West shows Western Pioneers had a completely different expectation of their government.
1. Troops in Forts at appropriate places. Government planning for land surveys’ and agreeable terms to manage land titles, etc., etc.
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2. Local governments in the new regions often started as very controlling co-ops the first years – to the benefit of all.
Point: The people of the West saw government far differently than the other regions did – and they had expectations of that government.
SOME CLEAN UP FROM LAST WEEK
Note the trails:

And the blue circles indicate nearby points of interest IF someone wanted to visit.
• Covered Wagon Women series:

Diaries and letters from women on the Trail.

There are 10 volumes, split by time periods.
I can’t find an estimate for the number of babies born on the trail.

However, these books likely have many stories.

“Patty Sessions, the Mormon midwife, delivered five babies on the trail between Omaha and Salt Lake City.”
AMERICAN HISTORY

My questions for today”

• How did the Gold Rush era change America?

• We hear stories of the time – but was it individuals, or companies that made the difference in this era?

• What drives a ‘gold rush?’
BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH

On a cold January morning in 1848, James Marshall was checking the flume he was building on the American River. He spotted something in the flume.
The Treaty of Guadalupe - Hidalgo had not quite been signed – That occurred Feb 2, 1848, transferring the land to US control.
San Francisco has a population of 800 in the Spring of 1848.

The news of the gold finally breaks in May. Crews in the harbor jump ship.
“As the spring and summer of 1848 advanced, the reports came faster and faster from the gold-mines at Sutter’s saw-mill. Stories reached us of fabulous discoveries, and spread throughout the land. Everybody was talking of “Gold! gold!!” until it assumed the character of a fever. Some of our soldiers began to desert;” – William T. Sherman
"From my mill buildings I reaped no benefit whatever, the mill stones even have been stolen and sold.

My tannery, which was then in a flourishing condition, and was carried on very profitably, was deserted; nobody wanted to be bothered with such trash, as it was called."

– John Sutter
Unlike the early Westward Expansion, this event would upend the idea of the frontier slowly moving west.

There were likely fewer than 14,000 people in California in January 1848.

250,000 more would arrive over the next 7 years!
CALIFORNIA TRAIL

The Oregon Trail, and the California Trail.
FOR CALIFORNIA!
DIRECT
EXTRAORDINARY INDUCEMENTS!!
THIRTY-FIVE DAYS TO GOLD REGIONS!
The "California Steam Navigation Co."

STEAMSHIP!
NICARAGUA

On FRIDAY, MARCH 23d, 1849,
The Quickest, Safest and Cheapest!!
Price of Passage Through Ninety Dollars!
By July 1, 1850, San Francisco census shows 94,766 people!
There are 626 vessels in bay – and most are abandoned.
May 1, 1850 headline:

‘The "Panama" sailed from San Francisco with $1,500,156 in gold dust destined for the East.’

The impact in not only local:
Gold production transformed the role of the United States in world trade, and increased foreign investment in the West.
More importantly, gold financed the original purchases of steel for the factories and the railroads – which created the market for more steel.
Some prospectors did get rich. But the costs of everything skyrocketed.

The later arrivals found the sale of their ox and wagon gave them little choice but to hire on as laborers.
“The California Gold Rush created wealth for the few, and labor for the many.”

– The Oxford History of the American West
Many fortunes were made – but the least risky method of making a fortune was supplying picks and shovels, and other goods to the hundreds of thousands flowing to the region.
A NEW AND MAGNIFICENT CLIPPER FOR SAN FRANCISCO.

MERCHANTS' EXPRESS LINE OF CLIPPER SHIPS!

Loading none but First-Class Vessels and Regularly Dispatching the greatest number.

THE SPLENDID NEW OUT-AND-OUT CLIPPER SHIP

CALIFORNIA

HENRY BARBER, Commander, AT PIER 13 EAST RIVER.

This elegant Clipper Ship was built expressly for this trade by Samuel Hall, Esq., of East Boston, the builder of the celebrated Clippers "SURPRISE," "GAMECOCK," "JOHN GILPIN," and others. She will fully equal them in speed! Unusually prompt dispatch and a very quick trip may be relied upon. Engagements should be completed at once.

RANDOLPH M. COOLEY, 88 Wall Street, Tontine Building.
• The speedy new Clipper Ships could not deliver enough clothes, shovels. Nails, mercury.

• This process of creating economic development in a need for specialized tools and goods.
The era of the individual panning for gold was short lived. The necessity to gather gold required mining, timber, rail cars, lighting, and massive numbers of workers.

It also required stamp presses of great expense.

That required capital.
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NATIONAL IMPACT

By 1852: 81 MILLION ounces of Gold
By 1852 SF is a city transformed. It is a city with merchants, bankers, ship owners, freighting firms, and manufacturers.
A few businesses that got their start in the Gold Rush of 1849:

- Studebaker.
- Levi Strauss
- Wells Fargo
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Levi Strauss

Wells Fargo
A few businesses that got their start in the Gold Rush of 1849:

- Studebaker.
- Levi Strauss
- Wells Fargo
This process will be repeated in other regions, but the difference is:

Is the wealth of the region simply extracted, or is business created?
FUTURE PROSPECTS

Of equal importance to the money, is the impact on the region.

California leapfrogs to a state without ever becoming a territory.
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Of equal importance to the money, is the impact on the region.

California leapfrogs to a state without ever becoming a territory.
They had been forced to create laws to meet the needs of the moment.
This also allowed them to bypass the political turmoil that was starting in the country due to the prospect of new states potentially becoming slave states.
Taylor is committed to a showdown with the South. And, he says, ‘I will treat traitors the same as I did Mexican spies – by hanging.’

His plan for California straight to statehood works because of the Gold Rush in 1849.
THE COMPROMISE OF 1850

• Henry Clay crafts the Compromise as 5 bills - that each pass – only because Taylor has died and cannot veto the Fugitive Slave Act aimed at placating the South.

Clay’s statehood for California follows Taylor’s lead. But two parts are major wins for the Southern Slave states.
NATIONAL CHANGES

California enters as a free state and then discovers gold.

Fugitive Slave Act amended – the quid pro quo was Slave trade in Washington DC abolished

Utah becomes a territory, and border set between Texas and New Mexico to make NM a territory as well.
REGIONAL HISTORY

But speed does not work so well for some groups in the new state were not so fortunate in the laws:

While European immigrants faired well,
• Asian, specifically Chinese were prevented from prospecting.
• Others were more forcefully stopped.
Major finds will continue through the era:

The Comstock Lode near Virginia City, Nevada will become the next. It becomes the richest mine in history.

But it requires a full mining solution – so it is the presence of experienced Cornish miners, Welsh smelters, and German metallurgy experts that speeds success.
Major finds will continue through the era:

The Comstock Lode near Virginia City, Nevada will become the next. It becomes the richest mine in history.

But it requires a full mining solution – so it is the presence of experienced Cornish miners, Welsh smelters, and German metallurgy experts that speeds success.
Virginia City is a boom town – again, is deep pockets are needed to finance the process.

Freighting, Lumbering, and mercantile trade are almost as profitable as having a claim!

But the best days lay ahead: in 1873, the miners find another rich vein!
Virginia City by the 1890s is a virtual ghost town as the mine played out.

Yet George Hearst, who had put up all his California holdings to buy out Comstock and the others before the biggest strike, would continue to thrive years later, having invested his money in other businesses.
• Idaho City in 1863 drew hundreds of thousands
• Gold Creek in 1864 started the Montana boom.
• The Black Hills Gold Rush would leave scars
• Helena provided even more gold –

• But these would also prove prosperous for others that were not nearby:
With mines now at the Missouri headwaters, Sioux City thrives!

But by the 1870's the action is closer!
FRONT RANGE, 1870

The front range strikes in Denver would attract 100,000 people to the Pike’s Peak and others.

Denver and Cherry Creek came later, but the mines appeared to play out.

Only deep shaft mining would suffice, and again, that meant money. But access to the Railroad and coke would build mining operations that would start the Mile High City.
• Though the Indians tried to prevent it, the discovery of gold in the Black Hills created a rush.

• Thousands of miners gathered in Sioux City in 1875 and points nearby.
The army, powerless to prevent the miners from entering, and the Sioux Indian refusal to agree lead to the opening of the land ‘at the miner’s own risk.’

- Deadwood swells to 7,000 people.
The Rushes for Gold have dwindled, (even as a Sioux City takes a leading role!)

But millions will continue to be made in mining the West:

• Copper in Montana
• Oil in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas
• Iron Ore in Minnesota
• Coal in Iowa, and Wyoming
While all of those minerals
• made millions for people,
• provided long term jobs,
• and played a part in the growth of the nation –

They did not have the power of gold to ignite the ‘fever.’
But that powerful force also led to other achievements:

Churches, banks, mercantile stores, newspapers, schools, and opera houses quickly followed the argonauts.
As we have seen today, it was the speed of development that is notable.

Jefferson thought it would take a thousand years to reach the coast.

By 1900, less than a century, the American frontier is gone.
My questions:

• How did the Gold Rush era change America?

• We hear stories of the time – but was it individuals, or companies that made the difference in this era?

• What drives a ‘gold rush?’
THE WESTWARD EXPANSION

For further reading:

• *History of the Westward Movement*, Frederick Merk, 1976

• *The Bonanza King*, Gregory Crouch, 2018
Lifelong Learning Instructor,
Western Iowa Tech Community College,
Sioux City, Iowa 2004 – Present

Siouxland: Ground Zero in the Great Depression

BOOMER CLASSICS:
Words that Changed the World

IOWA AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR
Keeping the Home Fires Burning: The Impact of the Civil War in Iowa
Presented by Russ Gifford
Thursday, April 29; 7 p.m.
Cargill Auditorium / No charge

The Institute for Lifelong Learning presents
“KHRUSHCHEV IN IOWA”
CREATED AND PRODUCED BY

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