

Bibliography – updated September 2007

(Prepared by Steve Beck, , Sutter's Fort State Historic Park)

Sutter and the Fort

John Sutter: A Life on the North American Frontier by Albert L. Hurtado **

Published in 2006, this is an excellent account of the life and times of Sutter and New Helvetia. It is well documented and does a superior job of placing Sutter in the “context of his time.”

Sutter: The Man and his Empire by James Peter Zollinger

Published in 1939, this is a scholarly work and is the most accurate and best documented account of Sutter's life. It deals with Sutter as a man. It covers Sutter's years in Europe and his time in the United States prior to settling in California, as well as life at the Fort and at Hock Farm, including references to farming, trade, and business practices. This is the quintessential source about Sutter and his Fort.

A Pioneer at Sutter's Fort 1846-1850 by Heinrich Lienhard edited by Marguerite Wilbur

This is a very good reference for what day-to-day life was like in and around Sutter's Fort. It is a translation of Lienhard's recollections 20 years after he left Sutter's Fort. Because of some questionable translating and some personal issues that Lienhard had with Sutter, and some prejudices about the Native People, this book should be viewed with some skepticism. But its value for discussing the social and material culture as well as its reference to the many other pioneers of the area, make it a valuable resource.

Fool's Gold (or Sacramento's Sainted Sinner) by Richard Dillon **

This is a less than scholarly work of “revisionist” history that merely rewrites for dramatic effect or misinterprets much of the sparsely circulated Lienhard document. It also contains some interesting but questioningly documented comments about Sutter's life in Europe and Westport (Kansas City). This book applies 20th century morality to 19th century social culture but only on a selective basis. However, it is accurate regarding chronology and is an interesting comparison to the Zollinger work. The historical synopsis that visitors get in the orientation room is based largely on this book. This work portrays Sutter in later life as a pitiable impoverished scalawag looking for handouts. This was not true, based on wealth being a “relative term.” Most of Dillon's information about Sutter's life after California came from articles in the Philadelphia Enquirer which were (unknown to Dillon), probably planted by Sutter and his supporters as he attempted to obtain remuneration from the U.S. Congress for his claims against the government—he needed to appear poor.



Sutter's Fort by Oscar Lewis

This is part of a series of books about American Forts. It is very superficial in its information about Sutter, the Fort, and the history of California. However, it is a quick and easy read and is recommended for younger readers. It quotes other secondary source books written about Sutter and only Sutter's interview with H. H. Bancroft is used as original source material.

New Helvetia Diary by John Sutter and the other clerks

This is the day-to-day record of the comings and goings at the Fort. It is a very dry but worthwhile document. It is a dated journal so you can look up specific dates such as January 28, 1848 when Sutter was told of the gold discovery. Also, many people who worked in, or passed through the Fort, are mentioned and their references are indexed. It is also a good correlation to the other books, manuscripts, and letters.

Sutter: His Own Words by John Sutter as told to Erwin Gudde

While this is obviously written with a slant toward Sutter's own perceptions, it's nice to read what his perceptions were. Quotes from this book are used on the sound boxes within the Fort.

Material and social culture in 1840's California

Seventy-five Years in California (or Sixty-Years in California) by William Heath Davis

This is the definitive work on social culture in California from 1830 until after the Gold Rush. Davis devotes individual chapters to vaqueros, missions, ranching, games, sailing and trade, etcetera. Davis was a contemporary and confidant of most of the influential people of California. He was the man who brought Sutter to the site of New Helvetia and he recorded Sutter's landing. This book truly gives the reader a comprehensive view of life in early California.

Two Years Before the Mast by Richard Henry Dana

This is the preeminent source for merchant sailing and the hide and tallow trade between Boston and California. It is a good read but it offers very little beyond, the life of a sailor, the hide and tallow trade, and the port pueblos.

A Tour of Naval Duty in California by Joseph Warren Revere

While this may sound like a military book, it is actually an extremely insightful work on all aspects of social and material culture in California. It examines the Mexican Californios, the American Emigrants, and the different native peoples. It is wonderfully written in pre-Victorian style prose with excellent illustrations by the author. It has many candid comments about the Spanish/Mexican treatment of the Natives, and how their lives changed under American rule. It is also the definitive history of the American Naval presence in Northern California since Warren was an officer in the American Navy. He is the man who sent the first American flag to Sutter's Fort, and raised the American flag at Sonoma. He was also the grandson of Paul Revere.



Military and Political History

California Conquered by Neal Harlow **

This is a scholarly work of the first degree. It is the definitive history of the Mexican-American War in California including the pre and post war years. This book sets the stage for the war, documents the battles and political strife during the war, and explains the political confusion that gripped California after the war and the discovery of gold.

Fremont by Allen Nevin

This is the best of many books about John Charles Fremont with regard to his experiences in California. It gives the reader an intimate glimpse of Fremont's maneuvers at and around Sutter's Fort. This is a nice augmentation to the Harlow book because it deals more directly with conditions in Northern California and how the people of the region viewed the war. This book also addresses Fremont's role in the Bear Flag Revolt.

Fremont by Ferol Egan **

While not as scholarly as Nevin's book, this is still a very good book and a much easier read. This book is very interpretive, and after reading it, I had the feeling that Mr. Egan had a very insightful understanding of Fremont. Egan spends many pages on Fremont's expeditions to California and Fremont's part in the Bear Flag Revolt and the Mexican American War.

From Mud-flat Cove-To Gold-To Statehood by Irving Stone **, excerpted from *Men to Match My Mountains*

Though largely undocumented, this is a quick, easy and enjoyable read about California from 1840 to 1850. It deals primarily with the ever-changing political atmosphere in the region, which means that it discusses the individuals involved in the political squabbles. It devotes chapters to how each emigrant party and some of their members influenced life in the region, which makes it especially appropriate for the Environmental Living Program.

General Reading

What I Saw in California by Edwin Bryant **

If I could read only one book about California during the Sutter era, this would be it. This book covers overland migration, Sutter's Fort, early San Francisco, the Mexican-American War, and the social and material culture of California. It is beautifully written and easy to read.

Bancroft's History of California by H. H. Bancroft

This is the definitive encyclopedic history of California (seven volumes) before the Gold Rush. It contains the "Pioneer Registry" which lists, and gives some information about most persons known to be in California prior to 1848. It is an excellent resource for locating original sources.



Pioneers of California by Donovan Lewis

This book contains biographies of 52 Californians living here in the 1840's. Though it has a few glaring errors in history, it is still an excellent resource. There are biographies of men, women, Americans, Mexicans, African Americans, and Chinese. This is probably the best material available for the Environmental Living Program. For History Live, by reading how each of these people impacted California, one can get a feeling for the social culture and the interrelated nature of the region.

Men and Women of the Bear Flag Revolt by Barbara Warner

This is a great resource for the Environmental Living Program because it gives biographies of many of the pioneers that the students portray. The book is well researched; although it's with the purpose of proving, rather than disproving, Ms. Warner's hypotheses. It is available in most libraries.



Donner Party

Ordeal by Hunger by George Stewart **

This is the most “readable” of all of the Donner Party books. Stewart gives a pretty accurate, though dramatic, account of the Donner Party without going into a minutia of footnotes.

Donner Party Chronicles by Frank Mullin **

This book is highly recommended by the very knowledgeable Trade Store staff. I have not read it, but it contains some of the best pictures and visual interpretation of the Donner saga that I have seen. It is a wonderful account of the day-by-day journey and includes many references to original source material.

The Donner Party: Weathering the Storm by Mark McGlaughlin **

In 2006, this book won an award for being the “best California History” nonfiction. It deals primarily with the entrapment in the mountains and uses both archaeology and written accounts to compare what was happening to the Donner Party and what was happening in the rest of Northern California. It supports the contention that the Donner Party didn’t initially realize how desperate their situation was because they experienced periods of very pleasant weather. McGlaughlin provides a very unique meteorological perspective. Many of the photographs are from the Sutter’s Fort Archives.

Archaeology of the Donner Party by Daniel Hardesty **

This is outstanding and professionally done. Hardesty compares the “written record” with the archaeological record and gives a “just the facts” account. It is a short easy read a highly recommended for a introduction to the Donner Party. Hardesty, and other archaeologists working with him, did much of their preliminary research in the Sutter’s Fort Archives. Hardesty has dedicated much of his professional life to studying the Donner entrapment.

Gold Rush

Rush to Riches by J. S. Holiday**

There are many excellent books about the Gold Rush including *The Shirley Letters*, *The World Rushed In*, etc., but this is the definitive source for Gold Rush history. It synthesizes the works of many other authors and is filled with hundreds of Gold Rush era photographs

There are many more books that are very good--these are just the ones I’ve found most useful for historical interpretation. The Sutter’s Fort Archives also contain many original documents, diaries, and letters and ledgers that relate to the history of California.



Additional Bibliography for Sutter's Fort Research

Books Identified by Genie Barry, Sequoia Elementary School, Oakland, California

The following books were available at the Oakland Public Library at the time Genie did her research. There may be some differences in book availability in other libraries. Genie used these books to put together much of the information included in the **Personal Stories, Emigrant Parties** and **Biographies**.

You can use a subject search such as: "Overland Journeys to the Pacific," "Donner Party" or "Sutter's Fort." The letter **J** before call numbers means "juvenile," so look *for* those books in the Children's section. You can also look for information on well-known personalities, like Sam Brannan or Pio Pico, by using a subject search. 917.8-9 and 979.4 were very good starting point for just doing shelf searches to see what was there.

A Pioneer Sampler (Barbara Greenwood).....	J971.3 Greenwood
Buffalo Gals (Brandon M. Miller).....	J978.02 Miller
California heritage (John & La Ree Caughey, ed.).....	979.4 Caughey
The California Trail (George R. Stewart).....	917.3 Stewart
Children of the Westward Trail (Rebecca Steffoff).....	J917.804 Steffoff
Daily Life in a Covered Wagon (Paul Erickson).....	917.8042 Erickson
First Wagons to California (Michael Chester).....	J978 C426f
Fool's Gold (R.H. Dillon).....	Biography SU86
Ghost Trails to California (Thomas H. Hunt).....	917.8 Hunt
The Gold Rush (Liza Ketchum).....	J979.401 Ketchum
History of the Donner Party (Charles F. McGlashan).....	979.4 M17
Hard Road West: Alone on the California (Gwen Moffat).....	917.9 Moffat
The Opening of the California Trail (ed. G. Stewart).....	917.8 Schallenberger



Ordeal of Hunger; the Story of the Donner Party (G. Stewart).....	979.4 St490
Overland to California in 1859 (Louis M. Bloch).....	978 Bloch
The Pioneers (Time-Life Books).....	978 Time
Pioneer Children on the Journey West (Emmy Werner).....	917.804 Werner
Pioneers of California (Donovan Lewis).....	Ref 920 Lewis
Snowbound – The Tragic Story of the Donner Party (D. Lavender).....	J978 Lavender
The Spanish West (Time-Life Books).....	979 Time
Sutter’s Fort: Gateway to the Gold Fields (Oscar Lewis).....	979.4 L587
Trappers and Mountain Men (AmHjrLib).....	J973 Am35tra
The Way West: Journal of a Pioneer Woman (L. Schlissel).....	J917.8042 Schlissel

