

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Gold Rush

In the first half of the 1800s, settlers made slow progress moving westward. By the 1840s, California was just a distant outpost. In 1848, something happened that sped up the movement of settling westward.

John Sutter was a Swiss immigrant who settled in California in 1839. His goal was to build his own private empire. In 1847, Sutter sent about twenty men to build a sawmill. One of these men was James Marshall. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1848, James Marshall found gold while working to build the sawmill.

Marshall and the other men continued working on the sawmill, but they kept finding more and more gold. Marshall took samples of the gold back to Sutter's Fort. Marshall and Sutter were both unhappy about the discovery of gold. Sutter was trying to build his own agricultural fiefdom and did not want competition. Marshall was trying to build a sawmill and didn't want gold hunters to get in the way. As a result, Marshall and Sutter decided to keep the discovery a secret.

While news of gold trickled throughout the country, most didn't believe the reports. It seemed like an unlikely tale until Sam Brannan came along. Brannan was a merchant in San Francisco. He had an idea that would make him rich, and he never even had to mine a piece of gold. Brannan purchased every pick ax, pan, and shovel in the region. He then went through the streets of San Francisco telling everyone about Marshall's discovery of gold. Brannan even had proof. He took a bottle of gold dust with him to show everyone. After Brannan's announcements, people began the race to find gold.

Brannan became rich selling supplies to miners in search of gold. Many miners looked for gold by sifting soil in a pan. These pans sold for twenty cents a few days before Brannan's announcement. After his announcement, these metal pans sold for fifteen dollars.

Eventually, thousands of Americans headed for California in the hopes of finding gold and becoming rich. By the time most of the miners reached California, it was 1849. These miners became known as "forty-niners." Some of these forty-niners did find gold and become rich, but many of them didn't. There were crowded mining camps, and gamblers often tried to cheat miners out of their money. Shopkeepers charged high prices for food, and some miners finally gave up and returned home. Others continued to search for gold in California.

The Gold Rush created a need for a better way to transport people and goods westward. The federal government was asked to build a road across the country and to speed up mail delivery. In 1857, construction of a road began. By 1858, stagecoaches and mail were leaving Tipton, Missouri twice a week. It took three weeks for people to travel from Tipton, Missouri to San Francisco.

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## The Gold Rush Questions

### Multiple Choice:

1. This man found gold while working to build a sawmill:

- a. James Marshall
- b. John Sutter
- c. Sam Brannan
- d. John Tipton

2. The Gold Rush took place in this state:

- a. Missouri
- b. Nebraska
- c. California
- d. Pennsylvania

3. The miners that participated in the Gold Rush were called:

- a. Gold diggers
- b. Gold Rushers
- c. settlers
- d. forty-niners

### True or False:

\_\_\_ 4. Sutter went through the streets of San Francisco telling everyone about Marshall's discovery of gold.

\_\_\_ 5. It took two weeks for people to travel from Tipton, Missouri to San Francisco.

\_\_\_ 6. By the 1840s, California was a well-settled, big city.

\_\_\_ 7. Brannan became rich selling supplies to miners in search of gold.

\_\_\_ 8. The federal government was asked to build a road across the country and to speed up mail delivery.

\_\_\_ 9. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1848, Sutter found gold while working to build a hotel.

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