

Introduction to the Cariboo Gold Rush

Background

- an extension of the gold rush in the Fraser Canyon from 1858 to 1860
- first major find of gold occurred at Horsefly in summer 1859

The Gold Rush

- about 100,000 people flood into the area during 1862-70 from many parts of the world (e.g., Overlanders, miners from California Gold Rush of 1848-49, British and Continental prospects, immigration from China)
- town of Yale (established as trading post 1848) booms as point to which the steamboats could advance up river and starting point of the Cariboo Wagon Road to the Interior.
- the town of Barkerville founded 1862 (named after Billy Barker who found gold at Williams Creek) largest town in the Canadian West in its heyday
- work began in 1862 on the very expensive Cariboo Wagon Road to link the gold fields of the Interior to the outside world
- gold production peaked in 1863 with an estimated production of 10 tonnes of gold
- replacement of surface digs by underground shafts, a capital and labour intensive kind of mining
- large companies took over the mines and hired crews at daily wages
- banks opened to value and receive the gold
- gold shipped to the coast by express companies using pack trains and stagecoaches
- an estimated \$30 million worth of gold came out of the Cariboo during the 1860s
- gold peters out, and most miners depart in the next decade

Long- and Short-Term Consequences for Colony

- economic boom-and-bust cycle
- short-term economic growth opportunities: accommodation, transportation
- demands for infrastructure (road building, construction of housing)
- short-term rapid rise in prices of all basic commodities, housing, and land
- growth of large public debt to provide services and infrastructure, especially the Cariboo Wagon Road
- political ferment as population expands
- eventual movement towards confederation with the Dominion of Canada
- demands on government services and the bureaucracy
- immigration from diverse sources; increased non-native population with whom the Aboriginal peoples come into contact

Context

- nation-building: imperialism, liberation movements (Italian unification, Polish Uprising) advances in
- first modern printing press arrives in British Columbia in 1858: first newspapers established
- telegraph line extended to British Columbia from Seattle in 1864 as part of projected Siberian telegraph connection between US and Europe