The Gold Rush

1848-1850s
There’s Gold in them thar hills!

- January 24, 1848
- James Marshall, a carpenter, was working for John Sutter, building a saw mill.
Nuggets were found by James Marshall...he relayed the information to John Sutter who said “I’m rich!”

Actually...we don’t know what he said.

Probably something awesome.

Video Link
Shhhhh!!!

- When Sutter and Marshall realized it was gold, they wanted to keep it a secret!
- It was too late, the workers at the mill had already found out!
Abandonment

- Once people heard the news…
  - Farmers left their plows
  - Blacksmiths left their forges
  - Tailors left their needles
  - Sailors left their ships
  - Doctors left their patients

They were called ‘49ers because most left in 1849!
Heading to California

💧 Failure to Prepare
  – Men put on their best clothes and bought a few fancy tools

💧 Without Preparation
  many men died
  – Disease
  – Fatigue
  – Indian Attack
  – Rattlesnake Bites
  – Starvation
  – Freezing to death
Getting to California

- Prospectors had three choices of how to get to California
  - Around Cape Horn
  - Through Panama
  - The Overland Route
Voyage of the Apollo bringing gold seekers to California (eight months)

Voyage via the Isthmus of Panama (about four weeks)
Cape Horn

- A very long trip
- If the ship didn’t carry the proper supplies you might catch scurvy
  - Comes from a lack of vitamin C
  - Easiest Way
The Panama Route

- By boat to Panama
  - Overland and upriver
  - Then wait for another boat to take you to California

- The quickest route
  - If you didn’t get robbed or killed in Panama
  - Or Catch Malaria
Overland Trail

- The cheapest route
  - Most people took this route
  - Must get to California before the snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains
  - "The Donner Party"
The Gold Rush
The Gold Myth

- Once you were in California, your cares were over.
  - You could bend down and pick up gold in the streams.
  - You just needed a strong sack and a strong back to haul it all down from the hills.
  - You’ll be rich in no time at all!
Who Got Rich?

- The Storekeepers
  - The people who sold things to all those miners who poured into California
  - Prospectors had to eat
  - They needed tents, shovels, shirts, and pants
  - They raised prices on the necessities.
Who Got Rich?
The Growth in Population

- **1848**
  - 812 people living in San Francisco

- **1849**
  - 80,000 people came to California in search of wealth

- **1850**
  - 25,000 people living in San Francisco
“Gold mining is nature’s great lottery scheme. A man may work in a claim for many months, and be poorer at the end of the time than when he commenced; or he may take out thousands in a few hours. It is a mere matter of chance.

— Louisa Clappe
The discovery of gold by James Marshall in 1848 signaled the beginning of the gold rush and rapid population growth in California. Between 1849 and 1860 more than 200,000 people came to California seeking their fortunes. Getting to California was not easy. Some made the difficult journey overland across the great plains, harsh deserts, and high mountains; others came by sea. San Francisco was the main destination for miners who came by sea. There were five main overland routes to the California gold fields. Lassen's Cutoff, Donner Pass, and Carson Pass led to the northern part of the state. The Salt Lake to Los Angeles route and the Gila River Trail led to the southern gold fields.

Four main mining techniques were used in the search for gold. Placer mines were small scale surface activities, miners used gold pans, rockers or sluice boxes in their search for gold. Hydraulic mines used water sprayed through large high pressure nozzles to wash tons of loose material from hillsides to be processed through sluice channels. Lode (or hard rock) mining involved digging into the mountains and extracting the gold bearing quartz, then processing it through stamp mills that crushed the rock into powder from which the gold was extracted. Dredges dug material up from river bottoms and adjacent banks in search of gold.
The Mother Lode
DEER CREEK DRY DIGGINGS
Nevada City, 1851.
California Gold Rush!!!
California Gold Rush!!!
California Gold Rush!!!
California Gold Rush!!!
California Gold Rush!!!
California Gold Rush!!!
What happened to John Sutter and James Marshall?

- Did they get rich?
  - Gold made them poor!
John Sutter

- John Sutter was afraid of gold!
- People got greedy
- People trampled his property
- Ate his Cattle
- Left him ruined
James Marshall

- Never profited from the gold
- He began to drink and died a sad man
Is There Gold Elsewhere?

- Gold was found in many other places!
  - Oregon
  - Nevada
  - Wyoming
  - Montana
  - Colorado
- Silver was discovered in many of these locations also!
The Comstock Lode

- Richest mining discovery in U.S. History!
  - Virginia City, Nevada

- Consisted of fabulous gold and silver veins.

- Thousands poured into Virginia City.
Comstock Lode Mine
Comstock Lode Mine
Comstock Lode Mine
Lasting Effects...

How did the gold rush help California?

- Brought people from around the world to California
- It mixed rich and poor
- Gave California enough people to become a state