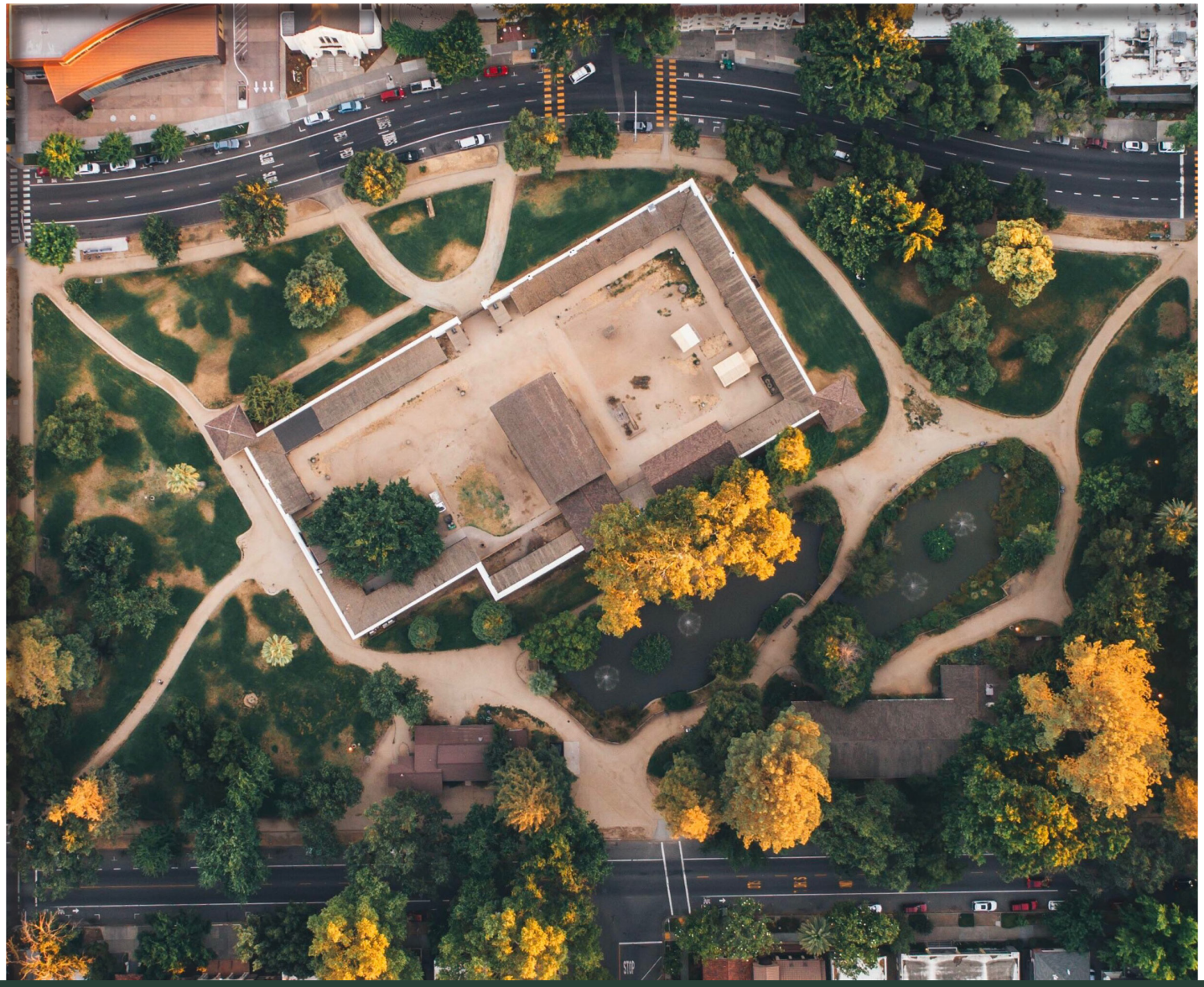


# Sutter's Fort State Historic Park

## Interpretation Master Plan

2024

# Plan Approval

On August 14, 2023, the California State Parks Planning and Acquisition Committee unanimously approved the Sutter's Fort Interpretation Master Plan, pending amendment to the Sutter's Fort General Plan to redress incompatibility between the two plans. On June 11, 2024, the California State Park and Recreation Commission unanimously adopted all proposed changes to the Sutter Fort General Plan, thereby enacting and formally approving the Sutter's Fort Interpretation Master Plan. To clarify formal completion of the Sutter's Fort Interpretation Master Plan and comply with policy related to Interpretation Master Plan approvals, included here are signatures of the relevant oversight division chiefs and District Superintendent.

**MATTHEW BELLAH**
Chief, Central Field Division

**LESLIE HARTZELL**
Chief, Cultural Resources Division

**HEATHER HOLM**
Chief, Interpretation and Education Division

**JOHN FRASER**
District Superintendent, Capital District

# Executive Summary

## Project Overview

This Interpretation Master Plan (IMP) will be the governing document for park management, operations, and interpretive planning. It reflects a comprehensive planning effort by California State Parks to improve the visitor experience at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park (SHP).

This IMP focuses on developing an inclusive, complex, and accurate exploration of history. The interpretive management project team, consisting of Capital District management and Sutter's Fort SHP staff, has drafted this plan using input from California Native American partners and by using the best of current historical scholarship.

This IMP represents a concerted effort to guide an inclusive, complex, and accurate exploration of history at Sutter's Fort. Some purposeful additions to this plan include: elevating the experiences of California's Indigenous people; examining Sutter's Fort's role as a catalyst for colonization; analyzing the tools used to study history; expanding interpretive periods; and identifying strategies to create equitable interpretive engagement for all people. These emphases aim to create a visitor experience that is reflective, analytical, and inclusive of California's diverse and complex history—an experience that this plan identifies as a laboratory of learning.

### Tribal Consultation

California State Parks initiated consultation with tribal representatives before beginning the process of developing the Interpretation Master Plan. From December 2020 through April 2021, California State Parks staff held individual virtual meetings with Tribal representatives from seven tribes that accepted an initial invitation.

During these initial consultations, Tribal representatives expressed their concerns and sometimes doubts about the nature of the endeavor. These consultations provided a foundation at the very beginning of the planning process to foreground indigenous perspectives, priorities, and concerns into the fabric of this plan.

Through this plan, State Parks commits to the continuous enhancement of the visitor experience at the Fort. This includes a commitment to working with Native American partners and other stakeholders to develop ongoing evaluations of our interpretive services and to ensure that the goals, objectives, strategies, and themes developed in this plan remain effective ways to interpret California's complex history.

## SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

This Interpretive Master Plan represents a new beginning for Sutter's Fort SHP. The goals, objectives, strategies, themes, and overall interpretive principles of this document create space for the pursuit of historical truth and understanding.

Sutter's Fort SHP will become a place of academic discovery, discussion, perspective, reflection, and most of all accuracy in communicating the history of California. Previous interpretive principles will remain a part of this institution's history, but we move forward into a new reality. Discovering and understanding complex cultural histories within California requires a new approach that relies less on living history concepts and more on critical analysis of history to deliver thematic experiences to visitors.

The realities of colonization in California are dark, uncomfortable, and unpleasant. Human beings exploited other human beings using power, force, and violence. This power dynamic created a place where value was assigned to people simply based on race. The effects of this racialized dynamic created significant distortions in how the history of California has been examined and presented at places like Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

The Fort's previous interpretive principles too often failed to provide an accurate portrayal of 1840s California life and culture. Efforts to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships with our Tribal partners will be essential to interpretive success moving forward.

Sutter's Fort SHP will become a "laboratory of learning" where an inclusive, complex, and accurate study of history helps piece together the complex history of California.

### Tribal Review

The first draft of the IMP was sent to each Tribe for review and then another round of consultation occurred via phone and email correspondence. Tribal feedback on the first draft was incorporated into a second draft and again sent out for review. The California State Parks Tribal Coordinator followed up with phone calls to gather any comments regarding the second draft and presentation materials regarding the IMP planning process were distributed via email.

All tribes attended a virtual open house hosted by California State Parks in September 2021. This open house gave tribal participants another opportunity to ask questions and make comments. As the IMP made its way through the various Parks Divisions for review, Tribes were updated through emails and letters.

# Document Organization

The Sutter's Fort State Historic Park Interpretation Master Plan is presented here in four chapters: Planning Context, Park Resources, Interpretive Direction, and Goals & Implementation. Each chapter is described below.

## Chapter 1
## **PLANNING CONTEXT**

The first chapter presents the Mission of California State Parks and its Interpretive and Educational Mission Statements alongside the Declaration of Purpose for Sutter's Fort State Historic Park and as well as a Statement of Purpose for this Interpretation Master Plan. This chapter also includes an introduction to the State Historic Park, including a brief historic summary of Sutter's Fort and an overview of previous planning efforts at the State Historic Park.

## Chapter 2
## **PARK RESOURCES**

The second chapter provides additional context about Sutter's Fort State Historic Park and presents the cultural, natural, and recreational resources there. These include historic landmark designations, historic structures, cultural landscape features, tribal cultural resources, collections, as well as community resources and facilities for education, recreation, and events.

## Chapter 3
## **INTERPRETIVE DIRECTION**

The third chapter establishes the foundation for interpretation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park by presenting an Interpretive Mission, Interpretive Vision, and set of Interpretive Themes. This chapter also includes a discussion of interpretive periods both before and after the establishment of the fort, opening the door to a broader understanding of its complex history.

Chapter 4
## GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION

The fourth chapter provides a road map for the development of interpretive programs, materials, and exhibits at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park. This chapter presents eleven broad interpretive goals, each of which is supported by a set of more specific interpretive objectives. These interpretive objectives are further explored through a series of implementation strategies, which are intended to provide clear guidance for action items, benchmarks, and measurable outcomes associated with executing the interpretative goals and objectives.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to citations provided throughout the document, the bibliography presents a complete list of all scholarship reviewed as a part of the development of this Interpretation Master Plan. The sources presented there are intended to catalogue the most relevant scholarship that will support the development of more accurate, inclusive, and complex interpretive programming at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

### Appendix

The Appendix to this Interpretation Master Plan includes the Educational Standards and Framework established by California State Board of Education.

# Planning Context

## California State Parks Mission

The Mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS INTERPRETIVE MISSION

Interpretation is a special form of communication that helps people understand, appreciate, and emotionally connect with the rich natural and cultural heritage preserved in parks. It is the mission of interpretation in California State Parks to convey messages that initially will help visitors value their experience, and that ultimately will foster a conservation ethic and promote a dedicated park constituency.

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS EDUCATION MISSION

The most powerful forms of education are meaningful, involve the student, promote critical thinking, and appeal to different learning styles. Our mission is to provide educational experiences both in California State Parks and in the classroom, assisting educators with curriculum needs and offering activities that enable students to investigate, research, and participate in interactive learning.

# Declaration of Purpose

## Sutter's Fort State Historic Park

Sutter's Fort catalyzed a pattern of change in California. The purpose of Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is to make available to all people an inclusive, complex, and accurate representation of the Fort's role in the colonization of California. The Fort enticed immigration and sparked the gold-rush, leading to the disruption of life and loss of traditional homeland for Indigenous people who still found ways to persevere. The Fort is central to the state of California's complicated and sometimes dark past, but it is also the key to developing an inclusive future.

The function of the Department of Parks and Recreation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is to provide an engaging educational platform from which an accurate study of the complex history of 19th century California can be explored.

# Sutter's Fort SHP

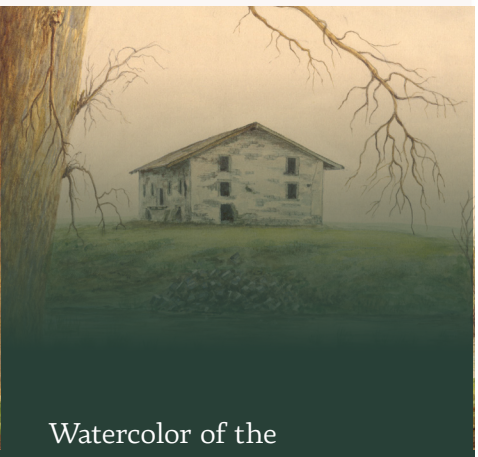
## Interpretation Master Plan Purpose

This Interpretation Master Plan (IMP) will be the governing document for park management, operations, and interpretive planning. Interpretive principles discussed within this document will replace interpretive principles discussed in any Sutter's Fort SHP planning documents developed prior to this.

This IMP directly addresses the need for delivering inclusive, complex, and accurate historical narratives for the people of California to better understand the complexities of the past. The IMP provides a long-term, unified interpretive vision for Sutter's Fort with specific interpretive goals and measurable objectives to accomplish those goals. It also recommends strategies in creating improved interpretive services for a redefined visitor experience.

To guide future efforts to enhance the visitor experience at the fort, the interpretive team will work with State Parks' staff, partners, and other stakeholders to develop ongoing evaluations of our interpretive services to ensure the goals, objectives, strategies, and themes developed in this plan remain effective ways to interpret California's complex history.

# Historic Summary and Park Introduction



Watercolor of the deteriorated Central Building at Sutter's Fort by Carl Ewald Grunsky, painted circa 1884. From the Sutter's Fort SHP Collection.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The site of today's Sutter's Fort SHP has a rich and complex cultural history that has seen both natural and forced transformations over time. The site has been a natural landscape, a Native village, a colonial establishment, a "pioneer memorial," and now a museum to explore the past. Each transformation has created a story and left a permanent mark on the previous land, people, and cultures.

Since time immemorial, diverse Indigenous peoples developed unique ways to manage California's natural resources. Long before colonizers ever set foot on Californian soil, Native peoples' use of traditional ecological knowledge created a mature and highly managed landscape.

By the early 1800s, the pressures and ongoing power dynamics of colonization in California had reached the Native villages of the Sacramento River valley. Native peoples of the coast had moved inland in the face of enslavement and violent conflict at the hands of first Spanish and then Mexican colonists. At the same time, Native populations were losing the battle against foreign diseases, while colonial agriculture and industry were decimating critical natural resources. Removed from traditional lands and forced into various modes of survival, Native Nations organized raids of colonial livestock, angering Californians and the Mexican government. Tensions, reprisals, and conflict ensued.

The Mexican government hoped John Sutter's presence as a colonizing influence would intimidate and control Native people in the interior of California. Having already gained the support of the Mexican government, Sutter entrenched his power at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers.

The subject of Native labor at Sutter's Fort has for too long been distorted and diminished. The examination of Native labor at Sutter's Fort requires an understanding of the decades of forceful and deadly relationships between colonizers and Native Californians. Out of fear, pragmatism, and concerns for cultural preservation, local Native tribes often cooperated with Sutter when he arrived in 1839. They performed a number of industrial and agricultural trades at the Fort. The relationship between Sutter and local tribes, which had transactional elements, was fundamentally coercive and not established through mutual engagement.[1]

During the operational period of the Fort, multiple military challenges to Mexican rule, like that of the Bear Flag Revolt in 1846, demonstrated ongoing political unrest in California. Eventually, the Mexican-American War led to Mexico ceding California to the United States in 1848. That same year, Sutter's associate, James Marshall, found gold at the saw-mill construction site and the California Gold Rush began. Mass immigration brought with it racial discrimination which furthered the ongoing, often one-sided conflicts between immigrants and California's Indigenous people.

With an influx of immigrants and a booming population, California was admitted to the Union in 1850 and thus began the start of state sanctioned racism, genocide, and oppression toward the Indigenous people of the region. Early politicians reinforced colonial values that viewed Native Californians as a roadblock to the growth of the state. The first governor, Peter Burnett, advocated for the termination of Native American people, exacerbating a culture of racism and violence.

In the aftermath of their encounters with the Spanish, the Mexicans, and expansion enabled by John Sutter, the Native American population was cut off from their traditional life, land, and resources.

Today, California's tribal communities continue as vibrant and living cultures, and fight for recognition of their historic experiences. Sutter's Fort SHP can now serve as public forum for visitors to more deeply understand the historically complex cultural dynamics of California.

1. Anthony Burris, *Mellon Public Scholars Program: Marshall Gold Discovery State Park and Sutter's Fort* (unpublished report, Humanities Institute, University of California, Davis, 2020), 2, on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

## RECONSTRUCTION

Shortly after the Gold Rush, the Central Building was all that remained of the original Fort. The Fort changed hands many times and was eventually purchased by the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) in 1889. Reconstruction of the Fort occurred during the 1890s. Using funding from the State of California, the outside walls of the Fort were built to closely model, not replicate, the original structures. During this time, site ownership was transferred from the NSGW to the State of California. The State accepted the partially constructed "California Pioneer Memorial" from the NSGW in April of 1893. The property was managed by the Department of Finance for many years and came under the authority of the then Division of Beaches and Parks in 1947.

Photograph picturing the reconstruction of the Fort during the 1890s.

Preservation groups like the NSGW were motivated to glorify the lives of John Sutter and early pioneers who ultimately enabled Indigenous displacement and dehumanization. Overall, the preservation movement paved the road to an exclusive portrayal of history at this site and others, honoring only the narratives of immigrants while leaving out the darker history of institutional racism in California.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION

A 1960 legislative act decreed that all State Park units be classified by type, and Sutter's Fort was classified as a State Historical Monument at a State Parks and Recreation Commission meeting in May of 1962. Sutter's Fort and 18 other units were reclassified as State Historic Parks in 1970.

## ADDITIONS AND CHANGES

Shortly after state acceptance, the interior shed-roofed portions of the fort were completed. Additional wood partitions and flooring were added in 1906 when the Fort served as a haven for refugees of the San Francisco earthquake. In 1907, additional land was acquired to allow "L" Street to bypass the southwest corner of the fort, and the property attained its present size of 6.2 acres. Construction of the California State Indian Museum and the adjacent maintenance building and gardener's cottage facility was completed in 1941. The final major addition was construction of the restrooms on the east end of the gardener's cottage in 1963.

The first park landscape design is known to exist only from its being mentioned in a newspaper article and drawn up in a planting plan by early 20th-century park staff.[2] The future of landscape management will intend to protect current park resources while also including California native ecology where possible. Native landscaping will be of interpretive value in discussions of changes to the region's natural landscape caused by mass immigration.

Past interpretive planning and programs relied heavily on the use of living history concepts: first-person interpretation, reenactments, historic trade demonstrations, period clothing, and "pioneer" material culture. These concepts attempted to immerse the visitors into an experience that demonstrated "what life was like in the 1840s." State Parks' institutional overreliance on living history interpretation produced romantic and one-sided representations of the history of the 1840s and failed to fully present the complex and dark truths of colonization.

The intent of this IMP is to address the above deficiencies and to guide the creation of interpretive experiences that provide inclusive, complex, and accurate explorations of history. Sutter's Fort SHP will be a place to explore the full complexity of the past, welcoming discussions on challenging and uncomfortable topics such as oppression, racism, slavery, and genocide of the First People of California. This IMP calls on the interpretive programs at Sutter's Fort to investigate, research, explore, and discover hidden truths about the past. In doing so, this IMP contributes not only to the California State Parks' Reexamining Our Past Initiative, but also to the broader transformations in the fields of Public History and Museum Studies that have taken place since 2020.

2. G. G. Radcliff & W. Vortriede, "Sutter Fort: Prospective Planting Plan," (pencil sketch plan, n.d.), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Past programs at Sutter's Fort have relied on reenactments, trade demonstrations, and other living history concepts.

# Park Planning History

A variety of documents exist or are known to have existed that involved past planning at Sutter's Fort SHP. Those of the most significance and most representative of changes over time are summarized here.

## 2012 INTERPRETATION MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the 2012 Interpretation Master Plan for Sutter's Fort SHP (2012 IMP) was to assess, expand, and update where appropriate the 1990 General Plan's interpretive elements.[3]

California State Parks contracted with Frank Binney & Associates, a professional interpretive planning firm, to produce the 2012 IMP. The firm had helped plan visitor experiences at Yosemite National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Mount St. Helens National Monument and numerous other state and federal parks across the country. The Frank Binney & Associates team for the IMP included Frank Binney (Principal Planner), and Alexa Riner (Planning Associate). Additional editing and editorial content was inserted by Parks staff after receiving the original submission.

This plan continued the use of living history concepts as the basis for interpretation. As described in the Executive Summary of this current 2022 IMP, the use of living history concepts has shortcomings when addressing darker aspects of California history.

3. California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: Interpretation Master Plan (IMP)* (2012), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

## 1990 GENERAL PLAN

The Sutter's Fort State Historic Park General Plan was completed in 1990 in response to the mandate of the Public Resources Code, which requires that a general plan must be submitted to the State Park and Recreation Commission for its approval before any major work takes place.[4] The purpose of this plan was to provide guidelines for development, interpretation, and management in accordance with the park's approved classification as a historic site.

In addition, the report included an Environmental Impact Element, conforming to requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The objectives of the plan were:

1. To identify the cultural, natural, and recreational resources of the historic unit.
2. To establish policies for management, protection, research, and interpretation of these resources.
3. To determine visitor activities and uses of the structure that are compatible with the purpose of the park, the available resources, and the surrounding area.
4. To determine the potential environmental impact of visitor activities, use of the structures and grounds, and related development.
5. To establish guidelines for the recommended sequence and scope of restoration and development.
6. To provide an informational document for the public, the legislature, department personnel, and other government agencies.

4. California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan* (1990).

## 1987 HOOK INTERPRETIVE PLAN

As part of the 1986/87 Fiscal Year Statewide Interpretive Exhibit and Artifact Rehabilitation Project new visitor orientation rooms were planned for Sutter's Fort.[5]

An exhibit plan for these rooms was written by Eileen M. Hook titled, New Helvetia: The Dream & the Reality: Sutter's Fort S.H.P. Orientation Rooms Interpretive Plan. The interpretive goal of the plan was to "understand the people of diverse origins who participated in the founding and building of John Sutter's empire, with emphasis on the period from 1839 through 1849 and John Sutter's contribution thereto." More specifically, the interpretive goal of the orientation rooms proposed in this plan is to aid the visitor in better understanding who John Sutter was, why he came to California, how the fort developed, what the fort meant to California history, and what was happening in California during the interpretive period of Sutter's Fort.

While the orientation exhibits developed from the 1987 Hook plan have since been replaced, the history of Sutter's Fort provided in the plan remains a valuable tool in studying the institutional history of Sutter's Fort SHP.

## 1979 STUDENT REPORT "THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SUTTER'S FORT: A CRITIQUE"

While not an officially produced planning document, this student paper on file with the California Department of Parks and Recreation provides a well-rounded summary of the history of reconstruction and interpretation at Sutter's Fort.[6] The author goes on to describe the park interpretation as it was in 1979, which is useful for current planning. Throughout the paper, she comments on the quality of interpretive and restoration decisions made in the past from the perspective of archaeological practices as they developed over time.

5. Eileen M. Hook, *New Helvetia: The Dream & the Reality: Sutter's Fort S.H.P. Orientation Rooms Interpretive Plan* (1987), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

6. D. O'Connor, "The Reconstruction of Sutter's Fort: A Critique" (1979), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

## 1961 REPORT ON RESTORATION AT SUTTER'S FORT STATE HISTORICAL MONUMENT

This document contains room-by-room summaries of reconstruction and restoration history at the Fort followed by recommendations for improvements to the then existing displays and proposals for new displays.[7] The author, Carroll D. Hall, Monument Supervisor, is concerned with increasing the popularity of the Fort to match that of its days as a pioneer museum. He does not delve into interpretation much beyond the content of the displays, stating that "once the fort is properly restored, we see no problems of interpretation." He concludes with ideas for producing a long-desired film about Sutter's life and the recommendation that a recently removed but popular vegetable garden be reinstalled.

## 1939 REPORT OF SUTTER'S FORT REHABILITATION COMMITTEE

This document presents the progress of rehabilitation construction.[8] The committee designed the interpretation to reflect life in 1848 and 1849 in order to show Sutter's Fort at its peak while also representing aspects of the California Gold Rush. The author, Chairman Frank N. Killam, describes their efforts to acquire period objects for display, build practical period facilities, and to age the walls and tools to promote realism.

## 1904 MCLAREN LANDSCAPE PLAN

Neither the original plan nor a copy of it has ever been found, but it is described in some detail in an old newspaper article and referenced in a number of other documents.[9] It is assumed that the current plantings and many that have since died or been removed were installed by the Native Daughters of the Golden West in accordance with this plan during the early twentieth century reconstruction effort. Twentieth century park staff drew a planting plan from this document.[10]

7. Carroll D. Hall, "Restoration at Sutter's Fort State Historical Monument" (1961), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.
8. Frank N. Killam, "Report of Sutter's Fort Rehabilitation Committee" (1939), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.
9. "Sutter's Fort to be Improved," *Evening Bee* (Sacramento), January 25, 1904, 3.
10. Radcliff & Vortriede, "Sutter Fort: Prospective Planting Plan."

Photograph picturing the restoration of the adobe bricks on the Fort's Central Building, which took place during the 1950s and 1960s.

## 1890 GRUNSKY SITE GRADING PLAN

Carl E. Grunsky was very active with the NSGW and seems to have led the restoration effort beginning with the 1888 motion by the NSGW to purchase the Sutter's Fort property. He prepared several sketches of the Fort as it stood in the late nineteenth century as well as what it may have looked like in Sutter's time.[11] He conducted interviews, surveys, site walks, and excavations. Using his research, he produced diagrams and plans in order to gain community support for the purchase and reconstruction of the fort. Grunsky did the conceptual drawings for the reconstruction, and Sacramento architect James Seadler was hired to produce the plans.

## 1848 KUNZEL MAP AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

A map showing the fort's layout and the uses of each room was prepared by Sutter's business manager, John Bidwell, and his clerk, Pierson B. Reading and was later published by Heinrich Kunzel in Germany in 1848. A copy was found at the Berkeley Bancroft Library during the 1957-58 Gebhardt excavations.[12] In 1989, the curator of Sutter's Fort solicited a translation of the map; however, attempts to find a qualified volunteer translator failed. The curator completed the project himself and the translated map was included as an appendix to the 1990 General Plan.[13] The purpose of the project was to obtain period translations to have the most detailed and accurate descriptions of the uses of each room. This map would then guide park staff in the purchasing of appropriate furnishings for each room.

**11.** Carl E. Grunsky, "The Restoration of Sutter's Fort: The Native Sons Committee and the First Board of Sutter's Fort Trustees" (manuscript, 1926), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation; California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan.*

**12.** C. L. Gebhardt, "Sutter's Fort: A Study in Historical Archaeology with Emphasis on Stratigraphy" (1958), on file with California Department of Parks and Recreation.

**13.** M. S. Tucker, "Kunzel Plan of Sutter's Fort" (translation for California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1989).

# Park Resources

## Cultural Resources

Given the interpretive importance of the history and human stories connected to the Fort, this IMP itemizes several cultural resources significant to the site.

### HISTORIC RESOURCES

#### Historic Landmark Designations

##### National Historic Landmark: Sutter's Fort State Historic Monument

National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States.

Sutter's Fort was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961.[14]

**14.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 8.

## National Register of Historic Places: Sutter's Fort (Reference Number: 66000221)

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources.[15]

The on-site non-Native American resources of Sutter's Fort were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966.[16]

## National Historic Trail: California National Historic Trail, Sutter's Fort

In 2017, the Capital District and the National Park Service entered into an agreement to certify that Sutter's Fort is a recognized historical site on the California National Historic Trail.[17]

## State Historic Landmark: Sutter's Fort (No. 525)

John Augustus Sutter, born of Swiss parents in Germany, arrived in New York in July 1834 and in California in July 1839. He founded the Fort in 1839 to protect 'New Helvetia,' his 76-square-mile Mexican land grant. Of the original fort, the two-story central building, made of adobe and oak, remains. The Fort's outer walls and rooms, which had disappeared by the 1860s, were reconstructed after the State acquired the property in the early 1890s.[18]

Sutter's Fort was designated a California State Historic Landmark in 1954.[19]


Entrance sign at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

15. National Park Service, "National Register Database and Research" (2021).

16. National Park Service, "National Register Database and Research."

17. A copy of this document is on file at the Capital District Office, and was signed on June 8, 2017. National Park Service, "The California National Historic Trail Interactive Map: Places to Visit in California" (2020); National Park Service, "What is a National Historic Trail (NHT)" (2020).

18. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, *Sacramento* (2021).

19. Ibid.

### State Historic Landmark: Coloma Road (No.747)

Sutter's Fort marks the western end of the Coloma Road. Opened in 1847, this road ran from the Fort to Sutter's sawmill at Coloma. Used by James W. Marshall in January 1848 to bring the news of the gold discovery to Sutter, it was traversed later by thousands of miners. In 1849 the Coloma Road became the route of California's first stage line, established by James E. Birch.[20]

The Coloma Road was designated a California State Historic Landmark in 1960.[21]

### City of Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources: Sutter's Fort

Sutter's Fort was registered as a Historic and Cultural Resource by the City of Sacramento in 1966.[22]

## Historic Structures, Cultural Landscape Features, and Archaeology

### The Sutter's Fort Historic District

The Sutter's Fort Historic District is located centrally within the boundaries of the above-described Sutter's Fort State Historic Park. The Historic District is contained within the 15' tall x 3' thick 1890s era adobe/red brick walls clad in a whitewash finish. Dating back to the 1890s Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) restoration of the Fort, the walls form the boundary of the Historic District in all directions. While the location of the walls is not accurate, the approximately 320' (E/W) x 163' (N/S) sextangular plan Fort, offers an identical sense of containment.[23]

### Original Central Building

Centrally located within Sutter's Fort, the 65' (N/S) x 34' (E/W) Central Building is the only original 1840s structure left standing within the Fort. The Building is a massed-plan, three-story, adobe

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. City of *Sacramento, Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources* (City of Sacramento, 2020), 304.

23. California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: Interpretation Master Plan (IMP)* (2012), 28-38.

brick house that features a moderately pitched side gabled roof covered in coursed wooden shingles. The Central Building's eastern, northern, and western elevations are constructed of original adobe brick and have been patched and repaired with other materials. The original foundation was replaced with red brick during the 1890s restoration of the building. The southern elevation was replaced with red brick during the mid-19th century. In the 1950 the exterior was given a cement coating on which lines have been drawn to resemble adobe bricks.

## Historic Reconstruction of the Outside Walls (1890s)

Kyburz Annex: Although historic records show the building as a later addition (by 1849) during the John Sutter Era, the Kyburz Annex was constructed in the 1890s by the NSGW during the reconstruction phase. Located east of the Northwest Block's Kitchen and west of the Northeast Block's Courtyard, the Kyburz Annex shares its southern wall with the northern elevation of the Central Building and its northern wall with the fort's 1890s era adobe/red brick northern elevation.[24]

The Northwest Block, the Southeast Block, the Southwest Block, the Northeast Block: These surrounding walls of the Fort were also constructed during the reconstruction phase. Although the exact footprint is not completely accurate, these walls remain historic in their own right as a part of the Fort's preservation. The interior of these walls has historically housed representations of the historic rooms.

## 1904 McLaren Plan: "Pioneer Memorial" Landscaping

A landscape plan for the site was developed in 1904 by John McLaren, Superintendent of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, at the request of the Trustees of Sutter's Fort. The McLaren Landscape Plan has not been located to date, although its content has been summarized in a newspaper article.[25]

This was to be a purely California park, using only California native trees and shrubs. The plan called for three species of native oak


Entrance gate at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

**24.** Ibid.

**25.** "State's Trees for the Fort," *Call* (San Francisco), January 26, 1904, 9; "Sutter's Fort to be Improved," *Evening Bee.*

to be planted as street trees along "K", 26th, and 28th Streets. No street trees were to be established along "L" Street. (This was prior to acquisition of property necessary to realign "L" Street away from the fort building). The oaks along "K" Street were to be deciduous. The interior grounds outside the fort were to be planted with clusters of California trees of different varieties and intermixed with walkways.

Beginning in 1904, and culminating in 1908, the Native Daughters of the Golden West planted a variety of trees, shrubs, and flowers on the grounds, for the purposes of creating a public park. The first copse of redwoods, planted in 1904 as a "California Pioneers Memorial" and the second copse of redwoods, were likely authorized by the McLaren plan.

It appears that the Trustees of Sutter's Fort adopted the McLaren Landscape Plan in 1904, although there is no information as to whether any modifications were also adopted. In any event, use of California native plant material has not been strictly adhered to since then. Existing plants, as well as incomplete historical references, indicate that many plants not native to California have been established since 1904.

Since the late 1950s, the department has gradually reduced the abundant landscape plantings that had previously accumulated. Although no formal landscape plan was prepared, the general departmental philosophy was to manipulate the vegetation toward the historically authentic post-settlement landscape, and to use only native plant species.[26]

During this time, trees, flower beds, vegetable gardens, rosebushes, vines, and shrubs were removed from inside the fort. There were also numerous plants of all sizes decorating the outside of the fort walls. The department made an initial, determined effort to remove many of these plants from the base of the Fort walls. Indirectly, the number of plants over the whole area has dropped during the past 30 years, through attrition and non-replacement.

**26.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 6.

## Duck Pond

An artificial lake in the shape of a large oval was created during site grading in 1891. Grunsky envisioned this lake to represent the slough which abutted the north wall of the fort during the Sutter period of occupation. This lake was subsequently filled in 1897 when the city cited it as a mosquito hazard.[27] In 1907, a smaller pond was excavated in approximately the same location as the original, probably as an integral part of the ongoing landscape development, and possibly according to the 1904 McLaren Landscape Plan. This pond, now the west oval of the current pond configuration, never had a sealed bottom. It does have a rock retaining wall to reduce bank erosion.

The east oval was constructed in 1909 and 1910. This oval is concrete lined along the bottom and banks. This lining may date to the initial construction, given the reported expense of the project.[28]

This aquatic resource is best described as an urban fishpond. The pond must be periodically dredged of accumulated sediments. Each oval has sprinklers which serve to aerate the water and maintain the water depth at an average of 16 inches.

Pond at Sutter's Fort, which was built to represent the slough located on the north side of the original Fort.

## Historic Plant Life

At the time of Sutter's arrival to the area, the site contained plant life characteristic of the Great Central Valley Landscape Province, specifically riparian and floodplains species.

Being on a high floodplain near the American and Sacramento River confluence, the site originally had much topographic relief, with deep, well-drained soils. This would indicate that the lower elevations of the site were dominated by Fremont cottonwood (Populus fremontii) and black willow (Salix goddingii), while the higher ground may have supported sycamore (Platanus racemosa). Other tree-shrub species that likely occurred in the area include box elder (Acer negundo var. californica), valley oak (Q. lobata), black walnut (Juglans hindsii), Oregon ash (Fraxinus latifolia), California buckeye (Aesculus californica), button willow (Cephalanthus occidentalis), sand bar willow (S. hindsiana), red willow (S. laevigata), and Pacific willow (S. lasiandra).

**27.** Ibid., 16; "Various Matters," *Daily Union* (Sacramento), September 8, 1897, 3.

**28.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 3.

Many of these plant species were actively managed by the Native Americans living in the area at the time of John Sutter's arrival. Native Miwok and Nisenan peoples used the materials harvested from these plants in a variety of ways, including weaving baskets, crafting tools, making clothing, and building shelter.[29]

Shortly after Sutter's arrival, many riparian trees along the slough were cut down for their wood, though some are visible in contemporary sketches.[30] To the north of the slough, north of modern-day "K" Street, orchards of apples, pears, plums, pomegranate, and citrus were planted. There were also grape arbors and raised garden beds. Deep ditches were dug to protect crops from cattle. In time, ditches were lined with willows.

### Historic Archaeology (CA-SAC-34/H)

In addition to the Native American cemetery and midden at the site (see next section), there is a significant historic archaeological component, which is indicated in the site record number, CA-SAC-34/H. The historic component reflects the occupation of the Fort site in the mid-1800s, reconstruction of the Fort in the late 1800s, and subsequent park activities. It includes scattered debris such as broken ceramics and glass, trash deposits, and features such as wells, floor surfaces, postholes, and foundations. Ground disturbances and grading have mixed the earlier and later deposits in some locations. It is also possible that some Native American cultural items in the historic deposits reflect the experiences of Native people, as well as the persistence of Indigenous culture, during the active years of the Fort.

## Tribal Cultural Resources

### Archaeology

The Sacramento Valley was likely occupied and used by humans during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene periods (14,000 to 8,000 B.P.);[31] however, the archaeological record of such use is sparse. This lack of archaeological evidence is understandable given

**29.** City of Sacramento, *Merged Downtown Redevelopment Plan Amendment: Draft Environmental Impact Report* (City of Sacramento with Gail Ervin Consulting, 2004), 6.4-3, 6.4-5.

**30.** See numerous contemporary sketches of the Fort in the Sutter's Fort Collections.

**31.** This archeology section uses two temporal references: A.D. (anno Domini, i.e. "in the year of our Lord") and B.P. (before present, i.e. before 2012).

that such evidence is likely buried under accumulated gravels and silts and few sites have been excavated beyond a couple of meters in depth.[32]

Recent excavations undertaken in downtown Sacramento recovered four flaked stone crescents in deeply buried contexts (i.e., on extinct landforms). The primary occupation of the site appears to be between 8,000 and 3,000 years B.P., though obsidian hydration results indicate the site was in use 10,000 or more years ago. The presence of crescents, which typically date from 8,500 to 7,500 B.P.,[33] provide credible evidence that the Sacramento area was occupied at a very early time.

Like the previous period, the Lower Archaic Period (8,000-5,000 B.P.) is poorly understood in the Central Valley. Few sites in the region have been found owing to the fact that evidence from this time period is largely buried.

The Middle Archaic Period (5,000-2,200 B.P.), identified as the Early Horizon under the Central California Taxonomic System (CCTS), is distinguished as one that emphasized hunting, as evidenced by the relative proportions of tools representative of hunting, fishing, and gathering activities.

Sites associated with the Upper Archaic Period (2,200-1,000 B.P.) contain substantial midden[34] deposits with shell, mammal and fish bone, charcoal, milling tools, and other artifacts. The number of mortars and pestles increases during this time, indicating a greater reliance on acorn and nuts. The increase in obsidian, shell, and bead assemblages observed at sites of this time period is thought to indicate a greater complexity of exchange networks and social stratification. This period is well represented at several large mound sites situated along the Sacramento and American Rivers.

The Emergent Period dates between 1,000 B.P. (950 A.D.) and the arrival of the Spanish in central California (i.e., 1800s) and is identified as the Late Horizon under the CCTS.[35] This period involves a dramatic change in general economy, characterized by large village sites situated on high ground, increased evidence of acorn and nut processing, introduction and use of the bow and arrow (indicated by small projectile points), and use of clamshell

**32.** M. J. Moratto and D. A. Fredrickson, *California Archaeology* (New York: Academic Press, 1984), 197; J. Meyer and J. S. Rosenthal, *Archaeological and Geoarchaeological investigations at Eight Prehistoric Sites in the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Area, Contra Costa County, California* (Rohnert Park, CA: Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University, Academic Foundation, 1997).

**33.** G. L. Fenenga, "A Typological Analysis of the Temporal and Geographic Distribution of the Eccentric Crescent in Western North America" (unpublished report, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 1984).

**34.** A midden is a mound or deposit containing shells, animal bones, and other refuse that indicates the site of a human settlement.

**35.** D. A. Fredrickson, "Early Cultures of the North Coast Ranges, California" (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1973).

disc beads as the primary medium of exchange. Sites from this time period often include items of Euro American manufacture, such as glass trade beads or worked bottle glass. Like the Upper Archaic Period, several sites along the Sacramento and American rivers have components dating to this time.

There is a known Native American cemetery located on the fort grounds. The extent of the cemetery and associated Native American site are not known.

In addition to this registered Native American site, there is a known cache of artifacts buried near the California State Indian Museum. This cache consists of a group of ground stone tools buried by department archaeologists about 50 years ago.

Due to the unknown extent of the Native American archaeological site and associated cemetery, no significant ground-disturbing activities shall take place on the grounds unless supervised by a qualified archaeologist.

## Ethnography

The land on which Sutter's Fort resides was occupied ethnographically by the Nisenan. The Nisenan occupied a territory bounded by the crest of the Sierra to the east, the west bank of the Sacramento River to the west, between the Yuba and Feather Rivers to the north, and the Cosumnes River to the south.[36] The neighboring Miwok, whose main territory was south of the Cosumnes River, occupied a portion of the southern Nisenan territory, from a few miles south of the confluence of the American River to the Cosumnes River.[37] This is thought to have been a recent movement northward by the Miwok as a result of efforts by the Spanish to remove the Miwok to the missions.[38]

Most Nisenan were unaffected by the missions established elsewhere in California in the 1700s and occupied their native territory until 1826, when Hudson's Bay Company fur trappers entered the Sacramento Valley. By the late 1840s, immigrants entering the valley had significantly influenced the Indigenous way of life. Those who had survived outbreaks of disease (e.g., the

**36.** R. G. Matson, "Pollen from the Spring Garden Ravine Site (4-Pla-101)," in *Papers on Nisenan Environment and Subsistence*, eds. E. W. Ritter and P. D. Schulz, 24–27, publication 3 (Davis: University of California, Center for Archaeological Research at Davis, 1972), 39; N. L. Wilson and A. H. Towne, "Nisenan," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8, California* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 387.

**37.** N. L. Wilson and A. H. Towne, *The Nisenan: An Expanded Version of the Chapter on the Nisenan Published in Volume 8, California, Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1982), 3; James A. Bennyhoff, Jr., *Ethnogeography of the Plains Miwok,* Center for Archaeological Research at Davis, Publication Number 5 (University of California, Davis, 1977).

**38.** Wilson and Towne, *The Nisenan: An Expanded Version of the Chapter on the Nisenan Published in Volume 8, California, Handbook of North American Indians.*

1833 malaria epidemic) and hostilities became laborers on farms and ranches owned by others or were subjugated to reservations established by the government.[39] By the time ethnographers began to collect information about the Nisenan, only a handful of people were left who knew only a few details about life before 1840. As such, ethnographic knowledge of the Nisenan is limited.

The Nisenan, who with the Maidu and Konkow form a subgroup of the California Penutian linguistic family, are often referred to in the literature as Southern Maidu.[40] The basic unit of political organization for the Nisenan was the autonomous tribelet,[41] a territory-holding group of one or more associated villages and smaller temporary encampments. The tribelet fell under the jurisdiction of a headman, whose leadership role was limited to times of major decision-making, group hunts, and ceremonies. The village or community group ranged from small extended families of one to two dozen people to large villages comprised of several families numbering over 500.[42] Village houses were commonly semi-subterranean, dome-shaped structures covered with earth, tule, or grasses. Most villages had an acorn granary and a sweathouse; dance houses (kum) were located in major villages.[43]

The Nisenan made use of the abundant river resources, in particular Chinook salmon, trout, perch, and sturgeon. The acorn, by far the most important resource, was supplemented with seeds, nuts, berries, roots, and game. Tule was an important source of raw material used to construct dwellings, canoes, and other domestic accoutrements. Major villages were located on natural rises, or knolls, ridges, or terraces along the American River and other stream courses, with temporary seasonal occupation sites located near important resources.[44]

A variety of stone tools were used, including knives, arrow and spear points, club heads, arrow shaft straighteners, scrapers, pestles, mortars, pipes, and charmstones. Toolstone used for these items included basalt, steatite, cryptocrystalline, and obsidian.[45] Many perishable items were made from wood (e.g., bows, digging sticks, and mortars), tule (e.g., mats, canoes), and plant fibers (e.g., cordage, netting, and baskets). Bedrock mortars, as well as portable variants, were important components of acorn processing technology.

**39.** P. J. Johnson, "Patwin," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8*: California, ed. R. F. Heizer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 351.

**40.** Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan," 387.

**41.** Kroeber (1932) devised the term "tribelet" to refer to the smaller native ethnic groups of California. The word "tribelet," or sometimes "triblet," has become an ethnographic term commonly used to differentiate the political and social structure of the smaller tribes of California from that of larger tribes to the east. Many modern Native Peoples object to this word, and this motivation for its use, precisely because it minimizes the status of the California tribes. See: A. L. Kroeber, "The Patwin and their neighbors," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 29, no. 4 (1932): 253-423; Alan Leventhal, Les Field, Hank Alvarez, and Rosemary Cambra, "The Ohlone: Back From Extinction," in *The Ohlone: Past and Present,* ed. Lowell John Bean, Anthropological Papers No. 42 (Ballena Press: 1994), 300.

**42.** A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (New York: Dover Publications, 1925), 831.

**43.** Wilson and Towne, *The Nisenan: An Expanded Version of the Chapter on the Nisenan Published in Volume 8, California, Handbook of North American Indians, 6.*

**44.** Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, 395; Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan."

**45.** Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan," 391.

However, Nisenan informants claim that neither they, nor their ancestors, manufactured the highly valued bowl mortars.[46] Bead necklaces of steatite, clamshell, and whole olivella shells, in addition to abalone pendants were traded from neighboring Maidu and Patwin.[47] Other items such as salt, feathers, fish, and roots were traded with other Nisenan groups.

The Nisenan situated their larger, permanent settlements on high ground along the Sacramento and American Rivers and in the foothills; the valley floor was typically used as temporary hunting and gathering ground.[48] As described in early explorer and immigrant journals, Native American villages in the area were fairly large settlements consisting of a series of dome-shaped houses and wicker cribs (granaries) for storing acorn.[49]

Several ethnographic Nisenan villages have been identified near the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers: Pusune, Momol, Sekumni, and Sama.[50] Sama was considered the southern-most Nisenan village along the Sacramento River. Pusune was an important village, perhaps serving as a regional center for the other smaller villages located along the American River. Kadema and Yusumne are located just a little further upstream along the American River. Both Nisenan and [the Hawaiian Native people who came with Sutter] occupied the village of Kadema.[51]

A small village identified in a historic drawing (circa 1852) as the Native American village of Sa'cum was located in downtown Sacramento. Although not identified by ethnographers, this village is now documented as a prehistoric site most recently occupied by Native Americans during the Emergent Period (1,000 B.P to the arrival of the Spanish explorers).

Prehistoric archaeological sites in the area of the American River are typically found on natural rises or levees that protected the occupants from recurrent flood events. Often artificial mounds are created on these high spots. One such high spot would have been on the south side of the river across from Pusune and could quite possibly be the location of the village of Momol.

**46.** Wilson's field notes, referenced in: Ibid.

**47.** Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan," 391.

**48.** Bennyhoff, *Ethnogeography of the Plains Miwok*; Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*; Kroeber, "The Patwin and their neighbors"; R. Levy, "Eastern Miwok," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8, California* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978); Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan."

**49.** Heinrich Leinhard, *A Pioneer at Sutter's Fort, 1846-1850: The Adventures of Heinrich Leinhard*, trans. and ed. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur (Los Angeles: The Calafia Society, 1941), on file with the California State Library, California Room Collections; Moratto and Fredrickson, *California Archaeology*.

**50.** Bennyhoff, *Ethnogeography of the Plains Miwok*, 165, Map 3; Wilson and Towne, "Nisenan," 388, Fig.1.

**51.** Wilson and Towne, *The Nisenan: An Expanded Version of the Chapter on the Nisenan Published in Volume 8, California, Handbook of North American Indians*, 21.

## Collections

Sutter's Fort manages an extensive museum collection of over 50,0000 objects, one of the largest in the State Park system. It includes photographs, diaries, letters, maps, paintings, furnishings, tools, and housewares, and primarily reflects the material culture of 19th century immigrants to California. While a selection of key historic objects is exhibited at the Fort, most of the collection is cared for off-site at the Statewide Museum Collections Center.

### Formal Collections

The Collection includes items that directly testify to life at Sutter's Fort in the 1840s such as John Sutter's magnifying glass, likely used to inspect the nugget that sparked the Gold Rush, and a Spanish-style plow made by Native people who were coerced to labor for Sutter. However, the bulk of the collection, traditionally known as the "Pioneer Collection," was amassed in the first part of the 20th century. Collection development began when the Fort was reconstructed in the 1890s. The Native Sons of the Golden West requested donations from members in order to turn the empty building into a museum. California designated Sutter's Fort as the State Historic Museum in 1917, encouraging more donations of material from across the state that often bore no specific relation to the Fort. The state hired Harry Peterson as curator in 1926 to develop the State Historic Museum concept. Peterson decided to emphasize the Gold Rush, and aggressively collected material from this period, filling an additional wing with exhibits.

The development of this early collection provides unique insights into the experiences of Euro-American settlers and the formation of the State of California. Yet, it is important to recognize that these collections practices were also shaped by the biases and misperceptions of the time. As a result, the majority of the Sutter's Fort collection represents what white immigrants to California valued about their own past, viewed through a lens of nostalgia, rather than the complexity of California's history or the diversity of its people. Nevertheless, the collection can continue to be a valuable resource for research, exhibits and publications on the history of the Fort, California at large, as well as processes of collective memory production, if researchers approach it critically and recontextualize the objects considering current historic theory and practice.


Family register page brought overland to California by Mary Bauer Endriss. From the Sutter's Fort SHP Collection.

## Site History

In addition to the "Pioneer Collection," Sutter's Fort manages materials related to the Park's history, such as architect's plans for the reconstruction, photographs of staff and programs, records of restoration and maintenance projects, and objects found onsite during the reconstruction.

## Props and Reproductions

Another important collection consists of objects acquired over the years to use in the various exhibits. These may be artifacts, modern equivalents, or replica items manufactured for the fort. They represent a variety of levels of quality and historical veracity. Again, some are still on exhibit, and many are in storage.

Separate from the exhibit collection, the park unit controls a collection of modern reproductions purchased with volunteer-generated funds, volunteer enhancement funds, and other state funds for use in the living history programs and docent demonstration programs.

## Scope of Collections

A Scope of Collections will guide future development of the Sutter's Fort collection so that it best supports interpretive goals.

# Natural Resources

Sutter's Fort exists in a highly altered urban landscape with very few of the original biotic or abiotic components of the ecosystem still intact.[52] Nevertheless, there are natural features of the site worthy of inclusion in this IMP due to their impact on the visitor experience.

In addition, the grounds have established historic significance. Photographs of the grounds indicate that the basic design of the landscaping has been established for more than fifty years. This includes the walks, curbs, and much of the planting.[53]

## TOPOGRAPHY

The topographical qualities of the park are not visibly significant and therefore have no direct influence on park interpretation. However, the historical grading changes made to the site are important to note for any future site work that may be undertaken, and for that reason are included in this document.[54]

The site has undergone dramatic topographic modification since the time of initial settlement. During both the original construction and the 1890s reconstruction,[55] site material was excavated to either fabricate adobe brick or clay fired brick. The slough which meandered through the northern portion of the property was filled with adobe bricks taken from the walls during the years after the Gold Rush to reduce flooding.[56]

As indicated in the 1890 Grunsky Site Grading Plan, extensive grading took place in 1891. The changes in elevation were determined during Gebhardt's excavation of the site in 1957 and 1958.[57] The original fort grounds ranged from 11 feet above mean sea level (msl) at the bottom of the slough to 29 feet above msl in the current fort complex. The elevations following the 1891 grading ranged from 13 feet above msl in the bottom of the pond to 29 feet above msl in the fort complex.

**52.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 8.

**53.** Ibid., 36.

**54.** Ibid., 2.

**55.** Gebhardt, "Sutter's Fort: A Study in Historical Archaeology with Emphasis on Stratigraphy," 14.

**56.** Ibid., 3; O'Connor, "The Reconstruction of Sutter's Fort: A Critique," 1.

**57.** Gebhardt, "Sutter's Fort: A Study in Historical Archaeology with Emphasis on Stratigraphy," 15, 21-22, 25-26.

## METEOROLOGY

As Sutter's Fort is primarily an outdoor experience, it is important to consider the local weather patterns and their impact on park interpretation design.[58]

Sacramento enjoys a mild climate and an abundance of sunshine year round. Nearly cloudless skies prevail during the summer months and Sacramento experiences an average of 186 clear days per year (51%).[59]

The Sierra Nevada exerts a shielding influence over winter storms. The heavy rain and snowfall in the mountains does occasionally cause flooding along the Sacramento River and its tributaries. This flooding has played a role in the history of Sutter's Fort.

The prevailing wind in Sacramento is southerly, coming up from the San Francisco Bay through the Carquinez Strait. A warm, dry northerly wind occasionally develops, and forces air southward over the Sierra Nevada and Siskiyou Mountains. These north winds produce Sacramento's heat waves in the summer. The daily temperature exceeds 90 degrees an average of 84 days out of the year (23%).[60] The high temperatures and clear skies form the primary argument in favor of keeping the large oak tree that shades the fort's interior grounds, despite the fact no tree was present in Sutter's time.

Precipitation averages 20 inches per year, most of it occurring between November and April 30.[61] Thunderstorms are rare, averaging four days per year.[62] Snowfall is rare and typically melts before reaching the ground.[63] Dense fog averages 32 days per year[64] and occurs mostly in midwinter, seldom in the spring or autumn, and never in the summer. Light and moderate fog is more frequent, and may come anytime during the wet, cold season, usually in the early morning hours. Under stagnant atmospheric conditions, winter fog can become very persistent, and may continue for several days.

**58.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 2-3; National Weather Service, "Climate of Sacramento, California" (2010, rev.), 1.

**59.** National Weather Service, "Climate of Sacramento, California," 75.

**60.** Ibid., 38.

**61.** Ibid., 48-49.

**62.** Ibid., 73.

**63.** Ibid., 70.

**64.** Ibid., 75.

## HYDROLOGY

The site is located on a high floodplain of the American and Sacramento Rivers. At the time of establishment of the settlement in the mid-1800s, a natural slough existed adjacent to the fort on the north side. During spring flooding, the American River overflowed its banks into the low-lying plains, and flowed to the Sacramento River along this path, which runs through McKinley Park, Sutter's Fort, the Tower Theatre, and William Land Park. While the low areas of the current site were periodically inundated, the hummock on which the fort was sited was high enough to avoid most floods.[65]

The slough had one deep area on the north side of the fort which retained water year-round. This was referred to by Sutter as the "teich."[66]

The urbanization of Sacramento County has resulted in complete disruption of the natural hydrologic cycle on the site. Construction of a system of flood control levees along the American and Sacramento Rivers, and upstream dams on the Sacramento River and its tributaries, has largely eliminated the periodic spring flooding. Furthermore, the nineteenth century filling of the slough leaves no original hydrological features active on park grounds.

## GEOLOGY AND SOILS

This is a heavily altered site in an urban setting without significant geological features to interpret. In Sutter's day, the fort was constructed on a floodplain, but features of that topography, geology, and soil horizon have been so heavily altered by human activity that they are not visible for interpretation at this time.[67]

The Central Valley is a deep trough filled with ocean and river deposits over millions of years.[68] These deep layers of sediment, over two miles thick underneath Sutter's Fort, would have covered all early prehistoric features. The known evidence of human habitation before Sutter's arrival is from a relatively recent era (5,000-2,200 years B.P.). While archaeological evidence of even earlier habitation has not been found at this site, this is likely due to the depth of the deposits rather than absence of the artifacts.[69]

**65.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 3.

**66.** Teich (prounounced "tike") is a German word meaning "pond."

**67.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan*, 3-4; California Geological Survey, "Note 36: California Geomorphic Provinces" (2002), 2.

**68.** California Geological Survey, "Note 36: California Geomorphic Provinces," 2.

**69.** City of Sacramento, *Merged Downtown Redevelopment Plan Amendment: Draft Environmental Impact Report*, 6.4-2.

## PLANTS

The existing vegetation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is a conglomeration of specimen trees and shrubs. This is an urban park in which the plant species and associations bear no resemblance to the original native vegetation.[70]

The plantings consist of scattered individual trees and copses, shrubs, succulents, groundcover, and turf. Several species of oak are established street trees bordering the property: valley oak (Quercus lobata) along 26th Street, live oak (Q. agrifolia) along 28th and "L" Streets, and English oak (Q. rober) along "K". Street. There are two copses of coast redwoods (Sequoia sempervirens) planted near the northeast corner of the property. The copse of three redwoods adjacent to 28th Street has an understory of Grecian laurel (Laurus nobilis), ivy (Hedera ssp.), and bear's breech (Acanthus. mollis). The other copse of three redwoods adjacent to "K" Street appears to have been planted at the same time. This copse has an ivy groundcover.

The existing turf grass is a mixture of perennial ryegrasses (Lolium ssp.), blue grasses (Poa ssp.), and fescue (Festuca ssp.).

## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Despite the lack of a formal landscape design plan, the current landscape is a significant cultural resource. Sutter's Fort exists in a highly altered urban landscape with very few of the original biotic or abiotic components of the ecosystem still intact.[71] Nevertheless, there are natural features of the site worthy of inclusion as a cultural resource due to their impact on the visitor experience.

When we consider impacting that landscape, we will develop plans to ensure that the historic and natural value of the park grounds is not lost. Future landscape management will intend to protect current park resources while including California native ecology. Native landscaping will be of interpretive value in discussions of changes to the region's natural landscape caused by colonization.

**70.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: General Plan, 4-6.

**71.** Ibid., 8.

# Recreational Resources

## COMMUNITY

Sutter's Fort SHP is influenced by its location within the Sacramento metropolitan area, by the nearby Downtown Central Business District, and by its proximity to both the State Parks' Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks (Capital District) and the 28 acre Old Sacramento Historic District (Old Sacramento).[72]

The main recreational aspect of the Fort grounds is the surrounding city-type park which is a favorite area for locals and visitors to sit and relax or have a picnic. This area is also used by the numerous visiting school groups for staging and picnicking.

Overnight camping is not allowed at Sutter's Fort SHP, and day use is limited to self-guided tours of the fort and the types of passive activities suitable for the surrounding small urban park, such as walking, playing group games, photography, and drawing or painting.

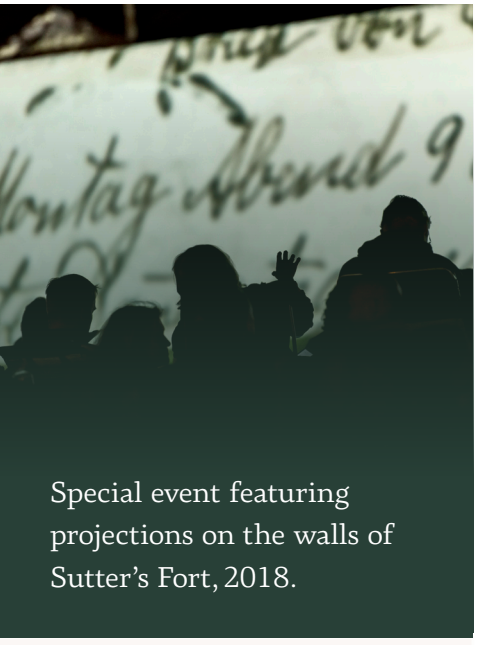
Recreational resources, surrounding and influencing Sutter's Fort include national historic trails connected to the Pony Express route and western migration; neighboring, regional urban corridors; other State Park facilities; City and County parks and trails; and local Downtown area museums and attractions.

**72.** California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Sutter's Fort State Historic Park: Interpretation Master Plan (IMP)* (2012), 27.

## FACILITIES AND EVENTS

The convenient downtown location of Sutter's Fort SHP invites interest in the use of the space for weddings, events, and gatherings. The Capital District Office is responsible for managing wedding and event applications, permitting, and general communications with any large party interested in using the park grounds. Both unit and district staff will support the operations of any approved event on an as needed basis.

Sutter's Fort SHP recognizes that the complicated history of the site requires unique attention toward hosting special events. As a part of the application and approval process, Sutter's Fort SHP interpretive principles help provide a framework by which to approve or deny special event requests. Understanding the value in community partnerships, community engagement, site exposure, and visitor relationships, Sutter's Fort SHP and Capital District staff will collaborate to determine the tonal appropriateness of special event requests.



Special event featuring projections on the walls of Sutter's Fort, 2018.

# Interpretive Direction

## Interpretive Mission

The mission of interpretation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is to create a laboratory of learning to empower all visitors to discover an inclusive, complex, and accurate history of Sutter's Fort and California in order to develop deeper understanding and personal meanings in the events of the past.

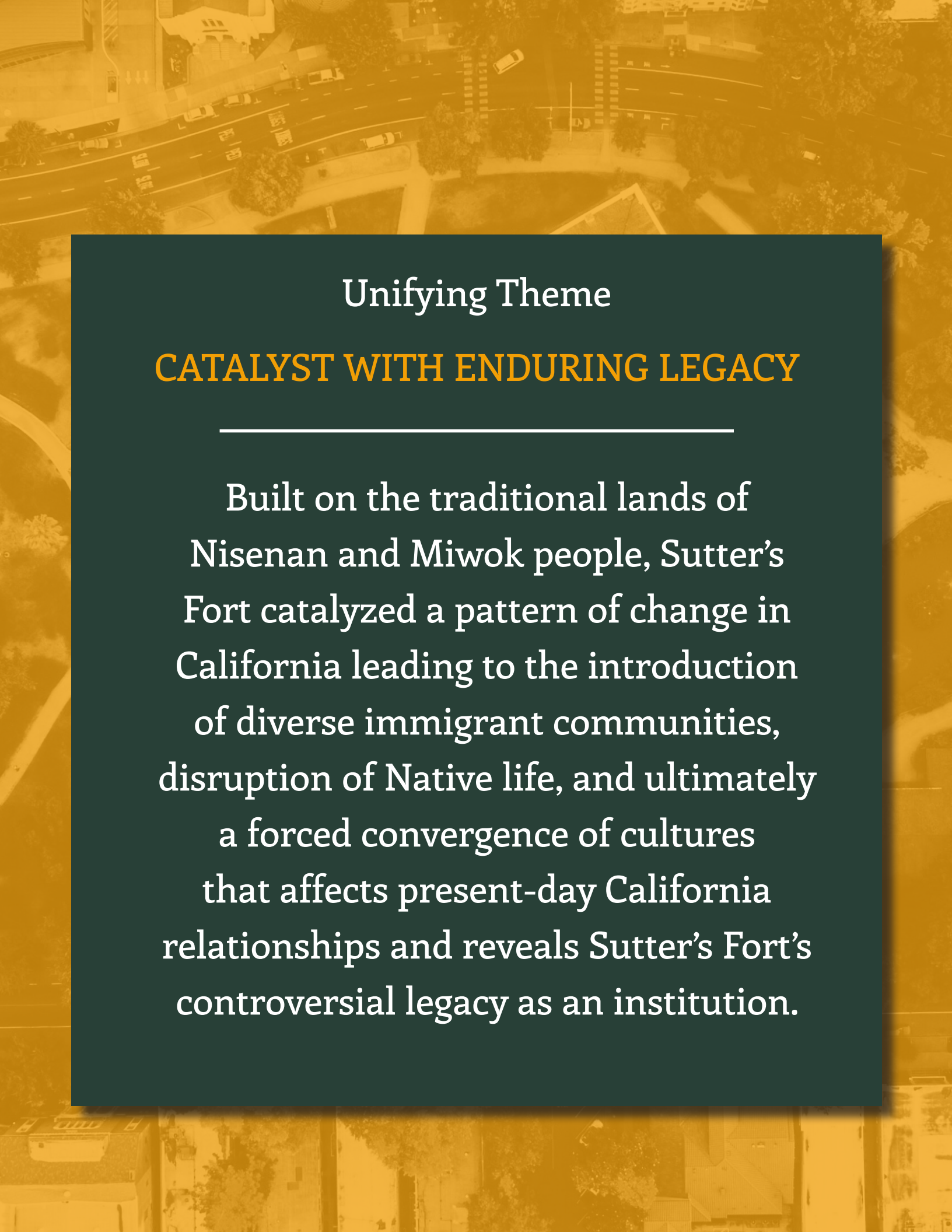
## Interpretive Vision

High quality, engaging interpretive services will help visitors personally connect with the complex narratives, conflicts, and deeper meanings of Sutter's Fort that are relevant to a broader cultural context in California today.

## Interpretive Themes

Themes are essential to the development of effective interpretive services. Themes express basic concepts about significant resources through single, complete, easily remembered statements. The use of themes helps differentiate interpretation from simple entertainment or instruction. Themes are a valuable tool for interpreters to use when developing new programs and they help visitors better grasp and remember the interpretive messages being conveyed.

Note that the new IMP themes have been written as "umbrella themes" under which shorter sub-themes can be developed for specific programs, exhibits and presentations.



## Unifying Theme

## CATALYST WITH ENDURING LEGACY

Built on the traditional lands of Nisenan and Miwok people, Sutter's Fort catalyzed a pattern of change in California leading to the introduction of diverse immigrant communities, disruption of Native life, and ultimately a forced convergence of cultures that affects present-day California relationships and reveals Sutter's Fort's controversial legacy as an institution.

PRIMARY THEME 1

## OPPORTUNITY & CONFLICT

The western landscape dramatically changed when perceptions of economic opportunity brought both greed and immigration to California creating immediate and lasting conflicts between Native and non-Native people.

Supporting Theme 1A

### State Capital on Ancestral Lands

Sutter's Fort, and California's state capital of Sacramento, sit on the traditional homeland of the Nisenan and Miwok people who retain a strong cultural connection and engagement with their ancestral lands.

Supporting Theme 1B

### Indigenous Stewardship of Natural Resources

The carefully tended and abundant resources of the Sacramento Valley have supported a large and diverse Indigenous population, with each tribe having rich cultural traditions and an extensive knowledge of natural resource harvesting and management.

Supporting Theme 1C

### Exploitation and a New Economy

Immigrants came to California drawn by economic opportunities such as land, carefully tended natural resources, exploited Native labor, and gold, bringing with them a new economy that permanently transformed the land and its cultures.

Supporting Theme 1D

### Enduring Effects of Genocide and Oppression

California's early state governments employed the idea of Manifest Destiny to justify the genocide and oppression of Indigenous people, and the repercussions of these injustices still affect the people of California today.

PRIMARY THEME 2

## LABORATORY OF LEARNING

Sutter's Fort SHP stands as a "laboratory of learning" where all people can better understand all perspectives of California's diverse, complex and sometimes tragic past through a visitor experience that is reflective, analytical, and inclusive.

Supporting Theme 2A

### Pursuit of Historical Truth

Through the ongoing pursuit of historical truth, integrating new sources and narratives, perceptions and understanding of history can broaden and change even though the events of the past remain the same.

Supporting Theme 2B

### Accurate Representation of Multiple Perspectives

Sutter's Fort's historical narrative requires an attention to both Native stories of perseverance and to non-Native perspectives of life on the western "frontier" to ensure an accurate historical representation of life experienced by all people in California in the 1800s is conveyed.

Supporting Theme 2C

### Somber Acknowledgment of Tragic History

Although Indigenous people's historical relationships with Sutter's Fort were each unique, many Native Americans of California today view Sutter's Fort SHP as a symbol of the systematic genocide brought by American westward expansion, and this perspective is critical to understanding California's tragic history and contemporary culture.

Supporting Theme 2D

### Expand Gold Rush Narratives

The historical narrative of the Gold Rush long told by the State of California and at Sutter's Fort SHP focused on the positive effects of westward migration on the growth of the California economy in ways that discredited the event's detrimental effects to California Native land and life.

Supporting Theme 2E

### Challenge False Histories

Sutter's Fort has been one of the key places where romanticized and mythologized versions of California history were created, and today offers unprecedented opportunities for building more truthful narratives about our state's past.

PRIMARY THEME 3

## ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS AND EXPLOITATION

In pursuit of his economic aspirations, John Sutter built his business enterprises on the exploited labor of indigenous people and minority immigrant groups, along with diverse tradesmen, shaping California's cultural relationships in a manner that persists today.

Supporting Theme 3A

### Slavery and Debt Peonage

The Indigenous people who built the Fort and worked Sutter's many enterprises often did so under threats to their lives and cultural traditions; they were separated from their homes, land, and resources, and they were ensnared in forms of unfree labor that included debt peonage and slavery.

Supporting Theme 3B

### Lasting Effects of Industry and Technology

The tools, materials, and industries at Sutter's Fort wrought lasting changes to people's cultures and livelihood as well as the environment.

Supporting Theme 3C

### Gold Discovery and Trade Center

The finding of gold at Sutter's Mill and the influx of gold seekers that followed led to the end of Sutter's Fort as an operational trading post, further exploitation of the labor of Native people and minority immigrant groups, and greater direct threats to the lives and cultures of Native people.

## SECONDARY THEMES

New secondary themes have been developed for this IMP, to guide interpretation outside the primary themes and primary interpretive period of Sutter's Fort:

Secondary Theme 1

### Resource Extraction and Natural Ecosystems

Trapping parties drastically altered California's natural ecosystems and introduced foreign diseases into the Sacramento Valley, both to the detriment of Indigenous people.

Secondary Theme 2

### Alta California and Mexican Rule

Mexican rule of Alta California accelerated the exploitation of Native labor and resources and opened the door to international trade routes for the hide, tallow, and fur trapping industries.

Secondary Theme 3

### Historic Refuge for Overland Immigrants

Overland immigrants, including the Donner Party, viewed Sutter's Fort as a place of refuge and hospitality, arriving at the end of the long journey to California.

# Interpretive Periods

The operational period of the Fort is one piece of a larger history. Interpreting periods both before and after the 1840s opens the door to a broader understanding of the complex history associated with Sutter's Fort.

## Applying Interpretive Periods
## FORT INTERIOR & HOUSE MUSEUM ROOMS

The Interpretive Periods section contains events that span more than 180 years. Preservation efforts will attempt to save the integrity of physical structures, but rooms and exhibits should not be restricted to presenting any one specific period. Therefore, this IMP recommends that the Fort interior and rooms be designed with flexibility to interpret the periods mentioned above and not be constrained to 1840s appearances alone. Using the best of current scholarship, the Fort will become a place to display complexities of history and explore the effects of that complicated history on California communities even today.

Appropriate applications of this plan may involve exhibits, displays, or rooms incorporating multiple interpretive periods in order to show the changes catalyzed by the Fort rather than representing only a snapshot in time. For example, demonstrating the Fort's role in colonization cannot be accurately exhibited by showing a static representation of a room during a specific year. The integration of multiple interpretive periods in visual aids will display the most accurate representation of Sutter's Fort history. Therefore, it is recommended that deviations from strictly displaying the Fort as it was in the 1840s will be necessary to achieve interpretive goals and communicate interpretive themes.

## PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE PERIODS

### First Indigenous People-1838

This period highlights the thriving and complex Indigenous cultures of California. As colonization became a harsh reality, this period also demonstrates the hardships incurred and prevailing perseverance of Native cultures through the pressures of colonization. Spanish exploration and the mission system, Mexican-era cattle ranching, trapping expeditions, and Sutter's travels to California all influenced a massive shift in the cultural, natural, and political landscape.

### 1838-1849

This period encompasses the beginning of John Sutter's plan to create a Fort in California, its operational period, to the sale of the Gold Rush-ravaged fort by 1849. Sutter's foothold in the interior of California created new, proximal pressures for Indigenous populations and they resisted this foreign power. The Fort's operation created conflicts between Indigenous and non-Native people as land, resources, and people were exploited.

Lithograph illustrating Sutter's Fort circa 1848, published by F. Gleason in 1851. From the Sutter's Fort SHP Collection.

## SECONDARY INTERPRETIVE PERIODS

### 1850-1880

This period follows the deterioration of the Fort as a result of the Gold Rush, the growth of the city of Sacramento, and early California statehood. This period also highlights the systematic racism and genocide of Native people largely exacerbated by government legislation post-statehood. The expanding population in California led to increased numbers of conflicts between Native and non-Native people.

Photograph of the east side of the Central Building at Sutter's Fort prior to restoration, circa 1888.

## 1880-1900

This period follows the process by which the Fort was reconstructed after John Sutter's death in 1880. Preservation groups like the Native Sons of the Golden West were motivated to memorialize the lives of John Sutter and early pioneers who enabled California's violent transformation. The reconstruction of Sutter's Fort started historic preservation movements across the state. This period can be interpreted using a modern lens as a time when Nativism and white supremacy created a culture in California focused on glorifying people who ultimately enabled Indigenous displacement and dehumanization. Overall, the preservation movement paved the road to an exclusive portrayal of history, honoring only the narratives of white immigrants while leaving out the darker history of institutional racism in California.

## 1900-Present

This period recognizes the modern role of the Fort as an institution and how that role has changed over time. In 1917, the Fort was designated as California's State Historic Museum, collecting a wide range of historic items, consisting heavily of immigrant material culture. In 1947, Sutter's Fort became part of the California State Parks system. A pivot in the 1950s turned the Fort into a living history museum representing an often-romanticized view of John Sutter and 1840s California life. Today, Sutter's Fort SHP remains a part of the California State Parks system and is an educational institution focused on conveying of an inclusive, complex, and accurate history of Sutter's Fort's role in California's past.

## Applying Interpretive Periods
## **PROGRAMS, SPECIAL EVENTS, EXHIBITS**

Programs, special events, and exhibits at Sutter's Fort SHP should represent an inclusive, complex, and accurate history relating to all the interpretive periods. Fort programs will explore a variety of perspectives about historic events to: 1) interpret complex historical events using various available narratives and 2) facilitate an understanding that the pursuit of historical truth will remain ongoing.

Program delivery will emphasize facilitated discussion among participants and should attempt to engage visitors in discussing even the most difficult histories of each interpretive period. Topics like racism, genocide, slavery, and institutional oppression may be uncomfortable but necessary to deliver programs that accurately portray Sutter's Fort in the scope of a larger California history.

After experiencing Fort programs, special events, and exhibits, successful implementation of the IMP will inspire visitors to dig deeper into finding personal meaning in the events of the past that can be applied to their relationships today.

# Goals & Implementation

## Interpretive Goals

The following interpretive goals are broad, general concepts that describe the ultimate purpose, aim or intent of interpretation at Sutter's Fort State Historic Park. They are not necessarily measurable, rather they represent the overall results that interpretation should achieve on the largest scale.

### GOAL 1

Represent an inclusive, complex, and accurate history of Sutter's Fort's role in the colonization of California.

### GOAL 2

Foster an environment for visitors to study the full complexity of history through current scholarship and varying perspectives of the cultures, events, people, and institutional history associated with Sutter's Fort.

### GOAL 3

Explore the changes to California catalyzed by Sutter's Fort including the consequences of those changes on Native people and on native lands over time.

### GOAL 4

Promote the stewardship of Sutter's Fort SHP rooted in the values of ongoing learning, truthful representations of the past, and a diversity of historical perspectives.

### GOAL 5
Cultivate an inclusive visitor experience by removing barriers for engagement and encouraging the involvement of underserved and underrepresented audiences.

### GOAL 6
Support the ongoing development and refinement of a wide range of visitor experiences that encourage both new and repeat visitors.

### GOAL 7
Expand Sutter's Fort SHP outreach efforts to build relationships with new and geographically distant audiences.

### GOAL 8
Promote educational programming that is inclusive, complex, and relevant to a wide range of student grade levels.

### GOAL 9
Nurture partnerships for the development of interpretation with Native American tribes, cultural institutions, community organizations, universities, historically relevant places, and all groups of people with cultural connections to the Fort.

### GOAL 10
Explore the effects of colonial commerce and industry on Indigenous life, land, and resources.

### GOAL 11
Enable staff and volunteers to deliver high quality, thematic interpretive services focused on inclusion, complexity and accuracy.

# Interpretive Objectives and Implementation Strategies

The following pages outline specific Objectives and Implementation Strategies for accomplishing the Interpretive Goals. While the Interpretive Goals broadly describe the ultimate purpose, aim, or intent of interpretation, Interpretive Objectives are categories for actionable and measurable Implementation Strategies.

# Goal 1

Represent an **inclusive, complex, and accurate** history of Sutter's Fort's role in the colonization of California.

**OBJECTIVE 1A** Welcome and include accurate historical narratives from all groups of people with histories connected to Sutter's Fort.

### Strategies:

1. Establish an advisory board of people who represent Indigenous tribal perspectives, a variety of historically connected cultural backgrounds, academic scholars, and educational specialists; consult this board regularly to review interpretive services.
2. Create a self-guided visitor experience that reflects accurate narratives and multiple perspectives about Sutter's Fort and California history.
3. Proactively recruit staff who can represent diverse historical perspectives.
4. Establish a consistent partnership program with local universities and cultural organizations with the intention to grow internships relating to ethnic studies.

During an Environmental Studies Program, students learn about the impacts of overland migration in 1840s California.

**OBJECTIVE 1B** Address difficult topics and help remove the stigma of discussing histories of racism, slavery, genocide, political power, cultural movements, and the greed that fueled colonization.

### Strategies:

1. Equip staff and volunteers with the skills to respectfully facilitate complex discussions with public groups.

2. Provide ongoing mental and emotional support for interpretive staff responsible for dialogic interpretation of difficult topics.
3. Develop self-guided interpretive signage, displays, and other tour-elements that encourage and facilitate informed conversations between visitors about these histories, even when staff and volunteers are not present.
4. Use universal concepts (i.e. family concepts, feelings, emotions) to establish a connection between today's audience and difficult histories.
5. Advocate for the acknowledgment of the generational trauma that Californian Indigenous people have experienced, especially with regards to early statehood legislation.
6. Develop and support curriculum that teaches ethnic studies and cultural awareness.

**OBJECTIVE 1C** Use the best of current scholarship to communicate the process of pursuing historical truth about California history.

### Strategies:

1. Start and maintain a reference list of appropriate academic sources that can be referenced by staff, volunteers, and visitors.
2. Invite speakers with academic backgrounds to help us with trainings, panel discussions, public conversations, and other opportunities to discuss the exploration of historical truth.
3. Create a seasonal "reader" that contains critical conversation points that can guide staff and volunteers in discussion with visitors.
4. Consult with the aforementioned advisory board to create and prescribe annual core research focuses to help interpretation maintain relevancy.
5. Model the principles of historiography when presenting sources about Sutter's Fort and California history.

# Goal 2

Foster an environment for visitors to study the full complexity of history through current scholarship and **varying perspectives of the cultures, events, people, and institutional history** associated with Sutter's Fort.

**OBJECTIVE 2A** Present interpretive material that interrogates traditional historical narratives of the Fort and of the colonization of California.

### Strategies:

1. Lead programs incorporating facilitated dialogue with visitors to reexamine traditional historical narratives.
2. Develop programs that help visitors recognize and avoid inaccurate, romantic narratives that honor people who disrupted Native life.
3. Use the best of current scholarship as a tool for contextualizing primary historical sources.
4. Solicit a broad spectrum of visitor perspectives about historic events.

**OBJECTIVE 2B** Present a variety of perspectives about Sutter's Fort's role in California history.

### Strategies:

1. Consult with a variety of Native tribes to hear their perspectives of historical events in California.
2. Be a platform for historically significant cultural groups to share their histories with the community (e.g., Native Californian and Native American tribes, as well as those with Hawaiian, Mexican, Spanish, and Russian backgrounds among others).

3. Create a self-guided experience that accurately voices the complex cultural perspectives about Sutter's Fort's role in colonization and Sutter's Fort SHP as an institution.

**OBJECTIVE 2C** Partner with Native tribes, historically significant cultural communities, and local academic institutions to improve visitor experiences.

## Strategies:

1. Partner with guest curators to develop rotations of exhibits from local academic and historically significant cultural communities.
2. Recruit staff from historically significant cultural communities.
3. Bring in speakers and lecturers for both internal training and public programming.
4. Offer a venue or event space for local community groups with aligned missions, goals, and histories to host their events on site at Sutter's Fort SHP.
5. Promote relevant academic and historically significant cultural communities through social media and general advertising.

State Parks Interpreter facilitates dialogue with young visitors at Oceano Dunes SVRA.

# Goal 3

Explore the changes to California catalyzed by Sutter's Fort **including the consequences of those changes on Native people** and on native lands over time.

**OBJECTIVE 3A** Create exhibits and programs that explore the impacts of Sutter's Fort on California Native people and Native cultures.

### Strategies:

1. Develop a land acknowledgment to recognize the First People of California.
2. Educate the public about the long history of California Native people's occupation of the site prior to Sutter's arrival.
3. Consult Native partners and the aforementioned advisory board to develop exhibits highlighting the diversity of California Native cultures.
4. Provide exhibit space for Indigenous tribes to share their cultural stories of trauma and perseverance.
5. Contextualize John Sutter's controversial relationships with Native people using the analysis from the best of current scholarship.
6. Communicate the historic power dynamics of Native labor at Sutter's Fort as a relationship comparable to slavery, not as a mutually beneficial agreement.
7. Remove the romanticized narrative of gold in California to address the detrimental consequences this had on the Native land and people.
8. Contextualize the motivations for the preservation of pioneer culture and the 1890s reconstruction of Sutter's Fort as a part of a statewide cultural movement of Nativism and extreme racism in California.

**OBJECTIVE 3B** Create exhibits and programs that explore the changes to California's natural environments over the course of multiple interpretive periods.

## Strategies:

1. Demonstrate the changes to California's natural landscapes caused by industries that accompanied colonization.
2. Create interpretive signage outside the walls showing the changes to the natural landscape over time.
3. Explore the differences of how Indigenous and immigrant cultures valued natural resources.
4. Use Native and non-Native plants found on park grounds to interpret the invasive plants brought to California during colonization.
5. Display the effects of the trapping industries on fur bearing animal populations and Californian waterways.

**OBJECTIVE 3C** Create exhibits and programs that explore the Fort's impact on the government of California.

## Strategies:

1. Work in partnership with the State Capitol Museum.
2. Explore changes to California governance from Indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, and then US control.
3. Discuss the long-suppressed history of state sanctioned genocide of Indigenous people.
4. Explore California's first elected officials and connect their initiatives to harmful ideologies, such as racism and Manifest Destiny.
5. Analyze oppressive legislation passed during early California statehood and the damage it caused for Indigenous people and for the broader California culture.
6. Highlight California's current-day legislative initiatives that attempt to improve government relationships with Indigenous people.

Chaperone volunteers discuss overland migration at the wagon station at Sutter's Fort.

# Goal 4

Promote the **stewardship** of Sutter's Fort SHP rooted in the values of ongoing learning, truthful representations of the past, and a diversity of historical perspectives.

Park Interpreter Jared Jones discusses the complex history of Sutter's Fort with visiting students.

**OBJECTIVE 4A** Deliver a socially constructive experience that explores the diversity of perspectives about stewardship of Sutter's Fort SHP.

### Strategies:

1. Provide speakers a civil platform for hosting panels, discussions, and conversations about the significance of Sutter's Fort SHP to the people of California.
2. Develop programming and exhibits after consulting with historically significant groups related to the history of Sutter's Fort.
3. Solicit visitor perspectives over time of what Sutter's Fort SHP means to them.
4. Create a safe space for discussing a broad set of definitions of the stewardship of Sutter's Fort SHP.

**OBJECTIVE 4B** Establish the interpretive identity of Sutter's Fort as a "laboratory of learning," where the people of California can learn the often dark, uncomfortable, and significant lessons of the state's history through a visitor experience that is reflective, analytical, and inclusive.

### Strategies:

1. Teach the value of listening when learning the generational history of another culture.

2. Encourage personal reflection by providing a space for visitors to start or end their experience at Sutter's Fort SHP with an open mind, ready to welcome new information.
3. Incorporate facilitated discussion into programs.
4. Use the interpretive themes to suggest opportunities to apply historical lessons to improve relationships, communities, and society today.
5. Expand partnerships to groups with interests in historic preservation, educational programming, interpretation, diversity of communities, and accurate history.

**OBJECTIVE 4C** Redefine the purpose of preserving Sutter's Fort from "honoring the past" to "being truthful about the past" so that we can create the potential for healing from historic trauma.

### Strategies:

1. Remove inaccurate and incomplete forms of historical interpretation and develop new interpretation relying on the best of current scholarship.
2. Consult the aforementioned advisory board about how to create dedicated space and appropriate times for Indigenous people to gather and feel welcome.
3. Consult the aforementioned advisory board about how the Park's grounds, staff, and resources might be used to promote cultural healing, both from the historical traumas of the Park's primary interpretive periods, as well as from the institutional traumas enacted by the State's interpretation of history through the Park's secondary interpretive periods.

# Goal 5

Cultivate **an inclusive visitor experience** by removing barriers for engagement and encouraging the involvement of underserved and underrepresented audiences.

**OBJECTIVE 5A** Sustain proactive outreach efforts to engage underserved communities.

### Strategies:

1. Identify and engage visitors with varying economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds as well as visitors with varying learning styles, abilities, time constraints, education, and ages.
2. Employ digital interpretive tools to reach people virtually.
3. Develop engaging interpretive programs and advertising intentionally designed to reach target audiences.
4. Take interpretive programs and mobile outreach efforts to local schools and community organizations.
5. Ensure that interpretive team meets regularly to assess the effectiveness of outreach campaigns.

**OBJECTIVE 5B** Remove barriers preventing potential visitors from engaging with Sutter's Fort SHP.

### Strategies:

1. Create and implement unique feedback mechanisms for both visitors and non-visitors to survey Sutter's Fort SHP's accessibility.

2. Fund program opportunities for those who need additional support.
3. Partner with the Friends of Sutter's Fort and other organizations dedicated to supporting underserved demographics.
4. Promote existing Department programs for free and low-cost park engagement and visitation options.
5. Offer interpretive programming that does not require Fort admission.
6. Develop recorded virtual programming for groups that can't or don't visit onsite.
7. Advertise other inclusive, culturally complex, historically accurate and accessible program options in the Sacramento region.
8. Update and maintain exhibit spaces to meet ADA standards where possible.


Visitors read interpretive signage at Monterey State Historic Park.

# Goal 6

Support the ongoing development and refinement of a **wide range of visitor experiences** that encourage both new and repeat visitors

The Environmental Living Program allows school groups to camp overnight at Sutter's Fort.

**OBJECTIVE 6A** Develop a seasonal, rotating schedule of exhibits and displays.

### Strategies:

1. Reconsider current exhibit and display spaces including the possibly of exhibit changes, additions, and repurposing rooms.
2. Create a sufficient space for seasonal exhibits and displays.
3. Explore interpretive design options for traditional and interactive museum exhibits, hands-on components, and virtual experiences.
4. Recruit curatorial staff to develop, manage, and execute seasonal exhibit schedules.
5. Display seasonal collection items that align with interpretive goals.
6. Work with social media team to advertise and promote new and seasonal exhibits.
7. Coordinate exhibits and displays with annual research goals.

**OBJECTIVE 6B** Deliver interpretive programs that focus heavily on facilitated discussion with audience to ensure every program is unique, relevant, and new even for repeat visitors.

### Strategies:

1. Train staff and volunteers in facilitating dialogue and to engage with the audiences' experiences, perspectives, and commentaries.
2. Develop a guided tour program with a facilitator, not a tour guide, who is appropriately trained in facilitating discussions among participants.

3. Use universal concepts (i.e. family, community, life, anger, fear, greed, power) to extract audience experiences and help connect those experiences to the related cultures of history.
4. Foster a historically accurate, yet inclusive conversational environment while addressing complex and difficult historical narratives.

**OBJECTIVE 6C** Develop a self-guided tour experience for visitors that can be easily modified by our interpretive and administrative staff.

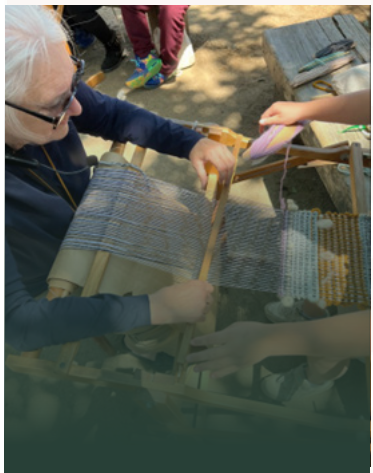
## Strategies:

1. Find a self-guided tour experience that can be managed electronically, represent diverse perspectives and is a unique experience during each visit.
2. Assign staff to routinely modify self-guided tour experience to align with seasonal exhibits, displays and programs.
3. Continue researching the best of current scholarship and quickly adapt self-guided experience to reflect the most accurate understanding of history.
4. Assign staff to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the self-guided experience as it relates to interpretive goals (i.e. is it inclusive, complex, accurate).
5. Survey effectiveness of the self-guided experience by analyzing its affect on the visitor's self-reflection, recognition of diverse perspectives, and understanding of the pursuit of historical truth.

**OBJECTIVE 6D** Create and host special events that appeal to diverse demographics and remain consistent with the interpretive values of Sutter's Fort SHP.

## Strategies:

1. Evaluate Sutter's Fort SHP's role in events in the community.
2. Develop a set of guidelines to determine the appropriateness of special events like weddings, movie nights, light shows, concerts, dinners, etc.
3. Partner with local Native tribes to provide event platforms for them to share their history, culture, trauma, and perseverance.
4. Promote and help coordinate teach-in events that educate the community about the experiences of Native groups in California.
5. Partner with community organizations and educational institutions to create appropriate special events benefiting the community as a whole and students studying history.



Docent Diana King helps a student make a small blanket at the Spinning/Weaving station at Sutter's Fort.

# Goal 7

Expand Sutter's Fort SHP **outreach efforts** to build relationships with new and geographically distant audiences.

**OBJECTIVE 7A** Reach new audiences in the local communities near Sutter's Fort SHP.

### Strategies:

1. Be involved in the community surrounding Sutter's Fort SHP.
2. Use roving interpreters outside of the Fort but on park grounds to reach casual park visitors.
3. Interpret the natural landscape and surrounding urban areas of the park to discuss the changes catalyzed by Sutter's Fort from pre-1839 to today.
4. Recruit additional park staff to extend interpretive reach beyond the walls of the Fort.
5. Partner with local community, cultural, historical and educational institutions who have connected missions.

State Parks Interpreter welcomes visitors.

**OBJECTIVE 7B** Reach distant audiences in communities further away from Sutter's Fort SHP.

### Strategies:

1. Use and promote virtual visitation and engagement tools like the PORTS (Parks Online Resource for Teachers and Students)® Program.
2. Broadcast Sutter's Fort mission, goals, themes, and programs

using social media.

3. Map and analyze the geographic reach of interpretive services using surveys and data collection from virtual media engagement.
4. Partner with other State Parks to create a series of interpretive opportunities that connect the histories of places across the state.

**OBJECTIVE 7C** Build positive relationships with a professional demographic in the community around Sutter's Fort SHP.

## Strategies:

1. Partner with academic and historically connected cultural institutions to recruit participation from historians, scholars, and community leaders.
2. Create and engage in dialogues about difficult histories through panel discussions and community platforms that demonstrate recognition and support for marginalized Native cultures of California.
3. Host public discussions about Sutter's Fort SHP and its place in Sacramento today.

# Goal 8

**Promote educational programming** that is inclusive, complex, and relevant to a wide range of student grade levels.

**OBJECTIVE 8A** Align interpretive programs designed for schools with California's current education standards, while allowing for flexibility to apply supplementary educational principles.

### Strategies:

1. Develop school-based interpretive program outlines that are relevant to education standards from multiple disciplines including points from Social-Science Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
2. Focus programs on complex historical topics that are less often taught to younger ages in school curriculum.
3. Focus interpretive programs for the high-school and college level on the subject of historiography.

**OBJECTIVE 8B** Design school programs to intentionally discuss complex and dark historical topics.

## Strategies:

1. Create programs that carefully discuss difficult topics like slavery, genocide, racism, and oppression.
2. Use universal ideas that can connect difficult histories to personal student experiences including appealing to family concepts, emotions, and feelings.
3. Focus on complex historical topics with all age groups, even younger audiences.
4. Facilitate an understanding of the challenges when evaluating primary sources of history.

State Parks Interpreters lead programs for all age groups, even younger audiences.

# Goal 9

**Nurture partnerships** for the development of interpretation with Native American tribes, cultural institutions, community organizations, universities, historically relevant places, and all groups of people with cultural connections to the Fort.

Nurturing relationships with Native tribes and other organizations is a key objective of this plan.

**OBJECTIVE 9A** Develop and maintain partnerships with Native tribes at Sutter's Fort.

### Strategies:

1. Encourage and cultivate tribal participation in the activities of Sutter's Fort SHP.
2. Recruit staff from tribal communities.
3. Support tribal liaison's role in developing and maintaining relationships with Native groups on site at Sutter's Fort SHP.
4. Provide event, exhibit, and program space dedicated to elevating the historical experience of California's Native people.
5. Ensure local tribal members are a part of the aforementioned advisory board.

**OBJECTIVE 9B** Establish partnerships with organizations in the Sacramento region.

### Strategies:

1. Meet with new potential partners to discuss missions, goals, events, and initiatives.
2. Advertise and support the missions of local partners.
3. Attend and support events of partner organizations.

4. Consult with partners about opportunities that may combine followers and increase stewardship of Sutter's Fort SHP.
5. Create internship opportunities with partner organizations.
6. Host ongoing lectures, panels and discussions with speakers from partner organizations focused on inclusive, accurate and complex histories.
7. Engage local heritage organizations with histories connected to the Fort.
8. Engage organizations with environmental awareness initiatives.

# Goal 10

**Explore the effects** of colonial commerce and industry on Indigenous life, land, and resources

**OBJECTIVE 10A** Recognize the nature of Native labor at Sutter's Fort as a direct result of the power dynamics that colonization forced into California.

## Strategies:

1. Examine the lasting impacts that violent coastal colonizers had on the consequent thinking and actions of Native people in Central California and beyond.
2. Discuss Native cooperation at Sutter's Fort as an act of cultural preservation and survival in attempts to avoid one-sided conflicts.
3. Interpret Native labor at Sutter's Fort as a relationship comparable to slavery, not a mutually beneficial agreement to share the benefits of a combined labor pool.
4. Discuss the possibility of inherent shortcomings when studying only written primary sources about Native labor at the Fort and how those written materials may present a different perspective than that of primary source Native oral histories.
5. Recognize the labor, skills and trades of Sutter's business were primarily done by Native people.
6. Represent a variety of Native narratives about labor at Sutter's Fort.

**OBJECTIVE 10B** Analyze the effects of immigrants' land management decisions and environmental impacts on the cultures and livelihoods of Native people.

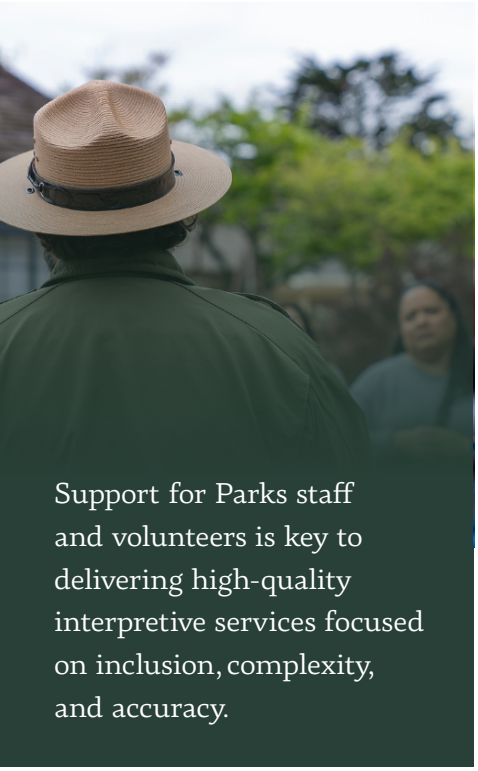
## Strategies:

1. Provide exhibit space that highlights local Indigenous relationships with the land and how colonization forced those relationships to change.
2. Examine the differences in natural resource use between Native and immigrant cultures.
3. Explore the environmental impacts of immigrant industries on natural resources and how that changed Indigenous relationships with the environments of California.
4. Display the skills and knowledge exhibited by Native cultures through their use of natural resources.
5. Discuss the challenges surrounding land ownership and restrictive legislation that inhibits traditional Indigenous relationships with California's natural resources today.
6. Examine the connections between Native land management and land management techniques today.

Exhibits are designed to convey an accurate and inclusive perspective on complex and difficult topics.

# Goal 11

**Enable staff and volunteers** to deliver high quality, thematic interpretive services focused on inclusion, complexity and accuracy.



Support for Parks staff and volunteers is key to delivering high-quality interpretive services focused on inclusion, complexity, and accuracy.

**OBJECTIVE 11A** Provide staff and volunteers with the resources, education, and support needed to deliver high-quality, thematic interpretive services focused on inclusion, complexity, and accuracy.

## Strategies:

1. Maintain a regular schedule of ongoing trainings appropriate for staff members and volunteers.
2. Engage academic, cultural, and interpretive educators to assist in the creation of trainings.
3. Develop thematic trainings based on current historical scholarship.
4. Develop skills trainings that build the capacity for providing meaningful interpretation, including facilitated dialog, to as diverse of a visiting public as is possible.
5. Encourage and support the regular participation in trainings led by partner groups.
6. Develop and regularly update required onboarding trainings for staff volunteers.
7. Support regular discussions among interpretive staff about recent scholarship, new resources, training opportunities, and examples from other historic sites.

**OBJECTIVE 11B** Evaluate all programs and exhibits using a series of ongoing, measurable objectives.

### Strategies:

1. Distribute and collect feedback surveys.
2. Set program goals at the start of the season.
3. Compile detailed annual reports for each interpretive program series.
4. Internally collaborate to evaluate programs after each season to ensure adherence to interpretive goals and objectives.

**OBJECTIVE 11C** Evaluate the performance of staff and volunteers on a regular basis.

### Strategies:

1. Interview volunteers prior to onboarding.
2. Schedule regular performance reviews and develop unique evaluation materials for staff and volunteers.
3. Build a personalized plan to improve interpreter skills.
4. Use a peer-review program to evaluate interpretive skills and relevance.
5. Use a self-review program to evaluate interpretive skills and relevance.
6. Create a 360-degree review program to reciprocate evaluations.

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