



*The State Capitol Building at Sacramento shortly before completion. California is the 31st state and achieved statehood on September 9, 1850. Its original capital was in San Jose, then it moved to Vallejo and on to Benecia. Sacramento became the capital in 1854. Construction started on the building on September 24, 1860, and was completed in 1874.*

## Chapter 8: Public Buildings

**STATE CAPITOL AND STATE HOUSE** — The first session of the Legislature, under the Constitution of 1849, met in San Jose, December 15, 1849. The present city of San Jose was, in the early days of forty-nine, scarcely large enough to accommodate the members, attaches, and visitors of the Legislature; accordingly an effort was made to have the Legislature adjourn to Monterey; but the effort failed.

December 4, 1864,  
George N. Symonds,  
for the murder of B. F.  
Russell, was hanged at the  
Water Works Building.





While it was still vividly imprinted on my mind, it was a shock to read on a placard in the streets ‘We should all vote against Negro and Chinese suffrage.’ These words do not represent the utterances of a knot of foolish and shortsighted politicians; if that were the case it would be unfair to cite them. Unhappily, they express the opinions of the majority in this State; they form the watchword of the political party which has won the victory at the polls.

William Fraser Rae, 1869



Courtesy Folsom Historical Society

*From 1873 to about 1915, a granite quarry operated at Folsom Prison. In this 1880 photograph, convicts line up to start their shift at the quarry. Note the variations in the stripes of the convicts' suits. "Con bosses" wore white shirts, black pants, and vests. Those wearing all horizontal stripes were regular convicts, or "bottom feeders," so named because they were served from the bottom of the mess bucket at meal time.*

On the 25th of January, 1850, a bill was introduced, which provided that the Capitol should be removed to some point on the Bay easy of access. Several flattering offers were received from various places.

General M. G. Vallejo made the following offer, which was accepted: He agreed to give to the State one hundred and fifty-six acres of land on Napa River, near the Straits of Carquinez, to have built suitable buildings for the State offices; or, as an alternative, to donate \$70,000 for building purposes. The Legislature provided, by law passed April 22, 1850, that all the propositions should be submitted to the people at an election held October 7, 1850. By a large vote the people selected Vallejo as the site for the Capital.

The session of 1851 assembled at San Jose.

At the opening of the session General Vallejo was present, urging the removal of the Capital with all its paraphernalia to Vallejo. Finally the bill passed which provided that the Legislature of 1852 should assemble in the town of Vallejo. General Vallejo had given bonds that the State House should be built, otherwise the provisions of the bill should be null and void.

Accordingly, in June, 1851, the Capital was removed to Vallejo. There were many doubts as to the legality of the removal of the records, for there was no safe place in which they could be kept. On the 5th day of January, 1852, the Legislature met in Vallejo. But the State House was hardly begun, and the little town of Vallejo was not at all prepared to accommodate the members, and the visitors were obliged to sleep on the steamer which had brought them to the new Capital. Many of the members were inclined to move to some larger and better place. On the 29th of December, 1851, the Court of Sessions had offered the Legislature the free use of the new Court House at Sacramento. The people of Sacramento had endorsed the action of the Court. January 9, 1852, the Assembly adopted a joint resolution to remove to Sacramento; but the Senate did not concur. However, on the 12th of the same month, the resolution was again brought up and adopted by both Houses. The Legislature thereupon adjourned to meet in Sacramento, January 16, 1852, where they finished the session. The citizens of Sacramento gave a grand ball in honor of the "Legislature at Sacramento."

On the 30th of April the Legislature passed a bill declaring Vallejo to be the seat of government, and ordering the Governor to remove the State records to that place. About this time General Vallejo appeared before the Legislature, and declared that he could not fulfill his obligations, and asked

*26th Street firehouse, late 1800s.*



Courtesy Sutter's Fort

I sent my son to ask Mr. Kelle if he would sell a little flour.

He flatly refused.

The following day my wife went to him, explained our condition and begged him earnestly to sell us the necessary flour at a high price. She obtained the same curt refusal.

On the following morning I myself accidentally met him, and when he answered my plea by saying that he had firmly decided not to sell any provisions during the journey, I took out my pistol and swore that I would shoot him like a dog before I would let my family die of hunger. I told him that if he did not agree to sell me the flour, he did not need to live any longer and that I did not care what happened to me afterwards. This threat worked. In the evening, when we were once more encamped next to each other, Mr. Breking, a former editor of a St. Louis paper, who had been my travelling companion for fifteen hundred miles, came to me and said that I might have the necessary flour if I would go to Mr. Kelle and get it. I was still too excited to do this, so I asked Mr. Breking to send his slave to get it for me. I obtained seventy-one pounds at thirty-five cents a pound, and so this trouble was over.

Herman Scharmann, 1849

