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The Great Medicine Road, Part 2: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, 1849 (The American Trails Series)

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During the early weeks of 1848, as U.S. congressmen debated the territorial status of California, a Swiss immigrant and an itinerant millwright forever altered the future state's fate. Building a sawmill for Johann August Sutter, James Wilson Marshall struck gold. The rest may be history, but much of the story of what happened in the following year is told not in history books but in the letters, diaries, journals, and other written recollections of those whom the California gold rush drew west. In this second installment in the projected four-part collection *The Great Medicine Road: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails*, the hardy souls who made the arduous trip tell their stories in their own words.

Seven individuals' tales bring to life a long-ago year that enriched some, impoverished others, and forever changed the face of North America. Responding to often misleading promotional literature, adventurers made their way west via different routes. Following the Carson River through the Sierra Nevada, or taking the Lassen Route to the Sacramento Valley, they passed through the Mormon Zion of Great Salt Lake City and traded with and often displaced Native Americans long familiar with the trails. Their accounts detail these encounters, as well as the gritty realities of everyday life on the overland trails. They narrate events, describe the vast and diverse landscapes they pass through, and document a journey as strange and new to them as it is to many readers today.

Through these travelers' diaries and memoirs, readers can relive a critical moment in the remaking of the West—and appreciate what a difference one year can make in the life of a nation.

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