

Diversity and Conflict 433 432

The gold fields drew people from all over the world. California soon became one of the most diverse places in North America. At first, the different groups got along well. However, as the gold fields became more crowded and less gold was found, things changed.

In the early days of the Gold Rush, many Native Americans worked as miners. As more people arrived at the mother lode, Native Americans were chased from their diggings. Some were forced to work for other miners for little pay.

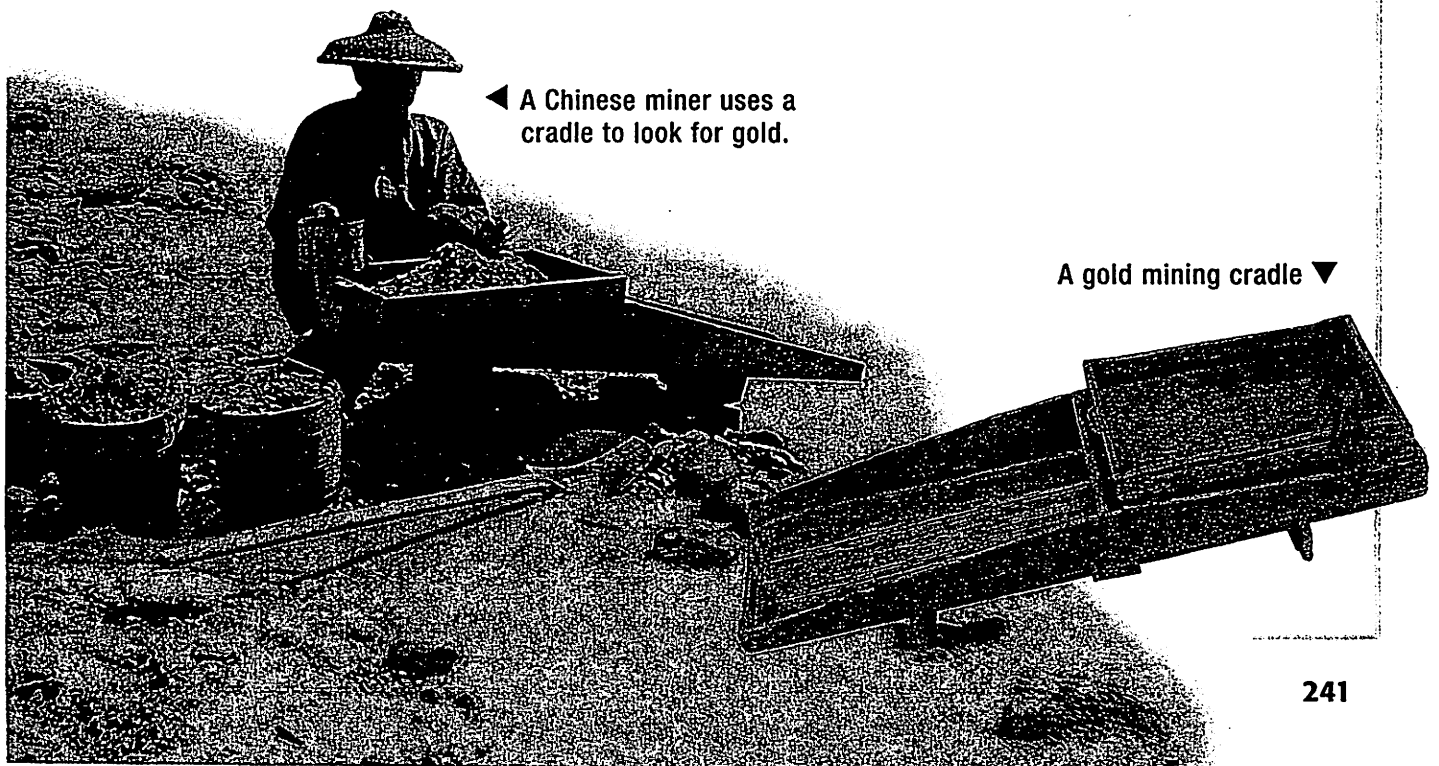
Thousands of Mexicans also came looking for gold. They were skilled and experienced miners, and at first they were allowed to mine without trouble. As more people from the East arrived, however, problems arose. The United States had just finished fighting a war with Mexico. Many of the newly

arrived Americans thought of the Mexicans as their enemies.

In order to keep Mexicans and people from other countries from mining, a law was passed. This law was called the Foreign Miners' Tax Law of 1850. Under this law, all miners from other countries had to pay a tax of 20 dollars a month to mine. This was a lot of money at the time. Many Mexican miners were unable to pay this tax and had to leave the gold fields.

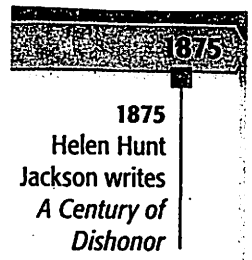
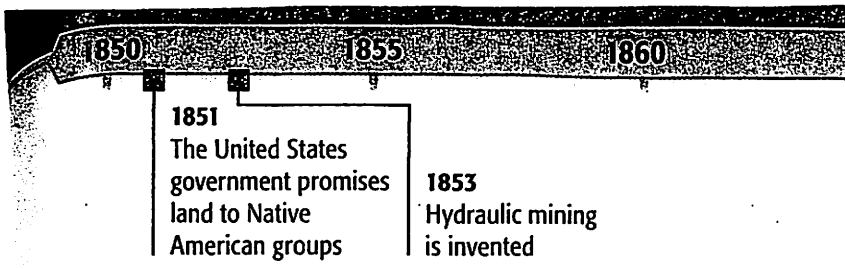
Chinese miners also had to pay a tax. Thousands of Chinese immigrants had come to California during the Gold Rush. At first, they were welcomed. They were often willing to work for low pay. But, as the gold started running out, the Americans did not want Chinese miners to get the last gold. In 1852, another tax law was passed that required Chinese miners to pay four dollars a month to mine in California.

REVIEW: What was an effect of the Foreign Miners' Tax Law of 1850? *Cause and Effect*



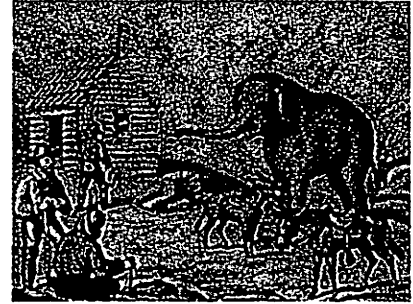
◀ A Chinese miner uses a cradle to look for gold.

A gold mining cradle ▼



★ ☆ ★

The Gold Rush was a time of tremendous excitement. New people kept arriving, and most of them believed their luck would change overnight. For many, just being there was amazing. They called it “seeing the elephant.”



Costs and Benefits of the Gold Rush

The early years of the Gold Rush were both exciting and scary. No other part of the United States had ever experienced such sudden change on such a large scale. Some of the effects of the Gold Rush were good. Others were bad. All together, these good and bad effects of the Gold Rush are called its costs and benefits.

The Benefits

The Gold Rush caused a booming economy. Mining camps grew into towns, and towns grew into cities, sometimes in a matter of months. Another benefit was the arrival of people from places all over the world. They gave California a rich mix of experience, talent, and culture. California’s rapid achievement of statehood was an indirect benefit of the Gold Rush. Without the huge

number of people who came at this time, California might not have applied for statehood so soon.

The Costs

On the cost side, various groups found themselves in conflict. Those in the majority, who were usually white Americans, often used their greater numbers to drive out other groups. Among those who suffered the most in this struggle for resources were Native Americans and Californios. During the same period, the Foreign Miners’ Tax Laws of 1850 and 1852 drove away many Mexican and Chinese miner’s. Another cost of the Gold Rush was the environment. New mining methods badly damaged California’s mountains, leaving effects that are still being felt today.

REVIEW What law drove many Mexican and Chinese miners away? *Cause and Effect*