California State Library
California History Section

Research Guides
Mining in California

Visit Us
California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
9:30-4 Monday-Friday
California may be synonymous with gold, but that's not the only valuable mineral this state offers. Get bitten by the gold, copper or even the borax bug and explore our mining past in via California History Section's rich collections!

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**ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!**
**Digitized Resources**

Can’t come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to mining in California!

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**California Gold Rush**

Curious about the Gold Rush? This online exhibit provides a thorough history of the period, accompanied by images drawn from our collection.

**URL:** http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/gold-rush/

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**Digitized Images**

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our extensive photograph collection, including images related to mining. You can see them on Calisphere!

**URL:** https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/

**Type in Search Box:** (mine* OR mining)
Digitized Resources

Digitized Publications
A few years ago we digitized some of our fragile mining publications. You can see them on Internet Archive!

URL: https://archive.org/

Type in Search Box: (mine* OR mining) AND collection:(californiastatelibrary)

BLM-GLO
Tracing your ancestor’s land claim? This federal resource tells you the first BLM plot claimant for each parcel.

URL: https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx

California Geological Survey Library
Curious about the geology of a mine? This library has a number of online resources that can help you including maps and reports.

URL: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/library
GOLD RUSH REFERENCE WORKS

Unsure about where to start? Consult a reference book! If you are interested in the Gold Rush, these books will point you in the right direction, by giving you an overview of the topic.


Do you want an overview of the Gold Rush? Holliday not only provides a thoroughly researched history, his excellent writing and primary-source illustrations make this seminal book a joy to read.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author


Want a comprehensive examination of the cultural, political and economic realities of Gold Rush California? This series explores how the confluence of cultures created by the Gold Rush gave rise to a wholly new political and cultural entity, with a massive world-wide influence, California.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author
Gold Rush Reference Works


Curious about how the Gold Rush affected the social fabric of American families? In *Days of Gold*, Malcolm Rohrbough explains how the departure of so many men for California’s gold fields not only created a society in California, but dramatically altered societies in the east.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


Hopes of wild success, tales of total failure and everything in between; these are the stories that Donald Jackson tells in his book *Gold Dust*. If you are looking for miner’s eye views of the Gold Rush, both in its heady successes and its fatal failures, this book is definitely worth a read.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author
Gold Rush Reference Works


Curious about how and why gold panning eventually gave way to hydraulic mining? Then you should check out *Gold* by Mary Hill. This book provides a good lay introduction to the history, geology and technology of 19th century gold mining in California.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


Are you researching an obscure town in the Mother Lode? Start with this book. Each alphabetically listed town entry not only summarizes the town’s history but lists sources that you can use for further research.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author
OTHER MINING REFERENCE WORKS

California is home to many minerals other than gold, its bonanzas include oil, copper, mercury and borax. Learn about these other resources through these references.


Are you curious about gold, silver or copper mining in California? This 2-volume set covers the history of all three in one go. Starting in 1848 and going up through 1918, it tracks both the successes and failures of western mining ventures for these three minerals.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


Does borax appeal to you as a research topic? This approachable little book provides a highly readable overview of borax mining in California. Its coverage of mid-century mining is particularly strong.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author
OTHER MINING REFERENCE WORKS


Are you curious about the mines in California’s coastal range? Then it’s quicksilver that you want to learn about. This book covers the history of mercury mining in California with a particular focus on the racial dynamics of hard-rock mining operations in this state.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author

Rintoul, William. 1990. *Drilling through Time: 75 Years with California’s Division of Oil and Gas*. Sacramento, Calif.: California Dept. of Conservation, Division of Oil and Gas.

Does California’s oil mining history strike you as an interesting avenue to explore? Take a peek at *Drilling through Time* published by the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Conservation. This book provides a quick overview of California’s oil drilling history and the emergence of governmental regulation.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author

Forget gold, are you interested in the history of California’s silver rush? Nadeau’s seminal work tracks the history of silver mining in California from the Comstock Lode to Calico, highlighting special bonanzas and locations along the way.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

**Search by:** Title and/or author

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Looking for a good mining story? This is where Nadeau excels. In this overview of California gold, silver and copper mining towns, Nadeau packs a wealth of anecdotes about colorful local personalities such as Rattlesnake Dick and Joe Joiner.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

**Search by:** Title and/or author
Bibliographies

When you’re overwhelmed, it helps to ask an expert for book recommendations. These bibliographies are just that, expert recommendations of the best or the earliest materials related to mining in California.


Are you looking for a primary sources but have difficulty reading handwriting? This book will point you to every published eye-witness account of the Gold Rush that its author could find. As such, it is a great starting point for researchers.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


Are you looking for maps? In this book, Wheat tracks down every single gold-rush map he could find, and describes them in detail. This edition also includes over 20 map reproductions.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

Want a comprehensive bibliography of books on mining in the American West? This multi-volume set covers not only the California Gold Rush, but books on other mining activities in California. The author also has chapters on other western states such as Nevada and Arizona.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

**Search by:** Title and/or author
CATALOG GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on mining.

Catalog

If you are looking for images, books and articles on gold mining, even papers left by miners, your best source is our catalog.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?
vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

Type in Subject Box: (mine* OR mining)

Limit: By desired material type

California Information File II

Sometimes the catalog doesn’t provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find information about individual articles, some mining deeds, even receipts.

URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Subject Box: mine* OR mining

For a narrower search: Add a place to your keyword search
There is a rich history of mining in California. These catalog links provide an overview of the industry, from the Gold Rush Era and beyond.

**Type**
- Maps
- Books
- County Histories
- Images
- Manuscripts
- Newspapers
- Statistics

**Subject**
- Agriculture
- Art
- Business
- Cooking
- Education
- Festivals
- Fiction
- Geology
- Highways
- Land
- Legislature
- Migration
- Music
- Oil
- Poetry
- Politics
- Railroads
- Religion
- Taxes
- Water

**Residents**
- African Americans
- Chinese Americans
- German Americans
- Italian Americans
- Japanese Americans
- Latin Americans
- Women
Curious about mining in a specific county? While these catalog links don’t list all that the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.

Alameda  Contra Costa
Alpine       Del Norte
Amador       El Dorado
Butte        Fresno
Calaveras    Humboldt
Colusa       Imperial

Contra Costa  Del Norte
Edorado      Fresno
Humboldt     Imperial
Inyo         Kern
Los Angeles  Madera
Mariposa     Mendocino
Merced       Modoc
Mono         Stanislaus

Mono         Trinity
Modoc        Tulare
Monterey     Tuolumne
Napa         Ventura
Nevada       Yolo
Placer       Yuba
Plumas       Stanislaus
Riverside    Trinity
Sacramento    Tulare
San Benito    Tuolumne
San Bernardino Ventura
San Bernardino Yolo
San Diego     Yuba
San Francisco Stanislaus
San Joaquin   Trinity
San Luis Obispo Tulare
Santa Clara   Tuolumne
Shasta        Ventura
Sierra        Yolo
Siskiyou      Yuba
Sonoma        Stanislaus
ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.

California Information File
In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of California mining articles, books, and manuscript collections.

Subject Headings: Mines and Mining (various subdivisions)

Photographic File
Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words, and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file.

Subject Headings:
1. Check by county
2. Check Mines and Mining
OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about any mining information contained in the following resources.

Map File
Looking for a map that details the geology and/or owners of a mining claim? Our map file is a great place to start. We have a wide variety of maps, some of which cover geology or information about property lines that are helpful to researchers.

Subject Headings: Check by county

Postcard Files
Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images related to mining. Most are not online.

Subject Headings: Check by county
**Vertical Files**

Our massive collection of vertical files covers a wide variety of topics including mining. You can check them for information on organizations, individuals, mining by location, and general mining.

**Subject Headings:**
1. Companies: Search by name
2. Counties: Amador: Pamphlets
3. Mines & Mining: Gold (and various other subdivisions)

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**Textual Files**

If you are looking for ephemera from California’s rich prospecting history, our textual files have materials in a wide range of formats, including items from the mining era.

**Subject Headings:**
1. Textual file: Certificates: Mining: Search by name
Other Places to look

Of course the California History Section doesn’t have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations:

Other California State Library Sections

- Government Publications Section
- Witkin Law Library
- Sutro Library
- General Information

- http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/law/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/services/

Other Government Agencies

- California State Archives
- California State Parks
- California Geological Survey

Local California libraries or archives

URLs:
- http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/
- https://www.parks.ca.gov/
- http://www.conservation.ca.gov/CGS/
This guide is also available online at:
http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/