

The Clipper Ship, "Flying Cloud" is one of the most famous ships that made the trip around Cape Horn to deliver adventurers to California. The Flying Cloud was launched April 15, 1851 at the shipyard of Donald McKay, East Boston, for Enoch Train. She made an 89 day record run from New York to San Francisco during the California Gold Rush.

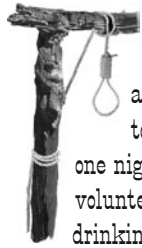
Chapter 2: Gold!

Since the St. Louis newspapers, in 1840, had published the glowing description of California, out of Dr. Marsh's pen, this country, just far enough distant to become a field for the golden dreams of many a romantic youth. Now, then, this land appeared again in a new dress, 'covered with gold,' and letters filled with gold dust had arrived together with more inviting descriptions and urgent invitations by friends. The romance had developed into reality and the attraction grew to an irresistible strength, the youth talented with romantic fancy filled the ranks of the adventurers, ready with the next chance to start for the newly acquired American province, the new El Dorado, where everybody could help himself to as much of the precious metal as he pleased, without the investment of a great capital.

For nearly forty days we had uninterrupted favorable winds, being in the "trades," and, having settled down to sailor habits, time passed without notice.



General William T. Sherman, 1846



“One man, a sailor, a deserter from the Ohio, took it into his head, one night, to rob one of the volunteers, who had set up a drinking store. He had already got two bags, containing about five thousand dollars’ worth of gold; but, not satisfied with them, grasped at a third, half full of dollars in silver. The jingling of the coin awoke the owner, who, springing up, gave the alarm, and, after a hot pursuit, the thief was captured, and bound to a tree until morning. At about nine, a jury of twelve miners sat to consider the case, a volunteer named Nutman officiating for Judge Lynch. Of course, he was found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged; but, some opposition being raised to depriving him of life, and a milder punishment suggested, it was finally determined that he should receive a hundred lashes on his bare back, have his ears cut off, and his head shaved, so that he might be everywhere recognised in the mining districts.”



William Redmond
Ryan, 1848-9



At the peak of the Gold Rush, hundreds of ships were moored in San Francisco harbor, often just having made the trip “around the horn.” Sometimes the ships were resold to miners ready to return to the “States.” As often as not, they were stripped of valuables (the sails made great tents for miners) and left to rot.

THE 1848 DISCOVERY OF GOLD: THE GOLD RUSH

James W. Marshall, the lucky discoverer of gold at Coloma, came to California from Oregon in 1845, whither he had gone overland from Missouri the year before. He came to Sutter’s fort, then the headquarters of all adventurers. Here he enlisted into the ranks of the California battalion under Colonel Fremont and took part in the American conquest and returned to Sutter’s fort after this battalion was discharged at Los Angeles, in early summer of 1847. On an excursion trip from the fort up on the American river he came through the Culloomah basin—now Coloma—and the location, concerning the beautiful stand of sugar-pine trees, and the pleasant water power on the South Fork of the American river, found his consent and awakened his desire to build a sawmill there. Returning to the fort he tried to persuade Captain Sutter to enter into a partnership agreement by which the latter was to furnish the means, while he (Marshall) was to superintend the erection and operation of the mill. With a full equipment of workmen and tools he started for the mill site at Coloma on the 28th of August, 1847. Here we give the names of the men who were working at the mill: Peter L. Weimer, William Scott, James

Bargee, Alexander Stephens, James Brown, William Johnson and Henry Bigler. Besides these white men there were some Indians employed also.

The mill was built over a dry channel of the river which was calculated to the tail race. Marshall, being a kind of wheelwright, had constructed the “tub-wheel” and had also furnished some of the rude parts of the machinery necessary for an ordinary up-and-down sawmill. By January, 1848, the mill was about finished, the tub-wheel set in motion, and after having arranged the head-race and dam he let on the water to test the goodness of his machinery. All worked very well until it was found that the tail-race did not carry off the water fast enough, so he was compelled to deepen and widen the tail-race. In order to economize labor he ordered his men to scratch a kind of a ditch down in the middle of the dry channel, throwing only the coarser stones out of the race, then letting on the water again, it would run with velocity through the channel, washing away all the loose dirt. This was done in the night so as not to interfere with the work of the men in the daytime, and in the morning Marshall, after closing the forebay gate, thus shutting off the water, used to walk down the tail-race to inspect the work the water had done.

This is the oldest known photo of Sutter's Mill, the gold discovery site in Coloma. After gold was discovered, the mill was abandoned when workers left for the gold fields. Chinese and other miners camped on the mill platform as can be seen in this photo. The man in front is not Marshall or Sutter, but an unknown character, perhaps the photographer's assistant.



Here (Cape Horn) we experienced very rough weather, buffeting about under storm stays, and spending nearly a month before the wind favored our passage.



General William T. Sherman, 1846