

SACRAMENTO'S CENTRAL CITY:
 ITS GRIDIRON PLAN AND
 PUBLIC SQUARES IN PERSPECTIVE

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Public spaces have provided cities and their residents with access to recreational spaces and landscapes not readily found in early cities. The city of Sacramento, throughout its history, has been an excellent example of how parks and public spaces play a significant role in the success and growth of American cities. To understand the significance of Sacramento's Central City public squares, one must understand the founding of Sacramento and its gridiron plan. Then, one can follow the history of public squares, both individually and as a whole. The gridiron planning design was an essential tool in establishing several Californian cities. This is also true for the city of Sacramento. The gridiron plan, drawn up in 1848-49, established the boundaries of early Sacramento and created a plan for land sales and the city's growth. The grid is prominent to the city of Sacramento because it designated the city's early public parks and squares. The designers of Sacramento saw the potential for a thriving urban center and they used the gridiron plan, with the inclusion of public squares, to define the boundaries and possible characteristics of a future city. As Sacramento's Central

City prospered, so too did each public square situated throughout the city. Each public square provided neighborhoods with access to recreational and open spaces in an urban environment.

SELLING LAND MEANS CREATING A CITY (AND ELIMINATING DEBT)

The creation of Sacramento a city does not follow the same pattern as other Western or Californian cities in the nineteenth century. The physical establishment of Sacramento, using a gridiron plan, was created out of debt situation. Sacramento's Central City located where the American River meets the Sacramento River was a fraction of nearly forty-eight thousand acres of land bought by Swiss immigrant and entrepreneur, John Sutter, Sr. Sutter obtained the land in a grant from Mexican governor Juan Alvarado in 1839, along with Fort Ross from the Russians in Northern California, which launched Sutter, Sr. into a deep financial crisis he would never recover from.¹ Sutter worked to construct and establish a trading post and fort near where he landed his ship at Sutter's Landing, east of the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers.² He built Sutter's Fort, and established a town site, called New Helvetia, in 1839. Sutter gained a prominent reputation in the surrounding valley through several business ventures, including funding various mining and agricultural projects, obtaining funds from various business associates, as well as his continuous, and often controversial, labor relations with the local Nisenan Maidu and Miwok tribes.³

Within the first few years Sutter became a successful tradesman and entrepreneur in California and Sutter's Fort became

1 Iris H.W. Engstrand, "John Sutter: A Biographical Examination," in Kenneth N. Owens, editor, *John Sutter and a Wider West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 80-81.

2 John William Reps, *Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 195.

3 A continued, more in-depth examination of Sutter's relationship with the Native Americans and their labor can be found in Albert L. Hurtado's "John A. Sutter and the Indian Business, in Kenneth N. Owens, editor, *John Sutter and a Wider West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 51-75.

a prominent stopping point for travelers arriving either from the San Francisco Bay en route to the Sierra Nevada or vice versa. Yet within a short time, Sutter quickly accumulated a massive amount of debt due to his spending habits and unsuccessful business endeavors. Some of Sutter's increased spending and debt included running Sutter's Fort as a trading post for miners and travelers, purchasing Fort Ross (along the Northern California coast) from the Russian government, and establishing two small townships, Suttersville and New Helvetia. By 1848, Sutter's debt totaled roughly \$80,000, owing money to his business partners and associates, and most notably to the Russian-American Company. Sutter was forced to put up his holdings at New Helvetia as collateral to settle portions of his debt. Certain factors, aside from his looming debt, created more problems for Sutter. Sutter became increasingly weary and depressed, leading to excessive drinking; he also began taking credit instead of cash from miners purchasing supplies. In the winter of 1848-49, he hastily retreated to his cabin near Coloma in the nearby Sierra Nevada mountain range. As Sutter experienced his debt woes, James Marshall, a miner who worked for Sutter, discovered gold on Sutter's Coloma property. Marshall inadvertently set off a firestorm of migrants and miners into the region, sparking the California Gold Rush.

John Sutter remained in hiding throughout the early months of 1849, most notably staying at his properties of Coloma and Hock Farm near the Feather River in Northern California. By this time, Sutter, Sr. had accrued more debt under his name, mainly from bad business negotiations, being "swindled out of his land" and money, miners "squatting" on his land and not paying rent, and paying for items he could not afford.⁴ As Sutter, Sr. continued to build debt in his name, he eventually "transferred some of his holdings to his son, John Augustus Sutter, Jr.," in order to relieve himself of the debt

burden.⁵ By doing so, however, Sutter, Sr. had made matters worse for himself and his family.

By spring of 1849, Sutter's oldest child, John "Augustus" Sutter, Jr., arrived from the Helvetia area of Switzerland to Northern California. At the age of twenty-one, Augustus arrived in search of his father who had abandoned his wife and children, leaving them with massive debt over a decade before.⁶ Augustus believed that his father had accrued substantial wealth from his business ventures and land holdings, a possible reason for including his son's name in his financial interests. When Augustus entered Sutter's Fort, however, he found something very different than what he expected.

Augustus found New Helvetia and Sutter's Fort mismanaged and in disrepair from use by squatters and miners. The fort and New Helveita was in chaos because Sutter Sr.'s primary labor force, the local Nisenan Maidu and Miwok people, had followed other miners in search of fortune during the Gold Rush. Sutter, Sr. had attempted to profit from the Gold Rush but failed to do so due in part to his debt woes, theft of crops by miners and passersby headed to the mountains, loss of labor to the mines, and little involvement by Sutter at the mines.⁷ Sutter, Sr. heard of Augustus' arrival and made his way to the fort, where both were reacquainted, and discussed options on how to settle Sutter, Sr.'s debt. By the fall of 1849, father and son came to the agreement that Sutter, Sr. would sign away his rights to ownership of his land and other assets to Augustus. Afterwards, Sutter, Sr. left the fort and land holdings to his son, and returned to his property on Hock Farm, away from many of the people in his life, believing that he had "been cheated out of...all that was Sacramento [sic]."⁸

Once he had control over the land and Sutter's Fort, Augustus

5 Engstrand, 84.

6 Engstrand, 78; 85.

7 Allan R. Ottley, editor, *The Sutter Family and the Origins of Gold-Rush Sacramento, originally written by John Augustus Sutter, Jr.* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 10.

8 Engstrand, 85.

Sutter began to update the fort and clear the surrounding land. He received help from businessmen, miners, and traders with whom he became acquainted during his stay at the fort. Some of these men were business partners of his father's or new arrivals to the region who were looking to get their hands on land deals and other business opportunities. Individuals and companies who worked with Augustus Sutter, Jr. included Peter H. Burnett, Morton Matthew McCarver, John Bidwell, Lansford Hastings, and the Hensley, Reading & Company.⁹ Augustus and other businessmen developed partnerships to increase the value and sell small portions of his father's land. More had to be done, however, to pay off his father's debt, including selling the land at better prices.

Within a few weeks after Augustus started selling off titles to land parcels, a man by the name of Sam Brannan, who would become one of the most influential businessmen in early California history, worked his way into becoming one of Augustus' most significant business partners in the sale of titles. Brannan, a Mormon settler, had started out in California as a store keeper near Sutter's Fort. He gained notoriety in 1848 when he discovered, from miners and John Sutter, Sr., that John Marshall may have found gold at Coloma. Quick to judgment and without confirmation of the gold discovery, Brannan made his way to San Francisco. He is recorded to have shouted throughout the streets that gold had been found in the Sierra Nevada.¹⁰ Brannan then bought as much mining supplies as he could afford, and made his way to his store in New Helvetia. He soon advertised that he had the necessary mining supplies settlers needed for gold mining. Brannan became financially wealthy, enough to dabble in various business ventures with John Sutter and other entrepreneurs. He soon became an influential business figure in the Sacramento Valley and San Francisco. He continued

9 Ottley, 14-19.

10 Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Gold Rush for Riches* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2004), 119-121.

to develop personal and business ties with mining companies including mines near Coloma and Mormon Island.¹¹ He eventually participated in buying and selling commercial property; a venture that would involve him with the plotting and selling of land parcels in Sacramento.

Brannan became a business partner of Augustus Sutter's, and suggested platting¹² a large section of land between Sutter's Fort and the Sacramento River. Brannan was interested in platting the land to sell parcels at a large profit.¹³ Brannan's choice of platting location was ingenious because, although he had been in the area for a short time, he saw the business potential that connected Sutter's Fort with the wharf at the Embarcadero along the Sacramento River. Brannan had other motives in suggesting the plat, mainly that it would influence more commercial enterprises to develop away from Sutterville, a few miles south of the river. Brannan looked to increase the importance of Sacramento as a commercial hub in the region because of the better situated location and investments he had already made. Sutterville, in Brannan's mind, was a problem and rival to Sacramento, if it were allowed to continue to grow. The location of Sacramento's plat would, and did, intentionally create more business ties for Brannan and his associates, and removed the competition of Sutterville from the Embarcadero and eventually, Sacramento.¹⁴

11 Owens, 121-123.

12 Plats, or platting, are checkerboard-like plans which feature straight-aligned streets, meeting at right-angles, and forming several square or rectangular blocks. Each block was then subjected to division into smaller parcels for the distribution of land for future built projects. These gridiron or checkerboard plans were laid across several types of landscapes across America, most being placed over flat or hilly terrains or next to navigable waterways. Gridiron plans provide cities and towns simplicity in city planning, with opportunities to greatly expand beyond their initial boundaries for future urbanization purposes if needed.

13 Hallam, 29.

14 Hallam, 29-30.

A GRID LEADS TO A CITY

Augustus saw the potential in platting of the land and also saw a better, quicker way to settle the remaining debt of his father with the Russian-American Company. He believed that there was potential in selling this platted land to make enough profit to close the debt. Augustus agreed to plat the land located between Sutter's Fort, the American River, and the Embarcadero along the Sacramento River. Augustus was not interested in the ownership of or reselling of the land, as much as he wanted to plat the land and pay off his father's, now his, debt. The next step was to hire a surveyor; not an easy thing to find in California in the late 1840s. Fortunately, one individual was present in California who could assist Augustus. In late 1848, Captain William H. Warner, a professional engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers and a veteran of the Mexican-American War, journeyed with other surveyors into the Sierra Nevada to report on the gold discovery.¹⁵ While making their way to the mountains, Warner and his colleagues, like miners and traders before them, stopped at New Helvetia to stock up and rest before they continued their traveling.

At Sutter's Fort, Warner met Brannan and Sutter, Jr., who learned about Warner's work as a surveyor and asked him to draw up plans for a gridiron system on the desired location. Warner accepted the job, after taking a leave of absence from his party that continued to gold country. Warner was assisted in platting the terrain by fellow members of his party, Lieutenants William Tecumseh Sherman, of later U.S. military fame, particularly Sherman's March from Atlanta to Virginia, decimating those areas during the Civil War, and Edward O.C. Ord, who a year later, drew up the gridiron plan for Los Angeles, to be draftsmen associates.¹⁶ The three surveyors established residence near the American River, and from December 1848 to January 1849, they created a gridiron

15 Hallam, 31-32.

16 Hallam, 32.

plan/plat for a potential town site.¹⁷ Their plan would allow Sutter, Jr. to quickly sell off his land holdings.

The gridiron plan, which became the city of Sacramento, followed a simple design. The grid is like other quickly built cities of the American West, and utilized the terrain of the American and Sacramento Rivers as cornerstone of the grid/map.¹⁸ The simplicity of the grid included several streets, eighty feet wide, which met at right angles and formed square parcels. In the grid/plat, Warner labeled every street and natural features for easy reference. Streets that ran in a north-south direction were listed numerically, starting with Second Street close to the Sacramento River and increasing eastward. Front Street was listed as the principal street that ran along the Sacramento River and was already partially constructed by the Embarcadero. Streets that ran west-east were listed alphabetically, increasing southward from the curve of the mouth of the American River. A few streets were listed alphabetically northward, such as North B Street, toward the banks of the American River. One exception to the eighty foot wide streets was M Street, now Capitol Avenue, which was designed and laid out as 100 feet wide. Twenty-foot alleys were also included in the grid to alleviate future congestion issues.¹⁹ Warner's grid design featured Sutter's Fort as a prominent structure in the potential city, along with the influence of the Embarcadero, the Sacramento and American Rivers, and other natural features including China Slough.

In completion of the gridiron design, over 500 square lots were drawn over the land Sutter, Jr. set aside to sell. Once Warner had shown his grid plan for the land, Sutter, Jr. approved the design and managed the sale of lots to prospective buyers. In January 1849, only a short time after the creation of the gridiron plan and Sutter, Jr.'s deed of transfer of land titles, the auctioning off parcels

17 Ottley, 17.

18 Joseph Armstrong Baird, Jr., *Architectural Legacy of Sacramento: a Study of Nineteenth Century Style* (Sacramento, CA: *Sacramento Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, September 1960), 193.

19 Reps, *Cities of the American West*, 209.

in Sacramento began.²⁰ In the beginning, most lots or parcels sold quickly alongside the Embarcadero and areas surrounding the fort. The sales of lots near the Embarcadero, interested business people and new residents as the core business of the town; although the grid plan did not highlight a central business sector for the new city.²¹

In the sales process, Sutter, Jr. and his associates began to assess the potential of the land to become a city. While writing up the city deed in 1849, Sutter included the reservation of ten square lots, measuring approximately two and a half acres, as public squares. Elsewhere in the deed, he reserved other streets and locations for the public, and organized the sale of lots to be handled by a civic government. With the city deed, Sutter, Jr. established a new community, Sacramento, out of the land his father had owned in debt. The deed allowed Sutter, Jr. to transfer the ownership of most of the land titles, except Sutter's Fort and surrounding lots and streets, to the new city of Sacramento as well as individual buyers. This effectively relieved Sutter, Jr. of his father's debt burden. Businessmen and entrepreneurs had the opportunity to buy, sell, and speculate on the sale of land and plots.²² This also included Sam Brannan, who bought several plots of land after they were platted. Although Augustus was virtually able to eliminate his father's debt, there was not much profit left over on the land sales for Augustus. John Augustus Sutter, Jr. eventually left Sacramento and moved his family to Hock Farm, and then, in poor health and of little wealth, moved to Acapulco, Mexico, where he lived for his remaining years, dying in 1897.²³

By the summer of 1849, however, much of the grid plan and its parcels had been bought by various purchasers, usually

20 Ottley, 21; 27.

21 John William Reps, *The Forgotten Frontier: Urban Planning in the American West Before 1890* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1981), 61.

22 Reps, *Cities of the American West*, 209.

23 Ottley, 73-74.

speculators, businesses, and residents. Sutter, Jr. saw an increase in profit for himself and the city in the management of the land. On average, in June of 1849, lots had sold for three thousand dollars compared to two hundred and fifty dollars a few months earlier. Brannan, Sutter, Jr., and other speculators became influential in the sale of lots in Sacramento and became controllers of the city over the sale of lots and land.²⁴ Order was a necessity in the recording of sales of the many lots and parcels in Sacramento. Therefore, according to Sutter Jr.'s City Deed, much of the sale of the town's lots and parcels were to be managed by a civic government.²⁵

Within a year, a local government was established and Sacramento quickly grew into a successful city. Many of the lots sold in the first year included some form of a structure used by human activity or inhabitation. One consequence of the grid, and the increased growth of the city, was the natural and human disasters that plagued the area in the following decades. Floods, fires, and land speculations would affect the city's growth and the grid in the latter nineteenth century. This included shifting the drainage of the American River at the river's mouth, building levees along the Sacramento River, and eliminating use of the grid for most of the area north of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. The saving grace of Sacramento in the nineteenth century was the location of the State Capitol, and the significant location of the city. Over the next one hundred plus years, Sacramento continued to prosper, commercially and in population, despite the disasters that befell the city in the 1850s and 1860s, including several floods from the Sacramento and American Rivers and city-wide fires.

24 John Frederick Morse, *The [First] History of Sacramento City*, originally written in 1853 (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Book Collectors Club, 1945), 25.

25 Ottley, *The Sutter Family and the Origins of Gold-Rush Sacramento*, 20-21.

THE CENTRAL CITY AND ITS PUBLIC SQUARES

The gridiron, in what would become the Central City sector of Sacramento, has influenced the landscape and image of Sacramento, including the evolution of public squares set aside by John Augustus Sutter, Jr. in 1849. The public squares in the Central City are unique to the early planning efforts of Sacramento. They are the earliest attempts of forming parks in the city. Sutter, Jr. reserved public squares in the grid plan and City Deed in 1849. The public squares were placed in almost equal distances apart from one another. This was so that residents in developed neighborhoods had access to parks or squares within close distances from their property or place of work.²⁶ Although some public squares have similar elements and facilities, no two public squares are alike in design and what is available at each site. The entire public squares share a common history as sites recognized and set aside as parks and public-use sites for the city and its residents.²⁷

Sacramento's history with parks and other public spaces is as old as the city itself. Ten square lots were set aside in 1849, by John Augustus Sutter, Jr. in the city deed he wrote to establish the city of Sacramento and transfer ownership of land parcels he and his father had owned. These ten square lots, according to Sutter, Jr., were authorized for "the public use of the inhabitation of said City to be applied to such public purposes as the future incorporated authorities of said City from time to time declare and determine," including parks and green spaces.²⁸ By doing so, Sutter, Jr. had created the first parks in Sacramento. These parks, as a whole, would become influence the development of Sacramento's Central City neighborhoods and the psyche of its residents.

The use of parks in Sacramento, much like other urban centers, gave residents easy access to natural landscapes and green

26 Reys, *The Forgotten Frontier*, 61-62.

27 John A. Patterson, *The Development of Public Recreation in the City of Sacramento* (M.A. Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1957), 3.

28 Patterson, 3.

spaces; especially important for residents who did not own property with lawns or yards. Parks and public spaces provided residents with relief from their daily lives and the stresses of the city; whether it was poor air quality, noise from traffic, or to give residents a space to engage in recreational activities. The location of parks and public spaces often coincided with the location of residential neighborhoods, where individuals and families would have easy access to open spaces. Selecting sites of parks and public spaces often followed the gridiron plan of their respected city, as was the case of Sacramento in its early years, which in turn determined the use of surrounding land for residential, civic, and commercial interests.²⁹

The public squares in the Central City used by Sacramentans today highlight the interests of their respective neighborhoods and residents. Out of the nine existent squares, two squares provide civic and public interests, Cesar Chavez Park and Sacramento Memorial Auditorium, three squares provide tree-filled and relaxation qualities of parks, Fremont, Marshall, and Winn parks, three were built for the recreational opportunities to their neighborhoods, Grant, Roosevelt, and Stanford parks, and one square strictly provides young Sacramentans with a neighborhood playground, Muir Park. These public squares provide their respective neighborhoods access to green spaces and gathering places. All have done so for over one hundred years.

The following list includes all ten square lots, bounded by their respective streets according to the 1849 city deed, and includes their current and historical names:

29 Gunther Paul, Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 34.

<u>Square Lot</u>	<u>Historical/ Current Name</u>
9 th , 10 th , I and J Streets.....	Plaza Park/Cesar E. Chavez Plaza
9 th , 10 th , P and Q Streets.....	(Franklin D.) Roosevelt Park/Playfield
15 th , 16 th , P and Q Streets.....	(John C.) Fremont Park
27 th , 28 th , P and Q Streets.....	(Alfred M.) Winn Park
27 th , 28 th , I and J Streets.....	(James W.) Marshall Park
27 th , 28 th , B and C Streets.....	(Leland) Stanford Park/Playfield
21 st , 22 nd , B and C Streets.....	(Ulysses S.) Grant Park/Playfield
15 th , 16 th , B and C Streets.....	(John C.) Muir Playground
15 th , 16 th , I and J Streets.....	Sacramento Memorial Auditorium
9 th , 10 th , B and C Streets.....	Alkali Flat Playfield (lost)

The nine remaining public squares are situated and are part of the neighborhood that surrounds it. For over one hundred and fifty years, these parks sometimes referred to as Sutter Park Grants, have evolved. The squares are important to the history of Sacramento's park system, and are as important as the inclusion of larger parks such as Capitol, Southside, William Land, and McKinley parks, that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Capitol Park, constructed in the 1860s, provides a large natural landscape as a backdrop to the California Capitol Building, while also serving as a large urban park where both the public and government employees escape from their busy

lives and is also the site of civic and public events. Other large parks in Sacramento, including Southside, William Land, and McKinley parks, provide neighborhood residents open land which residents use for recreational, private, and event plans. These parks also include a public zoo at William Land Park and a public library and recreational center at McKinley Park. In all, the public squares in Sacramento's Central City continued the park movement that included public spaces, some even larger than the square parks, in the city of Sacramento as it grew into an urban center.

These public squares began a movement to increase public parks and spaces in Sacramento and gave examples of what future parks in the city could become. No matter the changes that have occurred in each public square all of the sites are as old as the city itself, and each remaining square or park has retained its purpose as a site for public use. Many of the public squares have gone through several changes since the 1850s. Public schools once existed on the sites of Marshall Park and the Memorial Auditorium, before they were demolished, as new schools were constructed elsewhere for the growing student population. The Memorial Auditorium continues as a public-use building; serving as a facility for public school graduation ceremonies, concerts, and performances. Marshall Park is not only home to a park and playground facility, but also contains a senior citizen center built in 1961. Finally, parks like Grant, Roosevelt, and Stanford contain recreation fields where residents can play sports in their centralized neighborhoods. Much more can be said for the other public squares and parks in the Central City. Although each may be different, the squares have retained their purpose as sites of public-use for the people of Sacramento.

Out of the ten public squares set aside in the City Deed of 1849, twelve according to the original 1849 gridiron plan for

Sacramento, nine public squares exist today.³⁰ In following the criteria of the urban park movement in United States history, three types of parks are evident in describing the designs and history of these public squares. The three types of parks include plazas or civic-oriented, reform parks, or recreational and play fields, and the neighborhood park. For example, Chavez Park has maintained its description as a plaza or civic-oriented park for a few key reasons: it is situated near Sacramento's civic and downtown business neighborhood, including City Hall, the federal Post Office, Public Library, and a few state government agencies and public events are hosted on the plaza's grounds, including farmer's markets, concerts, and public demonstrations. The Memorial Auditorium also qualifies as a civic public square. Fremont, Marshall, and Winn Parks qualify as neighborhood parks because they provide picturesque, tree-filled, and green grounds for public relaxation; where residents gather to enjoy quiet, tranquil moments in a bustling city, and use the sites for public events and meetings. Roosevelt, Grant, and Stanford Parks and Muir Playground are categorized as reform parks because they house recreational and playing fields. The first three each have designated space for baseball diamond fields, along with basketball courts, soccer field space, or playgrounds. Muir Park is, as mentioned before, a space reserved for playground equipment and activities for young children.

The public squares are influential spaces to their respective neighborhoods. They provide residents and citizens an opportunity to commune with both an urban and country environment in centralized locations. As neighborhood parks, these squares also provide local residents with a place to gather and discuss events, become involved in business and recreational activities, and get to know the people and places around them. Today, six of the

30 "Reprint of the 1849 "Plan of Sacramento City, State of California." Map/plans can be found at the Sacramento Room archival center, Sacramento Public Library.

public squares are located within historic districts according to the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources: Grant Park, Cesar Chavez Park/Plaza, Fremont Park, Marshall Park, the Memorial Auditorium, and Winn Park.³¹ These six public squares provide a park to their respective historic districts and the development of their neighborhoods. The presence of all nine public squares is influential to the development and history of the Central City and its many neighborhoods. These influences include green spaces, sites for public gatherings, local events, markets, and concerts, fields for youth and adult sports, and open areas to alleviate the congestion of the city. The open, public spaces are ideal because they are situated in Sacramento's urban center and cut out of the imposing gridiron plan of the city.

CONCLUSION

Sacramento's Central City grid plan and public squares are significant features in the history of the city. The grid and the public squares are tied to the establishment of Sacramento, and have been continuously influenced by the changes of the city throughout its history. The existent public squares continue to serve the purpose that John Augustus Sutter, Jr. assigned for them. Each public square has served the visitors and residents of Sacramento for generations, providing an escape to parks and open spaces. Each park or public square has its own history and contribution to its respective neighborhood and the city. Its history involved; sites of public schools, the Capitol building, business opportunities, civic and neighborhood pride, architectural and landscape creativity, and relaxation and recreation activities. As a whole, the public squares were the first attempt to provide Sacramento with parks and public spaces as part of the planning for a growing city. These spaces influenced the development and use of other parks in Sacramento,

31 City of Sacramento. *Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources* (Sacramento, CA: Department of Community Development, December 2011), 122, 150, 152, 154, 156, 178.

parcs large and small for purposes of neighborhood recreation, zoos, senior centers, wildlife habitats, and libraries. It is the history of these public squares, along with their individual and collective histories, that started the movement to include parks and public spaces in urban planning efforts in Sacramento.

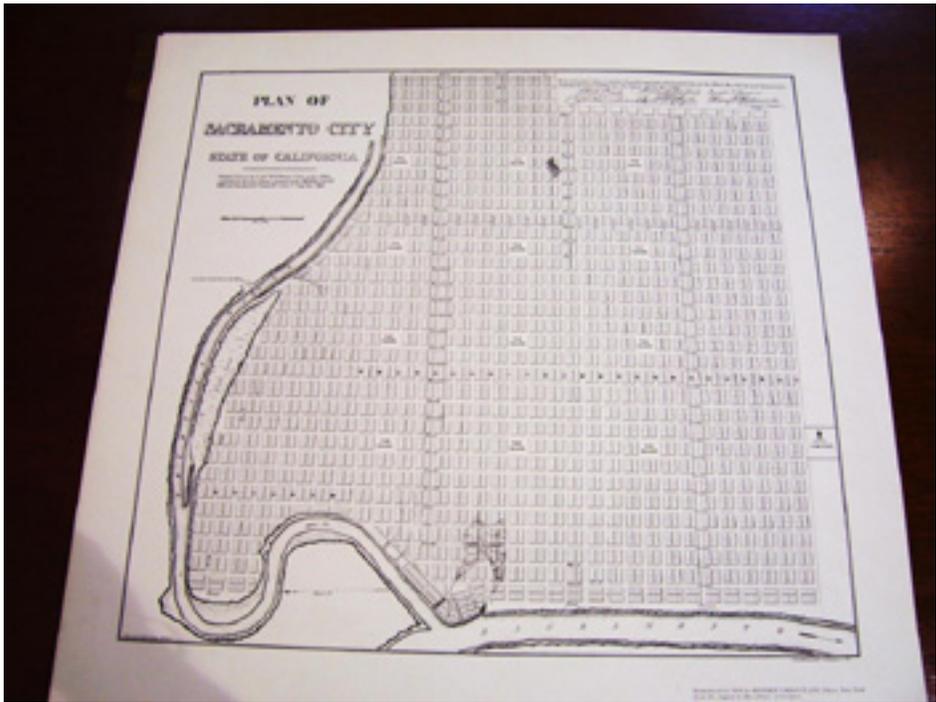


Figure 1: "Photograph copy of the Reprint of the 1849 "Plan of Sacramento City, State of California."

The plan identifies twelve city blocks as 'public squares,' equally spaced out in the grid. Ten public squares visible in the plan were named by John Sutter, Jr. in the City Deed of 1849 as sites for future public uses.

Photo taken by Michael Kremer, April 24, 2011. Copyright approval by staff at the Sacramento Room archival center, Sacramento Public Library.