

Gold Rush California

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Outline of Talk

- I. •Ante Impetus Aureus,*
1820s-48**
- II. Gold Rush Era, 1848-58**
- III. Capitalist California, 1859-95**

I. Ante Impetus Aureus

- A. **Mexican California** • “Before the Gold Rush”
- B. **Commercial America** • Vs. “Ante Bellum Era”
- C. **Republic & Empire** • SoCal’s founding myth

- Albatross on every teacher’s shoulders

I-A. Mexican California

- 1. **Beyond New Spain** • Spanish empire’s last gasp
 - Missionaries & ‘peasants’
- 2. **Mexico Reborn** • Mexican revolution
 - Criollo class
 - State formation weak
- 3. **Commercial Frontier** • California ranchos
 - Rebellious north

I-B. Commercial America

1. **Commodity Production** • World of small producers
– farm & workshop
2. **The Cotton South** • World trade, British industry & cotton
– Plantation slavery
3. **Mercantile Cities** • Huge growth of Big 4
– Merchant capital

I-C. Republic & Empire

1. **Jacksonian Democracy** • Party alliance of artisans & planters
2. **Last Gasp of the (White) Republic** • Eclipse of the small master & journeyman
– Farmer's fate not yet sealed
3. **Westward the Course of Empire...** • Continental country
– Mexican War

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I. Ante Impetus Aureus, 1820s-48

II. •Gold Rush Era, 1848-58

III. Capitalist California, 1859-95

II-A The Gold Rush Era, 1848-58

- A. **The Shout Heard Round the World**
 - It only lasts 10 years
- B. **The World the Miners Made**
 - Peculiar & pivotal moment
- C. **A World Undone**
 - ...for California, the USA, and the world
 - SF's founding myth & albatross...

II-A. The Shout Heard Round the World

1. **Gold for the Taking**
 - Placer deposits
 - \$1 billion taken in 5 yrs.

2. **“The Lights Came on All at Once”**
 - California at the cusp of 2d industrial revolution
 - Carey McWilliams

3. **Yellow Brick Road**
 - Gold & silver grease the wheels of global commerce
 - Shortage of *specie*

Gold & silver output

II-B. The World the Miners Made

1. **Free (White) Men**
 - Young, male & white
 - A Man's World
 - Europeans & 1848
 - Chinese & Mexicans
2. **Law Unto Themselves**
 - Law of the roaring camp
 - Becomes US mining law
 - Statehood & instant government
3. **Gold for What You Will**
 - The money economy
 - Everything for sale
 - Measure of all things
 - High prices & no production

II-C. A World Undone

1. **Merchants & Miscreants**
 - SF: Instant City
 - Class vs. equality
 - Fear & fire
2. **Vigilantes & the Coup d'Etat**
 - Merchant mobs
 - 1851 & 1855
 - People's Party
 - New city charter
3. **Crisis Comes to California**
 - End of the boom
 - End of placer gold
 - National downturn

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III. Capitalist California

- A. Capitalist Mining** • A new era dawns
- B. The New Economy** • Republic of miners gone,
capital & industry in
command
- C. Victorian San
Francisco**
 - A new city emerges
 - Fierce class conflict

III-A. Capitalist Mining

1. **Hydraulicking**
 - Capital-intensive
 - Immense environmental destruction
2. **Quartz Mining**
 - Continues to produce
 - Wage labor
3. **The Comstock Lode**
 - Launches new era
 - Along with Civil War
 - Nevada, the rotten borough

III-B. The New Economy

1. **Manufacturing**
 - Machinery
 - Mining engineering
2. **Agrarian Capital**
 - Food production
 - Capitalist investors
 - Wheat to Fruit
3. **Banking & Stocks**
 - SF pole of accumulation
 - Large banks
 - Mining exchange

III-C. Victorian San Francisco

1. Kings of California

- Big bourgeoisie
 - Big 4, Silver Kings, bankers, landlords, industrialists

2. Classes in Collision

- A working class
 - Irish, German, Anglo
 - Skilled & unskilled labor
 - Workingmen's state, 1877-79

3. A Proper City

- Bourgeois homes
 - The blight of Chinatown, SOMA & Barbary Coast
 - Victorian row houses