

Gold had been discovered in California! And the whole world seemed to change toward that promised land. Thousands of people went west, many of them crossing Nevada. It was a hard trip, across forty miles of desert. A few gave up and stayed in Nevada. There those few found a little gold.

The mining center in Nevada was Gold Canyon, at the foot of Mount Davidson. There one man supposedly dug out \$30,000 worth of gold in one summer. Another said he collected \$7000 in gold dust—in a single day.

But most miners did not find it that easy. The trouble was that the gold-bearing ore was full of blue clay. All the miners complained about "that blue stuff." It struck fast to the gold, making the precious metal hard to get. The miners threw the clay away with curses.

In 1851 two young men, Hosea and Allen Grosch, came to Gold Canyon. The Grosch brothers were bright fellows. And they were curious. They decided to make a few tests to find out just what that blue stuff was. What they found made their eyes pop.

Excited, they prospected farther and farther up the mountain. At last they found a place where the clay was very blue indeed. The gold specks in it outsparkled any others.

The brothers could mine on a small scale only. They did not have enough money. And then tragedy struck. Hosea cut himself with a pick and died soon afterward, of lockjaw.

But Allen did not give up. He decided to go to California to raise some money. He

asked a man named Comstock to look after his cabin while he was gone. In return he promised Comstock a fourth interest in the claim. But he did not tell where it was—or *what* it was.

In November 1857 Grosch and a man named Bucke headed west over the Sierra Nevada. The trip was a nightmare. The men, half frozen, crawled through the snow on hands and knees. At last they were found by miners and taken to camp. But Grosch's awful suffering had been too much. He died, and with him died the secret of the claim—for a time.

Comstock knew there was wealth somewhere on the mountain. All he had to do was find it. He wandered all over, making claims at likely spots. He found a bit of gold. But always it was mixed with that hateful blue stuff.

Comstock never did find the Grosch claim. Or if he did, he never knew it. For he was looking for gold. And all the time the real fortune lay in the blue clay. That hated "blue stuff" that miners threw away was almost pure silver!

Such a secret cannot be kept forever. In 1859 a visitor took away some bits of the blue clay. He found that the ore was worth almost \$5000 a ton.

Before long the news was out. A flood of miners headed for Nevada. The great silver rush was on. The Silver State was on the map. And you can bet that no one threw away that blue stuff anymore!

## CHECK YOUR READING

- 1. The story says that Nevada was hard to cross because of its**
  - A Indians
  - B deserts
  - C windstorms
- 2. Most of the travelers who stopped in Nevada found**
  - A a lot of gold
  - B a little gold
  - C no gold at all
- 3. The "blue stuff" was like**
  - A powder
  - B glue
  - C clay
- 4. When the Grosch brothers tested the blue stuff, they were**
  - A disappointed
  - B puzzled
  - C excited
- 5. Hosea died after he**
  - A cut himself with a pick
  - B fell down a cliff
  - C got lost in the mountains
- 6. Allen decided to go to California to**
  - A find a new partner
  - B raise some money
  - C take a rest
- 7. In return for watching his cabin, Allen offered Comstock**
  - A enough gold to last a lifetime
  - B a part interest in the claim
  - C a large piece of farmland
- 8. Allen never returned to Nevada because he**
  - A died in the mountains
  - B lost his mind
  - C was sent to prison
- 9. When Allen did not return, Comstock tried to**
  - A open a store
  - B write a book
  - C find gold claims
- 10. At last people found out that the blue stuff contained**
  - A iron
  - B silver
  - C copper