

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Sutter's Fort

AND/OR COMMON

Sutter's Fort State Historic Monument

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

L Street between 26th and 28th

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

California

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- \_\_\_ BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME The State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

901 G Street (P.O. Box 1206)

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Only one of Sutter's original buildings remained in 1891, when salvation of the fort began. That was the two-story building at the center of the fort which served as the main house in which migrants lived. Restoration, based upon this building and the remnants of the walls, as well as the descriptions of men who had seen the fort in its day, led to the earliest reconstruction of a fort generally similar in appearance to the original. However, subsequent (historic) and archeological research in the late 1950's has developed more accurate information. The original fort, for instance, was much larger than the reconstructed one we have today. It extended some 150' beyond the present east walls. It also contained a number of buildings which were not known to exist in 1890. The original fort was 330' long, and varied in width from 120' to 183' in width. Its high adobe walls ranged from 18 to 36 inches in thickness, and enclosed some 25 buildings.

The only remaining original building is the two-story adobe with gable roof at the center of the quadrangle. Its five rooms, originally used to shelter the new migrants, are now given over to the display of pioneer artifacts. Around the perimeter are constructed rooms, within which one can again see pioneer artifacts displayed in such crafts as blacksmithing, rifle-making, and repairing, and baking, as well as areas of housing and domestic functions like a library and a dining room. All of the exhibits aim to retain an atmosphere of the pioneer era of Sacramento's history, just at the beginning of the '49er gold-rush days.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1839-44, 1890-91

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sutter's Fort, at Sacramento, California, was the most strategically located site in Northern California in the 1840's. It was towards this point that most of the immigrant trails converged, either coming south from Oregon, or after crossing the Sierras going West. Sutter's Fort represented the beginning of civilization, in the minds of the pioneers who had trekked across vast reaches of wilderness in search of their new land. The kindness and hospitality offered at Sutter's Fort by John Sutter is legendary, and in numerous ways, the site played an invaluable aid in the American settlement in California.

## HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

John Augustus Sutter, born in Baden, Germany of Swiss parents, came to the United States in 1834 at the age of 31. He had travelled widely, and continued to do so in America, moving to St. Louis where he kept a store for a time, to Fort Vancouver and then the Hawaiian Islands, to the Russian Colony at Sitka, Alaska, and finally in 1839 to Yerba Buena, California.

There, he at once obtained permission of Governor Alverado to found a settlement in the Central Valley. Securing three small vessels, Sutter sailed up the Sacramento River into the American River, landing about two miles above the confluence of the two, in August, accompanied by ten Kanakas (non-Hawaiian Polynesians) and three white men. On a knoll about two miles from the landing place, Sutter began building a large quadrangular adobe fort, the outer walls of which were completed in 1844. He began to conquer the Indians in the region to obtain laborers for his various enterprises, and after becoming a naturalized Mexican citizen in 1840, received a land grant of nearly 50,000 acres.

In December 1841, Sutter purchased Fort Ross and its equipment from the Russian American Fur Company, including plows, rakes, harnesses, halters, reins, carts, 50 cannon, 1700 cattle, 940 horses and mules, and 900 sheep. In return, he agreed to pay \$30,000 plus a stipulated amount of agricultural produce. In order to supply the latter, Sutter desperately needed labor, and, more importantly, he needed skilled workmen to oversee and direct his Indians.



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In November 1841, the first band of overland migrants, 33 persons from the United States, arrived in desperate condition. Sutter immediately hired them to help him with his farming. This was a tactic Sutter employed over and over again, when 65 more migrants arrived in 1843, 46 in 1844, 250 in 1845, and 500 in 1846. He fed them, clothed them, and sheltered them at the fort, and many were quite willing to go to work for him, at least temporarily.

By the end of 1845, Sutter had ranches, a tannery, gristmill, spinning and weaving shops, a hat factory, a blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, cobbler, sawmills, and a salmon cannery. Sutter, however, lost control of his army of Indian farm workers in 1846, when John Fremont conscripted them into his California Battalion to fight in the Mexican War. The U.S. Army also took possession of his fort that year, holding it until March 1847. When Sutter got his Indians back that year, he went back to business as usual, in order to try to pay off his debt to the Russian Company. He was constructing a mill, however, at Coloma, California in January 1848, when his foreman, James Marshall discovered gold there. The Gold Rush began immediately, and Sutter lost all of his workers who fled to the gold fields. For a time, Sutter rented rooms at the Fort to the 49'ers and to merchants servicing them, but he soon went off to the gold fields himself.

Sutter's Fort began to deteriorate rapidly after 1849, and only a last-minute effort saved what remained in 1889. It was then purchased by the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1890, and restored by the State of California in 1891-93. In 1937 it became a part of the State Park System, and is administered today as Sutter's Fort State Historic Monument.

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1. Extracted largely from earlier file reports for the National Historic Landmarks Program.

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They, however, do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark. The surrounding environment is entirely residential, quite unlike the historic surrounding of this frontier post.