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## "Saved So Much as Possible for Labour:" Indian Population and the New Helvetia Work Force

ALBERT L. HURTADO

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In the 1840s Captain John A. Sutter transformed part of the Sacramento Valley Indian population into a work force for his New Helvetia settlement and the surrounding ranchos.<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Nisenan and Miwok population had a hunting and gathering economy that apportioned labor between the sexes and followed a well-defined seasonal round.<sup>2</sup> Formerly their work directly benefitted them, providing sustenance, a basis for biological survival and the continuation of traditional lifeways. Sutter and his White associates depended on Indian labor and altered the economic and social fabric of Indian communities to make Native people useful to them. Under Mexican law the newcomers had acquired title to huge tracts of land along the Sacramento River and its tributaries, but as late as 1847 there were fewer than 300 Whites in the valley while there were more than 20,000 Indians.<sup>3</sup> With limited White labor resources available, landholders had no choice but to rely on Indians for their labor requirements. Sutter explicitly recognized the value of Indian labor when he advised one of his White overseers on the treatment of Indian livestock thieves. The guilty should receive "severe punishment," but he advised against actions that would eliminate the Indian population. He thought it was preferable "for those who have land" that Indians were "saved so much as possible for labor."<sup>4</sup> To that end Sutter and other settlers used

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the Native population, converting it into a resource at their disposal. The ways that they did so and the effects on the Indian population are the two subjects of this paper.

A survey of the tasks that Indian workers performed emphasizes the importance of Native labor to White settlers. With the exception of a few White overseers, Indians performed virtually all of the agricultural labor on Sutter's rancho. During the wheat harvest he employed as many as 600 Indian workers in the field.<sup>5</sup> John Bidwell, one of Sutter's White employees who would later become influential in California Indian and political affairs, described a wheat harvest:

Imagine three of [sic] four hundred wild Indians in a grain field, armed, some with sickles, some with butcher-knives, some with pieces of hoop iron roughly fashioned into shapes like sickles, but many having only their hands with which to gather up by small handfuls the dry and brittle grain; and as their hands would become sore, they resorted to dry willow sticks, which were split to sever the straw.<sup>6</sup>

The harvest continued for several weeks with Indian workers carrying the wheat to a large corral where they drove a herd of wild horses through the ripened grain to thrash it. Then they threw shovels full of grain high into the air so that the wind blew away the chaff.<sup>7</sup>

Agriculture was New Helvetia's economic mainstay, but Sutter employed Indians in other enterprises as well. Hawaiian women who had accompanied Sutter to California taught Indian women to wash and sew cloth. Indians operated a distillery, a hat factory, a blanket works and a tannery. Native men trapped furs for Sutter and sailed his launch between New Helvetia and Yerba Buena. They manned Sutter's army, guarded his fort and enabled him to dominate other Indian tribes in the Sacramento Valley. Indians caught salmon for shipment to the coast; they killed deer for their tallow and packed it in barrels for customers at South American ports.<sup>8</sup> On occasion Sutter also used Native handicrafts to curry favor with Whites giving feather blankets and baskets to important visitors.<sup>9</sup>

To make Indians more productive Sutter disciplined them and regularized their work habits. John Yates, a sea captain who piloted Sutter's launch, was impressed with the orderliness of the Indians who worked at New Helvetia. In 1842 he visited Sutter's Hock Farm on the Feather River. Yates "was surprised by the ringing of a very large bell which was used . . . to call

ie natives to work."<sup>10</sup> He had seen the "habits and customs of natives in other countries" and was curious to see the response of the California Indians to the signal. He experienced "extreme satisfaction" for at the sound of the bell twenty Indians hurried to the place of labor and on receipt of their instructions promptly willingly set about the making of Adobes" for Sutter's new use.<sup>11</sup> Yates toured the farm and "found that much had been done and learnt that all was the achievement of the natives."<sup>12</sup> In return for their labor Sutter paid, fed and sometimes housed his Indian workers. For pay Sutter issued Indian workers a metal disk which they hung around their necks. It was perforated with distinctive hole for each standard work period credited to theearer who redeemed the disk at Sutter's store for trade goods.<sup>13</sup> Thus Sutter controlled wages, prices and the flow of Indian trade at New Helvetia. Under this system an Indian had to work for about two weeks to purchase a plain muslin shirt or enough material for a pair of cotton trousers.<sup>14</sup>

According to Indian oral history, Sutter reserved his metal currency for the Indians who customarily worked for him while using a different standard of remuneration for Indians who were forced to work on his rancho. During a season when Sutter was short of Indian labor, he sent his army to the foothills near Auburn to capture additional Nisenan men for the harvest. At night Sutter's armed Indian guards kept them in a high corral. They were fed very little and many of them lost a great deal of weight. After the harvest Sutter released them paying each man with a small string of beads.<sup>15</sup>

Sutter fed his workers with the produce of New Helvetia, beef from his herds and wheat from his fields. Cooks barbecued the beef directly on hot coals, but the Indians' principal ration consisted of cooked wheat that was served in long communal troughs. The practice of feeding was distasteful for Heinrich Lienhard, one of Sutter's White employees, because it reminded him of feeding pigs.<sup>16</sup> According to a Nisenan account the Indians ate a mixture of boiled beef and wheat in a device "like a hog's feeding trough."<sup>17</sup> Eating under these circumstances could cause problems because the participants had to compete for the best food. Sometimes one of the Indians would reach over one of his fellows at the trough to get a bone that "dripped and burned" the others' backs.<sup>18</sup> The Nisenan person who told this story believed that when Indians worked for Sutter they ate "like hogs."<sup>19</sup>

Living conditions among Sutter's Indian workers varied considerably. The Nisenan people who lived close to the fort probably slept in their own houses even when they were employed. When John C. Frémont and his exploring party entered California in 1844, their first contact with New Helvetia occurred when they entered a Nisenan *ranchería* about ten miles up the American River from the fort. Frémont found a "large Indian village, where the people looked clean, and wore cotton shirts and other articles of dress."<sup>20</sup> When he asked about Sutter, a well dressed Indian addressed him in Spanish, "I am a vaquero . . . in the service of Capt. Sutter," he said, "and the people of this *rancheria* work for him."<sup>21</sup> According to Frémont, these Indians appeared to be living relatively well, but other Indian workers were confined within the fort's walls. Lienhard was responsible for locking Indian men and women together in a large room at night to keep them from escaping. The room had no bedding and the inmates had to sleep on the bare floor. Lienhard recalled that when he opened the door in the morning "the odor that greeted me was overwhelming, for no sanitary arrangements had been provided."<sup>22</sup> He believed that these conditions caused large scale desertion of Indian workers during the day.<sup>23</sup>

Sutter tried to make sure that his Indian workers were clothed with at least a cotton shirt, but this goal was not always met. In 1845 Sutter wrote to William Leidesdorff requesting some brown manta cloth for his "boys and girls of the house, about 100, who are nearly all in rags and naked."<sup>24</sup> He was concerned because "when strangers come here it looks very bad, . . ."<sup>25</sup> Eventually Sutter wanted to provide his workers with blankets to cut down on the expense for manta cloth.

Besides employing Indians on his own rancho, Sutter supplied Indian workers to other settlers. As early as 1839 Sutter told Ignacio Martinez that he could provide Indian workers for him.<sup>26</sup> Sutter's role as a supplier of Indian labor was an integral part of his debt-burdened financial situation. For example, beginning in 1839 Sutter purchased goods from Antonio Suñol partially paying him with beaver pelts, branding irons, brandy, deer tallow and wheat. In June 1844 he still owed Suñol and agreed to provide him with thirteen Indian workers. The terms of this agreement are not known, but Suñol may have reduced Sutter's debt in return for the services of the Indians who

remained with the Mexican *ranchero* through September.<sup>27</sup> The following year Sutter promised to send Suñol thirty Indians by way of John Marsh's farm. "I shall send you some young Indians," he added, "after our campaign against the horse-thieves, . . ." <sup>28</sup> A few weeks later Marsh informed Suñol that the Indians arrived "as usual, dying of hunger, and I gave them the meat of two calves, for which, if you think right, you can put to my account six dollars."<sup>29</sup> According to Sutter these Indians were "among the best we have, and work with a good will."<sup>30</sup> They have never been associated with the mission Indians on the coast and were "perfectly guileless."<sup>31</sup> Sutter sent two Indian interpreters, a boy named Pulé and another man who spoke a bit of Spanish, so that Suñol could communicate with his workers. When Suñol was finished with the Indians he was supposed to tell Sutter so that he could "send to launch to bring them back to their families."<sup>32</sup>

Sutter sent Indian workers to many Whites in northern California including Suñol, Marsh, Henry Delano Fitch, Charles Weber, Vicente Peralta, John Coppinger and William Leidesdorff.<sup>33</sup> The surviving financial details of these transactions are scanty, but among the manuscripts of the Leidesdorff Collection at the Huntington Library there is a financial statement of Leidesdorff's dealings with Sutter from August 1844 to January 1846. According to this record Sutter owed Leidesdorff \$2,198.10. To help pay this debt Sutter charged Leidesdorff for Indian labor as well as other goods and services. After giving himself credit for all these items Sutter reckoned that he owed only \$114.90. By Sutter's figures, \$716.05 of his charges to the merchant were for Indian labor and associated expenses (see Table 1).<sup>34</sup> In other words, Sutter was able to liquidate nearly one-third of his debt by supplying Leidesdorff with Indian workers.

Sutter's accounting shows that different types of workers had different value on the California frontier and that he charged higher rates for shorter periods of service. For example, Sutter received four dollars per day for Indian boys kept for only three days, or the equivalent of sixty dollars per month. On the other hand, Sutter received eight to ten dollars per month for Indians whom he sent to Leidesdorff for two months or more. *Vaqueros* were worth more than other Indian workers. Equipped with two horses each they returned three dollars per day to Sutter. His account also indicates that there was some dissatisfaction

**Table 1: A Synopsis of Credit Associated With Indian Services Provided to William Leidesdorff Between August 1, 1844 and January 27, 1846, Compiled by John A Sutter.**

Number of Indians and Services Rendered	Rate Charged	Sub-Total
Passage of two Indian children to Yerba Buena		\$ 10.00
Two Indian boys for three days	\$ 4.00	12.00
Services of two Indians from April 9 to September 5, "having left previous to this date" four months, 21 days	8.00	76.92
Four vaqueros and eight horses, 13 days	12.00	[sic] 144.00
"Services of Mobe (Ind)" 2½ months	8.00	20.00
"6 months and 19 days service of 2 Indians"	8.00	106.13
"6 months service of Sula"		56.00
"5 months & 7 days service of 6 Ind who ran way on 16 September."		251.00
"2 months Service of Manl. [Manuel?]"	20.00	40.00
Total		\$716.05

among the Indians who went to Leidesdorff since six of them ran away. Two other Indians "left previous" to the date that the document was executed, but no cause was cited.<sup>35</sup>

Correspondence between Sutter and Leidesdorff reveals other characteristics to the traffic in Indian people. In the spring of 1846 Leidesdorff requested nine Indians including a girl, but Sutter could not comply immediately because it was too early in the year and he did not have enough workers for his own rancho.<sup>36</sup> Several weeks later Sutter begged off again claiming that he only had a few new hands from the mountains. He promised to send the merchant ten or twelve "selected Indians . . . which will be of some service to you," as well as "6 new hands for Vicente Peralta, and five Sawyers and Shingel makers to Denis [sic] Martin."<sup>37</sup> Although Sutter could not yet supply adult Indians to Leidesdorff, he sent him "two Indian Girls, of which you will take which you like best, the other is for Mr. Ridley whom I promised one longer as two year's [sic] ago."<sup>38</sup> Sutter added, "As this shall never be considered an article of trade [I] make you a present with the Girl."<sup>39</sup> This was a curious statement because Sutter made a distinction between the Indian girls that he sent to Leidesdorff and Ridley and the other Indians including children whose services obviously were an article of trade. John Chamberlain, a blacksmith who worked for Sutter, reported that it was "customary for Capt Sutter to buy and sell Indian boys & girls" at New Helvetia.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, Leidesdorff not only accepted the Indian girls from Sutter, he gave one of them to Mrs. William G. Rae, widow of the Hudson's Bay Company representative in California.<sup>41</sup> On occasion the overseer of Leidesdorff's Sacramento Valley rancho sent Indian children to Yerba Buena by way of Sutter's launch.<sup>42</sup>

The employment of valley Indians at New Helvetia and elsewhere made rancherías vulnerable to attack by outsiders. In the fall of 1840 several San José mission Indians arrived at Sutter's with a pass to visit their relatives and friends at the Sakayakumne Miwok ranchería on the Mokelumne River. They wanted to trade for feathers, baskets and women. Julian, one of Sutter's Indian workers, asked for permission to accompany the Christians to Sakayakumne. Sutter complied, stipulating that they were not to fight with other Indians and that they could trade for women who volunteered to leave their native ranchería.<sup>43</sup> The mission Indians and Julian departed, but they did not go to Sakayakumne. Instead, they went to the Yalasumne Nisenan ranchería on the American River. All of the able-bodied Yalasumne men were with Sutter assisting with the harvest. Julian and the others attacked the defenseless ranchería, killed five men and kidnapped the women and children whom they intended to sell to rancheros. According to a Nisenan account, an old man saved himself by jumping into the river and hiding in a beaver's hole. Later he went to Sutter's and alerted the Yalasumne men. The next morning Sutter took a force of "twenty men and a lot of Indians" and captured the assailants about thirty miles south of the fort on the Sacramento River. Sutter executed Julian and his accomplices to make an example of them.<sup>44</sup> Afterwards he wrote to José de Jesus Vallejo, secular administrator of the Mission San José and brother of the powerful land owner General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, explaining that he wanted no more mission Indians in his territory because they frightened his workers and made them flee to their rancherías.<sup>45</sup>

Although Sutter wanted to protect his workers' families, he could not always do so. As late as June 1846 Sutter complained that he could not supply Leidesdorff with Indians since "all remain at home to protect their family's [sic]," because of a Muquelemne Miwok uprising.<sup>46</sup>

The incorporation of Indians in the California frontier labor force had adverse effects on their family life since employment separated parents and children and made communities vulner-



able to attack when the men were away, but Sutter also interfered directly in traditional Indian marriage customs. When he arrived in California the Miwok and Nisenan practiced polygyny, a custom that permitted a few powerful men to have more than one wife, although most men had only one.<sup>47</sup> Sutter decided to restrict polygyny among the Indians because "the chiefs had so many wives that the young men complained they could have none."<sup>48</sup> To change this situation Sutter instituted a new system of marriage. He lined up the Indians with men in one row and women in another. "Then I told the women one after another," Sutter recalled, "to come forward and select for a husband the man they wanted."<sup>49</sup> Afterwards Sutter forbade the chiefs to have "more than one or two wives each."<sup>50</sup>

Sutter's reminiscences do not identify the Indian groups in which he restricted polygyny, but it is reasonable to assume that he did it in Nisenan country where his influence was greatest. Young Indian men without wives may have supported Sutter's interference in ranchería social arrangements, but the choice of mates was left to the women. Whether this was Sutter's decision or the Indians' is not known. However, the method of choosing a husband that Sutter described was a radical departure from the usual practice where the suitor and the woman's parents arranged the marriage. Moreover, Sutter did not eliminate polygyny but restricted it to chiefs, or captains as he often called them.<sup>52</sup> In some cases Sutter appointed the captains. Thus one of the distinctions that an Indian captain received for cooperating with Sutter was the privilege of having two wives.

At New Helvetia Sutter was the most important captain and he had several wives. His first wife was Anna Dübeld who remained in Switzerland until 1850 when she joined Sutter in California. In the meantime he lived with the Hawaiian woman Manaiki whom he brought from the Sandwich Islands in 1839.<sup>53</sup> Eventually Sutter permitted Manaiki to marry Kanaka Harry, also a Native Hawaiian, and gave the couple a piece of land on the American River in return for their years of faithful service.<sup>54</sup> Manaiki was Sutter's favorite California consort, but according to Lienhard he was intimately involved with Indian women too. Lienhard claimed that at the fort there was a special room for Indian women next to Sutter's chambers and that there were a "large number of Indian girls who were constantly at his beck and call, . . ." <sup>55</sup> The overseer, who was not one of Sutter's admirers, stated that Sutter had sexual relations with girls as young

as ten. After they become ill Sutter banished the girls from the fort and they died of neglect. One of these unions allegedly produced a child that later died.<sup>56</sup> Lienhard's unflattering description of Sutter's sexual relationships may have been exaggerated, but an 1846 statistical statement shows that there were ten mixed-blood children at New Helvetia, although the fathers were not identified.<sup>57</sup>

Whatever Sutter's personal life may have been like, White men customarily had Indian wives in the California interior, and some of these relationships were polygynous. Yates recalled that Nicolaus Allgeier, a German emigrant who worked for Sutter, had an "adopted wife (a California Native)" who called him "Nicholassee."<sup>58</sup> He also reported that Sutter's Irish blacksmith, John Chamberlain, was "much given to gazing at the native females."<sup>59</sup> Yates learned that Chamberlain "had been married nineteen times to native women & to my own certain knowledge . . . wedded . . . an American girl of thirteen."<sup>60</sup> Yates also enjoyed the company of two Indian women. Later he married a sixteen year old English girl, but the marriage soon broke up because the Indian women refused to give up their White husband, a development that Yates found most agreeable.<sup>61</sup>

Michael C. Nye, another of Sutter's former employees, also lived with two Indians. In 1847 he married Harriet Pike, a sister of one of the Donner Party women. Apparently Nye was willing to dissolve his relationship with the Indians, but he was very upset when one of them left taking his infant daughter to Sutter's Fort where he feared she would sicken and die. Nye attempted to force the woman to return but was unsuccessful. Finally she agreed to live with an Indian vaquero at a rancho near Nye, an arrangement that was satisfactory for them, but their little girl died.<sup>62</sup>

The emotional strength of Indian and White marriages is difficult to judge. For some White men the acquisition of an Indian wife was merely a temporary arrangement to be abandoned as soon as White women became available for marriage. Indian women's motives are harder to know because of the lack of sources, but marriage to White men may have provided them with security in a country that was dominated by Whites who regularly separated Indian families in order to satisfy their labor needs.

The motives of Indians and Whites no doubt differed, but they created a pattern of sexual relations and marriage that was

quite different from traditional Native and White practices. While Sutter claimed that he restricted polygyny to benefit unmarried Indian men, it seems that White men were permitted to have more than one wife. Native men were once again at a disadvantage because the privilege of multiple wives was transferred from Indian to White men.

Between 1839 and 1846 Sutter and his White contemporaries substantially altered Indian economic and social life. For New Helvetia there is little statistical evidence to help explain the possible demographic effects of White intervention in Indian culture. Fortunately, in 1846 Sutter had one of his employees take a census of Indians living in the country between the Mokelumne and the Feather Rivers (see Table 2).<sup>63</sup> Although this document is insufficient as a basis for a complete demographic study, it is the most detailed known Indian census for the period. According to this source there were 2,768 Indians in thirty-four rancherías and at New Helvetia. The Indian population was sexually imbalanced with 1,309 males outnumbering 1,167 females. The census and a later amendment to it indicated that there were only 218 White males, seventy-one White females, one Negro man and five Hawaiians, one of whom was a woman.<sup>64</sup> Males outnumbered females in all ethnic groups and White women were in very short supply. Indian men outnumbered Indian women, but the margin of difference varied from ranchería to ranchería. Overall, the sex ratio for Indians was 113.7 (males per 100 females), but the census showed that the aggregates for tame Indians had significantly higher sex ratios than the aggregates for wild Indians (see Table 3). Sutter described the difference between wild and tame Indians in a letter:

the tame Indians are what is called the Christian Indians and those that have been civilized since the settlement of the valley by the whites and are employed in the shops of the fort and as Baqueros and working men on the different farms.<sup>65</sup>

"Wild" Indians lived in their rancherías and came "into the settlements at Harvest time and assist[ed] in gathering the crops."<sup>66</sup> Thus all Indians in the census worked for Whites, but those who were most closely associated with them had the highest sex ratios.

To summarize Table 3, the wild Indian aggregate had a sex ratio that was within the normal range, although individual

Table 2: A Census of Indians at New Helvetia in 1846

	Village Name	[Current Spelling]	Tribes	Males	Females	Total
Tame or	Sakisimne			28	16	44
Neophyte	Shonomes			11	6	17
Indians	Tawalemnes		Yokuts?	25	21	46
	Seywamenes	Seguamne	Miwok	21	24	45
	Mukelemnes	Muquelemne	Miwok	45	36	81
	Cosumne	Cosomne	Miwok	34	25	59
<u>Sub-Total</u>			<u>164</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>292</u>	
Wild or	Sagayacumne	Sakayacumne	Miwok	27	20	47
Gentile	Locklomnes	Locolomne	Miwok	43	45	88
Indians	Olonutchamné			31	23	54
	Newatchumne	Newachumne	Miwok	31	30	61
	Yumagatock			21	15	36
	Shalachmushumne	Shalachmushumne	Miwok	32	18	50
	Omutchamne	Amuchamne	Miwok	18	9	27
	Yusumne			35	49	84
	Yaleyumne			124	113	237
	Yamlock-lock			40	27	67
	Sapototot			45	29	74
	Yalesumne	Yalisumni	Nisenan	228	257	485
	Wapoomne	Wapumni	Nisenan	75	67	142
	Kisky	Kishkish	Nisenan	48	45	93
	Secumne	Sekumni	Nisenan	23	26	49
	Pushune	Pusune	Nisenan	43	40	83
	Oiokecumne			16	19	35
	Nemshau			29	21	50
	Palanshau			17	18	35
	Ustu			25	14	39
	Olash	Ollash	Nisenan	30	22	52
	Yukulme	Yukulme	Nisenan	12	11	23
	Hock	Hok	Nisenan	39	40	79
	Sishu	Sisum	Nisenan	54	49	103
	Mimal	Mimal	Nisenan	22	16	38
Yubu	Yupu	Nisenan	56	65	121	
Bubu			19	16	35	
Honcut	Honkut	Nisenan	41	45	86	
<u>Sub-Total</u>				<u>1224</u>	<u>1149</u>	<u>2373</u>
	Tame Indians employed by Sutter			<u>85</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>103</u>
<u>Total</u>				<u>1473</u>	<u>1295</u>	<u>2768</u>

This table replicates the data in [McKinstry], November 1846, [Population Enumeration of the Sacramento Valley] MS 12, 13, MKP. The Village Names in the first column are spelled like McKinstry's original with the exception of five corrections made by Sutter in his "Estimate Indian Population—Dec. 20th 1847," MS 14-15, MKP. The column headed "[Current Spelling]" lists the village names that can be identified in *California, Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, ed. Heizer, and gives the current spelling. The third column indicates the tribal affiliation of the villages identified in the handbook. The last three columns give the numbers of Indian males and females that McKinstry noted in the census.

Table 3: Sex Ratios for Indians at New Helvetia in 1846

Major Sub-Group Aggregates	Males	Females	Total	Sex Ratio (Males/100 Females)
1. Wild or Gentile Indians	1224	1149	2373	106.5
2. Tame or Neophyte Indians	164	128	292	128.1
3. Tame Indians Employed by Sutter	85	18	103	472.2
4. All Tame Indians (2 + 3)	249	146	395	170.5
5. Total Indian Population (1 + 2 + 3)	1473	1295	2768	113.7

rancherías had markedly different characteristics.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the sex ratio for tame Indians appears to be abnormal with a much higher sex ratio. The least normal sex ratio is found in the small tame Indian population employed by Sutter. As a general rule populations with a deficiency of fertile females have difficulty in maintaining a healthy birth rate and their numbers decline, but without a knowledge of age distribution it is not possible to state with precision the reproductive potential of each ranchería and the aggregate populations.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, sexually imbalanced populations can occur randomly in human populations.<sup>69</sup> We also lack information about the rate of intermarriage between Indian groups which may have improved their reproductive potential. Still, the census is suggestive, but does it indicate an overabundance of Indian men imported from outside the reporting area, a dirth of women who had been exported from New Helvetia, or a higher mortality rate for women? The census together with other evidence presented here indicates that all three explanations are plausible.

Sherburne F. Cook examined similar sex ratios for Indians in the California missions. He attributed them to two factors. More males were recruited into the mission population, and diseases, especially syphilis, killed more females than males. At the missions the spread of diseases was accelerated by sexual relations between the races, aggregation of the Indians, increased communication between widely separated areas, poor sanitation and diet.<sup>70</sup> Similar conditions were present at New Helvetia. The incidence of syphilis is not known, but periodically other epidemics occurred that killed thousands of Indians.<sup>71</sup>

Although the demographic data are imperfect, some conclusions can be based on them when they are viewed in the light of other evidence of social conditions at New Helvetia. The Indian

population was under stress. Whites took over their country and used Indians to work the land and often cohabited with Native women. The new landholders exported Indian workers to other parts of California, thus converting Nisenan and Miwok people into human resources that non-Indians used to exploit the frontier region. New diseases infected Native people without immunities and many of them died. In a context of demographic decline, the relative lack of women assumed great importance because it limited Indians' ability to recover from population losses. Even though White settlement was relatively peaceful, it contributed to the reduction of Indian numbers. Far from preparing them for a future of peaceful relations and gainful employment in White society, the Indians' place in the work force weakened them as a whole and helped to make their country more accessible to Whites. It is true that some Native people benefitted from Sutter's presence inasmuch as they received trade goods, food, protection and power from their association with him. The benefits to these individuals were short-lived, however, and should be seen against the background of a declining Native population dominated by a White minority. In the end, Indians, who were "saved so much as possible for labour," were saved for their utility to White landholders who gave little thought to the long term consequences for their workers.

#### NOTES

1. The late John A. Hawgood wrote a useful historiographical essay on the published and unpublished sources on Sutter, "John Augustus Sutter: A Reappraisal," *Arizona and the West* 4 (Winter 1962):345-356. Hawgood's article omitted, of course, subsequently published writings on Sutter including Richard Dillon, *Fool's Gold: The Decline and Fall of Captain John Sutter of California* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1967); Oscar Lewis, *Sutter's Fort: Gateway to the Gold Fields* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); and two articles in *The American West* 17 (May/June 1980), Richard Dillon, "Captain John Augustus Sutter: Visionary of the Western Frontier, Victim of the Gold Rush," 4-10, 35-9, and Frank Lortie, "Sutter's Fort: Reconstruction of a Feudal Community," 12-14, 60.
2. Robert F. Heizer, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: California* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 387-413.
3. J. A. Sutter, Statistics of the District East of San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers, December 20, 1847, MS 28-29, McKinstry Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as MKP). Scholars have puzzled over the problem of accurately estimating California's pre-contact

Indian population for more than one hundred years. The most recent article on the subject is Russell Thornton, "Recent Estimates of the Prehistoric California Indian Population," *Current Anthropology* 21 (October 1980):702-704.

4. Sutter to Reading, May 11, 1845, Reading Collection, California Room, State Library, Sacramento (hereafter cited as RC).

5. John Augustus Sutter, *Reminiscences of General John Augustus Sutter*, MS, Bancroft Library.

6. Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *Echoes from the Past, by General John Bidwell, in Camp and Cabin by Rev. John Steele* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly, 1928), p. 82.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

8. Sutter, *Reminiscences*.

9. Webfoot [William D. Phelps], *Fore and Aft: Or, Leaves from the Life of an Old Soldier* (Boston: Nichols and Hall, 1871), p. 258; and Sutter to William A. Leidesdorff, August 8, 1844, MS 22, Leidesdorff Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California (hereafter cited as LE).

10. Yates, *Sketch of a Journey in the Year 1842 from Sacramento California through the Valley by John Yates of Yatestown*, MS, Bancroft Library (hereafter cited as Yates, Sketch).

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Sutter, *Reminiscences*.

14. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur, trans. and ed., *A Pioneer at Sutter's Fort, 1846-1850: The Adventures of Heinrich Lienhard*, The Calafia Series, No. 3 (Los Angeles: The Calafia Society, 1941), 68.

15. This account was attributed to the late Lizzie Enos, a prominent Maidu woman, and was told to me by Bernice Pate of Auburn, California. For stories by and about Lizzie Enos see Richard Simpson, *Ooti: A Maidu Legacy* (Millbrae, Calif.: Celestial Arts, 1977).

16. Wilbur, p. 68.

17. Hans Jorgen Uldall and William Shipley, *Nisena Texts and Dictionary*, University of California Publications in Linguistics, vol. 46 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 67.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, eds., *The Expeditions of John C. Frémont*, 3 vols. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1970-73), 1: 652.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Wilbur, p. 68.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Sutter to Leidesdorff, July 31, 1845, MS 58, LE.

25. *Ibid.*

26. See Sutter's correspondence with Ignacio Martinez, August 14, September 25, October 9, and October 28, 1839, Sutter Collection, California State Library, Sacramento (hereafter cited as SuC).

27. Sutter to Suñol, June 18, 1844 and August 30, 1844, SuC.

28. Sutter to Suñol, May 19, 1845, SuC.

29. Marsh to Suñol, June 16, 1845, Marsh Collection, California Room, State Library, Sacramento (hereafter cited as MC).

30. Sutter to Suñol, June 14, 1845, SuC.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Ibid.
33. The following documents include references to various rancheros who asked Sutter to supply them with Indians. Sutter to Suñol, June 18, 1844 and June 29, 1844, SuC; Sutter to Henry Delano Fitch, April 17, 1846, MS 391, Fitch Papers, Bancroft Library (hereafter cited as FP); Sutter to Leidesdorff, May 11, 1846, MS 129, LE; Sutter to Marsh, May 17, 1845, MC.
34. Sutter, Account of W. A. Leidesdorff, August 1, 1844 to January 27, 1846, MS 32, LE.
35. Ibid.
36. Sutter to Leidesdorff, April 17, 1846, MS 122.
37. Sutter to Leidesdorff, May 11, 1846, MS 129, LE.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. John Chamberlain, *Memoirs of California Since 1840*, MS, Bancroft Library.
41. Sutter to Leidesdorff, June 1, 1846, MS 137, LE.
42. Ibid.; and Contract between Leidesdorff and Buzzell, April 12, 1845, MS 43, LE.
43. Sutter to José de Jesus Vallejo, October 15, 1840, SuC.
44. Ibid. An elderly Nisenan man, William Joseph, who was born in the 1850s provided a rare Indian account of this conflict in his conversations with Hans Jorgen Uldall in 1930. See Uldall and Shipley, p. 69.
45. October 15, 1840, SuC.
46. Sutter to Leidesdorff, June 1, 1846, MS 137, LE.
47. A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925; rpt. Berkeley: The California Book Company, Ltd., 1953), p. 402.
48. Sutter, *Reminiscences*.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Kroeber, pp. 401–402.
52. Wilbur, p. 68.
53. James Peter Zollinger, *Sutter: The Man and His Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 10.
54. Wilbur, pp. 76–77.
55. Ibid., p. 76.
56. Ibid., pp. 75, 78.
57. Sutter, *Statistics of the District East San Joaquin & Sacramento Rivers*, January 8, 1847, MS 28–29, MKP.
58. Yates, Sketch.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Wilbur, pp. 61–62.
62. Ibid., pp. 53–54.
63. November 1846, MS 12, 13, MKP. Several authors have attributed this document to different employees of Sutter. Cf. Dillon, *Fool's Gold*, p. 275; James A. Bennyhoff, *Ethnogeography of the Plains Miwok*, Center for Archaeological Research at Davis Publication No. 5 (University of California Davis, 1977), p. 35; and Robert F. Heizer and T. R. Hester, "Names and Locations of Some Ethnographic Patwin and Maidu Villages," *Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility* No. 9 (Berkeley: University of Califor-



nia Archaeological Research Facility, 1970), 94. Respectively, they indicate that Lienhard, Gatten and McKinstry compiled the census, although it may have been compiled by several people. Whatever the case, when Lieutenant Henry Halleck of the American Military Governor's staff requested a census of California, Sutter submitted the 1846 census with the addition of John Bidwell's rough estimate of the Indian population north of the Feather River. The 1846 census appears to have been a careful enumeration of the Indian communities between the Feather and Mokelumne Rivers and on the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers' east banks. Sutter claimed it was not possible to expand the enumeration area because "the western side of the California [Sierra Nevada] Mountains is thickly settled with wild Indians who are generally at war with the numerous small tribes at the base and do not visit the Valley. [T]heir number I am not able to give." Sutter to Halleck, December 20, 1847, MS 50-51, MKP. See also Bidwell to Sutter, December 21, 1847, MS 16-19, MKP; Halleck, Circular, September 18, 1847, MS 29a, MKP. For Sutter's spelling corrections of Indian place names see December 20, 1847, MS 14-15, MKP; and the census that was finally sent to Halleck on January 8, 1847, MS 28-29, MKP. MS 12-13 is published in Heizer and Hester, "Names and Locations of Some Ethnographic Patwin and Maidu Villages," p. 96.

64. Sutter, December 20, 1847, MS 28-29, MKP.

65. Sutter to Halleck, December 20, 1847, MS 50-51, MKP.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Michael S. Teitelbaum, "Factors Associated with the Sex Ratio in Human Populations," in *The Structure of Human Populations*, ed., G. A. Harrison and A. J. Boyce (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 90-109.

68. *Ibid.*

69. Carl W. Meister, "Methods for Evaluating the Accuracy of Ethnohistorical Demographic Data on North American Indians: A Brief Assessment," *Ethnohistory* 27 (Spring 1980):153-169.

70. Cook, "The Indian Versus the Spanish Mission," *Ibero-Americana* 21 (1943): 28-34.

71. Accounts of epidemics and their effects on Indian communities during the Sutter years are found in Sutter, et. al., *New Helvetia Diary* (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1939), pp. 28-101; and Wilbur, *Pioneer at Sutter's Fort*, p. 99. Sherburne F. Cook, "The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 43 (1950):303-326; and Alice Bay Maloney, ed., *Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura: John Work's California Expedition, 1832-1833* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945).