



# Boomtowns

A boomtown is a town whose population and economy grows very quickly. It can also be a town that quickly appears and grows where there was no town before. Boomtowns usually appear near the discovery of natural resources like gold, silver, or oil, but they can be the result of any sudden or rapid population growth, like what happened during the Industrial Revolution. The California Gold Rush precipitated many boomtowns in areas where there was rumored to be gold. People lived in these towns, or in tents surrounding them, when they were not out prospecting. Boomtowns were contained businesses that sold food and supplies to the prospectors. They also sometimes had a Pony Express for mail and telegrams. They almost always had saloons, as well as assay offices which examined the metal found by miners and certified that it was real gold. Life in boom towns was challenging. People worked hard out prospecting, and they were constantly on the move in the pursuit of riches. Law enforcement in many boomtowns was crude, and vigilante justice often prevailed.

**DIRECTIONS:** Research the following:

1. Which major California city started out as a boomtown?
2. How did its population change, and over what time period?
3. Why did this city survive when so many other boomtowns did not?