

Miners: Lure of Precious Metals

How did MINING CAMPS Turn in TOWNS AND CITIES?

Thousands of people came west because of gold and silver strikes. They built towns and settled down. Often, however, mineral deposits played out quickly. When that happened, people moved on, leaving empty ghost towns behind.



What is an example of a NEW TOWN?

In 1858, prospectors found a few ounces of gold in Colorado streams. Farsighted planners bought up the surrounding land and began laying out the streets of Denver and building cabins. With the discovery of rich deposits the next year, Denver thrived. By 1860, it had a library, two newspapers, a theater, a school, and a barber.



Was THERE A PLACE FOR WOMEN?

Although most miners were men, enterprising women also profited in the new boom towns. With only a few dollars, a woman could open a boardinghouse and make a tidy fortune. Cooking and baking paid well, too. One ambitious woman reported that in less than a year she had baked and sold \$18,000 worth of pies.

Who established a LAW AND ORDER?

In spite of the efforts by makeshift governments to keep the peace, disorder and lawlessness often came with rapid growth. In the mining town of Bannack, Montana, one woman complained: "There are times when it really is unsafe to go through the main street, the Bullets whizz around so. What do you think of a place where men openly walk with shotguns, waiting to shoot someone against whom they have a grudge...."

Miners tried to limit such disregard for the law by organizing groups of vigilantes. These self-appointed law enforcers tracked down outlaws and sometimes hung them. With the arrival of women and families in western towns, peace and order became more common.

What did GOVERNMENTS Look like in mining towns?

Informal methods of government gradually gave way to more formal arrangements. In 1861, Colorado, Dakota, and Nevada were organized as territories; Idaho and Arizona followed in 1863 and Montana in 1864. Although mining towns would continue to spring up in the West, the process of more permanent settlement had begun.

