The California Gold Rush: How Greed Shaped a New Western Society in San Francisco

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On the morning of January 24 of 1848, James Marshall was making a routine inspection of the ground at the building site of a mill in Coloma, California when he made a discovery that changed California forever. Marshall noticed many flakes of gold in the earth and before long, thousands of people came flocking to the area in search of the precious metal (Caughey 6). This massive migration to California resulted in the formation of many new cities, most notably San Francisco, and was one of the most influential events in the history of the Western United States. The greed of immigrating miners during the gold rush led to extreme crime, racism, and lack of social institutions in San Francisco. In turn, these effects produced a new Western frontier society of chaos, violence and disorder in San Francisco.

California was first colonized by Spain and remained in Spanish control until Mexico won its independence in 1821 and took control of California. Up to this point, California was mostly unprosperous and only consisted of about twenty missions, the two struggling towns of San Jose and Los Angeles, and roughly a dozen large ranches (Caughey 1). In the years following the revolution, American traders, whalers, trappers, hunters and covered-wagon settlers immigrated to California. Ranching spread rapidly due to the plentiful grassland and by the 1840s the U.S. had economically annexed California (Caughey 3; “1820s to Gold Rush”). In 1846 the Bear Flag Revolt gave Americans control of California and it became an official U.S. territory. Many American soldiers were sent to California in order to strengthen U.S. control, which more than tripled the American population in California (Caughey 4-5). This large influx of new immigrants meant that a large population of unemployed men was in California, and the successful John Sutter was ready to harness that force. Sutter was a Swiss immigrant who came to California in 1839 after living in five other U.S. states and territories. He received a land grant of 50,000 acres and established a fort that “dominated Sacramento Valley”. Sutter wanted to establish a sawmill on his land that would further his economic dominance of the area and he planned on using the large military body as its labor force (Caughey 3-6). Sutter hired James Marshall, a New Jerseyan carpenter who moved to California in 1845 from Oregon, as the foreman for his mill and Marshall began construction in 1847 on the American River at Coloma. On January 24 of 1848, Marshall discovered gold in the river (Caughey 6-8). He shared his discovery with Sutter and they tried to keep the discovery a secret, but word spread as the few people they told proved to be untrustworthy and as others observed their irregular behavior of trying to lease large amounts of land which they intended to use for mining (Caughey 10-16). With the word of the discovery spreading, the quest for gold in California had begun.

The first wave of miners were the 1848ers, miners who resided in California and surrounding areas. Many heard reports of the gold, but at first very few went to the mountains to seek it other than the laborers on Sutter’s mill who had seen the gold themselves. San Franciscan Sam Brannan was one of the few who went to the mill and saw the gold for himself. On May 12 1838, he walked the streets of San Francisco yelling, “Gold, gold, gold from the American River”, with the hope of increasing business in his supply stores. His plan worked as San Franciscans began flocking for gold (Caughey 18-20). By mid June, 75% of the 800 people in the city were gone and San Francisco had the “appearance of a ghost town”(Caughey 20). The rush for gold spread to South California by June and the *Californian News* on May 29 wrote, “the whole country from SF to LA… resounds to the cry of *gold*! GOLD!! GOLD!!!!... everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxes” (Caughey 21). 48ers were tremendously successful and made thousands of dollars. U.S. consul Thomas Larkin reported on June 1 that a few hundred men made 10 to 50 dollars each per day and many averaged a finding of an ounce of gold per day. He predicted that “the ground would afford gold for many years, perhaps even for a century” (Caughey 32). News began to spread east as newspapers printed stories of gold, but most people were suspicious. On December 5, President Polk reported to Congress of the abundance of gold, in truth Polk was seeking justification for the controversial Mexican War, and on December 7, courier Lt. Lucien Loeser returned from CA with over 230 ounces of gold. The President’s word and visible evidence of the gold sparked gold mania (Caughey 39-43). Massive immigration to San Francisco and California ensued in which both Americans and foreigners, especially the Chinese, immigrated to California in search of riches. In 1848 San Francisco had a population of about 1,000 and by 1850 it was 30,000 (Altman 45). The immigration statistics to California are even more staggering. The population of California in 1848 was 14,000, in 1850 was 100,000 and in 1852 was 250,000 (Gascoigne 4). The discovery of gold had brought thousands of people to San Francisco in search of wealth.

Greed was an extremely prevalent character trait of the 49ers in San Francisco. 49ers came to California with the sole purpose of finding gold and had unrealistically high aspirations. Miner J.H. Carson writes in his diary, “A frenzy seized my soul... piles of gold rose up before me… in short I had a very violent attack of the gold fever (Caughey 22). Men from all over the country were possessed by gold fever and had nothing other than gold and riches on their minds. History writer Linda Jacobs Altman accurately writes, “gold fever was really just good old-fashioned greed, decked out in a red shirt and bandana and topped with a floppy miner’s hat” (Altman 50). 49ers were simply greedy men seeking to earn themselves wealth and so greedy that they were willing to start a new life at the prospect of riches. Most 49ers had incredibly high expectations and desired to become excessively wealthy. *Mr. Atherton’s Gold Lecture*, published by the *Washington Globe*, demonstrated these unrealistic expectations. It read, “the supply of gold was absolutely inexhaustible… one hundred thousand persons could not exhaust it in ten or twelve years” (Caughey 44). All the miners were avaricious for gold and every single one was under the impression that they were going to be wealthy and successful. The reality was that few would find riches and most would live very uncomfortable lives. The average day of a miner consisted of a sunup breakfast of “bitter coffee and hard biscuits” followed by 10 to 12 hours of digging, washing and bagging gold, during which one was “lucky to earn 15 dollars per group of 3 or 4 each day” (Altman 53-54). There simply were too many miners and not enough gold to make everyone prosperous. The expectations of the miners were not met, so their greedy desires remained and frustration grew as these desires continued to remain unfulfilled. Soon this greed and the frustration that came from it began to manifest themselves in different forms of San Francisco society.

The greed of the 49ers led to a high crime rate that made San Francisco a violent and dangerous society. As miners failed to find success through the gold mines, they began to turn to crime as a method for earning money. The Sydney Ducks were a notorious group that was one of the first to make the switch from mining to crime. The Ducks were ex-convicts from Botany Bay prison colony in Australia who came to San Francisco in hundreds in search of gold. However, “they soon decided that crime was easier and a good deal more profitable than panning for gold” (Altman 67). The Ducks began committing crimes at an alarming rate and formed a district called Sydney Town in which crime was so frequent that the area was “avoided by respectable citizens and anyone else who valued his life” (Altman 68). Crime began spreading from Sydney Town to all of San Francisco and the Ducks’ crimes through the city “up in arms” (Altman 69). Aiding the increase of crime was the government's inability to control illegal behavior. The population of San Francisco was growing faster than new government could keep up with. Frank Soulé observed San Francisco in 1849 as having no “proper government” or municipal authorities and being in “utter disorganization” as immigrants flowed in (Soulé). The California and San Francisco governments didn’t have the resources to manage the rapidly growing population because they were still newly developed governments and were unable to catch and convict most criminals. The government was so ineffective at catching criminals that in a year when there were over 200 murders in California, only one execution was made (Delano 364). People knew they could get away with illegal activity, so they began trying to fulfill their greedy aspirations by stealing instead of mining. Avarice seemed to outweigh the immorality of crime. 49er Alonzo Delano describes the frequency of crime and the government’s ineffectiveness in controlling it:

California has become a by-word for dishonesty and crime… The laxity of government- in fact, the want of an effective government was a grand stimulant to the perpetration of crime … Robberies and murders were of daily occurrence... The Executive pardoned crime in its most glaring deformity- that criminals almost universally escaped punishment (Delano 361-364).

San Francisco had become dangerous and at any moment one could be robbed or murdered. Many of the miners shared Delano’s beliefs and realized that something had to be done about the rapid growth of crime that made San Francisco a violent, dangerous, and disorderly place.

The people’s response to the high amount of crime backfired and made San Francisco an even more disorderly city. On June 9, 1851, 103 leading citizens established the Committee of Vigilance, which gave a committee of citizens control over San Francisco law (Altman 73). The June 10 *Daily Courier* gives the reasons for the Committee’s creation: “San Francisco is partially in the hands of criminals… life and property are in imminent danger... there is no alternative… but to… direct our whole energies, as a people, to… execute summary vengeance upon them” (Delano 368). The people were now in control of controlling crime, a task the government was incapable of doing. On June 11, the Committee made its first execution. John Jenkins, a Sydney Duck suspected of stealing from a safe, was hung in Portsmouth Square by the Committee (Delano 369). Public opinion very much in favor of Committee because the government had done next to nothing to stop crime, so the system of public rule spread throughout California. Delano describes the formation of the Committee as “a political revolution … as much justified by the state of affairs as was the revolution of ‘76” (Delano 371) and Soulé writes, “[there is] no greater calumny uttered against high-minded men than to represent … the members of the Vigilance Committee as a lawless mob” (Soulé). Contrary to the opinions of Delano, Soulé and most of the public, in reality the Committee of Vigilance was a barbaric mob rule. The Committee was both far too harsh and often violated the right to a fair trial, as the Committee generally sided with public opinion even if it was incorrect. Minor crimes were punished with “barbaric punishments” in which people were hung, branded, and flogged without a jury trial (Altman 74). Greed stimulated the increase in barbaric punishments because the miners were jealous of the criminals’ success and they took out that envy on any suspected criminal. An example of barbaric and excessive punishments can be found in the Miner Ten Commandments, a half-satire, half-serious poster found in most mining camps: “Thou shalt not steal a pick, or a shovel, or a pan from thy fellow-miner… for he will… discover what thou hast done… and if the law hinder them not they will hang thee, or give thee fifty lashes, or shave thy head and brand thee” (Hutchings). For a crime as insignificant as theft, one could be hung. The result of this was a massive increase in the amount of executions, which even exceeded the rate of crime. In the nearby mining town of Sonora, William Perkins counted six executions in the 2nd week of July alone (Altman 76). That means there were six times more executions in a small town in a single week than there previously were over a full year in the entire state of California. Violence and disorder remained in San Francisco, but now were created by the Committee instead of by the criminals. The massive growth of crime caused by greed and the peoples’ barbaric response to this crime, which was fueled in part by greed, made San Francisco a violent and disorderly society.

Greed also inspired racism to the both the Chinese and Native Americans in California, which led to violence and turmoil in San Francisco. In the late 1840s, floods, famine, peasant revolts and overpopulation in Canton caused a large spike in Chinese immigration by those who hoped to acquire wealth and return home (Meissner). Over 2,700 Chinese immigrants came to San Francisco 1851 and over 20,000 came in 1852 (Meissner; Altman 9). As a whole, the Chinese found far more success than whites. The Chinese were able to profit by filling the jobs left behind by gold seekers and performing jobs women would normally do including shopkeeping, cooking, sewing, and cleaning (Meissner). The Chinese were also patient, thorough and worked together, which allowed them to have success in mining claims previously abandoned by others (Altman 95). For example, Hong Kong immigrant Yee Ah Tye was found so much success in his mining endeavors that he was able “to hire scores of men to work in his operations” (Brands 51). Greedy whites were jealous of the Chinese success because most whites were unsuccessful. Whites also saw the Chinese as mining competitors who would impede them from achieving their greedy desires (Meissner). These views of the Chinese caused whites’ attitudes towards the Chinese “to shift from curiosity to contempt” (Meissner). As resentment towards the Chinese grew, violence towards the Chinese increased. It was common for mobs to visit Chinatowns or Chinese mines and kill the Chinese for no other reason than their race. In Chili Gulch such a mob beat a lone Chinese man to death with no excuse other than the fact that he was Chinese (Meissner). John Bigler, California’s governor from 1852 to 1856, “began a crusade against Chinese immigration” citing that the Chinese were dangerous to the welfare of California (Meissner). The Foreign Miners’ Tax of 1852 made all non-U.S. citizen miners pay a monthly fee, which made it very difficult for the Chinese to earn money. The 1852 “Anti-Coolie” bill limited Chinese “coolie” labor, unskilled and low wage labor, by imposing a work permit fee, which made it very difficult for the Chinese to find work (Meissner). The greed and jealousy of whites resulted in violence and unjust laws against the many Chinese immigrants in San Francisco that violated social order.

Racism directed against Native Americans also stemmed from greed and made San Francisco even more violent and disorderly than racism towards the Chinese. Native Americans had been living in California for over 600 years (Stanley 5). About 100 tribes lived peacefully and cooperatively in California, and little violence occurred between tribes (Stanley 19). However, miners’ greed ended up disrupting this peace. Whites were so avaricious for gold that they saw Natives Americans as obstacles on potential mining land and didn’t even consider them human. April Moore, a Nisenan Maidu native, says, “They saw us as a roadblock to their fortunes” (Native Americans). Jerry Stanley explains that the miners thought the Native Americans had “no real home and no claim to the land” because all they were concerned about was using the land for gold mining (Stanley 65). Whites also were looking for someone to blame for their lack of success, just like they did to the Chinese. National Geographic historian James Rawls describes miners’ resentment towards Natives as “a product of their own greed” because miners blamed Natives for their failure to achieve their greedy dreams (Native Americans). Whites began dehumanizing Natives as an excuse for killing them and driving them away from their lands. Whites began using the slur “Digger” and manufactured lies saying that the Digger had “no knowledge of morality… he raped white women and scalped white men…[he was] subhuman… [and an] obstacle to be overcome” (Stanley 65). The dehumanization worked enough to convince most whites that Natives were no better than farm animals. The *San Francisco Chronicle* read, “[Indians] grazed in the fields like beasts” (Stanley 66). As resentment and dehumanization progressed, most miners began to express the desire for complete extermination of Native Americans. Rawls says, “That was the cry of the day: Exterminate the diggers...men who had never seen an Indian before in their lives, record in their diaries how anxious they are to shoot one” (“Native Americans in Gold Rush”). The *Alta California* plainly read, “it will be absolutely necessary to exterminate the savages” (Stanley 66). In the 1850s, the government followed public sentiment and began encouraging extermination. Town governments began paying bounties for scalps, arms and proof of dead Indians. The Indian Indenture Act of 1850 allowed whites to kidnap Natives and work them as indentured servants. By 1863 when the Act was repealed, about 10,000 Native Americans had been sold into servitude (Stanley 70). Greed again played a role as people could now earn money by killing and capturing Natives. Col. Francis Lippitt describes Indian raids as “a very lucrative business” (Stanley 71). Violent raids became a normal occurrence as miners sought to earn money and reach extermination and began. So many Indians were killed, that the state of California had to pay $1,000,000 in dead Indian bounties from 1851 to 1852 (Stanley 67). Rawls describes it as “a case of genocide, mass murder that was legalized and publicly subsidized” (Native Americans). The Native American population of California was decimated. The Native population in 1848 was 125,000 and by 1860 had dropped 35,000 (Stanley 71). Greed led to frequent raids against Native Americans that made San Francisco a violent and dangerous place.

Another cause of disorder in San Francisco was the lack of social institutions, which also stemmed from the 49ers’ greed. The five basic social institutions are government, economy, family, education and religion and these institutions “are essential in the development and maintenance of orders” (“Social Institutions”). The social institution of government was affected through avarice by the formation of the Committee of Vigilance and the racist laws against Native Americans and the Chinese, but the four other institutions were also impacted by greed. The miners were all so greedy that most wouldn’t even consider taking a job other than mining because they couldn’t earn a fortune through normal occupations. The result of this was a completely one-dimensional economy that solely depended on gold mining. Cultural author Felix Wierzbicki observed that as everyone worked in the gold mines all day, “the household duties are unfulfilled” (Altman 100). This meant that cleaning, cooking, sewing, and other important tasks were left undone. The lack of other economic activities also meant that there was virtually no infrastructure. Frank Soulé described the city as having “no such thing as a home to be found” with only canvas tents and wooden framework serving as buildings. Soulé continues, “[There were] uneven and irregular roads with unfathomed abysses of mud and water” on all sides surrounded by “heaps and patches of filth” (Soulé). This one-dimensional economy founded upon the greed of the miners left San Francisco in a state of disorder as the entire city was like a slum and essential tasks were left unperformed.

The institutions of family, religion and education were also greatly affected by the miners’ greed and San Francisco turned into a city of immorality. Miners were so focused on reaching their avaricious desires in the mines that they had no motivation or time to focus on family, religion or education. Instead they would spend their free time in gambling saloons, venues that didn’t require hard work like churches, schools, or families would. The absence of emphasis on family was compounded by the lack of women in San Francisco, because mining was predominantly a male job. Even as the gold rush was declining in 1860 and more women were coming to San Francisco, there still was a ratio of about 8 males to every 3 women (US Census Bureau). As a result, very few families were present in San Francisco as the city was filled with single men. Without families, domestic and moral values weren’t emphasized so drinking, rowdiness, and unchecked behavior occurred frequently. Wierzbicki described San Francisco “like an edifice built on sand… society here… [is] excited, turbulent” and credited this turbulence to the lack of family, citing family as a strong foundation to society (Altman 100). The lack of family also left a sexual void for many miners so prostitution became much more common than in normal society. JoAnn Levy writes, “a largely male population permitted [prostitutes] an accord not found in Eastern society” (Levy 151). As a result, saloons were filled with prostitutes, furthering vice. The lack of emphasis on religion and schooling had similar effects to the absence of family. In 1851, there were only eighteen churches and eighteen schools in the entire city, while there were 537 saloons (“Eighteen Churches”). The limited presence of these two social institutions furthered the moral decay of San Francisco as more and more people spent their free time in saloons. A grand jury describes one particular saloon as an “ill governed and disorderly house… [with men] drinking, tippling, whoring, and misbehaving themselves” (Levy 168). San Francisco had become a place where morality had been thrown out the door and disorderly bad behavior was frequent. Soulé observed that “everyone drank, swore, and gambled” and orderly behavior was almost nonexistent (Soulé). An anecdote told by Joseph Henry Jackson, the literary editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* during the 1900s who wrote several history books on the Gold Rush, perhaps best demonstrates how greed got in the way of morality. In Jackson’s story, a prayer during a burial is interrupted by people digging up ground surrounding the burial site in search of gold and the preacher dismissing the funeral while declaring, “Gold!” (Altman 49). Miners were so focused on achieving their greedy desires that they disrespected their religion and deceased family member without hesitating for an instant. With morality rarely present in San Franciscans’ lives, 49ers behaved like hooligans, which filled the city with disorder.

Some may argue that greed was not the principal cause of disorder in San Francisco, but that the chaos was simply an effect of the massive population growth in the city. While this certainly was an important factor and greatly aided the creation of a disorderly society, greed was still the most important cause. Crime certainly was made easy due to the high population, but 49ers were only committing crime with the purpose of earning money that they failed to earn in mines. The Sydney Ducks, who are generally credited with starting the massive growth of crime, “realized mining was difficult and not so lucrative, [so they] lapsed into their old lawless ways” by raiding and robbing various businesses and people (May). This demonstrates that the rapid growth of crime was caused by miners realizing they could fulfill their avaricious desires through illegal methods, meaning greed was the principal factor in the rapid growth of crime. Similarly, resentment towards Chinese and Native Americans was stimulated by overpopulation, but people don’t massacre other humans simply due to large population growth. James Rawls cites the racist violence to the fact that 49ers “were frustrated men, because they were not getting rich quick, and they're looking for someone to blame (“Native Americans in Gold Rush”). The violence was a result of white miners blaming other races for their failures, so without the greedy aspirations of the miners most of the racist actions wouldn’t have occurred. Finally, social institutions were also hurt by the massive immigration as it was difficult for institutions to keep up with the growing population, but the extent of immorality in San Francisco shows that avarice was a more important force. Frank Soulé described the entire city of San Francisco as being in “moral ferment” because in order to get rich, “few had consciences much purer than their neighbors” (Soulé). Mining was so competitive that people had to leave their morals behind in order to achieve their greedy goals of wealth. This “moral ferment” can easily be seen in the lack of churches, schools and other important institutions that provide society with morality. While other factors like immigration were key in creating the new San Franciscan society, it is clear that greed was the most vital driving force in causing this disorder.

In the words of the famous writer Mark Twain from his 1872 book Roughing It, gold rush California was “a wild, free, disorderly, grotesque society” (Twain). Men from all over the world flocked to San Francisco and were possessed by gold fever, a greedy desire for unreasonable riches. Crime, racism, and the destruction of social institutions were results of this greed. These three results in turn were the driving forces in the establishment of a new Western society in San Francisco, which was a society of chaos, violence and disorder. This society embodied the modern image of the “Wild West” that we see in movies, a society lacking any semblance of order or control. San Francisco truly was a lawless society that was in complete pandemonium and filled with violence, but this chaotic San Franciscan society wasn’t created by a bunch of crazy cowboys and desperados like the “Wild West” was portrayed to be in pop culture. Instead, San Francisco’s chaos was forged by the greed that every single settler brought west.

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**Annotated Bibliography**

Altman, Linda Jacobs. *The California Gold Rush in American History*. Springfield, NJ, USA: Enslow, 1997. Print.

Linda Jacobs Altman writes this book as a simple narrative on the history and happenings of the gold rush. The book is a short and abbreviated summary that is perfect for background information. It also quotes many useful primary sources and uses anecdotes to explain larger themes, which will be very helpful when writing the paper.

[Brands, H. W. *American Colossus: the Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2010. Print.](http://www.bibme.org/)

I used this source at the recommendation of Mr. Bedar to find a story about a Chinese miner that demonstrated the success of the Chinese as a whole in the gold rush.

Caughey, John Walton. *The California Gold Rush*. Berkeley: University of California, 1975. Print.

John Walton Caughey describes his book as “a comprehensive view [of the gold rush], beginning with the discovery… and going on to measure the economic, political, social, and cultural outgrowths” (ix). The book is a very detailed and lengthy history of the gold rush and its effects, which was useful for giving an in depth background of the gold rush in its entirety.

Delano, Alonzo. *On the Trail to the California Gold Rush*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005. Print.

Alonzo Delano tells the reader nearly every detail of his five-month journey from Illinois to Sacramento. Delano expanded and polished his diary entries in order to create an engaging book that would sell to the general public in the 1950s, which was very interested in the gold rush. Delano was a journalist first and a gold seeker second, so his writings may be exaggerated, but he includes incredibly detailed anecdotes and analysis of nearly every aspect of the gold rush making this an incredibly useful primary source. Delano’s writings were first published in 1854 as *Life on the Plains and among the Diggings* and this is a new and edited edition.

"Eighteen Churches in S.F.; 8000 Communicants in '50." *The Bulletin* [San Francisco] Sept. 1925, Diamond Jubilee Edition ed.: n. pag. *The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco*. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.

This newspaper article describes the many different types of buildings in San Francisco, giving detailed counts of each type of institution. This was very useful in comparing the amount of schools and churches to the amount of saloons.

"From the 1820s to the Gold Rush." *San Francisco News Letter* (Sept. 1925): n. pag. *The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco*. Web. 5 Jan. 2014.

This is a newsletter detailing the history of San Francisco from the early 19th Century until late 1849. This helped me understand the events that occurred in San Francisco before the Gold Rush and gave a good overview of San Francisco’s history.

Gascoigne, Bamber. "History of the United States of America." *HistoryWorld*. N.p., 2001. Web. 05 Jan. 2014.

I used this source to look up population statistics of California and didn’t read the rest of the article.

"The Gold Rush: California Transformed." *California State University Northridge*. California State University Northridge, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

This is a pdf that offers a brief summary of the entire gold rush broken down into different themes. It had a similar breakdown to the Altman book, but contained less detail. Its only use was to provide several good quotes about the society of San Francisco.

Hutchings, James. "The Miners' Ten Commandments." Letter. 1853. N.p. *The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco*. Web. 5 Jan. 2014.

This primary source was referenced in the Altman text and the full version proved to be a very useful and entertaining source.

Levy, JoAnn. *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush*. Hamden, Ct.: Archon, 1990. Print.

JoAnn Levy writes a full book highlighting the achievements of the few women who participated in the Gold Rush, who for the most part had been left out of history books. This book was unique because it focused solely on women and was the only book I could find that gave a detailed description of women’s effect on the Gold Rush.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Gold Rush and the Shaping of the American West*.*California History*. 1st ed. Vol. 77. N.p.: University of California, 1998. 30-41. National Gold Rush Symposium. *JSTOR*. ITHAKA. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

Patricia Limerick writes about how the gold rush shaped the American West as it is today. Most of this source applies to a time period far more modern than what my paper is about, but it contains some immediate effects on Western society that were very helpful.

May, Meredith. "Sydney Ducks and Vigilante Justice in SF, 1851." *SFGate*. Hearst Communications, 9 Dec. 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.

This article from *SFGate* (a subunit of the *San Francisco Chronicle*) details the Sydney Ducks’ actions and motives as crime grew in San Francisco. This was very useful in arguing that the crime was primarily motivated by greed.

Meissner, Daniel J. "Chinese Begin Immigrating to California." *Great Events from History: The Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Powell John. Salem Press, 2007. *Salem History* Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

Daniel Meissner gives a brief summary of Chinese immigration during the gold rush. He explains why Chinese came, what they did, and how they were treated in a concise but informative summary.

"Native Americans in the Gold Rush." *American Experience: The Gold Rush*. PBS, 13 Sept. 2006. Web. 11 Dec. 2013.

This webpage brings a collection of perspectives on several topics of how Native Americans were affected during the gold rush. Historians, professors, and relatives of Native Americans who lived in California during the gold rush all share their thoughts on the gold rush’s effects towards the Native Americans. Stories retold by the Native American relatives offer gruesome yet detailed stories of oppression.

"Social Institutions, Basic Concepts of Sociology Guide." *Social Institutions.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.

This article helped me understand and define social institutions by giving a detailed but understandable explanation of what social institutions are and what specific institutions (churches, schools, etc.) are essential in society.

Soulé, Frank, Et Al. *The Annals of San Francisco*. New York: n.p., 1855.*Encyclopedia Britannica*. Web. 9 Dec. 2013.

Frank Soulé and others wrote a volume with the purpose of  depicting San Francisco’s “growth and characteristics” during the gold rush. This article gives a selection of excerpts from the full volume. Offers a very good overview of what San Francisco’s society was like from 1849 to 1855. Gives a detailed physical description of the town and also describes typical activities and daily lives of the miners.

Stanley, Jerry. *Digger: The Tragic Fate of the California Indians from the Missions to the Gold Rush*. New York: Crown, 1997. Print.

Jerry Stanley writes a detailed summary on the history of Native Americans in California and the tragic effects that the arrival of white settlers brought to them. The book was very useful in finding quotes from primary sources about Native Americans in California.

Twain, Mark. *Roughing It*. N.p. 1872. *The Huntington*. The Huntington Library, 1999. Web. 9 Feb. 2014.

I used this source to find one particular quote by Mark Twain about San Francisco society that was useful in my conclusion.

United States. Census Bureau. Department of Commerce. *Recapitulation of the Tables of Population, Nativity, and Occupation*. 8th ed. N.p.: n.p., 1860. US Census. *Census Bureau Homepage*. Web. 11 Dec. 2013.

The U.S. Census provides useful and very detailed statistics about California in 1860. The census breaks down the population into many different and useful demographics. 1860 is a bit after the gold rush, but the statistics are useful in analyzing the gold rush’s effects.

"William Kelly Describes San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851." *Gale U.S. History in Context*. Detroit: Gale, 2014. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 11 Dec. 2013.

William Kelly describes San Francisco as it was in 1851, making this a useful primary source. Kelly uses very descriptive and complex language, making for some very rich and interesting quotes that are useful to describe San Francisco society.

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**Bibliographic Reflection**

When choosing a topic, I made sure to select something that I found interesting so that I wouldn’t get bored throughout the process. I am a huge fan of movies, so I was interested in writing about either the Gold Rush (which I felt could relate to many Western movies) or about Al Capone and Prohibition (which I felt could relate to gangster movies). At the advice of Mr. Bedar, I decided to go with the Gold Rush, which I was glad to do because I knew very little about it but it seemed to be a very interesting and important era in U.S. history.

I had no idea what I wanted to write about at that point, so I browsed the Minuteman Library network for books that addressed the Gold Rush in a broad sense. After reading through these books and gaining a basic understanding of the gold rush, I was most intrigued by the rampant crime in San Francisco during this era. At this point, I was planning to write my paper on law and order during the gold rush, but Mr. Bedar recommended that instead I focus on the disorderly society created by the gold rush and use the high crime as one of the causes of this new society. Through the creation of several outlines and further meetings with Mr. Bedar, I formulated my thesis that greed created the new society. I subdivided my paper into three main areas: crime, racism, and social institutions.

As I was formulating these specific topics, I began finding more specific sources on each topic. I found books at the library about Native Americans and prostitution, and looked through internet databases to find sources about Chinese immigrants and the lack of institutions. I was able to find several great primary sources explaining the disorder of San Francisco both at the library and in the online databases. One source I found very useful was Linda Jacobs Altman’s book, which gave a good overview of the entire Gold Rush and also included many quotes from

primary sources. The two primary sources from Alonzo Delano and Frank Soulé were also very useful because they gave very detailed descriptions of the disorder in San Francisco and also gave me insight into what miners and people living in the area thought about what was going on.

My general approach to get to this final draft was to first conduct research on my own and formulate thoughts, next to meet with Mr. Bedar and hear another opinion about my ideas, and finally to combine my original thought with his suggestions. I used this method for each of the assignment deadlines and I found it to work for the most part. If I were to do it again, I might consult a third person (maybe a friend or family member) just to get more ideas on how to improve my paper. I also would plan my time better so I wouldn’t have to do an absurd amount of work on the days and nights before deadlines.

As a whole, I found this process very interesting and I think I learned a lot from it, but I still wouldn’t call it a “fun” process. While it was semi-enjoyable to see my thesis develop from a broad and non-detailed idea into a specific and strong paper, the thought of impending deadlines and the worry of earning a good grade loomed over the entire process and made it nerve wracking. Some of the research process I found very aggravating because I often was looking for a specific argument or fact and was unable to find it even after hours of research. The part of the process I found most enjoyable was making the detailed outline because as I worked I could see my research convert itself into a structured argument right before my eyes (this part would have been even more enjoyable if I hadn’t been doing it at 2:00 in the morning). Even though the process wasn’t exactly enjoyable as a whole due to the high level of stress it created, I think the skills I learned from completing this process will prove to be very useful in the future and I certainly am happy that I learned a lot about the Gold Rush.