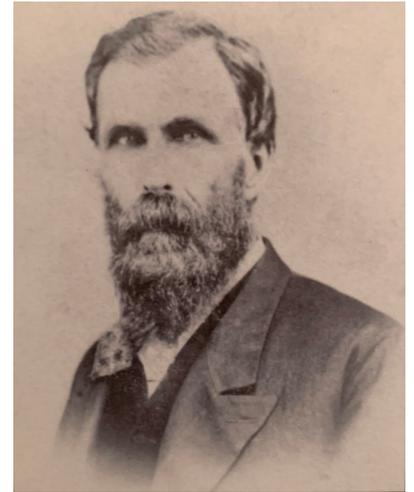


Gold Rush in Idaho!

Gold is a precious metal that is rare and valuable. It is found in nature in the form of nuggets or flakes. Learn about gold mining in Idaho!

Gold brought people from all over the world to the American west. Elias Pierce heard stories of gold flakes found in the Clearwater Valley and formed a prospecting party to mine in Idaho. In September of 1860, Pierce and his men found gold dust in Orofino Creek. Word spread quickly and soon over 7,000 men arrived in Idaho, looking to strike it rich!



Elias Pierce, Gift of Hattie Van Horn,
ISHS, Archives, 3370

Placer mining is when gold is mined from the top of the ground or in a stream. A gold pan was used to dip into a stream to scoop up dirt, gravel, and water. Miners would then swirl the pan around, allowing for gold to sink to the bottom because it was heavier than the sand and dirt. Underground mines were deep in the earth. Men would dig into mountains to find ore which is rock or sediment that contains minerals. The ore would be removed and crushed in order to separate the gold from the rock.



Gold Pan, Idaho State Museum

During the gold rush, boom towns, or mining towns, such as Silver City, ID, popped up very quickly all over the Northwest. If their dreams of getting rich didn't come true, people moved out. They became ghost towns with empty buildings and quiet streets.



Gift of George Ritchey,
ISHS, Archives, 348c

Gold Panning



IDAHO STATE
MUSEUM

/ IDAHO STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Placer mining was one of the easiest ways to find gold if you were patient! Will you strike it rich panning for gold?

Materials

- A shallow bowl
- Water
- Sand, rocks of various sizes, and other sediments (like dirt)
- Gold paint
- A small paintbrush
- A plastic tablecloth
- A large plastic container



Gift of Samuel M. Poindexter, ISHS, Archives, 76-119-2b

Instructions

1. Paint the small rocks that you found with gold paint with a small paintbrush. Let them dry. If you don't have gold paint, you can use marbles instead as gold.
2. While your "gold" dries, place a plastic tablecloth and large plastic container on the table and place your shallow bowl inside it.
3. Place all the rocks (including the gold ones), sand, and other sediments at the bottom of the shallow bowl and add water.
4. With a stick, mix the bottom so that the water becomes cloudy and you cannot see the placement of the gold rocks.
5. Now start "panning" with your shallow bowl. Make small circular movements to stir the mixture you have picked up. The rocks should settle to the bottom, and the sand and lighter sediments should mix with the water. Carefully pour out small amounts of the water into the large container, until you're left with only rocks.
6. Try to find all of the gold rocks just like Elias Pierce and his crew! How many gold rocks did you find?



Activity Vocabulary



IDAHO STATE
MUSEUM

/ IDAHO STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Boom Town	A town that grows quickly due to sudden prosperity.
Ghost Town	A town that is deserted by people.
Gold Pan	A shallow pan used for placer mining. Water, sediment, and gravel are swirled around in the pan. Gold pieces are heavy and sink to the bottom.
Ore	Naturally occurring rock or sediment that contains desirable metals like gold.
Placer Mining	The mining of materials on the earth's surface on the ground or in a stream bed.
Prospector	A person that searches for mineral deposits such as gold and silver.
Underground Mining	Mines that are dug deep in the earth's surface to excavate hard materials such as gold or silver.