
The Positive and Negative Impacts of the California Gold Rush of the 1849 on Westward Expansion in the United States

The Californian Gold Rush of the 1849 had its positive and negative impacts on westward expansion including the increase in population leading to development of California as a state, the removal of Native Americans, and both the stimulation of economy and monetary instability.

To begin, the impact of the Californian Gold Rush on westward expansion was positive in the aspect that it caused California to be added as a state. Discovery of gold caused rapid immigration to the west, which created boomtowns such as San Francisco. Thus, rapid increase in population allowed the United States to continue to expand west by adding California as a state. As people from the east migrated west in search of gold, it allowed the development of California as a predominantly Native American-occupied, tribal, Mexican territory to a populated state of the US. Also, the discovery of gold and the increase in population led to higher demand of products and caused stimulated economies, which in turn led to the development of international trading networks and improvement in money economy. The opening of the Transcontinental Railroad a few years after the Gold Rush, which allowed people to easily travel from east to west, was financed by money of the gold rush. Therefore, the 1849 Gold Rush had a positive impact by furthering westward.

However, the rapid increase in population also had its negative impact on westward expansion. Due to the large amount of people immigrating west, the amount of gold gradually started to decrease, and therefore, only a relatively small number of people managed to get rich. So, this hindered western expansion with the problem of poor local workers and farmers as the basis of society with the rich middle class on top. Therefore, it created a social hierarchy where government and economic developments were slowed down. Despite the initial stimulation of economy, such financial success was short-lived, as the rapid mining of gold created a monetary instability between gold and silver, leading to hyper inflation as the economy gradually started to disintegrate. Consequently, financial problems arose in the state of California, creating difficulties for the people residing the area, leaving a negative impact on westward expansion.

Also, the rapid immigration to the west after the discovery of gold caused Native Americans to be either killed or pushed out of their territories, aiding westward expansion through the concept of Manifest Destiny. With the belief that it was justified to remove Indians from their homelands to make space for white people, the rapid decrease in Native American population, although

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usually considered negative, was actually helping westward expansion. Supposedly, an estimate of 100,000 Native Americans were either killed or pushed out of their homes in the years following the Gold Rush of 1849, which allowed white people of the US to expand their territory into California in a relatively easier way. Even though the decrease in Native American population might have caused a considerable blow to the total population of the area, rapid immigration from the east soon filled up the cavity left by American Indians, thus aiding westward expansion.

In conclusion, the Gold Rush of 1849 aided America's westward expansion through the removal of Native Americans, stimulation of economy, and population explosion, it still had its considerable negative impacts with the shortage of gold, monetary instability, and decline of economy. Nevertheless, westward expansion was mostly assisted by the Gold Rush.

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