

The New World was a 525 ton steamer worth, in its day, \$150,000. The vessel was owned by The California Steam Navigation Company. Captain Hutchins was at the helm of this extraordinary vessel that was touted as having “unsurpassed accommodations, unequaled speed, and for safety no rivals.” This photograph is the oldest known photo of Sacramento taken in 1850.

Chapter 5: Sacramento

The first survey of the plat of Sacramento was made in December, 1848. Previous to the year 1844, Sutter’s Fort was the principal trading-post in Upper California, and in that year Captain Sutter and others at the Fort determined to layout and build a town on the river bank, three miles below, which was to be called Sutter. The first house was erected by Captain Sutter himself. Sutterville continued to flourish unrivalled until about the time gold was discovered.

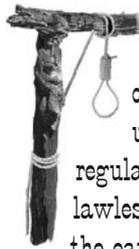
Shortly after the great discovery at Sutter’s Mill, there were a number of stores located at the Fort, and an immense business was at once created at that point. The first of these mercantile establishments belonged to C. C. Smith & Co., in

At four P.M. on board the “New World” steamer for Sacramento, en route to the mountains. A great crowd on board, smoking and spitting everywhere—one cannot walk in the saloon without kicking over “spittoons,” as the receiver is called, the very sight of which invites a discharge from an American mouth.”



Sir Henry Veel Huntley, (1852)

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The natural tendency of society, when left uncurbed by legal regulations, is toward lawlessness. So it was in the early days of California.

The population in the year 1848, and the greater part of 1849, was composed of the honest and intelligent element of the eastern cities and States. But the next tide that flowed in threw upon our shores the refuse material from the larger cities on the Atlantic side of the continent, and a horde of discharged convicts from Australian Colonies. The change in society was apparent immediately; murders, robberies, and crimes of every description became every day occurrences.



Library of Congress

Sutter's Fort, 1839-1849 — For all of its fame, Sutter's Fort had a short life. Once a thriving business center with a variety of shops to service pioneers, it was abandoned when all the tenants left for the gold fields. A few brave soles explore the empty remains of the central building in the 1860s.

which Sam Brannan was a partner. This one was started a few months before the opening of the mines, and on its counter the first exchange of gold-dust for storegoods took place.

At this time (1849) the building on the inside of Sutter's Fort was occupied by Rufus Hitchcock, the upper story being used as a boarding house. The front room below was used for drinking and gambling purposes. The bar was kept open night and day. If a customer had any coin, which was not often, the price of a drink was fifty cents; but in most cases he opened his purse and the bar-keeper took a pinch of gold dust, the extent of the pinch being regulated by the quality and quantity of the liquor consumed.

By summer all business was transferred to the embarcadero, which became the life of Sacramento.

John S. Fowler had pretty much a monopoly of freighting to the mines, which was done by means of ox-teams. He paid his teamsters from \$200 to \$250 a month. In the winter of 1848-9 the roads to the mines were nearly impassable. Freight from the Fort to Coloma was one dollar a pound—\$2,000 per ton. Even at that price it was impossible to transport the necessities rapidly enough to prevent serious apprehensions of famine in the remoter mining districts.

Hensley & Reading had erected a frame building in Sacramento, on the corner of I and Front streets, the first frame

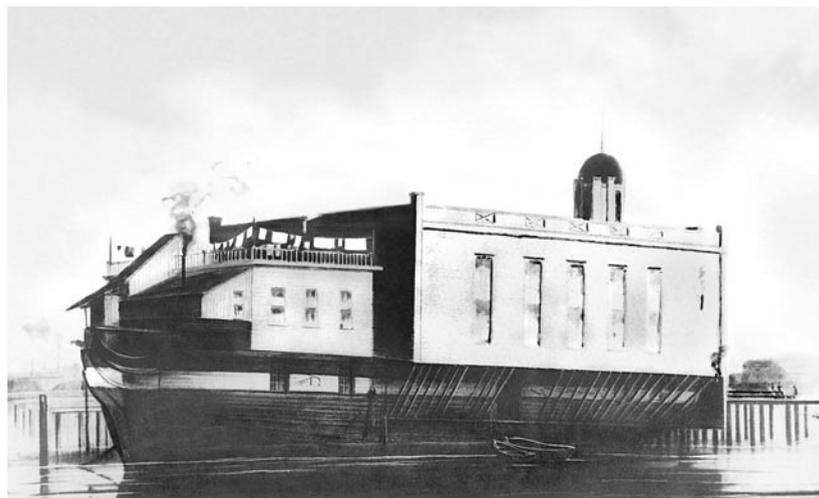
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house in the new city. Soon after this, Mr. Ingersoll put up a structure, half canvas and half frame, between J and K, on Front street, and Mr. Stewart had a canvas house on the bank of the river, between I and J, which was opened as a tavern, or primitive hotel. In February, 1849, Sam Brannan built a frame storehouse on the corner of J and Front streets, which was soon succeeded by another belonging to Priest, Lee & Co., on the corner of J and Second, and two stylish log houses were directly after erected by Mr. Gillespie and Dr. Carpenter.

On the first of April, 1849, the number of inhabitants at the Fort and in the city did not exceed one hundred and fifty. This committee provided for the election of one Alcalde and a Sheriff, to have jurisdiction from the Coast Range to the Sierra Nevada, and throughout the length of the Sacramento Valley. And so was constituted the first American judiciary in Northern California, under a sturdy oak on the banks of the Sacramento.

From February until June 1849, there was a steady course of improvement, the immigration coming by sea, and, as yet, in not very great numbers. The political and social condition was anomalous; there was no law or system of government, and yet there was no actual disorder or discord among the free inhabitants. "The old pioneers," says Morse, constituted at that time but a small and insignificant community; and whilst they were fully impressed with the idea of the profusion of riches that sur-

Prison Barge on Sacramento River, 1850 — Formerly a seagoing bark, the La Grange is moored on the Sacramento River opposite H Street. Retrofitted with the gangly structure on the top, this barge was the second Sacramento County prison from 1850 until it sank.



Nov 29 — when we left the Ocean steamer we were let down by a rope into the small Boat and rowed by the natives as far as the Boat could for shoal water and then carried a shore in the Natives Arms and set on dry sand once while crossing the Land on the Mules we came to a river, the bank on the river was so steep that we had to be carried across by the stoutest gentleman the Natives leading our mules across and then sat on our mules again to go in a foot path through Bushes and through mudholes. Our saddles had a Horn on the back and on the front. I had all that I could do to hold on with both hands to keep from falling off. You can judge whether you would enjoy such a ride or not.

Unknown Pioneer Woman

