Fools of Forty Nine

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When gold was found in forty-eight, the people said 'twas gas,
And some were fools enough to think the lumps were only brass.
But they soon were satisfied, and started off to mine,
They bought a ship, came 'round the Horn in the fall of forty-nine.

cho:

Then they thought of what they had been told, when they started after gold:
That they never, in this world, would make their pile.

The poor, the old, the rotten scows were advertised to sail
To New Orleans with passengers, but they must come and bail.
The ships were crowded more than full, but some hung on behind,
And others dived off from the wharf, and swam 'till they were blind.

cho
With rusty pork, and stinking beef, and rotten wormy bread,
With captains, too, that never were as high as the mainmast head,
The steerage passengers would rave and swear they'd paid their passage
They wanted something more to eat besides the lowly sausage.

cho

And they begun to cross the plains with oxen, holler, and haul,
And steamers, they began to run as far as Panama,
And there for months the people stayed, that started after gold;
And some returned disgusted with the lies they had been told.

cho

The people died on every route, they sickened and died like sheep.
And those at sea, 'fore they were dead, were launched into the deep.
And those that died, crossing the plains, fared not as well as that.
For holes was dug and they was dumped along the terrible Platte.
cho

The Ballad of America
recorded by Pat Foster
EL