



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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(Attention Photo and Assignment Editors)

Welcome Wagon Special Event – August 21, 2004

Sutter's Fort Features 1846 Covered Wagon Replica; Campfire and Western BBQ

SACRAMENTO -- They were simple in construction, fairly light and pulled by oxen. The prairie covered wagon was used to carry the necessities that the pioneers needed to sustain themselves for long periods on the trail.

For many, these wooden wagons covered with white canvas tops have become the symbol of the westward movement.

Visitors to California State Parks' Sutter's Fort in Sacramento will have the opportunity on August 21, 2004 to help welcome the fort's new 1846 replica prairie covered wagon.

Sutter's Fort SHP, in cooperation with the Sacramento Historic Sites Association, will hold a welcome wagon and "End of the Trail" pioneer demonstration day from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for visitors 17 and over; \$2 for visitors six to 16; and free for those five and under.

Costumed interpreters will demonstrate pioneer skills, including bobbin lace making, cooperage, blacksmithing, hearth cooking, weaving and more.

From 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., a campfire, pre-Gold Rush music for dancing and listening and a western barbecue will help mark the occasion. Advanced tickets only will be sold and they are \$25 per person and include admission to the daytime events. Telephone (916) 323-2015 for tickets or further information. Dinner reservations must be made by 5 p.m. Tuesday, August 17. The dinner will include brisket, chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, cowboy beans, cornbread, peach cobbler, soda and water.

But the special day will also mark the recent arrival of the fort's new 1846 replica prairie covered wagon. The wagon represents the many courageous emigrants who journeyed overland with the fort as their destination.

According to historians, the wagons were covered with white canvas tops which gave the appearance of ships at sea under full sail as they moved across the “ocean” prairie. They were sometimes referred to as prairie schooners.

Author Richard M. Davis wrote that the white canvas tops were designed to protect the contents from the burning sun, the dust and the rain. The pioneers did not ride in the wagons unless they were too ill to walk. The jolting ride proved too uncomfortable. The pioneers usually slept outside the wagon unless rain or weather forced them to seek shelter inside. The driver of the oxen walked alongside the beasts encouraging them along with a touch of a switch or goad that he carried, according to Davis.

Sutter’s Fort is not only the first settlement in the interior of California and the birthplace of Sacramento, but it is also the end of the California Trail.

Donated to the State of California, Sutter's Fort became a part of the California State Park System in 1947. Sutter's Fort stands as the oldest restored Fort in the United States.

Today, the Fort is furnished and reconstructed to reflect its 1846 appearance. Many activities and programs recreate the past thanks to the volunteers who give their time to share their love of California History.

The park is located in midtown Sacramento between K and L Streets and 26th and 28th Streets.

Further information of Sutter’s Fort SHP may be obtained by visiting the California State Park website at www.parks.ca.gov

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