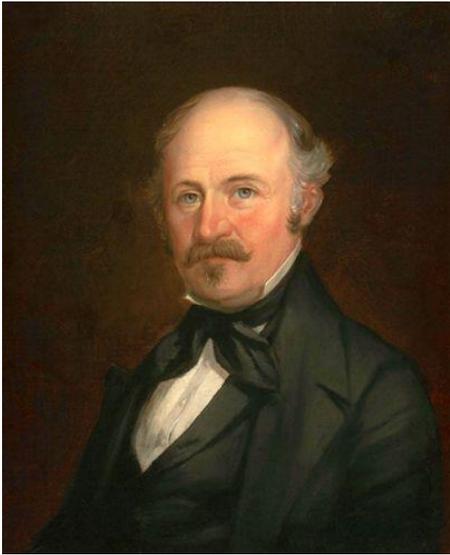


John Sutter, Kit Carson, and Peter Burnett

Prepared by Diane White and Pcyeta Stroud
Renaming Committee Meeting - January 30, 2023

John Sutter



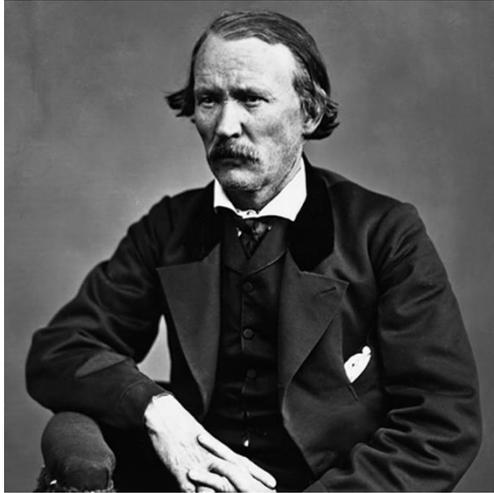
John Sutter, a Swiss immigrant, came to California in 1834 fleeing from debtors' prison, leaving behind a wife and five children to face his creditors. Sutter convinced Juan Bautista Alvarado, the governor of Mexican California, to grant him 48,400 acres, which he called "New Helvetia." His land grant also gave him absolute political, legal, and judicial authority in exchange for preventing further American settlement and controlling the indigenous communities in the region. Contrary to his promises, Sutter promoted American settlement to this Mexican territory, but made good on the agreement to control the Native population by decimating local indigenous communities. As historian Albert Hurtado notes, the destruction of ancient oaks, grasses, and animals -

major food supplies for Miwoks and Nisenans - "troubled him not at all."

Sutter enslaved Native peoples by making war on local tribes, which provided him with a steady source of free labor for his enterprises as well as a source of income by which to reduce his debts through the sale of orphaned children (Hurtado). According to UCLA professor Benjamin Madley in his book, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe*, Sutter kept "600 or 800 Indians in a state of complete slavery" and reportedly had them eat out of livestock troughs (Madley 2016).

Having been weakened by the impact of European diseases, attacks by fur-traders, and capture and enslavement by Spanish missionaries and Mexican rancho owners, some Miwok and Nisenan residents were drawn to Sutter's trading post for the security that Sutter offered them. However, once working for Sutter, the threat of violence prevented indigenous people from leaving, which meant their permanent enslavement (Hurtado).

Kit Carson



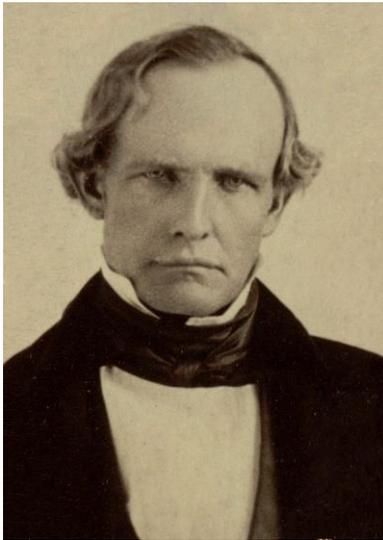
Kit Carson was perhaps the most famous trapper and guide in the West who traveled with John C. Frémont's expeditions in the 1840s. Frémont's wife, Jessie Benton Frémont is largely responsible for creating a flattering portrayal of Carson through her reports, which were widely published in the east.

Serving as Colonel John C. Frémont's scout in California, in 1846 Kit Carson and Frémont's men destroyed a village on the Sacramento River with artillery and rifle fire and then descended upon the village with swords, pistols, axes, and knives. Anyone attempting to escape was chased down and murdered by mounted soldiers wielding

tomahawks. Estimates of victims ranged from 150 to over 700, with perhaps another 300 people killed trying to escape. According to expedition member Thomas E. Breckenridge, the purpose of these mass killings of tribal communities in California was to teach survivors not to challenge whites. Frémont's expedition established Anglo-Americans' approach to California Indians: killing them or removing them by placing them on reservations or rancherias where whites could control and exploit them.

Carson went on to become even more famous for his 1863 campaign against the Navajo when they refused to removal to reservations. Carson commanded an expedition, which killed all Navajo men wherever they were found, burned crops, destroyed villages, slaughtered livestock, and allowed his Ute allies to keep their Navajo captives while selling the women and children to Mexican households (Guild and Carter).

Peter Burnett



California's first governor, Peter Burnett, came from a slaveholding Missouri family. He migrated to the Oregon Territory to escape his debtors and ultimately became the Supreme Judge of Oregon's territorial government. He advocated for the total exclusion of all African Americans from the territory and authored what became known as "Burnett's lash law," which authorized the beating of any free Black people refusing to leave the territory.

As the Gold Rush began in 1848 Burnett migrated to California. While serving on the state Supreme Court, he ordered the extradition of Archy Lee (a slave who the California Court had ruled was a free) back to Mississippi. Burnett, who owned two slaves that he kept in California, advocated for the total exclusion of African Americans in

California, as he had in Oregon.

Regarding California's tribal communities, Burnett gave state money to local militias to exterminate the indigenous peoples and worked with the US government to obtain the resources needed to carry out this genocide. Consequently, with support from the U.S. Army, local militias raided tribal settlements and murdered Native people. Local governments paid bounties to settlers for Native scalps and for the horses of the tribal people they killed. According to the historian Benjamin Madley, about 100,000 Natives in California died during the first two years of the Gold Rush alone; by 1873, only 30,000 Indigenous people remain (Madley 2016). At least 16,000 murders of Native Indians of California are documented during this time (Blakemore, 2019).

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