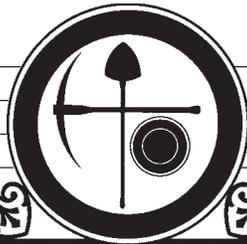


This month's theme:
The Gold Rush



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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

PROSPECTOR

March, 2005



The Gold Rush

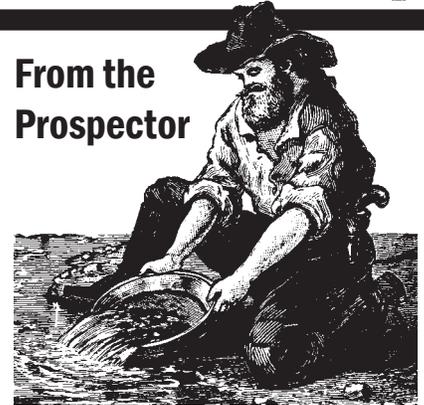
On July 3rd in the year 1890 Idaho was admitted to the union as the nation's 43rd state. At that time about 89,000 people had settled in Idaho. Just 30 years before, around 1860, the population was less than 10,000. That means that the population more than doubled every ten years from 1860-1890. A lot of people came to Idaho in such a short time. Nearly half of the towns that we can travel to in Idaho, like Boise and Lewiston, were established during those years. So what did Idaho

have that brought so many people in such a short time? Well, gold, of course! The unique thing about Idaho's gold rush is that most of the miners came from areas where gold had already been discovered, like California, Oregon, Washington and Nevada.

Gold was first discovered on the Clearwater River in 1860 and on the Salmon River about a year later. At this time Idaho wasn't even a state yet. In fact,

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From the Prospector



Howdy Prospector!

Well, spring is on its way. The snow is melting, the days are getting longer, the birds are singing, and my mule is getting restless. You see, spring means that prospecting season is around the corner. It's our favorite time of year. Soon the mule and I will be knee-deep in a mountain stream, panning for gold.

In between packing supplies and checking our claim, we thought this would be a good month to tell you the story about the Idaho gold rush. You know, I'm not the only one around here who caught gold fever. In the late 1800's almost everyone had it. In fact gold is what brought lots of folks to Idaho. Those nuggets helped make us a state.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy this month's story of the gold rush.

Idaho would be named a territory before it would be granted statehood. The gold rush that came after this first discovery of gold played an important part in these events. News of the exciting discovery traveled quickly and caused a stampede of some 10,000 miners into the area. They were all hoping to strike it rich or hit “pay dirt” as they used to say. Unfortunately, most found little or no gold. Some left the area to look for riches elsewhere, but many settled in Idaho and became shopkeepers or farmers in order to earn a living.

Not more than a year later, in 1861, some lucky miners did strike it rich when they discovered gold in the Boise River Basin. They told some of their friends, who told some of their friends, and in no time at all miners were flooding into the area we now call southwestern Idaho. The area became a gold rush hot spot and the settlers brought with them a bit of the “Wild West” that we’ve seen in movies and read about in books. In just 5 years nearly \$24,000,000 worth of gold would be found in the Boise Basin mining area. Gold seemed to be everywhere. Once, when miners were digging for much-needed water, they found gold instead. It was during this time that Idaho City, originally called Bannock City,

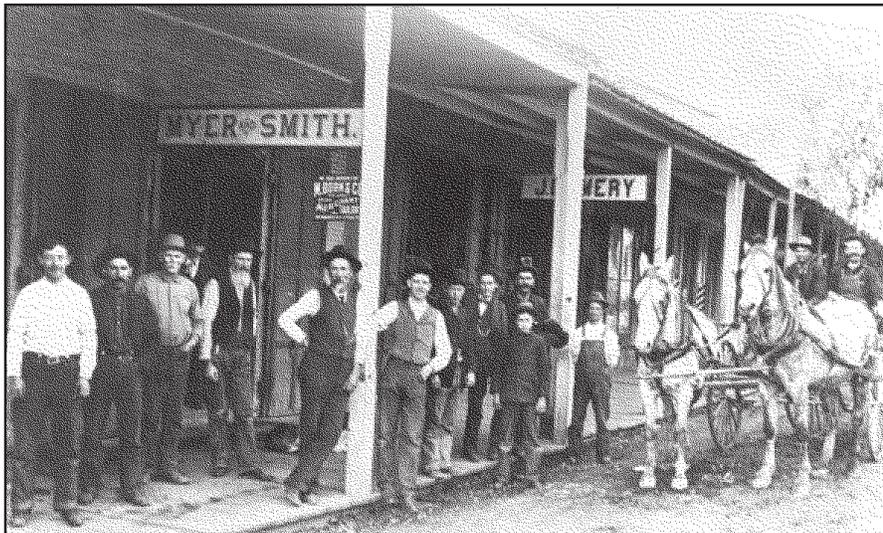
became the largest and biggest city in the northwest.

All of these new settlers led to a large enough population to get the United States government to outline and name Idaho as a territory. This act of Congress was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. The capital of the territory was Lewiston because most of the settlers were coming to the northern part of the territory. Boise would be named the capitol city about a year later. At

not very happy about all the settlers moving onto their lands. Many battles and small wars were fought during this time and sadly, many Native Americans and settlers were killed.

After Idaho became a territory the gold rush frenzy slowed down because not as much gold was being found in the mines. Then, in 1880, when a large deposit of gold was discovered on the Coeur d’Alene River another huge wave of gold seekers rushed into the territory. Since the Northern Pacific and

the Oregon Short Line Railroads had built tracks stretching across the Idaho territory, miners were able to travel faster and in larger groups than in the early gold rush days. The population grew very fast as gold seekers, for the second time, poured into Idaho. In 1890 the United States Congress and President Benjamin Harrison named Idaho



A crowd on the Streets of Idaho City

the 43rd state in the Union.

first Idaho territory included most of Wyoming and Montana, which were not states yet.

The Idaho Territory was a huge area with several Native American tribes and lots of forests and wild animals. This caused problems because the area was so large that it was hard to manage. In addition, the Native Americans were

the 43rd state in the Union.

A lot of people came to Idaho just to find gold, but most of them liked the mountains and the rivers and decided to stay and work and raise families. There are still some gold mines in Idaho, but most of the mines that were built between 1860 and 1890 have been shut down or turned into really neat tourist attractions. As for the mining “boomtowns” that were started during this time, most are still around but the people have found other ways to earn a living besides mining.⌘

by Glen Newkirk



The Fun Page

Help Lucky Noah Find His Mule

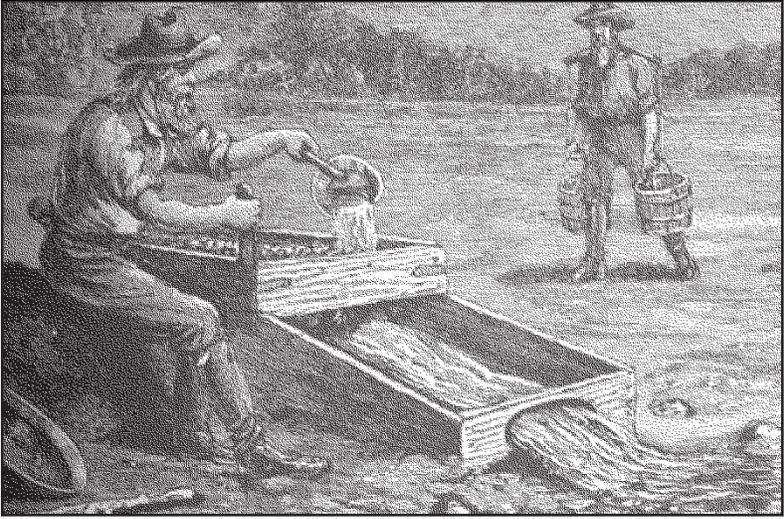
A large, complex maze with a small figure of a person at the top left corner and a mule at the bottom right corner. The maze is composed of many interconnected paths and dead ends. The background of the maze area has a fine, dotted texture.



Next Month's Activities

Well, we've told you all we know about gold mining, but we need your help so that we can learn more. Pick from one of the activities below or make up your own gold rush project and send it in to our Prospector headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine. Remember to include your name, the school where you're from, and the name of your prospector chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

Striking it Rich: Gold mining was a tough profession. Although most people didn't make much money, a few prospectors got fabulously rich. Pretend you are one of those lucky gold miners. What would you do with your new-found wealth? Draw us a picture or write a short story telling us how you spent your riches. Remember though, this is the late 1800's. No fair buying things that are only available today.



A Better Mining Machine: Placer miners had a lot of different tools to choose from. Gold pans, sluices, cradle rockers, hydraulic giants, and dredges could all be used to extract gold from rivers and rocks. Can you build a better mining machine?

Put on your inventor's cap and draw us a picture of a new machine that easily finds and extracts gold.

Ghost Town: Many early Idaho gold mining towns had a boom and then a bust. People rushed to the town when gold was discovered, but when the mining dried up,

everybody left. Throughout the state, these ghost towns still stand. Sometimes there are a few spooky old buildings, sometimes there's nothing left but a pile of rubble and a boarded up mine shaft. Have you ever been to a ghost town or do you know of a famous ghost town near

where you live? Give the rest of the Prospectors a short report on where the town is located, what you'd see if you were there, and some history if you know it. We can't wait to see what you find out!

Send in your work by April 13th to:

Prospector Club
 Lucky Noah
 Idaho State Historical Museum
 610 North Julia Davis Drive
 Boise, ID 83702

Or email it to us at kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us.