

Golden Nuggets

SACRAMENTO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Nov-Dec 2019, vol. 33-34

Sacramento Historical Society Presents Steve Beck

The Real John Sutter and His World Part II: The Golden Bear Rises

Tuesday, November 19 7:00 PM (Doors Open 6:00)

Columbus Hall, 5961 Newman Court, Sacramento

Join us for Part II of historian Steve Beck's "The Real John Sutter and His World" as he continues the story of California's dramatic and engrossing history—from armed occupation, to the gold rush, to statehood.

William Tecumseh Sherman, the famous Civil War general, once said, "John Sutter was the man most responsible for California becoming a part of the United States [of America]." The 1846 Bear Flag Re-

volt threw the socio-political situation in California into turmoil. The Bear Flaggers declared their own republic. United States' explorers John Frémont and Kit Carson organized an unsanctioned military force known as the California Battalion, and English and American naval vessels were literally racing up the Pacific Coast to seize the California capital of Monterey for their respective countries. All the while, more than 1,500 pioneers, including the Donner Party, were making their way west by wagon.



The central building at Sutter's Fort prior to restoration/reconstruction.



George B. Cooper's lithograph of Sacramento in December 1849

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Sacramento Historical Society Presents

An Early California Christmas: Dinner & Show

Tuesday, December 17 6:00 PM

Columbus Hall, 5961 Newman Court, Sacramento

Please join the Sacramento Historical Society for a special Sacramento Christmas holiday celebration dinner show featuring members of the Sacramento Theatre Company performing live readings on stage. Santa Claus will also be making a special visit (he's making a list, and checking it twice!).

Members: \$25; Non-Members: \$35; Table (6): \$140
Doors and Bar Open at 5:30PM
Dinner Buffet Service begins at 6:20 PM
Dessert available at 7:00 PM
Dinner Show at 7:30 PM

All are encouraged to come in period costume, 1840 to 1900. Dinner show seating is limited and will be handled on first come, first served basis.

Please RSVP and pay for dinner by December 12.

Gold Rush Medicine

by Dr. Bob LaPerriere

Dr. Bob LaPerriere spoke before a packed house at the October SHS monthly program. We thought our readers might appreciate a short excerpt from that provocative, and evocative, presentation:

The trek to California often involved "seeing the elephant" or "treading the elephant's tail," both expressions meaning one had gained experience by undergoing hardship. It was estimated the overall mortality of those heading west was 6 percent. The most common medical problems of the immigrants included gastrointestinal illness...not unexpected when you think about their drinking water: "A puddle where...green on top and...muddy...which the pioneers drank with considerable relish by shutting their eyes and holding their breath."

Another major problem en route was scurvy or vitamin C deficiency that claimed numerous lives. So too did broken bones—a fracture penetrated the skin, the mortality rate was about 100 percent due to infection. The need for amputation, the most common surgery, was frequent, and half of patients were saved by amputation.

These emigrants were coming to a land described as one of the "most healthful territories on the continent with a climate unrivaled in purity and equabil-



Ocular prostheses, or artificial eyes, have been used for thousands of years.

ity. Nor is sickness, that scourge of humanity, here to harass and hinder us in our pursuits." They did not realize that, within a few short months, gold rush immigration would produce a collecting point of health

tragedy not to be equaled any other place in the world. As the population of Sac-

ramento jumped from 2,000 to 10,000, 250,000 people poured into California. The emigrants exceeded the facilities. It was said that death was not a stranger...one-fifth found graves within their first six months after arrival.

During the gold rush the population of Sacramento was approximately 8,000, with about 50 doctors in the recently formed Medical Chirurgical Association. It was stated that "The physicians...did noble work. No danger appalled them." Sanitation was a luxury. The floods of January 1850 brought typhoid, enceph-

alitis, diarrhea, malnutrition and other disorders, complicated by the arrival later that year of cholera.

On October 18, 1850, a ship, the "New World", arrived on the Sacramento waterfront carrying news of California's statehood.

It also carried bad news—sparked by an emigrant from the boat, dying of cholera. With no sanitation or clean drinking water—and mounds of garbage, human and animal waste, and dead animals—the stage was set for an epidemic. At the worst, more than 40 deaths in 24 hours occurred. Within 18 days about 1,000 died, an estimated 15 percent of the population. The fatality rate approached 50 percent, and often death occurred within 24 hours.

"The rapid spreading of the epidemic gave to the physicians no rest day or night...they were falling like the foremost soldiers of a desperate charge and...seventeen of their number were deposited in Sandhill cemetery. And yet not one educated physician turned his back upon the city..."

Such tragedy stimulated physicians to band together. Four local medical societies started between 1850 and 1868; the only survivor being the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement, later the Sacramento El Dorado Medical Society and currently the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society (SSVMS), in continuous operation for 151 years.



Early, easily purchased medicines boasted ingredients we find shocking today, such as strychnine and morphine



To showcase the last century and a half, SSVMS has a Museum of Medical History that is open to the public, free, Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, except for holidays.

www.ssvms.org/museum

An End-of-Year Message from the SHS President

Dear Friends,

Thank you for belonging to the Sacramento Historical Society. Your interest in Sacramento's legacy is making the Society more vibrant every day.

The Board's priorities, based on your input, have been to present exciting, informative programs and improve the meeting venue. Many of you know Steve Beck, long time manager at Sutter's Fort and one of the most knowledgeable people about early California History. Steve has joined the Board and is chair of our Programs Committee. With his extensive network of contacts, Steve is the ideal person for this important job, and is working hard to put on a slate of ten programs this coming year. One of our programs will mark the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, constitutionally guaranteeing women's right to vote. And we are also pleased to announce "An evening with Stan Atkinson," the legendary KCRA-TV Channel 3 anchorman, who will share his insights from covering more than 30 years of the news that shaped Sacramento. We will be announcing the full program schedule before the first of the year. Speaking of presentations, we have upgraded the audio and visual equipment in the hall. A new projector and audio system are already in place, and we continue to explore ways to bring the programs alive. Many thanks to Gregg Lukenbill and Vice President Morris Lum who have worked tirelessly on these issues. The addition of a lounge with television monitors, tables and chairs and a bar with a selection of beer and wine have added a new dimension to the programs.

SHS membership now stands at more than 400, the highest membership has been in many years. In order to keep the momentum going, the Board recently formed a Marketing and Membership Committee. Members are Christina Richter, Bill George, Morris Lum, Gregg Lukenbill, and Darcel Harris. We are forming plans now to find events and opportunities to attract new members. You can help by spreading the word about the Society, and encouraging friends and family to join. People are even giving memberships as gifts! If you have ideas on how we can increase members, again please let us know. The

Committee is also putting together a sponsorship plan to attract businesses and groups interested in supporting Sacramento history.

The Board is pleased at the response to our tour of the McClatchy and Joan Didion November tours. This is an indication that our members are looking for opportunities to visit historic spots in Sacramento and northern California. As a group, we can exercise buying power and offer low-cost, quality trips. Again, we welcome your ideas on places to visit and things to do!

The Society is in a strong financial position. We have a savings account drawing interest, and monthly revenues are consistently growing and exceeding monthly expenses. Our mission statement is to "preserve the heritage of the Sacramento region, to act as a resource for inquiries regarding local area history, and to promote a greater awareness of Sacramento's regional and national history."

Sacramento's legacy is worth promoting and bringing to national and international audiences. Google "America's most historic cities." We are nowhere in the top 20! A quick reminder, we are the home of the first transcontinental railroad, the Pony Express, Sutter's Fort, the gold rush, the Western migration, California's capital and many other notable events. The Society can do a great deal in telling the stories and spreading the history of our wonderful city, and seeing if we can land a spot on the list of top historic cities.

We have openings on the Board, as well as opportunities to volunteer. Please contact us on the SHS [website](#) or call me at 916-899-9871.

Finally, we bid adieu to Jenan Saunders, newsletter editor for the past few years, and welcomes Veronica Dempsey to the helm. Thank you, Jenan, and we hope to see you at programs in the future.

Happy Holidays to you and yours, and we look forward to an exciting 2020!

Bill George, President

The Real John Sutter and His World Part II: The Golden Bear Rises (continued from page 1)

In the center of the confusion stood the Swiss/German entrepreneur, Mexican citizen, and American sympathizer, John Sutter, his Fort, and the settlement of New Helvetia. The Mexican-American War brought thousands of American emigrants to California. These reluctant transplants needed property, homes, food, jobs, and manufactured goods. Sutter's industries thrived, and gold was discovered at his sawmill.

Viewing historic pictures, follow California through war, a Gold Rush, the birth of Sacramento City, and the creation of a new State. Learn how these dramatic events affected the politics, the economy, the land, and the people, especially John Sutter, as the Golden Bear rose to greatness. Be sure to [RSVP](#) for this event.



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 visit sachistoricalsociety.org

GOLDEN NUGGETS

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OUT & ABOUT

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION & OTHER INFO
Nov 19	7 PM Doors open 6:00 PM	<i>The Real John Sutter and His World Part II: The Golden Bear Rises</i> Join SHS Board Member Steve Beck for Part II of his "The Real John Sutter and His World" as he continues the story of California's dramatic and engrossing history—from armed occupation, to the gold rush, to statehood.	Columbus Hall 5961 Newman Ct, Sacramento www.sachistoricalsociety.org Members free, Non-members \$10
Dec 6	6 PM to 8 PM	<i>Preservation Roundtable</i> The fall Preservation Roundtable will feature the City of Sacramento's preservation staff and consultants from Page & Turnbull to provide an overview of the first draft of Sacramento's Historic District Plans (HDP) project. This public meeting will focus on the draft historic context and historic survey prepared over the past year.	CADA Courtyard 1322 O St, Sacramento www.preservationsacramento.org \$5 donation requested
Dec 17	6 PM Dinner 6:30 PM Show 7 PM	<i>An Early California Christmas: Dinner & Show</i> Please join the Sacramento Historical Society for a special Sacramento Christmas holiday celebration dinner show featuring members of the Sacramento Theatre Company performing live readings on stage. Santa Claus will also be making a special visit (he's making a list, and checking it twice!).	Columbus Hall 5961 Newman Ct, Sacramento www.sachistoricalsociety.org Members \$25, Non-members \$35, Table \$140