

# GOLD FEVER! SCAVENGER HUNT

Can you find the objects pictured below? Have fun exploring!



**Abacus:** The abacus is an ancient manual counting device, like the world's first calculator. It was used to perform addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, even before pen and paper and the creation of written numbers. The abacus appeared around 1200 A.D. in China; in Chinese, it is called *suan-pan*. During the Gold Rush, this would have been used by miners, storekeepers, and traders. Each bead on the abacus represents a certain number value. Problems can be calculated by sliding the beads back and forth on their rods into different configurations. An abacus could have been brought by one of the 20,000 Chinese men living in California by 1852.



**Corn Husk Dolls:** Toys were often not a priority for families during the Gold Rush era, so many children amused themselves with whatever they could find lying around. One easy-to-make and inexpensive toy was the corn husk doll. The discarded corn husks were soaked, shaped, and tied with thread or string and decorated with bits of cloth, beads, colored thread, paint, etc. Parents or older siblings made the dolls for smaller children while older kids could make their own. A lucky child would have a "China" or porcelain doll. Rag dolls, made up of rags or pieces of fabric, were the most common of all.



**Fishing Kit:** A simple fishing kit might break the prospector's standard diet of dried pork, boiled potatoes, bread and beans. Fish were a reliable food due to the abundance of

streams and rivers. However, even with varied ingredients, the miner's meals tended to be of poor quality and lacked many nutrients. Inside the kit: 2 large forged fish hooks • 2 small forged fish hooks • 4 split sinkers (split sinkers are small lead balls cut part way through so that they can be squeezed around the linen fishing line as weights) • 1 cork • 20 feet of waxed linen thread.



**Fools Gold (Iron Pyrite) vs. Gold:** Fools Gold is smooth and round at the edges, dull in color, soft and will bend or dent if struck. Gold has similar qualities but is typically is lighter in color and harder to find.



**Gold Pan/Wash Pan:** As gold miners had few possessions, many of their tools needed to be multipurpose. Besides being used as a tool for finding gold, the gold pan was used as a wash basin for dishes, clothes, and the miner himself. In order to make the pan more effective, some let theirs rust to create a rough surface that helped keep the gold in the pan and also made the gold easier to spot.



**Hardtack:** A thick cracker made of flour, water, and sometimes salt. When properly stored, hardtack will last for years. Because it was prepared cheaply and would last so long, hardtack was the most convenient food for soldiers, explorers, pioneers, or anyone else on the go.





**Hornspoon:** Miners usually ate with utensils made from wood or the horn of an animal. The horn was heated and placed into a mold to give it a basic spoon form. After the material cooled, the utensil was cut to its final shape and polished until smooth. Although wooden spoons were easier to carve, hornspoons did not give you a splinter while you ate!



**“Housewife” Sewing Kit:** A small sewing kit would be carried by miners for quick, simple repairs on clothes. The term “Housewife” referred to the domestic activity of sewing clothes. Inside the kit: one pair of scissors, one wooden thimble, one wooden needle case (with a regular needle, heavier needle for leather or canvas) and five brass pins.



**Hudson’s Bay Trading Beads:** These beads were used as trading commodities among Native Americans and between fur traders. They came in many different colors, shapes, and sizes. These type of beads were bought up by thousands of people from the Hudson’s Bay Company, which they used as their trading currency, hence, they were named Hudson’s Bay Trading Beads. Six beads were equal to one beaver pelt. Most trade beads used in North America were made in Europe and bought for trading with the natives.



**Jaw Harp:** This common instrument of the 18th and 19th centuries is played by placing the harp over the teeth and gums. The rounded part of the Jaw Harp is held between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand. The narrow part of the frame should be positioned on the teeth of the performer. The tine (metal tongue) is plucked with the index finger as the

player breathes in and out, creating a resonance. Moving the tongue and changing the shape of the mouth create different sounds - simple entertainment for men after a long day panning for gold.



**Soaproot Brush:** The Soaproot plant gets its name from the naturally occurring soap-like substance that comes from its fibrous roots. Its sudsy properties make it an excellent all-purpose cleanser and could be used to stun fish, causing them to rise to the surface. Native Americans throughout California would create brushes with the fibrous bristle-like roots, which were then used for sweeping up acorn flour during food preparation. Gold miners could have used a brush like this for sweeping gold dust out of their pans.



**Tea Cup:** Of the thousands of Chinese who immigrated to California during the Gold Rush, many brought with them their cultural traditions, including drinking tea. Although not an original, the tea cup in the trunk is of a similar shape and glaze as ones that were used by Chinese gold miners.



**Traveling Inkstand:** Miners needed a way to write letters home and to record their thoughts. Always on the go, they needed portable writing instruments. This case is handmade and contains two feather quill pens with a small inkwell.