

"Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered and rolled,
Heavy to get and light to hold,
Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled,
Spurned by the young, but hugged by old,
To the verge of the church yard mold;
Price of many a crime untold.
Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Good or bad a thousand fold!
How widely its agencies vary,
To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless—
As even its minted coins express:
Now stamped with the image of good Queen Bess,
And now of a bloody Mary."

So sang the lamented Tom Hood, long years ago, and so he might sing at the present day, could he but see the Gold exchanged for the various Fashionable Goods at J. R. MEAD & Co's great Clothing Emporium of the Pacific coast. There at all times can be found GENTLEMEN'S FINE CLOTHING of the latest styles, and an endless variety of FURNISHING GOODS, all direct from their manufactory in New York.

Establishments—corner Montgomery and Bush streets, and corner Sansome and Washington streets,

SAN FRANCISCO.

A Peck of Gold

Robert Frost

Dust always blowing about the town,
Except when sea-fog laid it down,
And I was one of the children told
Some of the blowing dust was gold.

All the dust the wind blew high
Appeared like god in the sunset sky,
But I was one of the children told
Some of the dust was really gold.

Such was life in the Golden Gate:
Gold dusted all we drank and ate,
And I was one of the children told,
'We all must eat our peck of gold.'

The California Gold Rush

A poem for kids

James worked on a farm in the West
He dreamed of being rich.
One day he found something shiny
Just lying in a ditch.

“It’s gold!” thought James, excited, and
Showed it to farmer Sutter.
But he saw that Sutter was cross,
He saw him frown and mutter.

“Don’t tell anyone” said Sutter
“About what you have found.
If people hear there's gold about
They’ll come from miles around.

They’ll come to search the area
And trample on my farm.
They’ll trample on my vegetables
And do my livestock harm.”

James said for him not to worry
He would button his lip.
But two days later in a bar
He let the secret slip.

He mentioned it to his cousin
Who then told his own brother
Who mentioned it to his friend
And that friend told another.

Soon people started to arrive
To see what could be found.
They’d heard rumours that gold nuggets
Were just lying around.

Lots of people really believed
The hills were filled with gold.
Men and families packed their things and
From the East wagons rolled.

Others came from across the sea
From Mexico and Peru,
From Hawaii, China, Chile,
From France, and Britain too.

They all left their lives behind them
To become gold miners.
The year was 1849
They were the forty-niners.

Some people did not look for gold
But still got rich enough.

They set up shops for miners and
They sold expensive stuff.

But after a few years has passed
Gold was harder to find.
So many people were looking
All the land had been mined.

And poor old Sutter the farmer
Looked out across his land.
His fields were thoroughly trampled
His rivers, thoroughly panned.

And so California had changed
Not boring old fields, no,
There was an exciting city,
'Twas called "San Francisco"!

"Oh, California"

I come from Salem City with my washbowl on my knee,
I'm going to California the gold dust for to see.
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry,
The sun so hot I froze to death, oh brother, don't you cry.

Chorus:

*Oh, California, that's the land for me,
I'm bound for San Francisco with my washbowl on my knee.*

I jumped aboard the largest ship and traveled on the sea,
And every time I thought of home, I wished it wasn't me!
The vessel reared like any horse that had of oats a wealth,
I found it wouldn't throw me, so I thought I'd throw myself!

Chorus

I thought of all the pleasant times we've had together here,
And I thought I ought to cry a bit, but I could not find a tear.
The pilot's bread was in my mouth, the gold dust in my eye,
And though I'm going far away, dear brother, don't you cry.

Chorus

I soon shall be in Frisco and there I'll look around,
And when I see the golden lumps there, I'll pick them off the ground.
I'll scrape the mountains clean, my boys, I'll drain the rivers dry,
A pocketful of rocks bring home, so brothers, don't you cry.

Chorus

About *Sweet Betsy from Pike*

The journey to California in the days of the Gold Rush wasn't easy by sea or land. A clipper ship leaving New York took at least three months, with all the usual dangers of traveling by sea, to round the bottom of South America and reach San Francisco. The journey by land took six months from the mid-West, with many coming from further away.

Sweet Betsy from Pike comes from a songbook published in 1858 called Put's Golden Songster. "Old Put" was the pseudonym of John A. Stone, a San Francisco-based entertainer who wrote, performed, adapted, collected, and published songs for and about gold miners. This one was based on an Irish tune that was most likely brought to the New World during the potato famine. There is a Pike County in both Missouri and Illinois from where many California-bound gold seekers began their land journeys.

Sweet Betsy from Pike

Did you ever hear tell of sweet Betsy from Pike
Who crossed the wide prairies with her lover Ike
With two yoke of cattle and a one-spotted hog
A tall Shanghai rooster and an old yellow dog

One evening quite early they camped on the Platte
Made down their blankets on a green shady flat
Where Betsy, sore-footed, lay down to repose
With wonder Ike gazed on his Pike County rose

Their wagons broke down with a terrible crash
And out on the prairie rolled all sorts of trash
A few little baby clothes, done up with care
'Twas rather suspicious, though all on the square

The Shanghai ran off and the cattle all died
That morning the last piece of bacon was fried
Poor Ike was discouraged, and Betsy got mad
The dog drooped his tail and looked wondrously sad

They soon reached the desert, where Betsy gave out
And down in the sand she lay rolling about
While Ike, half distracted, looked on with surprise
Saying "Betsy, get up, you'll get sand in your eyes"

Sweet Betsy got up in a great deal of pain
Declared she'd go back to Pike County again
But Ike heaved a sigh, and they fondly embraced
And they traveled along with his arm 'round her waist

They swam the wide rivers and climbed the tall peaks
And camped on the prairies for weeks upon weeks
Starvation and cholera, hard work and slaughter
They reached California spite of hell and high water

That morning they stood on a very high hill
And with wonder looked down into old Placerville
Ike shouted and said, as he cast his eyes down
"Sweet Betsy, my darling, we've got to Hangtown"

Long Ike and sweet Betsy attended a dance
Where Ike wore a pair of his Pike County pants
Sweet Betsy was covered with ribbons and rings
Said Ike "You're an angel, but where are your wings?"

This Pike County couple got married, of course
But Ike became jealous, obtained a divorce
And Betsy, well satisfied, said with a shout
"Goodbye, you big lummo, I'm glad you backed out"

About *Old Settler's Song*

Most people who sought their fortunes during the days of the Gold Rush did not get rich. Many followed new strikes across the West and died penniless and alone in the desert. Generally, those who did well, and some did extremely well, were entrepreneurs who took advantage of the law of supply and demand. They provided miners with necessities like tools, food, water, and clothing at inflated prices. Saloons and music halls became big in San Francisco, as miners were eager to spend their money on alcohol, gambling, and entertainment.

Other success stories from the days of '49 include the old settler in this song and others like him who gave up their dreams of finding gold and made stable lives for themselves in the new western states. *Old Settler's Song*, also known as *Acre of Clams*, is based on an old Irish melody, *Rosin the Beau*, that has supported more different sets of lyrics than nearly any other folk tune.

Old Settler's Song

I've traveled all over this country
Prospecting and digging for gold
I've tunneled, hydraulicked and cradled
And I have been frequently sold

For each man who got rich by mining
Perceiving that hundreds grew poor
I made up my mind to try farming
The only pursuit that was sure

So rolling my grub in my blanket
I left all my tools on the ground
I started one morning to shank it
For the country they call Puget Sound

Arriving flat broke in midwinter
I found it enveloped in fog
And covered all over with timber
Thick as hair on the back of a dog

When I looked on the prospects so gloomy
The tears trickled over my face
And I thought that my travels had brought me
To the end of the jumping off place

I staked me a claim in the forest
And sat myself down to hard toil
For two years I chopped and I logged
But I never got down to the soil

I tried to get out of the country
But poverty forced me to stay
Until I became an old settler
Then nothing could drive me away

And now that I'm used to the climate
I think that if a man ever found
A place to live easy and happy
That Eden is on Puget Sound

No longer the slave of ambition
I laugh at the world and its shams
As I think of my pleasant condition
Surrounded by acres of clams

About *Ho! For California!*

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War and added 1.2 million square miles to the United States (including California), was signed on February 2, 1848. A few days earlier, a New Jersey-born mechanic named James W. Marshall discovered gold on the American River in California's Sacramento Valley. Gold fever swept the world as news of the discovery and subsequent strikes traveled in letters carried by ship from San Francisco to the Atlantic ports and England. The population of California increased by 100,000 within two years.

Ho! For California! was first sung that year at the send-off for a band of fortune hunters from Massachusetts. Borrowing portions of a Dan Emmett melody, Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. composed the song which was sung by his popular group The Hutchinson Family Singers. The song became an unofficial anthem for many bands of gold seekers

Lyrics to *Ho! For California!*

Ho! For California!

chorus:

Then, ho! Boys ho!
To California go
There's plenty of gold in the world we're told
On the banks of the Sacramento
Heigh ho and away we go
Digging up the gold on the Francisco
Heigh ho and away we go
Digging up the gold on the Francisco

verses:

We've formed our band, and we're all well manned
To journey afar to the promised land
Where the golden ore is rich in store
On the banks of the Sacramento shore
As off we roam through the dark sea foam
We'll ne'er forget kind friends at home
But memory kind shall bring to mind
The love of those we left behind
(chorus)

Oh don't you cry, nor heave a sigh
For we'll all come back again by and by

Don't breathe a fear, nor shed a tear
But patiently wait for about two year
We expect our share of the coarsest fare
And sometimes sleep in the open air
On the cold damp ground we'll all sleep sound
Except when the wolves come howling 'round
(chorus)

As the gold is thar most any whar
And they dig it out with an iron bar
And where 'tis thick, with a spade or pick
They can take out lumps as big as a brick
As we explore the distant shore
We'll fill our pockets with the shining ore
And how 'twill sound as the wind goes 'round
Of our picking up gold by the dozen pound
(chorus)

Oh the land we'll save for the bold and brave
Have determined there never shall breathe a slave
Let foes recoil, for the sons of toil
Shall make California God's Free Soil

From ***The Forty-Niners*** by Archer Butler Hulbert

Alas!

I've been to California, and I haven't got a dime,
I've lost my health, my strength, my hope, and I have lost my time.
I've only got a spade and pick and if I felt quite brave,
I'd use the two of them 'ere things to scoop me out a grave.

From ***Troupers of the Gold Coast*** by Constance Rourke



James worked on a farm in the West
He dreamed one day he'd be rich.
Then one morning he found something shiny
Lying in a ditch.

"It's gold!" thought James, excited
And showed it to farmer Sutter.
But he saw that the farmer was not pleased
He saw him frown and mutter.

"Please don't tell anyone" said the farmer
"About the gold you found.
If people hear about it
They'll come from miles around.

They'll come to look for gold
And trample over my farm.
They'll trample on my vegetables
And do my animals harm."

James said not to worry
He would button his lip.
But a few days later in a bar
He let the secret slip.

He mentioned it to his cousin
And that cousin told his brother
And that brother told his friend
And that friend told another.

So people started to go to the farm
To see what could be found.
They'd heard rumours of gold nuggets
Just lying around.

People really believed
That the hills were filled with gold.
Men and families packed their things and
From the East wagons rolled.

Others came across the sea
From Mexico and Peru,
From Hawaii, China, Chile,
France, and Britain too.

They left their lives behind them
To go and be gold miners.
The year was 1849
They were called the forty-niners.

Some people did not look for gold
But still got rich enough.
They set up shops for miners
And sold expensive stuff.

But as time went on
Gold became harder to find.
There were so many people looking
And all the best land had been mined.

And poor old farmer Sutter
Looked around his land.
His fields were thoroughly trampled
And his rivers thoroughly panned.

But now California had changed
Not boring old fields, no,
There was a big exciting city,
The city of San Francisco!