

City of Sacramento  
**Preservation Commission Report**  
915 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814  
www.cityofsacramento.org

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**File ID:** 2026-01005

5/20/2026

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**Old Sacramento National Register Update (M26-012)**

File ID: 2026-01005

**Location:** Old Sacramento Historic District, District 4

**Recommendation:** Review and comment.

**Contact:** Sean de Courcy, Preservation Director, (916) 808-2796, sdecourcy@cityofsacramento.org, Community Development Department

**Presenter:** Henry Feuss, Preservation Planner, (916) 808-5880, hfeuss@cityofsacramento.org, Community Development Department

**Attachments:**

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Draft Old Sacramento National Register Nomination Update
- 3-Original National Register Listing
- 4-Presentation

**Description/Analysis**

**Issue/Detail:** In early 2025, the City of Sacramento Preservation Office, in partnership with the City's Department of Convention and Cultural Services History Division, began an effort to update the Old Sacramento Historic District's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing to include a more inclusive history of the district. Following a competitive bidding process, Page and Turnbull was awarded the contract to produce the NRHP listing update. Staff is requesting the Preservation Commission provide a review and comment on the first administrative draft of the NRHP listing update (attached).

Old Sacramento, designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1965 and automatically listed on the NRHP when it was established in 1966, has a current nomination that primarily focuses on the extant buildings from the 1850s business district. The existing nomination also does not clearly define contributing and non-contributing resources or character-defining features of the district.

Additionally, this historic narrative overlooks the rich and diverse history of the area. Prior to colonial settlement, the land that encompasses Old Sacramento was home to seven Native communities

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whose contributions and experiences remain largely unrecognized in the district. The Gold Rush era drew a multicultural array of people from around the globe, including Chinese immigrants, African Americans, Hispanics, and people from various other European and Pacific regions. This diversity significantly shaped the cultural and social landscape of the district, but that story is currently unseen by the average visitor to Old Sacramento. Finally, despite the presence and impact of women throughout the district's history, their impact on the district is not appropriately celebrated in public history displays.

In addition to the groups identified above, during the mid-20th century, the area known as the West End, part of Old Sacramento, became a vibrant multicultural hub for Sacramento. Prior to Urban Renewal/Redevelopment, this area was home to a variety of immigrant, Hispanic, Black, Asian, and LGBTQ+ communities. These communities contributed to the economic and social fabric of Sacramento, yet this period is not identified as a significant part of the district's history, despite the incredible impact these people had on the physical and cultural development of Sacramento. The proposed project aims to document and highlight these significant contributions by creating a more comprehensive and inclusive historical narrative through an updated NRHP nomination.

Staff is requesting the Preservation Commission review and comment on the first administrative draft of the Old Sacramento NRHP listing update prior to the finalization of the document. There will be an additional public comment period prior to the submission of the nomination.

**Policy Considerations:** Since 2001, the City of Sacramento has been a Certified Local Government (CLG). CLGs are municipalities that have demonstrated through a certification process administered by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and the National Park Service (NPS) a commitment to local historic preservation. The CLG program was federally mandated as part of the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

One of the requirements of the CLG program is to facilitate and participate in the process of nominating historic resources to the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places. Bringing forward draft nominations for review by the Preservation Commission ensures compliance with this requirement, provides an opportunity for public comment, and allows the Preservation Commission to advise on the merits of the nomination prior to state consideration.

The Old Sacramento Historic District NRHP update advances the City's CLG responsibilities by documenting a grouping of properties of local, state, and potentially national significance.

**Economic Impacts:** None.

**Environmental Considerations:** This report concerns administrative activities that will not have a significant effect on the environment and would be exempt from the California Environmental Quality

Act (CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3)). Additionally, this report concerns administrative activities of government that do not constitute a “project” as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378(b)(5)).

**Sustainability:** Not Applicable.

**Commission/Committee Action:** None.

**Rationale for Recommendation:** The Preservation Commission serves as the City’s advisory body on matters relating to historic resources and plays a key role in fulfilling the City’s Certified Local Government (CLG) responsibilities. By reviewing and commenting on draft National Register of Historic Places nominations, the Preservation Commission ensures that local perspectives, priorities, and expertise are incorporated into the state and federal designation process.

**Financial Considerations:** Not applicable.

**Local Business Enterprise (LBE):** Not applicable.

**..End**

# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Old Sacramento Historic District

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: Bounded by U.S. Interstate-5 to the east; midline of Sacramento River to west; I Street Bridge on and off ramps to north; Capitol Mall and Tower Bridge to south.

City or town: Sacramento State: California County: Sacramento

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_A      \_\_\_B      \_\_\_C      \_\_\_D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>75</u>	<u>9</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>17</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>80</u>	<u>28</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 73

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade: financial institution, business, organizational, specialty store, department store, restaurant

Domestic: Hotel

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Social: Meeting Hall

Recreation and Culture: theater

Government: city hall, public works

Industry Processing/Extraction: communications facility, processing site

Transportation: rail-related, water-related, pedestrian-related

Agriculture/Subsistence: animal facility

### **Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade: business, specialty store, department store, restaurant

Transportation: rail-related, water-related, pedestrian-related

Recreation and culture: museum, theater, outdoor recreation,  
monument/marker

Landscape: parking lot

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## **7. Description**

### **Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian: Italianate

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century: Greek Revival

No Style

Other: Postmodern

Other: Contemporary

Mixed

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

WOOD

STUCCO

BRICK

STONE: Granite

CONCRETE

### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### **Summary Paragraph**

Old Sacramento Historic District

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The Old Sacramento Historic District is a contiguous district that occupies a 76-acre site along the east bank of the Sacramento River in downtown Sacramento, California, 13.8 acres of which are managed as Old Sacramento State Historic Park. The district extends into the Sacramento River, an integral cultural place to the local Native American peoples who have inhabited the area since time immemorable and a defining feature in the establishment of the City of Sacramento at this location. As such, the district contains the site of the City of Sacramento's earliest urban development, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, and includes the largest concentration of Gold Rush-era commercial buildings on the Pacific Coast. It also reflects an innovative approach to urban redevelopment led by the City of Sacramento and California State Parks in the mid-twentieth century, which envisioned the "Old Sacramento Historic Area" as a tool for revitalizing Sacramento's downtown. As a result of these efforts, the district presents a cohesive collection of restored original commercial and mixed-used buildings dating from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, as well as reconstructions of buildings from this period that were developed as part of the 1965 master plan for the "Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park."

Contributing resources to the district include 75 restored original or reconstructed buildings, three sites, and two objects. Noncontributing resources consist of a total of 28 buildings, sites, structures, and objects that do not date to the city's early development period or which were not completed as part of the 1965 master plan effort. Relatively few alterations or new buildings have been completed in the district that were not included in the master plan. As such, the district has a high degree of historic integrity and conveys both its significant role in the establishment of the City of Sacramento and the city's mid-twentieth century redevelopment.

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## **Narrative Description**

### Setting, Location, and Arrangement

The Old Sacramento Historic District is located in Downtown Sacramento. It is bounded by and cut off from rest of the surrounding area by the U.S. Interstate 5 (I-5) Highway to east, the midline of Sacramento River to west, I Street Bridge on and off highway ramps to north, and Capitol Mall and the Tower Bridge to south. Former Southern Pacific Railroad railyards are located to the northwest of the district. Vehicular entrances to Old Sacramento can be accessed from I Street at the north end of the district, and from Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets at south end. Pedestrian-only entrances to the district are accessed from the K Street pedestrian tunnel under the I-5 Highway, which also connects the district to the Downtown Commons (DOCO). Bicycle access is provided along the Sacramento riverfront via the Sacramento River Bike Trail, which spans the eastern edge of the district.

The Old Sacramento State Historic Park, owned and operated by California State Parks, occupies a 28-acre area within the northern end of the historic district. District contributors located in the State Park include the 1849 Scene, Big Four Buildings, Eagle Theatre, and B.F. Hastings Building.

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The Old Sacramento Historic District is characterized by a street grid that originates at the Sacramento riverfront, with large city blocks bisected by alleyways that descend in elevation to the original street level. Parcels are mostly rectangular. A few larger, irregularly shaped parcels are located along the western banks of the Sacramento River and to the north bordering the I-5 on-ramps.

### Buildings & Structures

Of the 75 contributing buildings to the district, 36 are restored original buildings, 38 are reconstructions of buildings that existed in the area during the 1849-1870 period, as envisioned by the 1965 Master Plan, and one is a partial reconstruction and relocation of a historic building facade. The reconstructed buildings were completed as accurately as possible given the resources available at the time, according to the standards set by the 1965 Master Plan. In terms of architectural styles, most of the buildings reflect the Italianate style, followed by the Greek Revival style, vernacular form, and lastly a transitional Greek Revival/Italianate style. Most of these buildings represent commercial property types appropriate for their historic period, including restaurants, hotels, offices, and stores, while a few, such as the Big Four Building and the Central Pacific Railroad Depot, are reconstructed properties intended for interpretive purposes. All of the buildings have been adapted for their new use as part of the Old Sacramento Historic District according to the 1965 Master Plan. The buildings range in height from one to three stories, with nearly half constructed with two stories, around one-quarter with one story, and around one-fifth designed with three stories. Nearly three-quarters of these buildings have a rectangular ground plan, while around one-quarter have an irregular plan. Flat roofs with parapets predominate, followed by buildings with gable roofs. All of the original buildings were constructed with brick structural systems. By contrast, all of the reconstructed buildings feature either a wood or steel structural system. With regard to exterior wall cladding, most of the buildings are sheathed in brick, followed by stucco, wood, brick and stucco, brick and wood, and lastly brick and granite. In terms of fenestration, nearly three-quarters of the buildings display a symmetrical arrangement of windows and doors.

In addition to buildings, the district also contains two contributing objects: the Pony Express Statue and Theodore Judah Monument; and two sites: the former Adams-McNeil & Co. Building site and the City Market Site.

### Landscape and Small-Scale Features

Other landscape features within the district include raised streets, hollow sidewalks, and 14-foot-wide wood plank sidewalks that are found throughout the district, as well as the reconstructed Central Pacific tracks and the 1850 earthen levee along the Sacramento River. Streets are paved with a mix of asphalt, cobblestones, cobblestone gutters, and decomposed granite. Sidewalks in front of most buildings in the district are raised with wood plank surface coverings. Other landscape elements include wood bollards that line the eastern border of the California State Parks section within the district along the western side of Firehouse Alley.

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Streets are organized within a rectilinear grid, with two north/south oriented streets (Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets) and four east/west aligned streets (I, J, K, and L Streets). Most of the streets are paved with asphalt, except for Front Street between J and L Streets, which has been reconstructed with cobblestones), and the dirt and gravel section of Front Street north of J Street to the foot of I Street. Some of the streets feature cobbled gutters, along Front Street between J and L, and on I, J, K, and L Streets between Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. Alleyways divide blocks along a north/south axis and are paved with concrete and cobblestones. Sidewalks are made of concrete topped with wood planking and sheltered beneath wide, shed-roof, commercial canopies. Where buildings were not raised to meet the new road grade, spaces in front of the original first floor now beneath the sidewalks have created hollow sidewalk segments with sub-surface features ranging from brick street retaining walls, corbelled buttresses, and timber supports to the original first-story facades of buildings. Most hollow sidewalk segments feature ceilings constructed with a wood post and beam structural system. Less common are those with barrel-vaulted ceilings constructed of brick.

#### District Integrity

A historic district possesses collective significance as a group of buildings where the value of the district as a whole is greater than the sum of each individual building's significance and integrity. The contributing buildings within the Old Sacramento Historic District are original restored buildings dating to the nineteenth century or reconstructions of original 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings that existed in the district. A handful involved relocation or partial relocation of a building from nearby blocks, which took place as part of the mid-twentieth century redevelopment project. Although reconstructions compose just over half of the historic district's contributing buildings, Old Sacramento retains sufficient integrity to express its historic significance as a Gold Rush-era commercial core and the culmination of an innovative mid-twentieth century urban planning and historic preservation project.

The Old Sacramento Historic District retains its integrity of location and setting through its concentration of original restored historic buildings and infill of vacant lots with reconstructions of buildings that existed on those sites during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and a continued visual connection between the City of Sacramento's original blocks and the Sacramento River. Although the district's historic setting has been compromised by the adjacent I-5 Highway and larger modern structures at the borders of the district, the visual impact of these intrusions has been mitigated by historically appropriate trees and plantings, and visual experiences within the district strongly convey the sense of a nineteenth-century urban commercial setting. Cottonwood, eucalyptus, ailanthus, and locust trees have been used as perimeter plantings to screen view sheds from modern features.

The Old Sacramento Historic District retains its integrity of design through the preservation of the city's original rectilinear street grid plan with orthogonal blocks intersected by a north-south oriented alley (as opposed to the east/west aligned alleys outside of the district), surviving raised streets and hollow sidewalks from flood protection efforts of the nineteenth century; cobblestone paving and raised boardwalk sidewalks; densely developed blocks with a continuous street wall of one- to three-story commercial and mixed-use buildings; and railroad tracks along the

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Sacramento Riverfront. The individual buildings retain the character-defining design features consistent with the original Greek Revival and Italianate architectural styles or nineteenth-century vernacular construction in which they were built.

Old Sacramento also retains a sufficient amount of its integrity of materials and workmanship to convey its significance as an urban district composed largely of Greek and Italianate-style commercial and industrial buildings. Materials and workmanship characteristic of the nineteenth century are expressed through brick, granite, or stucco wall cladding; ornamental wood detailing, such as carved corbels, dentil molding, window and door surrounds, and turned wood columns; and cast-iron columns and balcony grills. On reconstructed buildings, an attempt was made to use the same level of detailing and workmanship displayed in the original buildings.

Through its retention of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, Old Sacramento is also able to retain its integrity of feeling and association. The district continues to clearly convey the sense of being a nineteenth-century urban city center that was restored and redeveloped as part of a mid-twentieth century master planned project. The district maintains its historic associations with the establishment of the City of Sacramento as its original commercial and institutional core, important developments in statewide and national transportation and communication history, and innovative urban and historic preservation planning of the mid-twentieth century.

#### Integrity of Contributors and Noncontributors

Resources are considered contributors to historic districts if they convey the shared associations with architectural styles, historical events, and cultural context that are present throughout the district and possess historic integrity. With regard to the Old Sacramento Historic District, a building, structure, object, or site has been considered a contributor if it is an original building that was constructed during the district's early period of significance from 1848 to 1913 or if it was included in the 1965 "Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park" Master Plan, which guided the restoration and redevelopment of the district from the late 1960s to the 1990s. Noncontributors are any buildings, sites, or objects that do not date to the early period of significance or which were not included in the cohesive vision presented in the 1965 Master Plan. Given that the 1965 Master Plan also included the restoration of the original nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings in the district, this restoration work, regardless of its accuracy according to modern preservation standards, contributes to the district's overall historic significance. As such, only exterior changes that do not relate the 1965 Master Plan vision have been considered non-historic alterations and are described in the architectural descriptions for each resource.

The following individual property descriptions are organized by street name in alphabetical order, followed by street number in numerical order, with contributing and noncontributing resources listed consecutively in separate lists. Data included in the building descriptions consists of construction date, type, architectural style, basic form, roof type and material, and cladding material, where relevant.

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Complete building permit records for each building within Old Sacramento Historic District were not reviewed due to the sparsity of permits for original buildings and inconsistency and inaccuracies in permits for the reconstructed properties. Listed alterations are based primarily on visual observations made by the preparers of this nomination while completing the field survey. Only exterior alterations that do not clearly relate the 1965 Master Plan restoration and reconstruction work have been described. In some cases, a comparison with early photographs (when available) and a review of Google Maps Street View images allowed for the listing of a more thorough alteration history. The dates of significant alterations are included if known.

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## INDIVIDUAL RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS

### Buildings and Parcels (80 Contributors, 30 Noncontributors)

#### Front Street

1. 917 Front Street C. M. & T. Co. APN: 600120150000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1849 Reconstruction Date: 1973-1975

One-story, reconstructed vernacular building clad with horizontal wood siding. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

2. 921 Front Street Eagle Theatre APN: 600120140000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1849 Reconstruction Date: 1975

Two-story, reconstructed vernacular building clad with vertical wood siding and canvas. It has a gabled roof. No alterations were noted.

3. 930 Front Street California Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot APN: 600150010000 Contributor  
Original Date: ca.1860s Reconstruction Date: 1986

One-story, reconstructed vernacular building clad with vertical wood siding. It has a gabled roof. No alterations were noted.

4. 935 Front Street Tehama Block APN: 600120140000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1851 Reconstruction Date: 1980s

Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with horizontal wood siding. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

5. 1013 Front Street Brannan Building (west) APN: 600710350000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1853-65

One-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a flat roof with flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

6. 1017-1023 Front Street Booth Buildings APN: 600710410000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1854, 1865, 1875

Three buildings, each two-stories, restored and reconstructed in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. The buildings have a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

7. 1020 Front Street California Pacific Railroad Depot APN: 600750040000 Contributor  
Original Date: Unknown

One-story, reconstructed vernacular building clad with vertical wood siding with Hardie board. It has a gabled and shed roof. No alterations were noted.

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- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>8. 1025 Front Street<br/> Original Date: ca. 1852-1856<br/> Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat roof with a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p> | <p>United States Hotel<br/> APN: 600710250000</p>                           | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>9. 1031 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1853<br/> Two-story, restored building in a vernacular/Greek Revival style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat roof with flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>   | <p>New York Drug Store<br/> APN: 600710250000</p>                           | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>10. 1100 Front Street<br/> APN: 00600750030000<br/> One-story, reconstructed vernacular building clad with vertical wood siding. It has a gable and shed roof with a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>                                   | <p>California Pacific Railroad<br/> Original Date: Unknown</p>              | <p>California Steamers Building<br/> Contributor</p> |
| <p>11. 1111 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1852-1853<br/> One-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>                             | <p>Commission Merchants<br/> APN: 600720490000</p>                          | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>12. 1113 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1853<br/> One-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>                                | <p>Lambard Flour Mill<br/> APN: 600720490000</p>                            | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>13. 1115 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1853, 1870<br/> Two-stories-over-basement, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco and concrete. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>      | <p>Brooklyn Hotel<br/> APN: 600720240000</p>                                | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>14. 1201 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1856<br/> One-story, restored building in a Georgian Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat roof and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>                                       | <p>Stanford Brothers Warehouse<br/> APN: 601360020000</p>                   | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>15. 1204 Front Street<br/> Original Date: Unknown<br/> Two-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with horizontal wood siding. It has a gabled roof with a flat-roofed addition. No alterations were noted.</p>                     | <p>California Steam Navigation Company Office<br/> APN: 600750030000</p>    | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |
| <p>16. 1207 Front Street<br/> Original Date: 1856<br/> One-story, restored building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet roof and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.</p>                     | <p>Kleinhaus Building (formerly Cavert Building)<br/> APN: 601360030000</p> | <p>Contributor</p>                                   |

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17. Front and L Streets Adams-McNeil & Co. Building Site APN: 600720250000  
Original Date: Unknown Contributor  
Vacant parcel with a parking lot at sunken grade and hollow sidewalks.

**I Street**

18. 101 I Street City Hall and Waterworks APN: 600110100000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1854 Reconstruction Date: 1985  
Two-story, reconstructed building in a mixed/Eclectic style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat roof with a flat parapet. Alterations include a flat metal awning with cloth covering over front entrance, and a concrete patio with wood fence and gate.

19. 111 I Street B Four Buildings APN: 600110030000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1852  
Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

20. 115 I Street Dingley Coffee & Spice Mill APN: 600110030000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1858-1859 Restoration Date: 1969  
Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a flat parapet roof. No alterations were noted.

21. 116-120 I Street Mechanics Exchange Hotel Annex APN: 603600010000  
Original Date: 1861-1864 Contributor  
Three-stories-over-basement, restored building in an Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a flat roof. No alterations were noted.

22. 122 I Street Mechanics Exchange Hotel APN: 600120360000 Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1859 Restoration Date: 1974-1976  
Two-story-over-basement, restored building in an Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a shaped parapet roof. No alterations were noted.

**J Street**

23. 114 J Street Vernon-Brannan Building APN: 600710330000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1855  
Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with painted and unpainted brick. It has a flat roof with shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

24. 117 J Street Bennett's Masonic Hall APN: 600120310000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1854 Original Builder/Architect: John Kirk  
Three-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

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25. 117 J Street      Daily Union Building      APN: 600120290000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1850      Reconstruction Date: 1973-1975  
Three-stories-over-basement, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat roof and a covered walkway. Alterations include newly replaced or repointed brick.

26. 118 J Street      City Market Site      APN: 600710490000      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1880  
Vacant site that houses Pioneer Park.

27. 122 J Street      Pioneer Hall and Bakery Building      APN: 600710450000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1855  
Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a flat roof with a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

28. 126 J Street      Gregory-Barnes Building      APN: 600710270000      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1865  
Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

29. 127 J Street      Haines Building      APN: 600120300000      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1853      Restoration Date: 1981  
Two-stories-over-basement, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

30. 128 J Street      I&S Wormser Building      APN: 600710270000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1853  
Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include the addition of a stepped parapet and porch with columns at unknown date.

**K Street**

31. 101 K Street      Boyd & Davis Building      APN: 600710250000      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1855  
One-story, reconstructed building in a vernacular/Commercial Block style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

32. 102 K Street      What Cheer House      APN: 600720490000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1853  
Three-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

33. 106 J Street      Brannan Building (east)      APN: 600710340000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1853-1865

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One-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat roof with flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

34. 108 K Street                      King Barroll & Co.                      APN: 600720390000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1852

Two-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

35. 110 K Street                      National Hotel                      APN: 600720390000                      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1853-1855

Two-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

36. 111 K Street                      Howard House                      APN: 600710560000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1866

Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

37. 113-115 K Street                      Lady Adams Building                      APN: 600710560000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1852

Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

38. 114 K Street                      The Winkle Bakery                      APN: 600720390000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1852

One-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

39. 116 K Street                      Ebner's Hotel                      APN: 600720480000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1857                      Reconstruction Date: ca. 2008-2011

Three-stories-over-basement, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet roof. No alterations were noted.

40. 118 K Street                      Empire House                      APN: 600720480000                      Contributor  
Original Date: 1867

Three-stories-over-basement, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

41. 121-127 K Street                      Winkle-Harris Building                      APN: 600710380000                      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1852-1857                      Reconstruction Date: 1976-1977

One-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

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42. 126 K Street Pendergast Store APN: 600720320000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1852

One-story, restored vernacular building clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

43. 128 K Street and 1106 2nd Street Rivett-Fuller Building and Annex  
APN: 600720330000 Original Date: 1852 Contributor

Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

44. 129 K Street Union Hotel Annex APN: 600710550000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1855

Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

45. 130 K Street Democratic State Journal Building APN: 600720340000  
Original Date: 1852 Contributor

Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

**2nd Street**

46. 906 2nd Street Foster Saloon (and adjacent Pioneer Square Shops)  
APN: 600120370000 Original Date: ca. 1860 Contributor

One-story-over-basement, restored building in a vernacular/Colonial Revival style clad with brick (painted and raw). It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

47. 910 2nd Street Schroth Building APN: 600120210000 Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1851, 1875-1876

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include the removal of storefronts as of 2025.

48. 914 2nd Street Hall, Luhrs & Company APN: 600120220000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1883 Restoration Date: 1984

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

49. 916 2nd Street Hotel de France APN: 600120230000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1852

Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

50. 922 2nd Street Baker & Hamilton Building APN: 600120240000 Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1868

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Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and brick (painted and raw). It has a shaped parapet roof. No alterations were noted.

51. 924 2nd Street      Our House Saloon      APN: 600120280000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1856

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

52. 928 2nd Street      Sazerac Building      APN: 600120280000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1858-1859      Reconstruction Date: 1976

Three-story restored building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

53. 1000 2nd Street      B.F. Hastings Building      APN: 600710220000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1849-1853

Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include the addition of ADA stairs and ramps along with a cloth awning valance.

54. 1001 2nd Street      Heywood's Building      APN: 60073050000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1857

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

55. 1008 2nd Street      Arcade Hotel      APN: 600710430000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1868      Reconstruction Date: 1976-1978

Three-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

56. 1009-1013 2nd Street      P.B. Cornwall Building      APN: 600720360000      Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1866-1867

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include the addition of a two-story porch.

57. 1012 2nd Street      Adams Express Building      APN: 600710320000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1853

Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and stone. It has a shaped parapet roof. Alterations include an arch over sidewalk attached to front façade.

58. 1015 2nd Street      Pioneer Telegraph Building      APN: 600730410000      Contributor  
Original Date: 1857-1859

Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

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- |  |                          |                   |             |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 59. 1017 2nd Street<br>Original Date: ca. 1857   | St. Charles Restaurant   | APN: 600730470000 | Contributor |
| Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.                 |                          |                   |             |
| 60. 1021-1023 2nd Street<br>Original Date: ca. 1853  | Carpenter Buildings      | APN: 600730450000 | Contributor |
| Two-story, reconstruction building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.                                    |                          |                   |             |
| 61. 1022 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1852-1853  | Orleans Hotel            | APN: 600710530000 | Contributor |
| Three-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.                                 |                          |                   |             |
| 62. 1027-1039 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1861-1862   | Morse Building           | APN: 600730480000 | Contributor |
| Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include the partial enclosure of the upper porch/veranda. |                          |                   |             |
| 63. 1028 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1865   | Bank Exchange Building   | APN: 600710550000 | Contributor |
| Two-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with painted brick. It has a flat and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.   |                          |                   |             |
| 64. 1028 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1855   | Union Hotel              | APN: 600710550000 | Contributor |
| Three-story, restored building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.  |                          |                   |             |
| 65. 1107 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1869-1870  | Fratt Building           | APN: 600740350000 | Contributor |
| Three-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with painted and unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.                |                          |                   |             |
| 66. 1110 2nd Street<br>Original Date: ca. 1854-1857  | Goodell's Carpenter Shop | APN: 600720350000 | Contributor |
| One-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a gabled roof. No alterations were noted.  |                          |                   |             |
| 67. 1111 2nd Street<br>Original Date: 1862-1866  | Barriga/Frey Building    | APN: 600740370000 | Contributor |
| Two-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with unpainted brick and concrete masonry units. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.   |                          |                   |             |

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68. 1112 2nd Street Sacramento Engine Company No. 3 APN: 600720360000  
Original Date: 1853 Date of Restoration: 1960 Contributor  
Two-story, restored building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco. It has a gabled roof. No alterations were noted.

69. 1112 2nd Street Skagg's Building APN: 600720350000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1860  
One-story, restored building in a vernacular/Mission Revival style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

70. 1117 2nd Street Placer Times Building/Still, Connor and Co. Company  
APN: 600740320000 Original Date: ca. 1850 Contributor  
Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with unpainted brick. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

71. 1121-1125 2nd Street Red Light District APN: 600740320000 Contributor  
Original Date: ca. 1850s-1860s  
One-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

72. 1126 2nd Street Pacific Stables and State Armory Building APN: 600720450000  
Original Date: 1855 Contributor  
Two-story, reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet roof. No alterations were noted.

73. 1128 2nd Street Clarendon Hotel APN: 600720430000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1855 Reconstruction Date: 1976-1979  
Three-stories-over-basement, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival/Italianate style clad with stucco. It has a shaped parapet roof. Alterations include the potential addition of a bay along 2nd Street.

74. 1119 2nd Street Cienfuegos Building APN: 600740320000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1871-1873  
Two-story, reconstructed building in a Greek Revival style clad with brick (painted and raw). It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

75. 1200 2nd Street Diana Saloon APN: 601360080000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1861  
Two-story, partial reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

76. 1200 2nd Street Fashion Saloon APN: 601360080000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1855

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Two-story, partial reconstructed building in an Italianate style clad with stucco and unpainted brick. It has a flat parapet and a covered walkway. No alterations were noted.

77. 1200 2nd Street Rialto-E.P. Figg Buildings APN: 601360090000 Contributor  
Original Date: 1852-1853

Two-story building in an Italianate style clad with stucco, partially reconstructed with relocated elements of the original façade. It has a shaped parapet and a covered walkway. Alterations include interior renovations that combine the first floors of the Rialto and Figg Buildings and the adjacent Diana Saloon.

78. East side of 2nd Street at the intersection with L Street Theodore Judah Monument  
APN: N/A Original Date: 1931 Contributor

A bronze and stone monument (object) commemorating Theodore Judah, formerly the chief engineer for the Sacramento Valley Railroad in California.

79. Northeast corner of J and 2nd Streets Pony Express Monument APN: N/A  
Original Date: 1976 Contributor

A 15-foot-tall bronze statue over a base (object) depicting a rider on horseback that commemorates the Pony Express mail route.

80. Grass lawn between Commonwealth Aly, I Street, and Front Street 1849 Scene  
APN: 00600120010000, 00600120170000, 00600120160000, 00600120150000  
Original Date: 1849 Contributor

A large green lawn open space with archeological resources.

### **Noncontributing Resources**

#### **Capitol Mall**

1. 1 Capitol Mall University of San Francisco, Sacramento Campus Noncontributor  
APN: 00601360220000, 00601360070000 Original Date: Unknown  
Five stories-over-two-story-garage, Postmodern building with flat and Mansard roof and clad with stone and plaster panels.

#### **Front Street**

2. 1000 Front Street Delta King APN: 00600750020000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: 1923-1927 Delta King is a maritime object. It is a sternwheeler ship docked west of the Sacramento Riverbank.

3. 1110 Front Street Rio City Café APN: 600750030000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: Unknown  
One story, vernacular reconstructed building with horizontal wood siding and capped by a shed/gable roof.

4. 1210 Front Street Joe's Crab Shack APN: 601360250000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: ca. 2003

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One story, Contemporary/vernacular building with a gable roof and clad with horizontal wood siding.

4. Front Street City-owned Restrooms APN: 600740380000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: Unknown  
One story, utilitarian building clad with vertical wood plank siding and capped by a shed roof.

**I Street**

5. 125 I Street California State Railroad Museum  
APN: 600110050000, 600110090000 Original Date: 1981 Noncontributor  
Two-story building in a Contemporary style clad with unpainted brick. It has a flat roof. No alterations were noted.

**Neasham Circle**

6. 109 Neasham Circle Tower Bridge Garage APN: 601360190000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: Unknown  
Six story Contemporary building with flat roof and clad with unpainted brick.

**Sacramento River Bike Trail**

7. 1240 Sacramento River Bike Trail Public Restrooms APN: 600740380000  
Original Date: Unknown Noncontributor  
One story, vernacular building clad with horizontal wood siding and capped by a shed/gable roof.

8. Sacramento River Bike Trail n/a APN: 600750030000 Noncontributor  
Original Date: Unknown  
One story, utilitarian contemporary building with no roof and vertical wood siding.

9-20. Various locations Vacant parcels APN: 600710520000,  
600720400000, 600120290000, 600120250000, 600720310000, 600710210000, 600720300000,  
600110040000, 600710240000, 600730490000, 600710260000, 600710510000, 600710540000,  
600120340000, 600710390000, 600710480000, 600120380000 Original Date: n/a  
Noncontributor

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

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- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Exploration

Settlement and Commerce

Transportation

Communication

Community Planning and Development

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**Period of Significance**

1848-1913

1965-1990

**Significant Dates**

1848

1864-1965

1913

1965

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Bennett, A. A. Bennett

Goodell, Nathaniel D.

Boyd, Alexander

Davis, Jacob Z.

Carr & Winans

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Old Sacramento Historic District is significant at the national level under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Commerce, Transportation, and Communication, and at the state level for Community Planning and Development. The historic district preserves the areas of the City of Sacramento's earliest period of urban development, including its first commercial streets and businesses, residences, municipal services and facilities, and sites of state government, all of which are located within the city's original street grid. The Old Sacramento Historic District is also significant for the pivotal role it held in the initiation and expansion of

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multiple regional, statewide, and national transportation and communication systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including steamboat, riverboat, and stagecoach services; the first railroad west of the Mississippi and the Transcontinental Railroad; the Pony Express; and telegraph services. The period of significance for the historic district in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Commerce, Transportation, and Communication encapsulates the area's earliest period of development from 1848 to 1913. In the area of Community Planning and Development, the Old Sacramento Historic District is significant at the national level for containing some of the earliest examples of raised streets and hollow sidewalks in the United States and the only such examples in the state of California, reflecting a unified state- and city-led planning response to frequent flooding in the nineteenth century. Old Sacramento is also significant in the area of Community Planning and Development at the state level for its pioneering role in the evolution of urban redevelopment policy and the historic preservation movement nationwide in the mid-twentieth century. Planning and development of the Old Sacramento historic area, starting in the 1950s, put Sacramento at the vanguard of major policy shifts and approaches in these fields. The period of significance for the historic district in the area of Community Planning and Development aligns with major milestones in the redevelopment of the Old Sacramento historic area from 1965 to 1990.

Additionally, the Old Sacramento Historic District is significant at the national level under Criterion C for possessing a large concentration of original nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial, mixed-use, and institutional buildings that were designed and constructed during the earliest period of the city of Sacramento's development, several of which were designed by notable architects or builders of merit. The period of significance aligns with the earliest period of development from 1848 to 1913.

Lastly, the Old Sacramento Historic District is significant at the national level under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal. The historic district contains known archaeological resources that possess the potential to yield important new information about the lives of early city of Sacramento residents and the city's development, including Gold Rush-era shipwrecks. The period of significance aligns with the earliest period of development from 1848 to 1913.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

***Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement & Commerce***

Native American Life, Pre-Contact

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The Sacramento area is the homeland of the Nisenan people, the Southern Maidu, Valley and Plains Miwok, Patwin Wintun peoples, and the people of the Wilton Rancheria, predating the founding of the City of Sacramento by thousands of years and continuing to the present day. The natural landscape and environment of the Central Valley, and in particular the rivers that crisscross the valley, are integral to the creation stories, cultures, and lifeways of the region's native peoples. The Sacramento Valley occupies the northern third of the 400-mile-long Central Valley. The Sacramento River is the largest river in California, which flows down its center from the Klamath Mountains to the San Francisco Bay. Fed by several rivers that carry snowmelt from the surrounding Sierra Nevada, Coastal Ranges, Klamath Mountains, and southern Cascade Range, the Sacramento River overflowed its banks annually for thousands of years before the nineteenth century, transforming much of the valley floor into a vast inland sea more than 100 miles long. The surrounding landscape was filled with hundreds of thousands of acres of seasonal sloughs, swamps, and marches. The City of Sacramento would be established at the southern edge of this inland sea.<sup>1</sup>

A broad and diverse network of Native American tribes thrived in this environment. The Nisenan, meaning "people" in Maidu, established central villages and smaller satellite villages on natural rises in the landscape along the principal waterways throughout the region, including the Sacramento and American rivers. One of the most influential villages in the Sacramento area was *Pushune*, or *Pusune*, which was located near downtown Sacramento on the north bank of the American River. Two smaller settlements, *Sacum'ne* and *Momol*, were located south of the American River near the present-day Southern Pacific Railyards. The banks of the Sacramento River in present-day Old Sacramento were an important seasonal gathering place for local tribal peoples during the dry seasons.

The Nisenan moved seasonally among the higher elevations, lower hills, and Sacramento Valley floor. The rivers and wetlands were central to local tribal life, providing them with a bountiful diet that included salmon, sturgeon, clams, mussels, waterfowl, lizards, turtles, frogs, and other animals that lived in and along the rivers—as well as riparian plants, such as tule reeds and bunch grass, which they used to build dome-shaped houses.<sup>2</sup> Additional plants and animals from the surrounding oak-studded grasslands, especially acorns, further enhanced their diets and ways of life. Beyond serving as resources for physical subsistence, however, the plants, animals, and natural landscape of the Sacramento Valley were imbued with deep spiritual significance and believed to be inhabited by powerful spirits.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Vaught, "The Perils of Agriculture in Sacramento's Untamed Hinterland," in *River City and Valley Life* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 106; Todd Holmes, "Rivers of Gold, Valley and Conquest: The Business of Levees and Dams in the Capital City," in *River City and Valley Life* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 119.

<sup>2</sup>Solano Archeological Services, LLC, *Native American Cultural Setting and Context: Consumnes River College – Sacramento, California*, 2023, 12; Gary Day, "Nisenan, Rocklin's Earliest Culture," accessed February 20, 2025, [https://rocklinhistorical.org/rocklin\\_history\\_series/Nisenan.%20Rocklin's%20Earliest%20Culture.pdf](https://rocklinhistorical.org/rocklin_history_series/Nisenan.%20Rocklin's%20Earliest%20Culture.pdf).

<sup>3</sup>Solano Archeological Services, LLC, *Native American Cultural Setting and Context: Consumnes River College*, 12-15.

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### Euro-American Contact, 1848

The traditional ways of life of the region's native peoples were upended by the arrival of Euro-American explorers.<sup>4</sup> From then onward, the experience of local native peoples became one of survival amid devastating diseases, increasing violence, state-sanctioned removal efforts, and genocidal policies.<sup>5</sup>

In 1808, Spanish explorer Gabriel Moraga became the first European to see Sacramento.<sup>6</sup> Moraga named the area Sacramento after the Spanish word for "sacrament," but deemed the area uninhabitable for a mission due to seasonal rains that turned it into a floodplain during the winter months. Spanish missionaries and early American explorers further investigated the area but did not attempt to establish a permanent settlement for thirty more years. Diseases, such as malaria, introduced by the newcomers in the 1830s and 1840s, decimated the indigenous populations, wiping out entire villages.<sup>7</sup> Fur traders who had witnessed the banks along the entire course of the Sacramento River "studded with Indian Villages" when they first arrived in 1832, were stunned to find it "depopulated" less than one year later. According to J.J. Warner, a member of one of these expeditions, "large numbers of their skulls and dead bodies were to be seen under almost every shade tree, near the water, where the uninhabited and deserted villages had been converted into graveyards."<sup>8</sup> Mortality rates are estimated to have been near sixty percent, though some entire tribes and tribelets perished and others became refugees.<sup>9</sup> By the late 1840s, historians estimate that the native population across California had been cut in half.<sup>10</sup>

### Development of the City of Sacramento

#### *Population Growth & Early Residents*

In 1839, Swiss immigrant John Sutter established a settlement called New Helvetia ("Helvetia" being the Latin word for Switzerland) roughly two miles east of the convergence of the Sacramento and American Rivers and the present-day site of Old Sacramento.<sup>11</sup> Mexican governor Juan Bautista Alvarado had given Sutter seventy-six square miles of land to establish a foothold on the frontier and discourage American encroachment.<sup>12</sup> The remote location led Sutter to build a fort at New Helvetia for protection.

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<sup>4</sup> Ascent Environmental, *Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Capitol Annex Project*, January 2020, 4.12-8.

<sup>5</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> Thor Severson, *Sacramento, An Illustrated History: 1839 to 1874, From Sutter's Fort to Capital City* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1973), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Ascent Environmental, *Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Capitol Annex Project*, 4.12-8.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathon J. Warner, quoted in David A. Bainbridge, "The Hudson's Bay Company Brigades of 1832-33 and the Malaria Epidemic of California," in *The Fur War in the West: Ecological and Cultural Consequences*, (San Diego, CA: Rio Redondo Press, 2013), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Bainbridge, "The Hudson's Bay Company Brigades of 1832-33 and the Malaria Epidemic of California," in *The Fur War in the West: Ecological and Cultural Consequences*, (San Diego, CA: Rio Redondo Press, 2013), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Edward D. Castillo, "Short Overview of California Indian History," State of California Native American Heritage Commission, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://nahc.ca.gov/native-americans/california-indian-history/>.

<sup>11</sup> This settlement is also referred to in some sources as "New Helvetia."

<sup>12</sup> Severson, *Sacramento, An Illustrated History*, 33.

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In 1840, Native Americans working for Sutter cut a road from the fort at New Helvetia to the Sacramento River and created an informal “embarcadero” there for supply ships to land and deliver goods. Sutter used Native American crew members to then transport supplies from these ships to the fort further inland.<sup>13</sup> Native Americans—composed of individuals from the local Nisenan and Miwok tribes and refugees from the Spanish missions—performed nearly all of the labor at New Helvetia. They did so out of necessity, as diseases introduced by the Anglo-American newcomers, competition from fur traders, and the persistent threat of violence from Sutter if they refused to cooperate reduced their means of survival. The conversion of their homeland into cultivated agricultural land and infestation of the rivers and wetlands that formed a centerpiece of local tribal life with malaria-carrying mosquitos permanently altered the landscape upon which the local tribes depended, making it more dangerous and less reliable as a source of subsistence. Exchanging labor for much-needed trade goods, Native Americans built the adobe walls at Sutter’s Fort and manned a militia of 150 native infantrymen and fifty native cavalrymen that protected the fort. During the annual harvest, Sutter employed up to 600 Native Americans for the annual harvest. Native peoples also operated a distillery and tannery; produced hats and blankets; and caught beavers, salmon, and deer for trade that supported Sutter’s enterprise. They also helped ship these goods to Yerba Buena (now San Francisco), forming the vital workforce that was essential for the creation and survival of New Helvetia.<sup>14</sup>

The discovery of gold at John Sutter’s mill in Coloma in January 1848 initiated the California Gold Rush, one of the largest, self-financed mass migrations of people the world had experienced up to that point, as well as one of the most multiracial, multiethnic, and multinational events in U.S. history. Located at the crossroads of river connections to San Francisco and the most convenient overland routes to the northern California goldfields, the embarcadero at Sacramento became the principal gateway for thousands of miners heading to the gold fields in the Sierra Nevada foothills.<sup>15</sup> As such, Sutter’s informal embarcadero transformed into a bustling ethnically and culturally diverse encampment almost overnight. One account in the *Sacramento Union* newspaper described the embarcadero in 1849 as being “. . . perfectly crowded with the efforts of landing immigrants and merchandise” with “vessels devoted to storage, boarding, and lodgings” lining the east bank of the Sacramento River.<sup>16</sup>

An initial trickle of prospectors came from southern California, Oregon, northern Mexico, and Chile in 1848 but quickly became a flood by 1849, with people coming from places around the world, including but not limited to the eastern United States, Canada, countries across Latin America, northern and southern Europe, and China.<sup>17</sup> An article in the *Sacramento Transcript* newspaper, published in April 1851, described California’s burgeoning diversity as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen G. Helmich, "K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero," *Golden Notes* 26, no. 3 (Sacramento County Historical Society: Fall 1980), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, 48-55.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth N. Owens, *River City and Valley Life* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 42.; Helmich, "K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero," 6.

<sup>16</sup> V. Aubrey Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time" (Sacramento, CA: Historic Landmarks Commission, 1968), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Owens, "River City: Sacramento's Gold Rush Birth and Transfiguration," 42.

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“Californians of the old regime, Chinese, Kanakas [Hawaiians], Indians, Japanese, Malays, Hindoos, the negro, [and] natives of the Island,” as well as, “English, French, Spaniards... Germans, Hungarians, and Italians - all have been re-cast, as it were, and come out of the mould Americans.”<sup>18</sup> Despite descriptions like this, violence, stoked by racism and greed and sanctioned by government-sponsored policies, made the Gold Rush one of the most dangerous periods in local Native American history. To avoid persecution, Native Americans engaged in resilience strategies as a means of survival, such as choosing to pass as Hawaiians, skewing the historic records of Sacramento’s diversity.<sup>19</sup>

The influx of people and burst of speculative development brought by the Gold Rush catalyzed the development of the area now known as Old Sacramento into a permanent human settlement and planted the first seeds of the City of Sacramento.<sup>20</sup> By 1848, John Sutter had amassed substantial debts and was at risk of losing his rancho. His son, John August Sutter, Jr., commissioned the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers to survey and plat the land between the embarcadero and Sutter’s Fort into lots that he could sell off to repay his father’s debts. The plan established a thirty-block square section for the new city of Sacramento adjacent to the embarcadero. Streets were laid out in an orthogonal numbered and lettered grid aligned with the Sacramento River, starting with Front Street along the waterfront. The plat featured standardized blocks each measuring 340 by 320 feet and alleys running along a north-south axis.<sup>21</sup>

The lots sold quickly, and the city’s population rose exponentially from 150 in 1849 to just over 6,800 in the following year. In 1850, the California Legislature offered a charter to Sacramento, officially incorporating it as a city.<sup>22</sup> That same year, the United States Census reported that the city of Sacramento contained 6,600 white residents and 200 Black residents.<sup>23</sup> Black residents at the time consisted of a mixture of the descendants of enslaved individuals brought to Latin America by Spanish and Portuguese colonists, free Black people from the northern United States, and enslaved men and women taken to California by their white enslavers.<sup>24</sup> Large numbers of Chinese men came to California during the Gold Rush and the years following, seeking ways to support themselves and their families in a period during which China was

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<sup>18</sup> “Our Population,” *Sacramento Transcript*, 3 April 1851, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

<sup>19</sup> Consultation with Wilton Rancheria, email from Sean deCourcy to Clare Flynn, December 8, 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Neasham, “Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time,” 7; Charles W. Snell, “National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Special Report on Old Sacramento, Theme XV, Subtheme: The Mining Frontier, Theme XVII Travel and Communication,” 1964, National Historic Landmark Documentation, 538.

<sup>21</sup> Nathan Hallam, “‘We Must Give the World Confidence in the Stability and Permanence of the Place:’ Planning Sacramento’s Townsite, 1853-1870,” in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M.A. Simpson, ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 64.

<sup>22</sup> Severson, *Sacramento, An Illustrated History*, 66. 89.

<sup>23</sup> *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, California State Report* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), accessed September 9, 2025,

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1850/1850a/1850-census-report-california.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh Johnsen and A. Bronwyn Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento: A Street-By-Street Tour* (Brookfield, MO: Donning Company Publishers, 2019), 25.

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wracked by political conflict and natural disasters.<sup>25</sup> While San Francisco was *Dai Fow* (Big Port or City) for Chinese immigrants as their main port of entry to California, Sacramento became *Yee Fow*, the “Port” or “City.”<sup>26</sup> The 1852 census recorded 814 Chinese men and ten Chinese women living in Sacramento.<sup>27</sup> By 1860, that number had risen to around 1,200, nearly 100 of whom were women working in brothels near the embarcadero.<sup>28</sup> The 1850 census also counted eighty Native Americans and 1,260 “foreign” residents living in Sacramento County at the time, though it did not include these more detailed breakdowns for the city of Sacramento.<sup>29</sup>

Sacramento was largely treated as a stopover between the mining camps and San Francisco in its earliest years, and as a result had a predominantly transitory population. Men far outnumbered women; approximately 93 percent of the city’s population in 1850 consisted of men. The gender imbalance was most stark among the Black and Chinese communities, much of which consisted of single young men or husbands seeking to earn money to send back home to their families. Some people, however, stayed and settled in the new city, choosing to start businesses and families. German, Irish, Jewish, and Portuguese immigrants tended to come to California in the nineteenth century as refugees escaping difficult economic or social conditions in their home countries and, therefore, more often arrived in multi-generational family units of men, women, and children with the intention of setting down permanent roots. As a result, much of Sacramento’s early permanent population and most prominent figures consisted of people from these countries.<sup>30</sup>

Sacramento’s early streets contained a mixture of commercial businesses and mixed-use buildings with residences on upper floors, interspersed with smaller residential buildings.<sup>31</sup> The ethnic and cultural melting pot that characterized the city’s early population was evident in the emergence of ethnic enclaves that developed around the core commercial area near the embarcadero. A concentration of Chinese businesses and residences formed along I Street from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street, south of a body of water known as Sutter’s Lake (or alternatively Sutter’s Slough, China Lake, or China Slough) forming Sacramento’s Chinatown.<sup>32</sup> The homes and businesses of Black residents, meanwhile, tended to congregate along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, just to the east of the present-day boundaries of Old Sacramento, roughly along the path of the U.S. Interstate 5 Highway (discussed in more detail in the Redevelopment section).<sup>33</sup> Japanese immigration increased in the 1880s, and by the end of the nineteenth century, a Japantown was established in

<sup>25</sup> Flora Chou, Deepeeka Dhaliwal, and Donna Graves, “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2019, E-21.

<sup>26</sup> Owens, “River City: Sacramento’s Gold Rush Birth and Transfiguration,” 55.

<sup>27</sup> Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 55.

<sup>28</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*.

<sup>30</sup> Owens, “River City: Sacramento’s Gold Rush Birth and Transfiguration,” 54-55.

<sup>31</sup> Sanborn-Perris Map Company, “Sacramento, Ca.” [map], 1895, Library of Congress.

<sup>32</sup> Chou, et. al, “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970,” E-24; Jim Miller, “Exploring Sacramento’s Lost Lake and the Possibilities for Restoration,” American River College, 2005, accessed September 17, 2025, [https://ic.arc.losrios.edu/~veiszep/14fall2005/MillerJim/G350\\_MillerJim\\_Project.htm](https://ic.arc.losrios.edu/~veiszep/14fall2005/MillerJim/G350_MillerJim_Project.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 25.

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Sacramento on the blocks between 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, L, and O streets.<sup>34</sup> Nearly all of Sacramento's Chinatown and Japantown and all of the historic Black neighborhood along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street were demolished during the mid-twentieth century as a result of redevelopment efforts and highway construction in downtown Sacramento. Though the homes and businesses no longer remain, the westernmost block of the city's Chinatown is located around I and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets, and the northwest end of the city's Japantown is located near the intersections of 2<sup>nd</sup> and L streets, both within the boundaries of present-day Old Sacramento.<sup>35</sup>

### *Commercial Development, 1848-1913*

While San Francisco was California's largest city and financial center in the nineteenth century, the Gold Rush established Sacramento as California's transportation center and the primary supply, shipping, and distribution center for the mining camps in the foothills and Sierra Nevada mountains. As the main point of entry for supplies arriving on riverboats from San Francisco, Sacramento's makeshift embarcadero evolved into a true port where supplies were unloaded onto wagons and pack mules for overland transport to the mining camps across the region. In 1852 alone, it was estimated that Sacramento received at least 165,000 tons of river freight that year, thirty percent of which was used locally in Sacramento and the surrounding area, while the remaining seventy-five percent was transported to the mining camps.<sup>36</sup>

While the banks of the Sacramento River initially remained relatively natural and undeveloped, dotted with temporary canvas tents and structures, riverboats docked and abandoned along the riverbank by prospective miners were repurposed to serve as stores, warehouses, and hotels, becoming the city's first commercial establishments. The first semi-permanent structure in Sacramento was reportedly a ship that housed the McDougal & Co. store.<sup>37</sup> Another example is the ship *Sterling*. Built in Massachusetts in 1833, it sailed with seven passengers and freight from the East Coast to Sacramento in 1850, where it was docked and converted into a warehouse. At the time it was one of 30 such "storeships" moored along the embarcadero. The *Sterling* deteriorated and sank at the foot of J Street in 1855; its remains were individually listed on the National Register as the "J Street Wreck" in 1991 and are a contributor to the Old Sacramento Historic District.<sup>38</sup>

Adjacent to the busy waterfront embarcadero, new buildings rose rapidly on lots lining Front Street and the surrounding area between I and K Streets.<sup>39</sup> J and K streets were the main routes

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<sup>34</sup> Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center and Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, *Images of America: Old Sacramento and Downtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 81; California Museum, "Kokoro: The Story of Sacramento's Lost Japantown," Google Arts and Culture, accessed February 20, 2026, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/ngWB1z39GH3oLQ?hl=en>.

<sup>35</sup> Chou, et. al, "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970," E-31.

<sup>36</sup> Owens, "River City: Sacramento's Gold Rush Birth and Transfiguration," 45.

<sup>37</sup> Helmich, "K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero," 13.

<sup>38</sup> James P. Delgado, National Park Service, "J Street Wreck," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1991.

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for wagon trains leaving the city and emerged as Sacramento's primary commercial streets.<sup>40</sup> Mercantile, trading, and distribution companies proliferated on the blocks closest to the embarcadero. K Street contained a concentration of such commercial enterprises, most notably the "Big Four Buildings," relocated from their original location on K Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets to their present location at 111 I Street (contributor, relocated) in Old Sacramento in the 1960s. The buildings contained the Stanford Brothers wholesale merchandise store, owned by Leland Stanford and his brothers, as well as the Huntington, Hopkins, and Co. hardware and mining store, owned by Colis P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins. Stanford, Huntington, and Hopkins used the fortunes they amassed selling goods to miners to become three of the four founders of the Central Pacific Railroad, famously known as the "Big Four."<sup>41</sup> A warehouse for the Stanford Brothers company was built at 1201 Front Street (contributor, original) in 1856. Other major mercantile businesses on K Street in the 1850s and 1860s included the Empire Market meat market at 120 K Street (contributor, reconstruction); Rivett-Fuller Building and Annex at 128 K Street and 1106 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction), which supplied paints, oil, wallpaper, upholstery, and window glass and became one of the most successful businesses to be founded during the Gold Rush; and the Lady Adams Building at 113-115 K Street (contributor, restored), which housed a wholesaling and importing business founded by German immigrants who had sailed to California together on the brig Lady Adams in 1849.<sup>42</sup>

Front Street contained the Connecticut Mining and Trading Company (CM&T Co.) at 917 Front Street (contributor, reconstruction), a lumber and heavy goods store, and the Booth and Company grocery store at 1017 and 1019 Front Street (contributor, restored), one of the leading sellers of produce, wine, liquor, and tobacco on the West Coast. One block to the east, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street was home to the Hall, Luhrs and Company Building at 914 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), a wholesale grocery operated by Thomas Bertram Hall and German immigrant Charles August Luhrs; the Baker and Hamilton Building at 922 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), which sold hardware, seeds, and mining tools; the Pacific Stables at 1126 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction); and the Our House Saloon Building at 924 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restoration), which housed the shops of various cloth merchants in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>43</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> Street contained some of the earliest banks in Sacramento, including the Bank Exchange Building at 1028 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored) and B.F. Hastings Building at 1000 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), and provided financial services to Sacramento residents and visitors. Meanwhile, numerous eating and drinking establishments opened on the blocks adjacent to the embarcadero to sustain the city's growing population. Among these were Pioneer Hall and Bakery at 122 J Street (contributor, restored) and Winkle Bakery at 114 J Street and 121-127 K Street (contributors, reconstructions). The city also contained the establishments of several flour mills and flour merchants. Among them were the George Schroth Building at 910 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), built by baker, flour merchant, and German immigrant George Schroth

<sup>40</sup> Owens, "River City: Sacramento's Gold Rush Birth and Transfiguration," 45.

<sup>41</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 9-10, 55, 74, 77, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 17, 22, 35, 63, 85.

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around 1852; the Pendergast Store at 126 K Street (contributor, restored), and the Lambard Flour Mill at 1113 Front Street (contributor, reconstruction).<sup>44</sup>

Saloons flourished, providing ample socializing and entertainment options for the city's predominantly male population. The first business in Sacramento to exclusively sell ale was the Legget Alehouse at 1025 Front Street (contributor, restored). While drinking establishments came and went frequently, some of the more well-known in Sacramento in the nineteenth century that are represented in Old Sacramento were the Our House Saloon at 924 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), owned by a Black man named Henry Gibson; the Gem Saloon in the Sazerac Building at 928 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored); and the Foster Saloon at 906 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored). The Foster Saloon was run by Eliza T. Foster, a notable instance in which a woman became a successful businesswoman and was able to amass a fortune and maintain control of her personal assets through a divorce and remarriage.<sup>45</sup>

By the 1850s, Sacramento gained a reputation as a "city of hotels," as numerous establishments opened to accommodate the flow of people passing through the city on their way to and from the mining camps. The Orleans Hotel at 1022 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction), Union Hotel next door at 1028 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and 129 K Street (contributors, restored) were the most prominent hotels of their day and were popular among politicians, lobbyists, and legislators. Similarly, the Arcade Hotel at 1008 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction) became known as the senatorial headquarters because it catered to legislators, judges, lawyers, government officials, and their families. One of the most visually elegant was Ebner's Hotel, with its rooftop cupola, at 116 K Street (contributor, reconstruction). More affordable lodgings were available at the Mechanics' Exchange Hotel and Annex at 116, 120, and 122 I Street (contributors, restored), which catered to pipefitters, tradesmen, and laborers from the adjacent Sacramento Iron Works, as well as the employees of the railroads, steamships, flour mills, and other industries near I and Front streets. Travelers looking for a sense of familiarity could stay at the What Cheer House at 102-106 K Street (contributor, reconstruction), a local outpost of a well-known brand of affordable lodgings that was known for its warm atmosphere, plentiful food, and comfortable accommodations. The Brooklyn Hotel at 1115 Front Street (contributor, reconstruction), owned by Irish immigrant John Edward Mooney, meanwhile, provided cheap rooms and meals for tradesmen, laborers, and transient travelers.<sup>46</sup>

Hotels and boarding houses offered unmarried women a chance to not only own property and earn a living, but in Sacramento's case, amass considerable wealth in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Lorinda Washburn owned the United States Hotel at 1025 Front Street (contributor, restored) as well as several other properties in Sacramento. By the time of her death, she had amassed an estate valued at \$100,000. Thurseay Louisa Buckhout Wadsworth, a milliner and dressmaker, ran the Howard House at 111 K Street (contributor, restored). In 1873, she was named in a list of the "Moneyed Men of Sacramento." Eugenie Dumas, a French immigrant,

<sup>44</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 7, 24-26, 62.

<sup>45</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 14-15.

<sup>46</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 12, 45, 49-50, 65, 72, 90.

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owned and operated several successful hotels in the 1850s and 1860s, including the Hotel de France, the Hotel Lafayette, and Hotel Francais. The building that housed one of the locations of the Hotel de France remains at 916 Front Street (contributor, restored). The Clarendon House at 1128 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction) was owned and operated by Caroline A. Williams, a well-educated Black woman from Massachusetts. Her hotel was popular among travelers and politicians and was known for its high-quality accommodations and food.<sup>47</sup>

Women living in Sacramento in the nineteenth century could also gain wealth and notoriety as the proprietors of brothels. In 1860, fourteen percent of the women in Sacramento's First and Wards along Front, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and I streets were employed as prostitutes. Eighty percent of these women were born outside the United States, including Chinese, Latin American, Black, and European women. White women earned the most money in this line of work, followed by women from South America and Black women and lastly by Chinese women, who accounted for the largest number of the city's prostitutes. Sacramento's red light district operated on the east side of 2<sup>nd</sup> street between K and L streets through the end of the nineteenth century. Among the brothels on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street were houses run by German immigrant Johanna Heigel, a free Black woman from Ohio named Frances Bass, Costa Rica-born Mariquita "Mary" Esquivel and Mexican-born Josefa Cienfuegos, all of whom earned a considerable amount of wealth. Over the course of her life, Cienfuegos became known for her generosity and philanthropy and, at the time of her death in 1909, was referred to as the "mother" of the city's Mexican community.<sup>48</sup>

Embedded in Sacramento's bustling commercial fabric were the ordinary workers who performed vital service work for the city's visitors and residents. Service work was often provided by men from racial or ethnic minority communities, who were often shut out of more affluent careers due to racial discrimination. Black men in Sacramento typically found work as barbers, blacksmiths, cooks, laundry workers, carpenters, bootblacks, and saloon keepers.<sup>49</sup> A large proportion of the loading and unloading of cargo from ships along the waterfront was initially performed by Mexican men, but by the 1860s was dominated by Chinese men.<sup>50</sup> Chinese men also frequently worked as brewers, cooks, or grocers. Chinese laundries were a common business type in Old Sacramento in the nineteenth century, including a few businesses on the blocks between 2<sup>nd</sup>, I, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and J streets.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Establishment of First City Services & State Offices*

In addition to commercial and residential activity, the busy city center along the waterfront and adjacent blocks were also the site of public services and facilities, and, after Sacramento's selection as California's permanent capital city in 1854, the offices of several State of California departments. A group of local business leaders met under an oak tree near Front and I streets in

<sup>47</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 19, 56, 61, 88.

<sup>48</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 103, 108; Center for Sacramento History, *Underground Tour Guide Interpretation Manual*, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time," 16.

<sup>51</sup> Sanborn-Perris Map Company, "Sacramento, Ca." [map], 1895, Library of Congress; Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 20, 23.

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the spring of 1849 to discuss the formation of a local government. The city's first City Council was elected and a city charter was drafted that summer.<sup>52</sup> Early town meetings were held inside the City Hotel (not extant) near Front and J streets.<sup>53</sup>

Like the city's first commercial businesses, Sacramento's first public services were housed in boats docked along the riverbanks. The city's drinking water was originally filtered through charcoal on a riverboat called the *Eliza*, while its first jails were located first in the *Strafford* and then the *La Grange*, which were moored near the foot of I Street, and rented by the County of Sacramento for the purpose in 1850.<sup>54</sup>

In 1853, the intersection of Front and I streets again became the site of a milestone in the establishment of the city's local government with the completion of the City Hall and Water Works building at 101 J Street (contributor, reconstruction). The multifaceted building housed a variety of public services, including the offices of the city justices of court, as well as a police station and receiving hospital. The building's roof, meanwhile, was designed to serve as the main reservoir for the city's water supply.<sup>55</sup> Sacramento County offices were spread amongst several buildings in the district, including the Tehama Block at 935 Front Street (contributor, reconstruction), Gardiner Hotel (later the What Cheer House), and additional buildings on Front Street.<sup>56</sup> The Sacramento County Hospital, which began operation in 1853, was one of the earliest tenants of the Hotel de France building at 916 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored).<sup>57</sup>

Local newspapers were a vital resource for all residents and visitors and also had offices near the waterfront, where reporters had easy access to the major happenings and events of the day. Sacramento was a hotbed for newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century with nineteen newspapers starting in the city from 1849 to 1857. Only two of these newspapers, the *Sacramento Daily Union* and *Democratic State Journal*, survived longer than two years. The *Sacramento Daily Union*, the longest active newspaper in Sacramento after the *Sacramento Bee*, was founded in 1851 by striking printers in opposition to pay cuts by other local newspapers of the day. Its first office was located in a building constructed in 1850 at 117 J Street (contributor, reconstruction). Among the *Daily Union's* notable writers were short story author and poet Bret Harte and Mark Twain, whose travel log from a trip to the Sandwich Islands (present-day Hawaii) in 1866 was published by the newspaper and raised Twain's profile nationally. *The Sacramento Daily Union* remained active until 1994.<sup>58</sup> *The Democratic State Journal*, which ran from 1852 to 1858, had its own dedicated office building at 130 K Street (contributor, restored).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time," 18.

<sup>54</sup> Helmich, "K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero," 12.

<sup>55</sup> Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, *Images of America: Old Sacramento and Downtown*, 32.

<sup>56</sup> Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time," 18.

<sup>57</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 19-20.

<sup>58</sup> "Sacramento Daily Union (1851-1966)," California Digital Newspaper Collection, accessed September 24, 2025, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=SDU>.

<sup>59</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 78-79.

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California became a state the same year the City of Sacramento was incorporated in 1850. For the first several years of statehood, the California state government moved from city to city as various municipalities—including San Jose, Vallejo, Benicia, and Sacramento—vied to become the new state’s capital. Sacramento emerged as the logical choice because of its rising population and potential as an economic and transportation hub; it was chosen as the permanent capital city of California in 1854.<sup>60</sup> Following the decision, members of the State Senate and Assembly traveled by riverboat from Benicia to Sacramento with the official State paraphernalia, where they were received on the Sacramento River banks by the Sutter Rifles, Sacramento’s first military company, and escorted to a celebratory reception at the Orleans Hotel, which was also attended by Governor John Bigler.<sup>61</sup> As previously described, the Orleans Hotel and adjacent Union Hotel were popular destinations for politicians, legislators, and lobbyists when visiting Sacramento, transforming the block of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street between J and K streets into the “political storm center of the state” through roughly 1880.<sup>62</sup> Politicians and other orators frequently spoke from a temporary stand opposite the hotels, while crowds of spectators listened from the street and balconies of the surrounding buildings.<sup>63</sup> State and national politicians also socialized at the upstairs apartments of California Governor and U.S. Senator Newton Booth and his business partner Cyrus T. Wheeler at the Booth Buildings at 1017-103 Front Street. From 1866 to 1892, Booth and Wheeler hosted some of the most prominent political figures of the at the building, including Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison, General and future President Ulysses F. Grant, and newspaper editor, publisher, and politician Horace Greeley.<sup>64</sup>

Individual State departments were also housed within buildings in Old Sacramento. The State Supreme Court was located on the upper floors of the B.F. Hastings Building, and the State Library was housed within the I & S Wormser Building at 128 J Street (contributor, restored) from 1855 to 1857 and again from 1859 until they moved to the newly constructed State Capitol Building in 1869.<sup>65</sup> One block south, the upper floors of the Pacific Stables building at 1126 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction) contained the State Armory and headquarters of the Sutter Rifles.<sup>66</sup>

Sacramento’s westernmost blocks within Old Sacramento remained the center of state political life through approximately the late 1860s and early 1870s, when the California State Capitol building was completed and state departments and functions moved inside the new building or to the surrounding blocks. The area remained the heart of local politics and city services through 1909, when a new City Hall building was completed approximately nine blocks to the east at 915

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<sup>60</sup> Hallam, “‘We Must Give the World Confidence in the Stability and Permanence of the Place:’ Planning Sacramento’s Townsite, 1853-1870,” 68-69.

<sup>61</sup> “Telegraphic,” *Daily National Gazette* 1, no. 24, 2 March 1854.

<sup>62</sup> “Stirring History Was Made In and About This Old Hotel Where Drinks Were Two Bits,” *Sacramento Bee*, 9 September 1905, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 50.

<sup>64</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 43-44.

<sup>66</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 85-86.

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I Street (outside the historic district). The original City Hall and Waterworks Building was demolished a few years later in 1913, finalizing the shift of the city's political epicenter to the east.<sup>67</sup>

### ***Criterion A: Transportation & Communication***

In the mid-nineteenth century, as San Francisco developed into the financial capital of the western United States, Sacramento emerged as the transportation and communication center of the West. Located at the confluence of two rivers and at the crossroads of several overland routes to the goldfields in the Sierra Nevada foothills, the city became the headquarters for major riverboard companies and interstate freight and stage lines, as well as the first railroad in the Western United States and the country's first transcontinental railroad.

#### Steamship & Riverboat Travel

Present-day Sacramento is located at the confluence of two navigable rivers, the Sacramento River and American River, which meet at Sacramento and empty into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and San Francisco Bay. This location has made the Sacramento area an important transportation center for the region since it was first inhabited by indigenous peoples thousands of years ago.<sup>68</sup>

During the Gold Rush, the Sacramento River became the most important transportation corridor in California, thanks to the vital connection it provided between the state's largest city at San Francisco and Sacramento, which emerged as the gateway to Northern California's goldfields. Ships brought passengers and cargo from San Francisco to Sacramento daily and docked at the developing embarcadero. In 1852 alone, the records of Sacramento's harbor master showed that 363 sailing ships and 238 riverboats landed at Sacramento that year.<sup>69</sup> River travel and transportation became one of the city's largest and most lucrative industries with several competing steamboat companies operating along the river to meet the demand. In 1854, a group of the most successful steamboat operators merged to form the California Steam Navigation Company (CSNC). The company ran regular daily service between San Francisco and Sacramento and built a passenger terminal and row of open freight sheds on the embarcadero at its intersection with K Street. Having consolidated a number of competing steamboat operating firms, CSNC dominated inland steamboat travel in the Sacramento Valley in the 1850s and 1860s. River passenger traffic began to wane following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and further declined after the Central Pacific Railroad purchased CSNC in 1873 in order to decrease competition and shift passenger service to its railroads.<sup>70</sup>

#### Stagecoach Lines & Express Mail Services

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<sup>67</sup> Richard J. Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment, Sacramento's Story" in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M.A. Simpson, ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 89.

<sup>67</sup> Severson, *Sacramento, An Illustrated History*, 66, 89.

<sup>68</sup> A.L. Kroeber, *The Valley Nisenan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1929), 255.

<sup>69</sup> Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, *Images of America: Old Sacramento and Downtown*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Helmich, "K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero," 2, 5.

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Arrival in Sacramento by ship was only one portion of the journey. Once passengers or supplies reached Sacramento, they were typically transported overland to the mining camps and towns by horse-drawn wagons and carriages, which served as the primary mode of ground transportation through the early 1900s.<sup>71</sup> Just as it was the center of river transportation in California in the nineteenth century, Sacramento also became the hub of California's stagecoach system—which extended into Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho—and the western terminus of the Central Overland Route, an important transcontinental route through which mail, freight, and emigrants were transported between California, Nevada, and Utah. James Birch began operating the first stagecoach services in California as a mail carrying service between Sacramento and Mormon Island (now submerged under Folsom Lake) in 1849, which he managed from offices in the Brannan Buildings at 1001-1013 and 106 Front Street, respectively (contributors, restored). In 1854, Birch organized the consolidation of several stagecoach lines to form the California Stage Company, offering passenger and mail carrying services. The company grew to become the largest stage operator in California and had offices in a number of buildings in Old Sacramento in the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Initially headquartered at the Orleans Hotel, in 1855, Birch purchased the Adams Express Company Building at 1012 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored), which had been built by Adams and Company, a combined express mail service and banking house, for the growing California Stage Company.<sup>73</sup> From 1864 to 1868, the company's offices were located at the Boyd and Davis Building at 101 K Street (contributor, reconstruction).<sup>74</sup>

Sacramento became a center for California's communications networks, and companies offering express mail and telegraph services proliferated. During the 1850s and 1860s, at least seventeen express mail services operated in Sacramento.<sup>75</sup> The B.F. Hastings Building (contributor, restored) contained the offices of several such companies, including the Wells Fargo Company's Sacramento offices from 1855 to 1857.

The Pony Express, founded by the Russell, Majors, and Waddell Company in the spring of 1860, was a pioneering, though short-lived, express mail service that operated between Sacramento and St. Joseph, Missouri, facilitating quicker communication between the East and West. Riders on horseback carried mail over the roughly 1,800-mile route in ten days, stopping briefly at relay stations every twenty-five miles and transferring to fresh riders and horses every three stations, or seventy-five miles. From April 1860 to March 1861, the B.F. Hastings Building in Sacramento served as the Pony Express's western terminus.<sup>76</sup> The service's western terminus shifted to the Adams and Company Building from May 1861 until October 1861, when the Pony Express was supplanted by the completion of the country's first transcontinental telegraph line.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, *Images of America: Old Sacramento and Downtown*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time," 12, 18.

<sup>73</sup> "Historical Body Booklet Wins Top Place Award," *Sacramento Bee*, 1 July 1959; Neasham, "Old Sacramento: A Reference Point In Time," 12.

<sup>74</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 59.

<sup>75</sup> *The Golden Hub: Sacramento*, ed. Paula Bowden (Pilot Hill, CA: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Books, 2008), 195-197.

<sup>76</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 44.

<sup>77</sup> National Park Service, "A Brief History," Pony Express National Historic Trail, April 23, 2025, accessed October 1, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/poex/learn/historyculture/index.htm>.

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### Telegraph Companies

Sacramento's central role in the development of innovative transportation and communication systems extended to the creation of local, regional, and national telegraph services, the primary mode of instant communication in the mid-nineteenth century. By the mid-1850s, several telegraph companies had been established in California to connect various cities and towns throughout the state. Among these were the California State Telegraph Company and Alta California Company, both of which had offices in Sacramento. In 1853, the California State Telegraph completed telegraph lines that connected San Francisco with San Jose, Stockton, Marysville, and Sacramento. The Alta California Company, meanwhile, had lines between Sacramento and Nevada City. Outside Sacramento, the Pacific and Atlantic Company built lines from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and the Placerville and Humboldt Company completed lines to Nevada. Following Congress's passage of the Pacific Telegraph Act of 1860, which funded construction of the country's first transcontinental telegraph line, these three telegraph companies and others merged with the California State Telegraph Company to form the Overland Telegraph Company. The consolidated company was organized to complete the portion of the transcontinental telegraph line to Salt Lake City on behalf of the Western Union Company, which had been awarded the contract for the project from the federal government. On October 24, 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph message was sent from the Overland Telegraph Company's Sacramento offices from California Supreme Court Chief Justice Stephen J. Field to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, DC.<sup>78</sup>

The California State Telegraph Company initially operated out of the Adams and Company Building before relocating to the B.F. Hastings Building, which also housed the offices of the Alta California Company from 1858 to 1863.<sup>79</sup> In 1863, the consolidated company moved to the Pioneer Telegraph Building at 1015 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restoration) before it was acquired by the Western Union Company in 1867. Western Union continued to operate from the building through the early twentieth century.<sup>80</sup>

### Railroads

Few developments have had as significant of an impact on the history and development of Sacramento, the state of California, or western United States as the arrival of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century. Sacramento was at the forefront of bringing railroads to California and the effort to extend service across the country, cementing its place as the transportation center of the state. California's first steam railroad, and the first common carrier railroad west of the Mississippi River, was the Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR), formed by a group of Sacramento entrepreneurs in 1854. The railroad's terminal was located south of Old Sacramento at the intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and R streets. The SVRR's route, surveyed by enterprising young

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<sup>78</sup> "The Transcontinental Telegraph," National Park Service, updated May 7, 2024, accessed October 1, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-transcontinental-telegraph.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> National Park Service, Western Office, Division of Design and Construction, "B.F. Hastings Bank Building," Historic American Building Survey Written Historical and Descriptive Data, accessed October 1, 2025, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/master/pnp/habshaer/ca/ca0500/ca0526/data/ca0526data.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 44, 47-48, 118.

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engineer Theodore Judah, ran along R Street twenty-two miles to Folsom and proved to be an immediate boon to the young city of Sacramento when it opened in 1856, speeding the transportation of granite and cobblestones used to build Sacramento and San Francisco and silver from Nevada's Comstock Lode.<sup>81</sup>

Fascinated by the idea of building a transcontinental railroad to connect the East and West Coasts, Judah surveyed multiple potential routes for a railroad over the Sierra Nevada mountains and lobbied legislators in Washington, DC and entrepreneurs in San Francisco and Sacramento to support his endeavor. Initially dismissed, he eventually convinced four Sacramento businessmen—wholesale grocer Leland Stanford, dry goods merchant Charles Crocker, and two hardware dealers, Collis P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins—to finance the new railroad. The “Big Four,” as they became known, incorporated the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) in 1861. Planning for the CPRR took place at the Huntington, Hopkins and Company store in present-day Old Sacramento, and the floor of the Stanford Brothers wholesale merchandise store next door served as the company's headquarters from 1862 until 1873, when it relocated to San Francisco.<sup>82</sup> The conjoined buildings, known colloquially as the “Big Four Buildings,” were originally located on the south side of K Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets and were relocated to their present site at 111 I Street in Old Sacramento in 1967 (Discussed further under Criterion A: Community Planning & Development).

Initially held up by the sectional politics leading up to the Civil War, Congress and President Abraham Lincoln passed the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, granting the CPRR the franchise to construct the western portion of the transcontinental railroad. Groundbreaking for the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad took place on January 8, 1863 at the foot of K Street near the Sacramento River waterfront. The railroad's route would run along Front Street north of J Street and behind the City Hall and Waterworks Building and proceed northeast out of the city. To facilitate construction of the railroad, the City of Sacramento granted the CPRR the rights to Sutter Slough and lands west of Front Street to the Sacramento River north of K Street on the condition that the railroad company contribute to efforts to protect the city from persistent flooding by strengthening the riverfront embankments and levees. CPRR raised and leveled the banks of the Sacramento River to its new grade at Front Street and built a platform over the riverbanks, periodically improving and expanding its riverfront earthworks over the following decades until finally building a tall concrete seawall along the riverbanks in 1912.<sup>83</sup> Along the waterfront between I and K streets, CPRR constructed wharves, warehouses, a freight depot, and passenger depot.<sup>84</sup> Reconstructions of the Central Pacific Freight Depot (contributor, reconstruction) and later 1876 Central Pacific Passenger Depot (contributor, reconstruction) are located near their original locations.

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<sup>81</sup> Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City*, 52-53.

<sup>82</sup> Johnsen and Llewellyn, *Buildings and Builders of Early Sacramento*, 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> Helmich, “K Street Landing, Old Sacramento & The Embarcadero,” 6.

<sup>84</sup> Orsi, “Railroads and the Urban Environment, Sacramento's Story,” 84-87.

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As construction of the transcontinental railroad progressed, the CPRR absorbed several smaller competing railroad firms, including the Sacramento Valley Railroad in 1865, Western Pacific Railroad in 1867, and Southern Pacific Railroad in 1868. In May 1869, the Central Pacific's line from Sacramento joined with the Union Pacific Railroad's line at Promontory Point, Utah, completing the nation's First Transcontinental Railroad.<sup>85</sup>

Completion of the transcontinental railroad and the CPRR's rise to dominance would not have been possible without the thousands of workers who constructed the railroad's tracks, trains, and other infrastructure and kept them running on a daily basis. Workers from around the world flocked to Sacramento, attracted by the abundance of available jobs building the railroad or working in CPRR's massive railyards just north and east of present-day Old Sacramento on the infilled site of Sutter Slough. CPRR recruited workers from China to meet its voracious demand for labor to complete the transcontinental railroad.<sup>86</sup> Between 1865 and 1869, approximately 15,000 Chinese workers built the railroad, making up roughly ninety percent of the overall workforce. Many settled in Sacramento once the railroad was complete and contributed to the city's economy as merchants, restaurateurs, laundrymen, peddlers, and other professions. Despite their demonstrable contributions, racist sentiments toward Chinese residents grew during the 1870s, culminating in the passage of the federal Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned the immigration of laborers from China—with the exception of merchants, teachers, diplomats, and a limited number of other professions—into the United States and remained in effect through World War II.<sup>87</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the railroad company, renamed the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) in 1884 and still in need of workers, began recruiting Italians from the eastern United States and directly from Italy to work in the railyards. By 1900, Italians made up the third largest group of unskilled workers employed by the SPRR, and by 1910, they comprised largest group.<sup>88</sup> That same year, it was estimated that the SPRR employed approximately one-third of Sacramento's workforce, demonstrating its dominance over nearly all aspects of city life.<sup>89</sup>

The railroad's control over the Sacramento River waterfront transformed the character and role of the city's oldest blocks. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the SPRR continued to expand its physical presence along the river. By the 1910s, the waterfront was entirely industrialized. The industrialization of the blocks closest to the river and the noise, pollution, increased risk of fire, and crime it brought with it contributed to shifting Sacramento's commercial, political, and administrative center.<sup>90</sup> Illustrating this shift, a new City Hall building opened nine blocks to the east in 1909; the original City Hall and Water Works Building, damaged by the vibrations from the constant flow of trains running by, was demolished in 1913

<sup>85</sup> City of Sacramento, General Plan Technical Background Report, Appendix B, 2013, 6.3-60 - 6.3-60 – 6.3-61.

<sup>86</sup> Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City*, 55.

<sup>87</sup> "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," National Archives, January 17, 2023, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>.

<sup>88</sup> Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City*, 56.

<sup>89</sup> City of Sacramento, General Plan Technical Background Report, Appendix B, 6.3-64. Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment, Sacramento's Story," 58.

<sup>90</sup> Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment, Sacramento's Story," 89.

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to clear the way for additional SPRR facilities. Although Sacramento's "West End," as the blocks between the State Capitol and Sacramento River that included Old Sacramento became known, remained a living neighborhood with a diverse and multi-cultural population, divestment, deteriorating physical conditions, and growing crime rates gradually transformed Sacramento's oldest neighborhood. By 1915, fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company showed that many of the grand hotels from the city's Gold Rush-era had been converted into boarding houses, transient hotels, or "cheap lodgings," often occupied by migrant workers. Prominent businesses, such as Breuners and Weinstock-Lubin, meanwhile, relocated their stores to the east. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the assessed value of properties in the West End fell by fifty percent. The West End's physical deterioration accelerated as affluent, mostly white, residents moved out to newer neighborhoods to the east and south during the Great Depression. This so-called "white flight" increased during the post-World War II period, altering the demographics of Sacramento's oldest neighborhoods into some of the lowest income but most ethnically and racially diverse areas of the city. By the late 1940s, twenty-one percent of the West End's population was African American, thirty percent was Asian American, and thirteen percent was Latin American.<sup>91</sup> Around this time, City officials and reporters for the *Sacramento Bee* began to identify the West End as a blighted area, describing it as the worst slum west of the Mississippi River, and began calling for change.<sup>92</sup>

### ***Criterion A: Community Planning & Development***

#### **Sacramento's Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks**

##### *The History of Flooding in Sacramento*

Prior to the construction of levees and other reclamation projects in the nineteenth century, the Sacramento Valley flooded each winter and spring due to the combination of rain and melted snow pack from the Cascade Mountain Range and Sierra Nevadas. This cyclical annual flooding was a central part of the cultures and lifeways of the tribal communities who lived along the Sacramento and American rivers.

The Gold Rush, and rapid influx of settlers from around the world, permanently transformed the physical landscape these tribal communities called home. Hydraulic mining along the Sacramento and American rivers north and east of the fledgling City of Sacramento eroded hillsides and deposited debris in the river, disrupting their natural flow and increasing the frequency and severity of its flooding.<sup>93</sup> Further efforts by settlers to control the flow of the rivers, prevent flooding, and reclaim surrounding floodplains in the mid- to late-nineteenth century changed forever the tribes' access, use, and relationships with the rivers and shorelines.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Moriah Ulinskas, "Tale of A City: Community Resistance to Redevelopment in Sacramento's Japantown," *California State Library Foundation Bulletin* No. 128 (2020), pp. 20-25, accessed October 15, 2025, <https://cslf.medium.com/tale-of-a-city-9bebd0db30a1>.

<sup>92</sup> Lee M.A. Simpson and Lisa C. Prince, "The Invention of Old Sacramento: A Past for the Future," in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M.A. Simpson, ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 292.

<sup>93</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Consultation with Wilton Rancheria, email from Sean deCourcy to Clare Flynn, December 8, 2025.

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The City of Sacramento's location at the confluence of the American and Sacramento rivers offered the benefit of easy access to transportation and commerce along the river; however, it also came with the virtual certainty of annual flooding. Shortly after the city's establishment, efforts were taken to protect it from flooding. Under Mayor Hardin Bigelow, the City of Sacramento and citizens jointly constructed Sacramento's first levee. The levee paralleled Front Street and the Sacramento River on the west and paralleled the American River on the north from Sacramento to Brighton. When this levee failed in the flood of March 1852, larger levees were constructed, including one south of the city on R Street.<sup>95</sup>

### *Raising Sacramento's Streets*

In 1853, the Mayor and Common Council first discussed the possibility of leveling and raising the city streets by approximately four feet in areas of lower elevation to prevent flooding. Although there were mixed reactions to the plan, the process began that year. I, J, K, and L streets were raised. J, K, and L streets were raised from Front Street on the west to 9<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. I Street was similarly graded from Front Street on the west to 6<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. Redwood crosswalks were constructed between Front and 8<sup>th</sup> streets. It was an expensive process, but the City wished to maintain its status as the state capital and continue attracting development.

Despite these efforts, the winter of 1861 to 1862 brought the most destructive floods ever experienced in the City of Sacramento and spurred the federal, state, county, and city governments to develop flood control measures in the Sacramento Valley. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undertook a project between 1864 and 1868 to redirect the American River and dredge it of mining debris. By straightening a curve in the American River and joining the American and Sacramento rivers approximately one mile above their original juncture, the Corps increased the flow of the river and decreased its likelihood of flooding. Dirt from the re-routing of the American River was used as fill for the City's raised streets.

In 1863, the Sacramento Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance establishing a standard to elevate the city's streets by eight to fourteen feet. Between 1864 and 1868, the City of Sacramento raised the streets of its downtown to prevent flood waters from entering the low-lying downtown. Property owners were required to raise or add a story to their buildings in order meet the new level of the streets. In addition, property owners were responsible for building sidewalks that would bridge the gap between their buildings and the raised streets. Raising the streets increased downtown property values by fifty to sixty percent because the public gained confidence in the security and prosperity of the downtown.

In 1864, the Board of Trustees authorized proposals to fill Front Street south of I Street to high grade. Since this work occurred adjacent to the railroad tracks, the Central Pacific may have encouraged property owners along Front Street to request high grading since it widened the track area and provided extra room for railroad operations. It was the re-grading of Front Street that served as a catalyst for downtown owners to elevate the rest of the streets to the high grade level

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<sup>95</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report, 2009.

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specified in the City's ordinance. The new elevation was to be level with the top of a hill where City Plaza (Cesar Chavez Park) was located.

To contain the dirt fill, each property owner constructed a retaining wall along the edge of the street in front of his property. To strengthen the retaining wall and keep it from collapsing toward the building, brick bulwarks or buttresses, thicker at the bottom and tapering toward the top, were installed against the wall at intervals ranging from four to six feet. Many of the brick walls themselves also angled slightly toward the street to add additional strength.

Although most builders of the bulwarks and street retaining walls were private contractors who responded to requests for bids published by the City, local prisoners were an additional source of labor. The Street Commissioner was the designated Superintendent of the chain gangs and had the authority to order sentenced prisoners to work on streets, alleys, and other places as directed. The number of contractors who submitted bids to construct the street retaining walls increased from two in 1864 to ten in 1865, and there was strong demand for more bricklayers and laborers.

As the streets were raised, sewers and water lines were also installed. Lines made of brick or wood were three to five feet in diameter and egg-shaped. Some corner properties contained brick cylindrical cistern-like structures underground that may have served as water reservoirs in case of fire.<sup>96</sup>

Property owners raised the streets on their blocks and constructed sidewalks as they were financially able; therefore, sidewalk segments on a single block may have been at the original grade or elevated. Stairs, ladders and ramps were constructed between raised sidewalks and those which remained at the original grade, creating a particularly hazardous streetscape. The first efforts to raise streets were completed in 1864 in the blocks encompassing Old Sacramento, including Front Street was from K to I streets; J Street was between Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets; and I Street from Front to 5<sup>th</sup> streets. In 1865, street raising was completed on L Street between Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets; K Street between Front and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street from I to L streets. The city's remaining areas of low elevation, outside Old Sacramento, were raised between 1866 and 1876.<sup>97</sup>

Property owners were responsible for raising their buildings to meet the new street level, which could either be done by adding a story to the top of the building or raising the building to the new level. Property owners who added stories to an existing structure created a basement level which often retained the doors, windows, and fire doors of the building's original first story. The majority of merchants, however, raised their buildings with jacks and put new foundations and storerooms underneath them to maintain the main floor of the building at street level. Most elevated buildings were brick. It required hundreds of screw jacks to raise the larger buildings; each jack had to be turned a little at a time to keep the building level and balanced as it was

<sup>96</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

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elevated. Some building owners raised their buildings with jacks and filled the space left below with earth.<sup>98</sup>

### *Raised Streets and Alley Dips*

The nature of Sacramento's raised streets is apparent from the alleys, which were not raised, but remained at the original grade level. In Old Sacramento, the raised streets are visible from Firehouse Alley, which runs north-south through the city blocks and dips from the raised street level to the original street grade. To a lesser extent, the I/J and K/L alleys also dip from the level of the elevated streets to Sacramento's original grade. The dip from the raised street level to the original grade along alleys facilitated the delivery of goods and accommodated small stables and sheds. The raised streets and the new sewer system improved drainage greatly. The alleys still flooded at times but were of lesser importance; by and large, activity could continue on the raised streets.<sup>99</sup>

### *Hollow Sidewalks*

The hollow sidewalks were formed by six structural elements: the street retaining wall, the building wall, two end walls (which divide and partition the hollow sidewalk spaces), the ceiling, and the floor. Buildings that were raised are often supported by brick piers, while buildings to which a story was added feature the former first story facade at basement level. Brick piers range from simple, rectangular or square shaped, utilitarian supports to narrow, wall-like supports with corbelled bases. Some brick piers feature corbelled brackets which may have supported iron I-beams or wood beams running below the sidewalk above. Buildings supported by the original building wall typically feature door and/or window openings, including openings that may have been bricked-in when additional stories were added. These window and door openings sometimes include wood or granite thresholds and/or metal covers that may have been installed to safeguard against fire.

Two types of structural systems were used to span between the street retaining wall and the building and support the sidewalk surface above. One was a wood post and beam framework system, while the other incorporated brick barrel vaults. The post and beam system was supported by the street retaining wall and by framework in or paralleling the building wall. Beams supporting the sidewalk were then covered with wood planks and surfaced with brick or cement to create a sidewalk above. The brick barrel vault system was comprised of shallow, arched brick barrel vaults that spanned between iron I-beams, which were spaced four to six feet apart and were supported by the street retaining wall and brick building wall or wood posts along the building wall. Wood planks or cement above the vaults formed the sidewalk surface. Tie rods were located at the base of each arch to hold the sides together with tension. Newer or reconstructed hollow sidewalk systems are comprised of reinforced concrete flat slabs which rest on concrete or encased steel beams which span from the street retaining wall to the building or to free-standing columns.

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<sup>98</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

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When the new sidewalks were completed, the hollow sidewalk spaces below were continuous; however, over time, the spaces were partitioned into smaller segments by walls that property owners constructed at the lot lines to secure the spaces from occupation or theft.<sup>100</sup>

### *Significance of Old Sacramento's Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks*

The raised streets and hollow sidewalks in Sacramento represent the City's response to the chronic flooding of the downtown. This effort is particularly significant in the context of the flood control measures that the federal and state governments took simultaneously. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers redirected the American River and removed mining debris to increase its flow, and both the state and county governments pursued the construction of levy systems, but the city government pursued the raised streets project downtown. The project reflects the political culture of the mid-nineteenth century and also demonstrates why Sacramento was selected as the State Capital and the terminus of the transcontinental railroad: the city was particularly attractive to investors because it was willing to accommodate them. Rather than lose its bid as the State Capital or risk losing the railroad, Sacramento aggressively pursued the raised streets project to lessen flooding in the downtown and to improve the city's drainage and infrastructure system.

Sacramento is the only city in California and one of the earliest in the United States to raise its streets. Chicago, which began to raise its streets in 1856, may have been the first to improve its infrastructure on the same scale. The raised streets program in Chicago is most similar to Sacramento's project: streets were raised with dirt from the river, buildings were jacked up to meet the new elevation, and hollow sidewalks were constructed. The effort to raise the streets and sidewalks in Seattle, Washington, like that in Sacramento, was spurred by chronic flooding. The Seattle Fire of 1879 served as the catalyst for the project. Unlike the infrastructure projects in Chicago and Sacramento, buildings located below the grade of the raised streets resulted when overzealous builders constructed structures immediately after the fire, before the raised street project was completed. Like Sacramento, the federal and state governments simultaneously pursued flood control efforts in Seattle, including damming the Duwamish River and filling parts of the bay. The resulting streetscapes in Chicago, Sacramento, and Seattle are very similar.

Large swaths of Sacramento's raised streets with hollow sidewalks were demolished for construction of the I-5 Highway and Downtown Plaza Mall in the 1960s and 1970s. Examples of raised streets with hollow sidewalks with varying degrees of integrity remain in an area bounded by Front Street on the west, I Street on the north, 13<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, and L Street on the south, including within Old Sacramento. The raised streets remain visible from the alleys, which dip to the original grade level west of I-5 in Old Sacramento and east of I-5.<sup>101</sup>

### Urban Redevelopment Efforts & Historic Preservation Movement in the Mid-Twentieth Century

<sup>100</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Survey Report*, 2009.

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Planning and development of the Old Sacramento historic area from the 1950s to the 1980s put Sacramento at the vanguard of the nationwide evolution of urban redevelopment policy and the historic preservation movement in the mid-twentieth century.

For most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, economic policies at all levels of government in the United States emphasized outward growth and the development of new neighborhoods and suburbs, often to the detriment of their older urban downtown centers, like Sacramento's West End. The divestment of funding and resources from these older urban core areas resulted in widespread physical decay and outward migration of businesses and affluent residents to newer outlying suburbs.

Policymakers at all levels of government throughout the United States from the 1930s to the 1950s favored "slum clearance" and "urban renewal" as the means of revitalizing downtown areas. In broad terms, these concepts posited that the most effective way to address the poor conditions of aging urban neighborhoods was to clear them wholesale of decaying, obsolete buildings and build anew. The U.S. Housing Acts of 1934, 1937, 1949, and 1954 and Highway Act of 1956 promoted and provided financial backing for slum clearance as a key component of federal urban redevelopment policies, which were subsequently adopted by states and cities across the country. Originally intended to address homelessness and poverty, these policies formalized the discriminatory practice of redlining, which denied mortgages to the owners of older buildings in urban neighborhoods with a high concentration of low-income, racial and ethnic minority residents. The lack of access to federal financial assistance contributed to the worsening physical conditions of old urban neighborhoods, like Sacramento's West End, and provided government leaders with the legal basis to repossess property for slum clearance through eminent domain. Following these federal precedents and directives, the California State Legislature passed the California Redevelopment Act in 1945, authorizing cities and counties to create their own redevelopment agencies to survey so-called "blighted" areas and make preliminary plans for their redevelopment. The act initiated major urban redevelopment projects throughout the state, including Sacramento.

The expansion of the interstate highway system under the Federal Highway Act of 1956 compounded the impacts of redevelopment on older urban neighborhoods and their residents throughout the country in the mid-twentieth century. Like redlining, eminent domain, and slum clearances, decisions about where to route the new highways often targeted older racially and ethnically diverse urban neighborhoods. The large-scale destruction of entire neighborhoods caused by urban redevelopment programs and federal highway construction received widespread public outcry. With more and more historic buildings and neighborhoods falling to the bulldozers, a growing number of Americans began to experience a collective sense of loss of the nation's history and identity, sparking a historic preservation movement in the United States.<sup>102</sup>

#### Development of the Plan for Old Sacramento

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<sup>102</sup> Simpson and Prince, "The Invention of Old Sacramento: A Past for the Future," 290-295.

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The redevelopment of the Sacramento's oldest blocks along the Sacramento River waterfront into "Old Sacramento" was a direct and pioneering response to the conditions created by decades of policies that focused on urban renewal and highway construction at the expense of the living neighborhoods, residents, businesses, and historic places that stood in their way. Using the authority granted by the California Redevelopment Act of 1945, Sacramento's City Council allocated funds for a redevelopment survey of the West End in 1948. The survey identified sixty-two blocks of 244 blocks in downtown Sacramento as blighted. Two years later in 1950, the city established the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency to study and make plans for redeveloping the West End. The same year, the city's planning department adopted an ordinance that officially designated the West End as blighted, despite challenges from residents and property owners that they lacked evidence for their findings.<sup>103</sup> Under the ordinance, all of the blocks from the Sacramento River east to 10th Street and between I Street to the north to R Street to the south, including the area that became Old Sacramento, were designated as "Redevelopment Area No. 1."<sup>104</sup> Freed from the requirement to replace demolished housing with new residential development by the Housing Act of 1954, the first phase of demolition took place within a fifteen-block area to the south of Old Sacramento from 1957 to 1961, resulting in the clearance of 310 parcels and displacement of more than 1,800 residents and 350 businesses.<sup>105</sup>

Plans to redevelop the West End triggered a multi-faceted grassroots movement of individual community members, groups, and agencies at the local, state, and national levels to save the historic buildings in the path of the bulldozers. Concerned about the deteriorating condition and potential loss of some of Sacramento's most historic buildings, City Councilman Edgar A. Sayre, Jr., led the formal establishment of the Sacramento Historic Landmarks Commission (SHLC) in 1953. The model for the SHLC was based on examples set by similar commissions in San Jose and Monterey.<sup>106</sup> The SHLC's initial functions included promoting the preservation of historic sites, designating historic landmarks, recommending historic properties for the City to acquire, and developing a new museum. The initial principal target of Sayre's efforts was the B.F. Hastings building at 2<sup>nd</sup> and K streets, known for its historic role as the headquarters of the Pony Express, which he considered second only in historic significance to Sutter's Fort.<sup>107</sup> Sayre advocated for the building to become a permanent public museum and pushed for the development of such a museum to be among the commission's first acts.<sup>108</sup>

While redevelopment in Sacramento progressed, the California State Legislature enacted a statute in 1957, appropriating \$50,000 for the Division of Beaches and Parks (now the Department of Parks and Recreation) in cooperation with the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, to study the development of a zone of preservation in the West End, acquisition of

<sup>103</sup> Ulinskis, "Tale of A City: Community Resistance to Redevelopment in Sacramento's Japantown."

<sup>104</sup> Simpson and Prince, "The Invention of Old Sacramento: A Past for the Future," 294.

<sup>105</sup> Redevelopment Agency of the City of Sacramento, *Sacramento Redevelopment: The Sacramento of Tomorrow* (Sacramento: Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, undated), 7-8.

<sup>106</sup> "Historic Landmarks Unit Plan is Okehed," *Sacramento Bee*, October 2, 1953, 21; "Ed Sayre, Jr. Heads Landmarks Group," *Sacramento Union*, October 2, 1953, 16.

<sup>107</sup> "Pony Express Building May Be Reopened," *Sacramento Bee*, October 23, 1953, 23.

<sup>108</sup> "City Councilmen, Citizens Discuss Landmarks Unit," *Sacramento Bee*, October 31, 1953, 25.

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artifacts, and creation of a museum that could be incorporated into the state park system.<sup>109</sup> The three-part study was published in 1958 and showed that seventeen of the thirty-one total State Historical Landmarks in Sacramento were located on the blocks between the Sacramento River waterfront, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, I Street, and Capitol Avenue. In light of this and pending redevelopment plans, the study recommended that the City of Sacramento establish a historical zone of preservation containing these blocks, which would be protected by zoning laws with architectural controls to preserve the historic exterior features of the buildings and that the construction of any major new traffic arteries should be designed to have the least impact on the “historical values and atmosphere of this zone.”<sup>110</sup>

Much of the funding for Sacramento’s redevelopment projects was slated to come from the Federal Highway Act of 1956 through the construction of a new interstate highway through downtown Sacramento. Despite the findings and recommendations of the 1958 State Parks reports, separate studies prepared by two consultant groups in 1958 and 1961 recommended that the new U.S. Interstate 5 Highway be routed along the west side of the Sacramento River where the Division of Beaches and Parks had identified the largest concentration of historic buildings. This original route was adopted by City Council, SRA, and State highway agencies and commissions in 1962.<sup>111</sup> A total of thirty-eight historic buildings stood in the path of the proposed new highway.<sup>112</sup> City Council, SRA, the local chamber of commerce and realty board, and business associations supported the highway plan, believing it would attract large commercial interests to this economically depressed part of downtown Sacramento. The proposed routing succeeded in convincing Macy’s to agree to build a new department store in downtown Sacramento next to the new highway where it would have nearly direct access to a freeway offramp. However, plans for the new highway also triggered the largest and most effective movement in support of historic preservation the city of Sacramento had yet seen.

As plans for the highway emerged, a powerful group of preservationists at the local, state, and national levels banded together to form a grassroots movement to save Sacramento’s oldest blocks. The multi-layered cohort included the SHLC, California State Division of Beaches and Parks, National Parks Service, U.S. House Representative John Moss, and the *Sacramento Bee*, led by its publisher Eleanor McClatchy, who ran regular editorials in the paper against the highway project. In 1960, the SHLC released its own study with City Council’s backing aimed at “Restoring and Preserving the Historic Landmarks and Heritage of ‘Old Sacramento.’” The study picked up several of the goals proposed by the SHLC seven years earlier and recommended the creation of a state park, city-county museum, and a zoning ordinance to control architectural design in the area. The following year, the National Park Service formally issued its own findings in a report on the impacts of the proposed highway route. In what it

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<sup>109</sup> “Statutes of California 1956 and 1957,” Volume 2, Chapters 2315 and 4030.

<sup>110</sup> California Division of Beaches and Parks, *Old Sacramento: A Report on Its Significance to the City, State and Nation, With Recommendation for the Preservation and Use of Its Principal Historical Structures and Sites – Part I*, (State of California: Department of Natural Resources, 1958), 9.

<sup>111</sup> Simpson and Prince, “The Invention of Old Sacramento: A Past for the Future,” 299.

<sup>112</sup> Walter Atkins, Richard Gibler, and Donald Wagenet, *Environmental Renewal in Old Sacramento* (University of California, Davis, 1975), 24.

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called “a matter of deep concern,” the NPS report found that any highway route on the east side of the Sacramento River would result in a substantial loss of historic buildings and sites of local, state, and national significance. The NPS called for preserving as much of Old Sacramento as possible and, if rerouting the freeway was impossible, recommended relocating buildings rather than demolishing them.

These reports and efforts by preservation advocates held off construction and convinced Sacramento’s urban renewal planners to formally initiate efforts to preserve and redevelop Old Sacramento into a historic commercial district. In 1963, SRA, the City of Sacramento, and the State Division of Highways hired the planning firm of Candeub, Fleissig and Associates to complete a master plan for the redevelopment of an “Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park.” Completed in 1965, it promoted developing the Old Sacramento area as “a practical re-creation of a living, self-sustaining community reflecting the atmosphere, character, architecture, enterprise and color of the early gold mining period for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the people and to stimulate their appreciation of historical values as they pertain to our national heritage.”<sup>113</sup> The master plan helped coordinate intertwined efforts by various departments and agencies tied to redeveloping the West End. Most significantly, it helped convince the California State Division of Highways to modify the routing of the Interstate 5 Highway to curve around and avoid the blocks with the highest concentration of historic buildings and sites.<sup>114</sup>

Designation of “Old Sacramento” as a National Historic Landmark in 1965, followed by its listing in the National Register of Historic Places after the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 further boosted preservation and restoration efforts. In 1966, SRA approved creation of redevelopment Project No. 4 (later renamed the Capitol Mall Riverfront Project No. 4), which included the four-block “Old Sacramento historic area.” The master plan for Old Sacramento was formally approved by City Council that same year and funded in 1967. The plan directed the “preservation, restoration, and reconstruction of properties” in Old Sacramento from the period between 1849 and 1870 and triggered the official planning, property acquisition, and site preparation for the newly created historic district.<sup>115</sup>

Distinct from other efforts to preserve historic areas or historic districts in other cities across the country, the 1965 master plan for Old Sacramento introduced a pioneering new approach called “preservation for use,” which proposed historic preservation as a tool to support and advance the goals of urban revitalization. The concept was the brainchild of Vernon Aubrey Neasham, the master plan’s historic consultant. Neasham had a long career as a historian with federal and state agencies stretching back to the 1930s and had previously authored the California State Division of Beaches and Parks’ three-part study that initially advocated for the preservation of Old Sacramento back in 1958. Rather than restore or reconstruct the historic buildings as museum

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<sup>113</sup> Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, *Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park, Technical Report*, 1965, 2.

<sup>114</sup> Simpson and Prince, “The Invention of Old Sacramento,” 301-302.

<sup>115</sup> Simpson and Prince, “The Invention of Old Sacramento,” 297-299.

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pieces primarily for the purpose of educating the public, Neasham's "preservation for use" strategy directed that buildings in Old Sacramento would be renovated and reopened as working hotels, shops, restaurants, and commercial establishments that would be integrated into Sacramento's everyday modern life. In Neasham's words, Old Sacramento would be "No dead museum piece but a living, pulsating element of modern life, to be enjoyed by the living."<sup>116</sup> The master plan's emphasis on commercial regeneration and revitalization of an economically depressed portion of the West End was crucial in winning over Sacramento city planners and officials to rehabilitating, rather than bulldozing, Old Sacramento.<sup>117</sup> Envisioning Old Sacramento reborn as a self-sustaining, economically viable contributor to the city's commercial center, Neasham saw "preservation for use" as a model that could be applied across the country. "Old Sacramento's influence is bound to be exerted on future generations," Neasham wrote in the master plan. "... Preserved, with an economic as well as a cultural reason for being, it will have nationwide importance. As a model and guide in historical restoration, interpretation, and use, its influence will be exerted throughout the land, thus enabling us to better understand what made America great."<sup>118</sup> The slogan, "preservation for use" was later adopted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as part of its campaign to convince property owners to restore historic buildings as sound economic and community investments.<sup>119</sup> In adhering to this plan, Old Sacramento broke the mold of its time and introduced innovative new planning concepts that shifted the focus of urban redevelopment efforts from slum clearance to preserving and rehabilitating existing neighborhoods.

#### Realizing the 1965 Master Plan: The Creation of Old Sacramento

Though the master plan for Old Sacramento was funded in 1967, it took more than two decades to fully realize the plan's vision. Initial steps included relocating existing residents, many of whom consisted of elderly pensioners and transient workers, and established businesses from the blocks. The elderly residents, most of whom wished to stay in the city center, were rehoused throughout the city by SHRA. Though studies by SHRA determined that relocating the transient workers did not merit "substantial relocation expenditures," SHRA reluctantly offered to relocate the transient workers to standard quality housing in other parts of the city. Many of the businesses, meanwhile, were relocated to 12<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>120</sup>

Old Sacramento was financed in part through the relatively new planning tool of tax increment financing (TIF). First introduced in California in 1952, TIF froze property taxes for parcels in Old Sacramento at the 1954 level, with the goal of attracting private investment through the prospect of profiting from the increased value of the restored and redeveloped properties. SHRA controlled two-thirds of the district, while the State Department of Parks and Recreation owned and occupied the district's north one-third. Reconstructions of buildings that had been present in

<sup>116</sup> Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, *Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park, Technical Report*, 1965, 38.

<sup>117</sup> Simpson and Prince, "The Invention of Old Sacramento," 303.

<sup>118</sup> Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, *Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park, Technical Report*, 1965, 38.

<sup>119</sup> Peter J. Hayes, "He Made History Pay Its Own Way," *Sacramento Union*, March 14, 1982: 17.

<sup>120</sup> Atkins, Gibler, and Wagenet, "Environmental Renewal in Old Sacramento," 11-13.

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the area were a focal point of the Master Plan. At the time of its completion, fifty-three whole or partial buildings out of the 130 buildings that had existed in the area before 1870 remained, several of which would need to be demolished to make way for the new highway. Many of the remaining buildings had been extensively altered through the removal of exterior ornamentation and storefront remodels that made them unrecognizable from their original appearance, while age, deferred maintenance, and antiquated building construction methods left others in poor or unsafe condition. As a result, the blocks contained a patchwork surviving buildings in varying states of preservation and disrepair, vacant lots, and in some cases, entire block faces with no buildings or only the hollowed-out structures of older buildings. The Master Plan promoted the reconstruction of buildings of historic or architectural significance that had existing in the area in the mid- to late nineteenth century in order to restore the densely built-up character and energy that had existed in the area in its heyday.<sup>121</sup>

To ensure that the deteriorating historic buildings were “authentically restored” or reconstructed, the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency published a Design and Development Kit in 1970 that contained design standards and environmental requirements. Private investors who purchased property in Old Sacramento were required to adhere to the Design and Development Kit. The reconstruction of the Morse Building, supported by funding from federal urban renewal funds, served as a pilot program for the reconstruction program and provided lessons that informed the Design and Developer Kit.<sup>122</sup> Among the design standards included in the document were that:

1. All projects shall be designed by a competent architect or engineer/design consultant team familiar with the architecture of the 1850 to 1870 era;
2. Authentic reproduction of the original buildings is the first priority of development;
3. Developers restoring existing buildings are required to maintain as much of the existing structure as possible [...];
4. Developers restoring or reconstructing buildings are required to use historically authentic materials on all exposed facades; and
5. Quality materials and construction techniques are to be used for all restoration and reconstruction work. All materials and workmanship incorporated are to be the best grade of the respective kinds for the specified purpose.<sup>123</sup>

Additionally, developers were required to restore or reconstruct buildings according to schematic plans that had already been prepared by consultants hired by SRA based on historic research, photographs, drawings, sketches, written descriptions, and the surviving built fabric.<sup>124</sup> If schematic plans had not yet been completed, the developer was responsible for researching the property themselves to complete an “authentic reproduction.”<sup>125</sup> As part of their contract with SRA, they were also required to construct wood sidewalks in front of their properties in

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<sup>121</sup> Candeub, Fleissg and Associates, *Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park, Technical Report*, 39-42.

<sup>122</sup> Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Old Sacramento*, 1968; City of Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Design and Development Kit: Old Sacramento*, 1970.

<sup>123</sup> Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Design and Development Kit: Old Sacramento*, 1970, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Old Sacramento*, 1968.

<sup>125</sup> Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Design and Development Kit: Old Sacramento*, 1970, 7.

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alignment with designs provided by SRA.<sup>126</sup> Although the reconstructed buildings in Old Sacramento are not fully accurate recreations of the original nineteenth-century buildings they aimed to replicate, they have achieved significance in their own right as buildings that were a key component of the redevelopment of Old Sacramento.

City planners targeted the nation's bicentennial celebrations on July 4, 1976 for completion of a majority of the private investments, landscaping, and support facilities for Old Sacramento, seeking to leverage Old Sacramento "for the role it played in the growth of the West."<sup>127</sup> An important milestone was reached in 1970 when the Southern Pacific Railroad agreed to relinquish its property holdings along Front Street and the Sacramento Riverfront from just north of I Street to Capitol Mall. The transfer of property from the railroad company cleared the way for planned development along the riverfront.<sup>128</sup> By 1975, renovations were in progress at forty-seven of the fifty-three available properties.<sup>129</sup> Twenty-nine restored or reconstructed buildings were completed in time for the bicentennial celebrations the following year.<sup>130</sup> The 1965 master plan's design intents for monuments commemorating SPRR engineer Theodore Judah and Sacramento's prominent role in the Pony Express at the west edge of the district along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street were also fulfilled by 1976. In 1971, a 170-ton granite monument honoring Judah, originally installed at the SPRR depot in 1923, was relocated to the west side of the intersection of 2<sup>nd</sup> and L streets.<sup>131</sup> In May 1976, a seventeen-foot tall bronze statue of a Pony Express rider, designed by Southern California artist Thomas Holland, was dedicated at the west side of the intersection of 2<sup>nd</sup> and J streets.<sup>132</sup> Rounding out the master planned development completed in time for the bicentennial was the construction of a multi-story brick-clad parking structure at the south edge of the district in February 1976.<sup>133</sup>

In spring 1978, Sacramento's City Council and County Board of Supervisors each allocated \$1.2 million to construct a new museum in Old Sacramento. The museum was proposed to be housed inside a reconstruction of Sacramento's original City Hall and Waterworks building. However, passage of Proposition 13 later that year and resulting uncertainty about local government revenues shelved the project.<sup>134</sup> After years of delays and struggle to acquire funding, the reconstructed City Hall and Waterworks building was finally completed at the north end of the district in 1985. Its reopening as the Sacramento History Museum fulfilled local preservation advocates' long-sought goal of establishing a new city-county history museum.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, *Design and Development Kit: Old Sacramento*, 1970, 8.

<sup>127</sup> Atkins, Gibler, and Wagenet, "Environmental Renewal in Old Sacramento," 3.

<sup>128</sup> "SP Gives Up Riverfront," *The Press-Tribune* (Roseville, CA), November, 23 1970: 1.

<sup>129</sup> Atkins, Gibler, and Wagenet, "Environmental Renewal in Old Sacramento," 15.

<sup>130</sup> John V. Hurst, "Paint Bricks? Old Sacramento Debate Surfaces," *Sacramento Bee*, June 27, 1976: 39; "Old Sacramento Meets the Challenge of the Past...Today," *Sacramento Union*, January 27, 1974: 81.

<sup>131</sup> "Big Moving Job," *Sacramento Bee*, June 20, 1967: B1; "Scouting Capsule Buried," *Sacramento Union*, August 5, 1971: D1.

<sup>132</sup> Helen Diepenbrock, "Pony Express Rides Again," *Sacramento Union*, May 30, 1976: B2.

<sup>133</sup> "Times Are Booming in Rebuilt Old Town," *Sacramento Union*, February 22, 1976: E21.

<sup>134</sup> "History Fans' Dream Becoming Reality," *Sacramento Union*, March 12, 1985: 7.

<sup>135</sup> "History Fans' Dream Becoming Reality," *Sacramento Union*, March 12, 1985: 7.

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The year 1985 proved to be a major milestone in realizing the master planned vision for Old Sacramento. A combined \$10.5 million in funds from the State and redevelopment funds and private investment spurred a broad swath of projects, including reconstructions of the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) Freight Depot and loading platform; California Steam Navigation Company Warehouse, office, and freight depot; and a wood plank wharf over the riverbanks from J to L streets.<sup>136</sup>

Progress on other portions of the State Parks portion of the district continued to proceed slowly. As far back as the State's 1958 studies recommending preservation of Old Sacramento, the east side of Front Street between I and J streets had been envisioned for redevelopment as a "1849 Scene," containing reconstructed buildings that depicted Sacramento at the start of the Gold Rush. Three buildings were reconstructed in the area designated for the 1849 Scene between the mid-1970s and 1990: the Connecticut Mining and Trading Company between 1973-1975, Eagle Theater around 1975, and Tehama Block between 1988 and 1990.<sup>137</sup> With the exception of these buildings, the "1849 Scene" has not been completed.

#### Development Not Included in the 1965 Master Plan

While the majority of the mid- to late twentieth-century physical development in Old Sacramento was directed by the 1965 master plan, a few buildings and features were added to the district which were not included in the original master plan and are, therefore, non-contributors to the historic district. Much of this contemporary development was undertaken by the City to increase activity and visitorship along the waterfront. Although a schoolhouse never existed historically within the boundaries of Old Sacramento, and staff from the State Department of Parks and Recreation considered it "out of character" with the history of the district, a replica of a nineteenth-century one-room schoolhouse, donated by the Sacramento Soroptimist's Society, was erected in 1976 at Front and L streets as a temporary exhibit for the city's bicentennial celebrations. The building remained in place at Front and L streets until it was demolished in 2025.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to plans for a city-county history museum that predated the 1965 master plan, a separate museum with state-wide reach joined the historic district in the early 1980s. A reconstruction of the Central Pacific Railroad's passenger depot opened on Front Street in 1976 as the first arm of a larger planned California State Railroad Museum. The full museum, housed in a contemporary brick building that spanned nearly three city blocks at the north edge of the district, opened in 1981.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Lou Thelen, "Here's What's Planned for Old Sacramento," *Sacramento Union*, 10 February 1985: A6,

<sup>137</sup> "When Bygones Aren't Bygones," *Sacramento Bee*, July 17, 1988: I1; Jim Johnson, "Crocker, Others Honored," *Sacramento Bee*, July 1, 1990: H1; "After 125 Years...The Eagle Theater Will Reopen," *Sacramento Bee*, February 23, 1975: S1

<sup>138</sup> Allen W. Welts, "School Restoration 'Out of Character,'" *Sacramento Union*, February 28, 1976: A8; Darrell Smith, "Old Sacramento's Giant Ferris Wheel to Make Way for Children's Play Area," *Sacramento Bee*, March 19, 2025.

<sup>139</sup> Eleanor Doyle, "Train Depot Tells Story in Sight and Sound," *Sacramento Union*, October 24, 1976: D1.

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During underwater archaeological investigations in the Sacramento River in 1984 to plan for waterfront upgrades, the wrecks of two ships were discovered adjacent to the floodwall at the foot of J Street. Archaeologists identified the wrecks to likely be those of the Gold Rush-era storeship, the *Sterling*, and an unidentified ship lying on top of it, which likely sank in 1932.<sup>140</sup> In 1986, archaeologists found another shipwreck, that of one of Sacramento's early prison ships, the *LaGrange*, just south of the I Street Bridge.<sup>141</sup> The discoveries prompted revising designs for the new waterfront wharf to include a notch and cantilevered section to avoid damaging the shipwrecks.<sup>142</sup> Further changes to the waterfront occurred as the decade came to a close. In 1989, the *Delta King* riverboat, which had made regular trips from San Francisco to Sacramento from 1927 to 1940, was permanently moored in the Sacramento River at the foot of K Street. The restored riverboat continues to operate as a hotel, restaurant, and event venue.<sup>143</sup>

In 1988, City Council approved construction of a fifteen-story contemporary office tower with an adjacent parking garage at the district's south boundary at 310 Capitol Mall. As part of the approval, the developer also agreed to build a four-story "historically accurate" commercial building on the opposite site of Neasham Court at 1200 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.<sup>144</sup> The completed building featured storefronts along L Street that were similar to but not exact replicas of elevation drawings for reconstructions of the Rialto Building, Figg Building, Diana Saloon, and Fashion Saloon prepared by Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, which were included in the 1965 master plan.<sup>145</sup>

Two one-story wood frame buildings were constructed on piers along the Sacramento River embarcadero around the turn of the twenty-first century to enliven the waterfront and increase dining options in Old Sacramento. The Rio City Cafe opened in a new building at 1110 Front Street in 1993, followed by Joe's Crab Shack at 1210 Front Street in 2003.<sup>146</sup>

### State and National Comparison

The planning and development of Old Sacramento marked a pivotal shift in historic preservation in the United States by pioneering a hybrid model that combined architectural restoration, selective reconstruction, and state-funded urban redevelopment into a single, economically driven historic area. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, most historic preservation in the United States was undertaken at the local level by private groups and organizations who focused on saving individual historic buildings. With the main exception of the restoration and

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<sup>140</sup> John W. Foster, "Archaeology and History Beneath the Sea: The Preservation, Management and Interpretation of California's Heritage Resources," California State Parks, accessed December 10, 2025, [https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=23514](https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23514).; Delgado, "J Street Wreck," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1987.

<sup>141</sup> "Prisoner of the River – LaGrange," The Historical Marker Database, accessed December 10, 2025, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=16989>.

<sup>142</sup> "Old Sacramento Waterfront Determination of No Effect," undated report, Center for Sacramento History.

<sup>143</sup> "History," Delta King, accessed December 10, 2025, <https://www.deltaking.com/history>.

<sup>144</sup> Ted Reed, "15-Story Tower Proposed at Edge of Old Sacramento," *Sacramento Bee*, January 22, 1988: C8.

<sup>145</sup> Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, *Old Sacramento Historic Area and Riverfront Park, Technical Report*, 1965.

<sup>146</sup> "Restaurant Opening Rio City Café," *Sacramento Bee*, April 11, 1994: C16; Mike Dunne, "Shack Attack," *Sacramento Bee*, July 11, 2003: Ticket 37.

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reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia as a tourist attraction in the 1920s, rarely did preservation efforts focus on recreating entire neighborhoods.<sup>147</sup>

When the State Division of Beaches and Parks published its watershed study in 1958 that initiated formal efforts to preserve Old Sacramento, division staff pointed to already existing preserved historic areas around the country to support their recommendations. The report referenced Charleston, South Carolina (1924), New Orleans, Louisiana (1936), the Old Georgetown area of Washington, DC (1950), Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts (1955), and the Old Albuquerque Historic Zone in New Mexico (1957).<sup>148</sup> While some of these historic areas were active commercial districts with existing urban fabric, they focused on preservation and continued activation of existing buildings. The preservation of Old Albuquerque involved remodeling Victorian-era buildings into idealized Pueblo Revival style facades to fit an aesthetic.

Within California, the State of California's redevelopment policies in the 1940s and 1950s clashed with a burgeoning interest in preserving historic sites from within the State's own ranks. In the 1930s, the California State Division of Beaches and Parks (now the Department of Parks and Recreation) had led early efforts to preserve the state's most historic places, but their work was short-circuited by the Great Depression. Those efforts were renewed with greater focus after the end of World War II.<sup>149</sup> As car ownership, disposable income, and leisure time increased among Americans following the war, so too did the demand for outdoor recreation and entertainment. In 1945, Governor Earl Warren signed a series of bills to expand California's State Parks System, including authorizing a survey to add new areas to the system.<sup>150</sup> The State Legislature established Columbia State Historic Park, considered the best-preserved gold mining camp in California, as a new state park the same year. Individual buildings at Columbia State Historic Park were restored beginning in the 1950s.<sup>151</sup> Another nineteenth-century mining town, Bodie, was preserved in a state of "arrested decay" and established as a state historic park in 1962. Both were managed primarily as educational sites, rather than as active commercial areas.<sup>152</sup>

Old Sacramento State Historic Park was established in 1965, coinciding with its designation as a National Historic Landmark and initiation of redevelopment through adoption of the 1965 Master Plan.<sup>153</sup> As such, the Old Sacramento Historic District represented a unique approach that combined heritage preservation, city planning, and urban redevelopment. By merging the

<sup>147</sup> Simpson and Prince, "The Invention of Old Sacramento: A Past for the Future," 290-291.

<sup>148</sup> California Division of Beaches and Parks, *Old Sacramento – Part 1*, 3-5.

<sup>149</sup> "Park History," Columbia State Park, California State Parks, accessed October 28, 2025, [https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=30226](https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30226).

<sup>150</sup> Melissa Tyler and Lisa Prince, "California State Parks: Preserving Our Natural and Cultural Treasures for Over 150 Years," California State Archives, digital exhibit, 2014-2016, accessed October 15, 2025, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/california-state-parks-california-state-archives/jQVhcq2KEXhvIA?hl=en>.

<sup>151</sup> "Park History," Columbia State Park, California State Parks, accessed October 28, 2025, [https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=30226](https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30226).

<sup>152</sup> Tyler and Prince, "California State Parks: Preserving Our Natural and Cultural Treasures for Over 150 Years," California State Archives, digital exhibit.

<sup>153</sup> *Old Sacramento State Historic Park General Plan and Environmental Impact Report*, June 2014, 1-8.

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interpretive ambitions of reconstructed historic sites with the functional goals of urban renewal, it helped established a model for heritage tourism districts that closely reflects the cultural and planning priorities of the postwar era.

***Criterion C: Architecture***

Old Sacramento is significant for its large concentration of mixed use and commercial buildings that were originally constructed between the start of the California Gold Rush in the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and which demonstrate the typical architectural styles and construction methods of this formative period in California's history.

The Gold Rush created the necessary economic and social conditions to produce what architectural historian Harold Kirker called the "California Renaissance" during the 1850s and 1860s. In Old Sacramento, this architectural renaissance took the form of commercial buildings that were classically inspired, urban, and cosmopolitan. Prior to the early 1850s, the materials needed to construct buildings were mostly imported and very costly. Some of the buildings were prefabricated out of metal and shipped to California from England or China. Others were created from the hulls of abandoned ships and repurposed for use along the waterfront as commercial spaces, hotels, or even a post office. Most, however, represented vernacular structures constructed of local timber, or in some cases adobe. In these buildings, function largely overrode any aesthetic considerations, which would have been a much more important factor for academic-style buildings.<sup>154</sup>

The Gold Rush, however, made it possible to produce a substantial portion of the building materials locally, thereby reducing considerably the cost of these goods. As the interest in gold mining by individual prospectors declined during the 1850s, some of those miners settled in the area to establish businesses or to rebuild their lives around their former skills and trade. Consequently, Sacramento developed a district of mills, foundries, factories, and shops west of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. One of the early industrial businesses in this district was the Sacramento Iron Works on the north side of I Street, west of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The company supplied much of the iron doors, window shutters, columns, and ornamental details for the new brick buildings constructed in the district after 1852. Prior to that year, many of the buildings in Old Sacramento were constructed of wood. After a devastating fire on November 2, 1852 that destroyed everything south of J Street and west of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, except the Lady Adams Building at 113-115 K Street (contributor, restored), the City imposed new construction standards prohibiting buildings not constructed of stone, brick, or iron in the business district. By 1854, there were 500 "fireproof" masonry buildings and some thirty brickyards in the city.<sup>155</sup>

Sacramento also developed a pool of skilled labor able to construct the more refined architectural forms characteristic of the classically inflected buildings found in the urban centers of the eastern

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<sup>154</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

<sup>155</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

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United States and in Europe. In addition to tradesmen and builders, the city attracted a number of professional architects who maintained offices in Old Sacramento during the 1850s and 1860s. Among them were A. A. Bennett, Nathaniel D. Goodell, Alexander Boyd, Jacob Z. Davis, and Carr & Winans. These architects brought with them the cosmopolitan taste for mid-nineteenth century classical architecture and applied it to the commercial buildings throughout the city. Consequently, many of the earliest commercial buildings in Old Sacramento were designed in the Greek Revival style, more than twenty of which survive in the historic district.<sup>156</sup>

Initially popular in the United States in the cities along the eastern seaboard, the Greek Revival architectural style quickly evolved into a national style for commercial, institutional, and domestic buildings throughout the country. Adapted from the classic Greek temple front, this style employed details of the Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian order. While the temple form was the national norm for the style, in Old Sacramento the extant buildings display a non-temple variant applied to commercial buildings throughout the area. These buildings range from one to three stories, with most featuring rectangular ground plans, flat roofs with straight or segmented parapets, denticulated cornices, a brick structural system, stucco exterior cladding along the main facades and exposed brick along the secondary elevations, a symmetrical facade fenestrated with a ribbon of narrow window openings with straight, unadorned sills and lintels and a centered main entrance on the first story, and double-hung wood-sash windows, some with a four-over-four-light arrangement.<sup>157</sup>

The most common style applied to the buildings in Old Sacramento was Italianate. The Italianate style originated in England as a reaction to the rigid formalism that characterized early nineteenth-century classical architecture. By the 1830s, the style had spread to the United States, where it remained in use until the mid-1880s. In Old Sacramento, there are over thirty Italianate-style commercial buildings and others that display a mix of Italianate and Greek Revival styles dating to the mid- to late-nineteenth century.<sup>158</sup>

One of the architects whose interpretation of the Italianate style greatly influenced the commercial architecture in Old Sacramento was Albert Austin Bennett (1825-1890). Perhaps best known for his work on the California State Capitol, the Golden Eagle Hotel at 7th and K streets, and the original Romanesque-Revival buildings at Folsom State Prison, Bennett's work is also well represented in his Italianate-style design of the Masonic Hall at 117 J Street (contributor, reconstruction) in Old Sacramento. The building contained the offices of Bennett's architecture practice in the nineteenth century. In contrast to the later ornate and florid phases of the Italianate style, the Masonic Hall reflects the influence of the more severe English Roman variant, which Bennett did much to popularize throughout the area. As with many of the other Italianate-style commercial buildings in Old Sacramento, the Masonic Hall rises from a

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<sup>156</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

<sup>157</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

<sup>158</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

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rectangular-shaped ground plan to a height of three stories, and is capped with a flat roof, a segmented parapet, and a bracketed cornice. Its brick structural system is coursed on the exterior with red brick laid in a running bond pattern. The front façade is highly symmetrical with a centered main entrance topped with a transom light and a decorative, non-load bearing brick voussoirs. The entry opening and its double-leaf doors are repeated across the first story of the main façade, and are sheltered beneath an open, wood-frame sidewalk canopy with a flat roof and turned wood balustrading.<sup>159</sup>

The work of another prominent architect, Nathaniel Dudley Goodell, is also well represented in the district. Among Goodell's most notable works are the Heilbron House and Albert Gallatin Mansion in Sacramento, the latter of which later became the official residence of the governors of California. Within Old Sacramento, buildings designed by Goodell include Pioneer Hall and Bakery at 122 J Street (contributor, restored), which also contained Goodell's carpentry shop and architecture offices, and the Hall, Luhrs and Company building at 914 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, restored).<sup>160</sup>

Similarly, a large percentage of the other Italianate-style buildings in Old Sacramento are fenestrated with regularly repeating round-arched door and window openings. The round arch was one of the most common architectural forms in the United States between 1846 and 1876. In Old Sacramento, this character-defining feature of the Italianate style was commonly embellished with a keystone, hood molding, brackets, and/or an archivolt. Other features of the style include wide projecting eaves supported by corbels underscored with a band of dentil molding, as well as pedimented windows and doors, pilasters, decorative cast iron balcony grills, stucco exterior wall cladding, and single and paired glazed doors. Italianate doors were the first to have large panes of glass inset within the door itself in lieu of sidelights with small panes, as in Greek Revival examples.<sup>161</sup>

Also present in Old Sacramento is a third style, which is actually an eclectic variant of the Italianate and Greek Revival styles. The Greek Revival-Italianate variant is represented in the district by properties such as the Dingley Coffee and Spice Mill at 115 I Street (contributor, reconstruction) and the Clarendon Hotel at 1128 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (contributor, reconstruction). In these eclectic examples, Greek Revival elements such as the straight, unadorned sills and lintels, denticulated cornices, acanthus leaves, or Anecone detailing are combined with Italianate features that include round-top arches (unknown to the Greeks), pedimented window and door openings, and projecting eaves supported by corbels.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

<sup>160</sup> Gerald Price, "Heilbron House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 1976.

<sup>161</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

<sup>162</sup> ICF International, "Old Sacramento Historic District," California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

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A fourth architectural form found within Old Sacramento can be classified broadly as vernacular. In vernacular buildings, function tends to override aesthetic considerations. Additionally, these buildings are generally made of locally available materials and constructed using local building traditions. Examples of vernacular building forms are represented in Old Sacramento by the Central Pacific Railroad Depot at 1020 Front Street (contributing, reconstruction), the California Steam Navigation Company Building at 1100 Front Street (contributing, reconstruction), and the Eagle Theatre at 921 Front Street (contributor, reconstruction). Most feature gabled roofs and wood-sash windows. Exterior wall cladding consists of wood siding, brick, or stucco, and fenestration can be regular and symmetrical or asymmetrically arranged.<sup>163</sup>

### ***Criterion D: Archaeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal***

#### **Sunken Ships**

As described under the sections on “Commercial Development, 1848-1913” and “Development Not Included in the 1965 Master Plan,” two known historic shipwrecks—the Gold Rush-era storeship the *Sterling* and one of Sacramento’s early prison ships, the *LaGrange*—exist in the Sacramento River adjacent to the embarcadero within the historic district’s boundaries. The *Sterling* was listed on the National Register in 1986 as the “J Street Wreck.” As rare surviving examples of the ships that served as some of the earliest built commercial and institutional developments in the city, they contribute to the Old Sacramento Historic District.

#### **Potential to Yield Information About Early Residents**

Several sites in Old Sacramento contain known archaeological resources that have been documented as part of excavations conducted by California State Parks over the course of Old Sacramento’s redevelopment. Given efforts to raise the elevation of the city in the mid-nineteenth century and the more recent discoveries of archaeological resources during redevelopment projects in the district, there is a high degree of likelihood that additional archaeological resources with the potential to provide information about the early residents and development of Sacramento, and possibly earlier Native American activity in the area, exist under surviving original buildings, raised streets, and areas that have not been excavated.

### ***Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties***

Old Sacramento meets Criteria Consideration B because a small number contributing resources compared to the overall number of contributors have been moved in the district. The only known elements that were relocated to the district consist of the Big Four Buildings, facades of the Rialto-E.P. Figg Buildings, and the Theodore Judah Monument. However, these features were relocated to their existing locations as part of the realization of the vision for Old Sacramento laid out in the 1965 master plan. Therefore, these resources have achieved significance separate from their original construction as contributors to the development of Old Sacramento from the 1960s to the 1990s.

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<sup>163</sup> ICF International, “Old Sacramento Historic District,” California Department of Parks and Recreation District Record 523D Form, 2014.

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***Criteria Consideration E:***

Old Sacramento meets Criteria Consideration E. Although the reconstructed buildings in Old Sacramento are not fully accurate recreations of the original nineteenth century buildings they attempted to replicate, they were presented in a dignified manner as part of a master plan in which they are “an essential component in a historic district” and were completed as “part of an overall restoration plan for an entire district.”<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, the reconstructed buildings are significant not as representations of demolished nineteenth-century buildings, but rather because they have achieved significance in their own right as buildings that were a key component of the redevelopment of Old Sacramento, a significant project in the history of community planning and development.

***Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance in the Last Fifty Years***

While the later period of significance for Old Sacramento (1965-1990) extends to less than 50 years ago, the Old Sacramento Historic District meets Criteria Consideration G because more than fifty percent of the contributing properties and the district’s earlier period of significance (1848-1913) are greater than fifty years old.

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<sup>164</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, rev. 1997), 38.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # HABS CA-1258, HABS CA-197, HABS CA-1255, HABS CA-192, HABS CA-185, HABS CA-167, HABS CA-1254, HABS CA-199  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 30 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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- |                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.58628219735337  | Longitude: -121.50644777121326 |
| 2. Latitude: 38.58447159049393  | Longitude: -121.50303852716449 |
| 3. Latitude: 38.581951027880436 | Longitude: -121.50414915130257 |
| 4. Latitude: 38.57993984345451  | Longitude: -121.50591626810892 |
| 5. Latitude: 38.58058139340985  | Longitude: -121.5081139784744  |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)  
See Boundary Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The north, south, and east boundaries were identified in the original 1965 National Register nomination and USGC map, and appear to be well justified given the clear physical barrier created by the I-5 Highway to the north, east, and southeast and modern construction on the north side of Capitol Mall. No other Gold Rush-era buildings exist outside of this boundary for several blocks. While there are several buildings associated with the redevelopment history of Sacramento on nearby blocks, these have a different history of design, development, and visioning from the planning that resulted in the Old Sacramento Historic District and are better examined separately. The northern, southern, and eastern boundaries are further justified as the modern transportation infrastructure enclosing the district lacks a historic association with the historic district and would not contribute to its significance.

The Sacramento River has historically served as the western boundary for this area of Sacramento. However, given the significance of the banks of the Sacramento River to local Native American tribes and documented presence of at least one individually landmarked Gold Rush-era shipwreck on the riverbed at the foot of J Street, extending the western boundary through to the approximate midline of the Sacramento River appears justified.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Clare Flynn and Samantha Purnell, Architectural Historians

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street & number: 1007 7<sup>th</sup> Street #404 city or town: Sacramento state: CA zip code: 95814

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date: April 29, 2026

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### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Old Sacramento Historic District

City or Vicinity: Sacramento

County: Sacramento

State: California

Photographer: Page & Turnbull staff

Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

Sacramento, CA  
County and State

Date Photographed: October 21, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20. 930 Front Street, camera facing northwest.
- 2 of 20. 101 I Street, camera facing northwest.
- 3 of 20. 111 K Street, camera facing north.
- 4 of 20. 115 I Street, camera facing north.
- 5 of 20. 116 K Street, camera facing south.
- 6 of 20. 116-120 I Street, camera facing south.
- 7 of 20. 118 J Street, camera facing south.
- 8 of 20. 1111 2nd Street, camera facing east.
- 9 of 20. 917 Front Street, camera facing east.
- 10 of 20. 921 Front Street, camera facing east.
- 11 of 20. 922 2nd Street, camera facing west.
- 12 of 20. 935 Front Street, camera facing northeast.
- 13 of 20. 1126 2nd Street, camera facing west.
- 14 of 20. 114 K Street, camera facing south.
- 15 of 20. Front and L Streets, camera facing northeast.
- 16 of 20. 102 K Street, camera facing south.
- 17 of 20. 130 K Street, camera facing southeast.
- 18 of 20. 1017 2nd Street, camera facing east.
- 19 of 20. 1113 Front Street, camera facing east.
- 20 of 20. East side of 2nd Street at the intersection with L Street, camera facing east.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

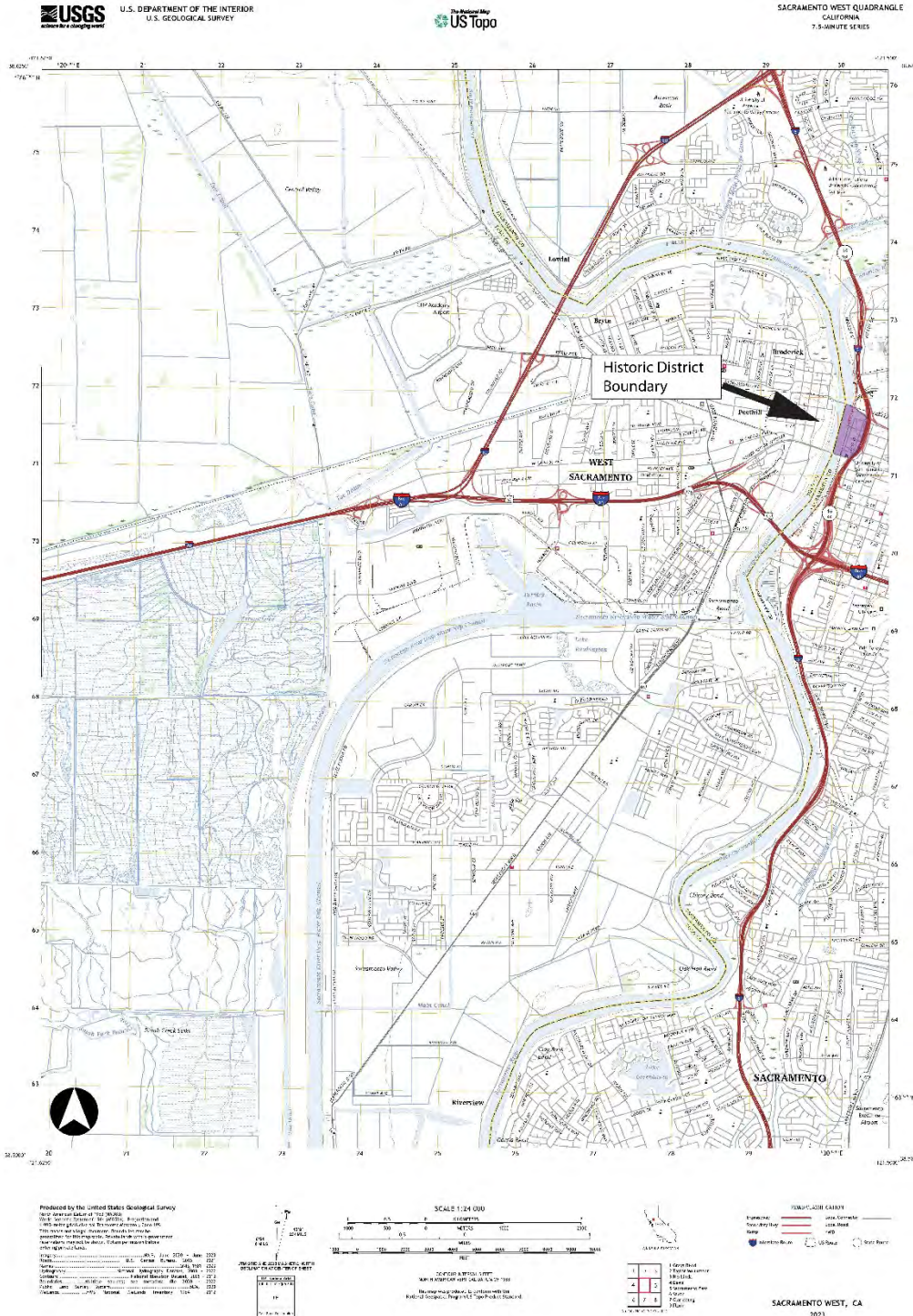
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

Location Map



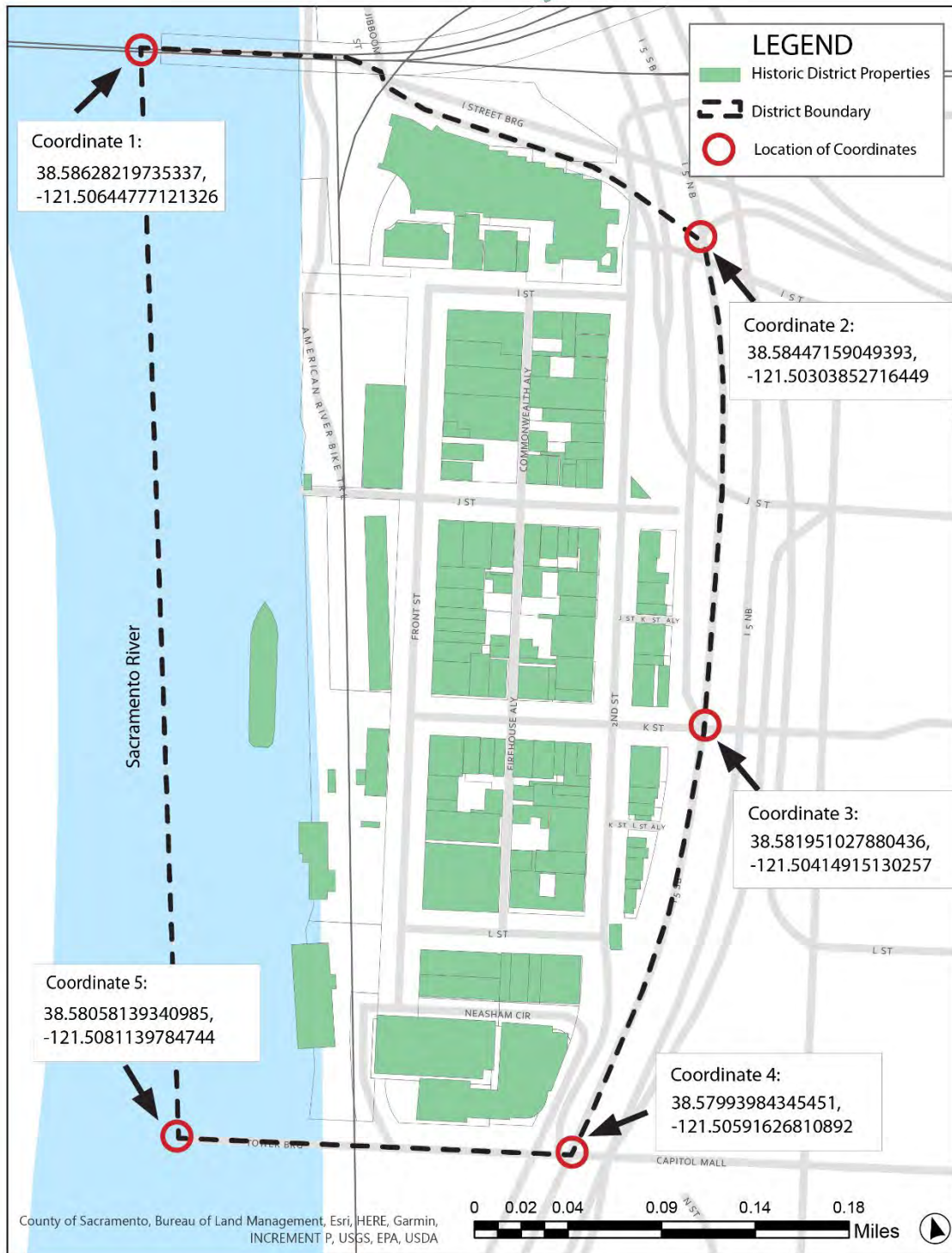
Old Sacramento Historic District

Sacramento, CA

Name of Property

County and State

### Boundary Map



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

Sketch Map

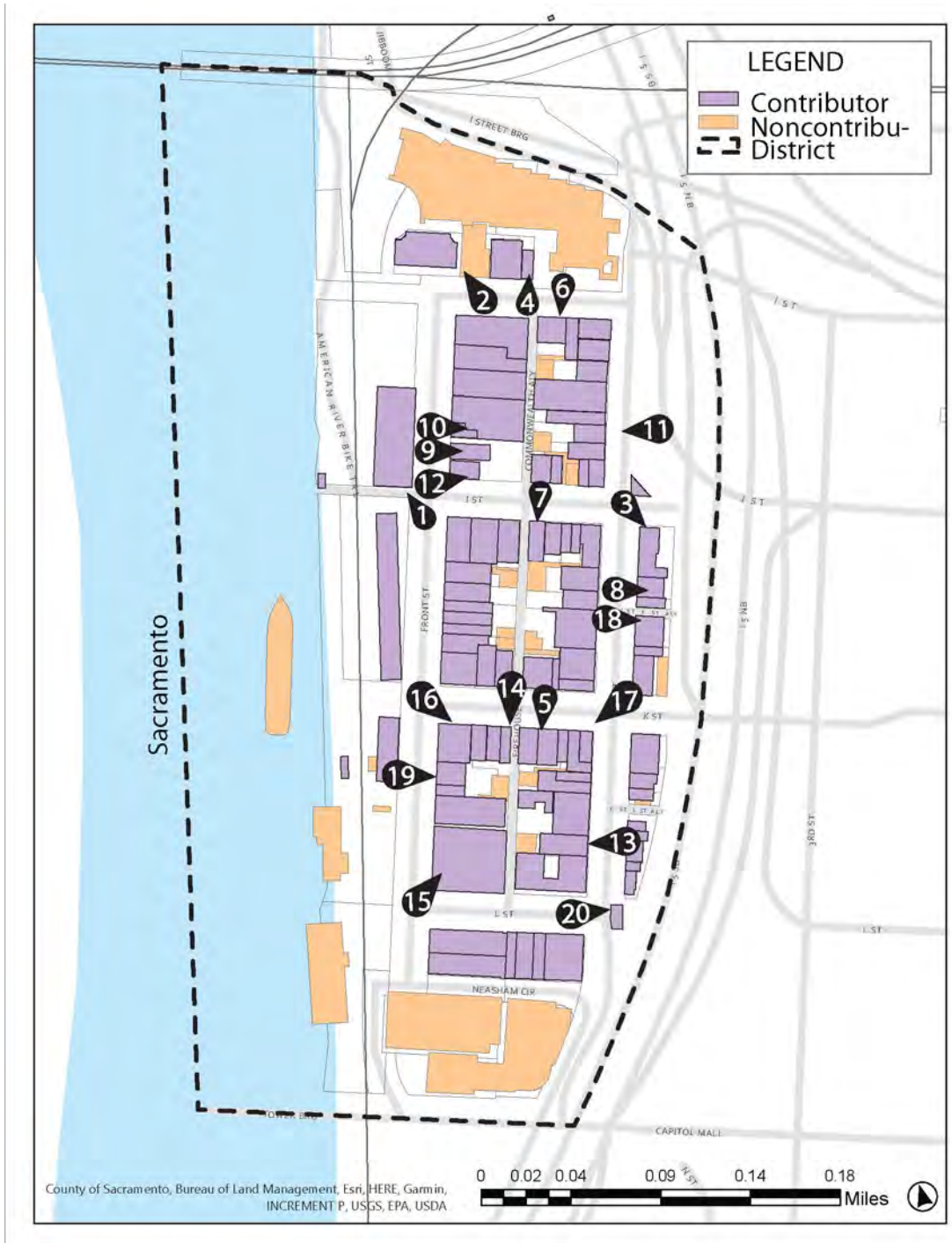


Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

Photo Key

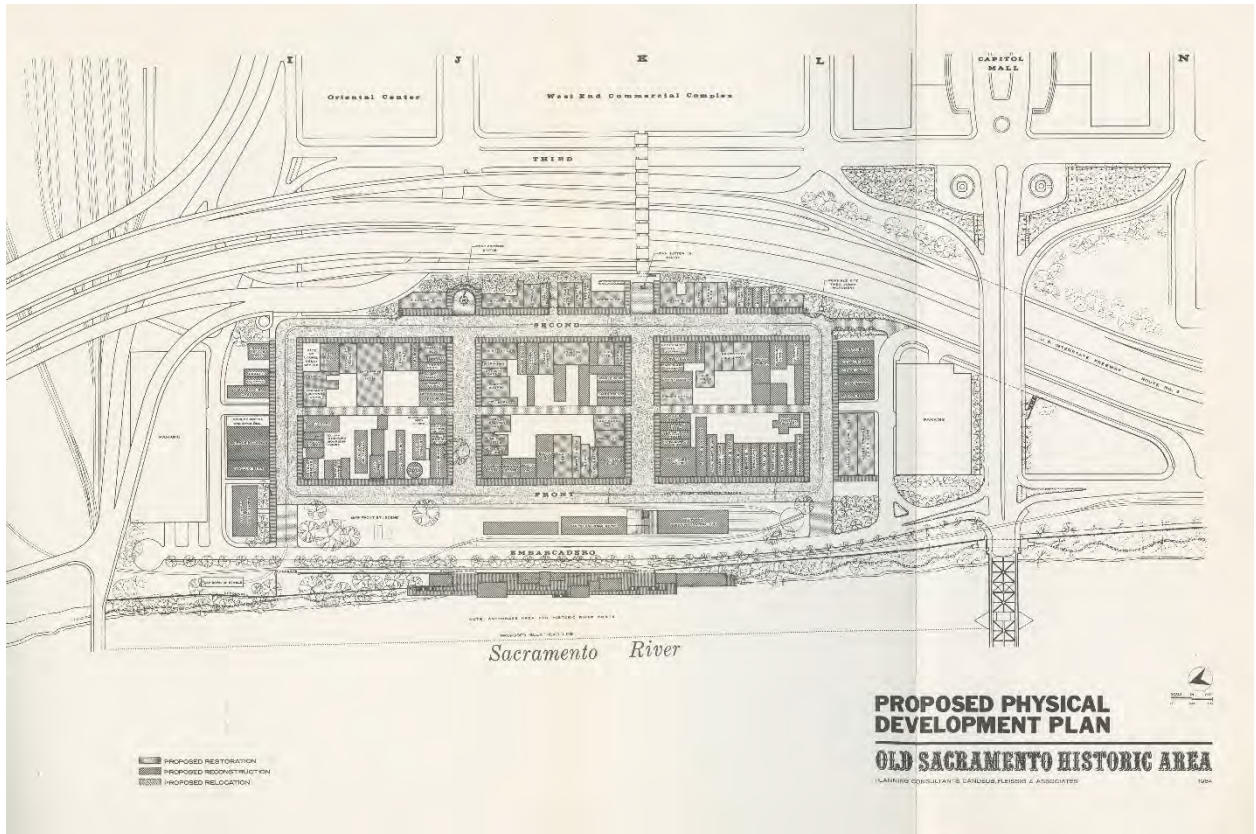


Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Figure 1** 1964 Old Sacramento Master Plan Proposed Physical Development Plan, Candeb, Fleissig and Associates.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 1.** 930 Front Street, camera facing northwest.



**Photo 2.** 101 I Street, camera facing northwest.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 3.** 111 K Street, camera facing north.



**Photo 4.** 115 I Street, camera facing north.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 5.** 116 K Street, camera facing south.



**Photo 6.** 116-120 I Street, camera facing south.



Old Sacramento Historic District

Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 7.** 118 J Street, camera facing south.



**Photo 8.** 1111 2nd Street, camera facing east.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 9.** 917 Front Street, camera facing east.



**Photo 10.** 921 Front Street, camera facing east.



Old Sacramento Historic District

Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 11.** 922 2nd Street, camera facing west.



**Photo 12.** 935 Front Street, camera facing northeast.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

Sacramento, CA  
County and State

**Photo 13.** 1126 2nd Street, camera facing west.



**Photo 14.** 114 K Street, camera facing south.



Old Sacramento Historic District

Sacramento, CA

Name of Property

County and State

**Photo 15.** Front and L Streets, camera facing northeast.



**Photo 16.** 102 K Street, camera facing south.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 17.** 130 K Street, camera facing southeast.



**Photo 18.** 1017 2nd Street, camera facing east.



Old Sacramento Historic District  
Name of Property

County and State

Sacramento, CA

**Photo 19.** 1113 Front Street, camera facing east.



**Photo 20.** East side of 2nd Street at the intersection with L Street, camera facing east.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Old Sacramento Historic District

AND/OR COMMON  
Old Sacramento Historic District

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Sacramento

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE  
California

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF  
CODE  
06 067

COUNTY CODE  
Sacramento 067

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency

STREET & NUMBER  
630 I Street

CITY, TOWN  
Sacramento

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. CCOUNTY RECORDER'S OFFICE

STREET & NUMBER  
901 G Street (P.O. Box 1206)

CITY, TOWN  
Sacramento

STATE  
California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Sacramento Historic District is an area of a few blocks beside the Sacramento River which still retains some flavor of the pioneering era of the city's history-- about 1840 to 1870. While there are more old buildings clustered in this part of the city than any other, there are also gaping holes in streetscapes, created by the destruction of many buildings. Attempting to remedy the visual patchiness of the area is a redevelopment commission, cosponsored by the city of Sacramento and the State of California, which is rehabilitating old buildings, constructing new ones in period dress, and even moving buildings from other places into the area. The result as of now, as the project is in progress, is mixed, varying from feelings of authenticity to staginess, as one moves from street to street. Due to a new limitation of funds, the speed with which the project is carried forth has also been drastically cut back. Much work is going on, some of it based upon historical research and a desire for correctness.

The immediate surroundings of the district, on three of four sides, are composed of massive freeways, with soaring overpasses to the East and numerous bridge access roads to the North and South, and the Sacramento River, largely invisible behind a concrete wall, to the West. The roadway are a real tangle, and are so close to the little district, that they are a significant part of nearly every view down this or that street. As a result, the feeling within the district, is like that of an island, surrounded by the concrete platforms on which cars and trucks are roaring by.

Second Street and Front Street are the two most unified streetscapes, generally lacking the interrupted line of buildings on the East-West Streets. Perhaps what is being created will one day be a cohesive environment with a feeling for the period aimed at. Right now, the importance of the area derives from the collection of buildings there whose historical associations are very strong, and which have affected the development of the city of Sacramento and the settlement of California and the Far West.

Most important among them, are the B.F. Hastings Building, western terminus of the Pony Express, The Big Four Building, moved to the district from elsewhere, wherein was planned the Central Pacific Railroad, The Adams Building, the second and last Pony Express Terminal, and The Darius Ogden Mills Bank, associated with the financing of the famous Comstock Mine.

Many other buildings are of interest too, presenting the flavor of the town's commercial district through hotels, saloons, warehouses, stage offices, and various small businesses and shops, largely used now as "boutiques," antique stores, and tourist shops.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Mining
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT multiple

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## HISTORY

The riverport of Sacramento, situated on the lower Sacramento River, emerged in 1849-1850 as the great interior distributing and transportation center for the Northern Mines in the Mother Lode Country of the Sierra Nevada. It also, almost at once became California's second largest city. In the 1860's, as the mining frontier marched eastward into Nevada, Idaho, and eastern Oregon, Sacramento, already a great staging and freighting center, became the transportation gateway to most of this inland empire. Beginning in 1858, Sacramento served the western terminus of the national communication and transportation systems that linked the East with the West, which extended from the mining town of El Dorado on the south to Sierra City on the north. In the late 1850's and early 1860's Sacramento also became the western terminal of the Central Overland Mail and Stage Line, the Pony Express, the first transcontinental telegraph, and of the first transcontinental railroad.

Late 1848, the town of Sacramento, located some two miles from John Sutter's Fort, and also located on his estate, was surveyed as a townsite and the first lots were sold in January 1849. By December of that year, the new city had almost 4,000 inhabitants. The first buildings of frame, logs, and canvas, were erected in January 1849, and in October, the first brick building was completed. By the end of 1850, Sacramento had 7,000 residents.

Steamboats landed tons of freight from San Francisco at the Sacramento docks, and from here it was carried by pack mule, trains, and wagons up into the Northern Mining Camps. In March 1851, Sacramento was incorporated as a city. By 1854, the city had 2,500 buildings, and it then became the capitol of California.

The discovery of gold at John Sutter's Mill at Coloma, California in January 1848, resulted in the greatest series of gold strikes on the North American continent. In the great movement of miners throughout California, Sacramento at once emerged as a vital and strategic travel, supply and shipping center.

As San Francisco emerged in the 1850's as the financial capital of the Far West, so did Sacramento become the transportation capital of this vast region. Here in Sacramento were centered the headquarters of far-reaching stage and freight lines to California, Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon. Here were also located the offices of powerful riverboat companies. The first railroad of the Far West was built at Sacramento, and here was planned and begun the western section of the nation's first transcontinental railroad. The Central Pacific Railroad Company was incorporated at Sacramento on June 28, 1861, by Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker, for the purpose of construction of a transcontinental railroad from California to the East.

(cont'd)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Carroll D. Hall and Hero Rensch, Old Sacramento: A Report on its Significance (in 3 parts, Div. of Beaches & Parks, Sacramento, 1958).  
 Harold Kirker, California's Architectural Frontier (San Marino, 1960).  
 Oscar O. Winther, The Transportation Frontier, 1865-1890 (New York, 1964).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 30

UTM REFERENCES

A	10	16301140	42711726	B	10	1630600	42711720
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	10	1630600	4270970	D	10	16301120	4270970
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The "Old Sacramento" Historic District, is bounded on the north by the south edge of the "I" Street Bridge access ramp, on the east by the west edge of U.S. Interstate Route 5, on the south by the north edge of Capitol Mall, and on the west by the Sacramento River. Within this c. 30 acre district, visually bounded so abruptly on three sides by massive concrete highway structures, is a small town with the flavor of a Western, nineteenth-century commercial district. Buildings within, are a mixture of preserved historical

(cont'd)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Dillon

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

11/22/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW.,

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D.C. 20240

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665) hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been determined according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark  
 Designated JAN 12 1965  
 Boundary Certified:  
 [Signature]  
 DATE: [Signature] 11, 1974

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4/29/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Old Sacramento

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Among the most interesting historic structures are the following buildings:

1. The Big Four House. Built in 1852, this was the office of the Central Pacific Railroad Company from 1861 to 1873. Located at 220-226 K Street.
2. Pony Express Terminal (B.F. Hasting's Building). Built in 1853, it served as the western terminus of Russell, Majors, and Waddell's Pony Express from April 1860 to March 1861. Located at 1006 Second Street.
3. Adams and Company Building. Built in 1853, this structure served as the express and banking house of the important Adams & Co. firm from 1853-1855, then as a stage depot and telegraph office. From May-October 1861, it was the second and final western terminal of the Pony Express, during the period when it was operated by Wells, Fargo & Company. Located at 1014 Second Street.
4. Pioneer Telegraph Building. Erected in the 1850's, this served as the office of the State Telegraph Company from 1863 to 1868, and of the Western Union Telegraph Company, 1868-1915. Located at 1015 Second Street.
5. Darius Ogden Mills Bank. Built in 1852, D. O. Mills (1825-1910) was personally associated with this bank until 1861, when he moved to San Francisco. In 1864 Mills became president of the new Bank of California, which, from 1864 to 1875, was the most powerful financial institution in the Far West. In 1883 Mills then moved to New York City with the millions he had made in the Comstock mines and became a national banking figure, associated with the Bank of New York. Located at 226 J Street.
6. Sacramento Bee Building. Erected in 1857, this structure served as a newspaper office from 1857 to 1902. Located at 1016 Third Street.
7. Ebner's Hotel. Erected in 1856, this three-story building is located at 116 K Street.
8. Lady Adam's Building. A two-story store and office building erected in 1852, it is located at 113-15 K Street.
9. Fire House No. 3. Erected in 1853 this two-story building is located at 1112 Second Street.

(continued)

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Old Sacramento

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

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Important historic sites include the following:

1. The Embarcadero. This served as the riverboat landing at Sacramento from 1839 to 1881. Located west of Front Street on the eastern bank of the Sacramento River. The landing of the California Steam Navigation Company was located at the foot of K Street.
2. Original Stage and First Railroad Terminal. Located at the southwest corner of Front and K Streets, this was the original terminal of the 1850's stages to the mining camp and also of California's first railroad, the Sacramento Valley Railroad, built in 1855-56.
3. Start of Construction of First Transcontinental Railroad. Located at Front and K Streets. Here, on January 8, 1863 the first spade of earth was turned to mark the beginning of construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. Here was also located the railroad's first depot.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Old Sacramento ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Old Sacramento during the Gold Rush days of the mid 19th century was a hub of activity for Northern California and the entire Pacific Coast. It was in this section of the city that Sacramento's first commercial enterprises had their start. Gold prospectors from all over the world loaded up with supplies at these businesses and joined the wagon trains which slowly wound into the Mother Lode country.

The first stores, hotels theatres and other commercial structures were made of wood, brick and stone. Despite floods, fires, cholera and squatter riots, Old Sacramento thrived. Its energetic citizens built levees, formed fire brigades, established hospitals, schools and churches. The first stage and telegraph lines, the first steamboats, the first California railroad and the Pony Express agency were to be found there. It is worthy of note that the majority of the registered state historical landmarks in Sacramento County are located in Old Sacramento. In Old Sacramento were located the dramatic occurrences that changed the course of California history from a gradual agricultural development of a new territory to a sudden, relentless movement arising out of the age-old quest for gold. Old Sacramento is the very heart of the history of Sacramento.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Old Sacramento ITEM NUMBER #10 PAGE #2

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buildings, and constructed "period" creations. Within the bounds of the district are two separate National Historic Landmarks, The B.F. Hastings Building at 1006 Second Street, and the "Big Four Building," recently relocated to the south side of "I" Street, between Front and Second Street. The boundary is shown as the blue line on the accompanying USGS map entitled "Sacramento West quadrangle," 7.5 min. series dated 1967.



Henry Feuss, Preservation Planner  
5/20/2026

# Old Sacramento National Register Update

## M26-012 – Preservation Commission



# Introduction – Old Sacramento

- Partnership with Convention and Cultural Services
- National Historic Landmark (1965)
- Listed on National Register (1966)
- Detailed/Inclusive History
- ARPA/Grant Funding
- Consultant: Page and Turnbull



# Old Sacramento

- Updates include:
  - Period(s) of significance
  - Contributing/non-contributing status
  - Boundaries
  - Historic context



# Thanks!

Contact us:

Henry Feuss

Preservation Planner

Community Development  
Department

[hfeuss@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:hfeuss@cityofsacramento.org)

[cityofsacramento.org](http://cityofsacramento.org)

*City of*  
**SACRAMENTO**

