THE NATURAL BORDERLAND AND THE HISTORY OF THE FOLSOM LOCALITY

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THE NATURAL BORDERLAND AND THE HISTORY OF THE FOLSOM LOCALITY

A Thesis

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Department of History
Abstract

of

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This study focuses on an area within northern California during the nineteenth century. Specifically, the following study provides insight into the early history of Folsom, California. Generally, this work examines the intersection of two different worldviews and the subsequent changes that took place. While the traditional interpretation of the California gold rush suggests the extraction of gold occurred out of nowhere, in actuality, gold was simply the next exploited element within the natural borderland of the Nisenan. Through the examination of diaries, newspaper articles, and scholarly works created within the nineteenth century, one gains insight into the early history of the Folsom locality.

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Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I focused on this particular location since I grew up within Sacramento County. In elementary school, the indoctrination into the dominant culture’s interpretation of California history began. The curriculum included visiting various locations such as Sutter’s Fort, Sutter’s Mill in the town of Coloma, the old school house in Old Sacramento, and the California State Railroad Museum. Surprisingly we visited the California Indian museum, along with a trip to Indian Grinding Rock. I remember something special about that particular place more than any other location. However, my experience at the Miwok roundhouse is polluted with the memory of a fellow classmate pulling the fire alarm. Understandably, our field trip was cut short.

During the following years, I gained momentary glimpses into the feeling I felt at Indian Grinding Rock while camping in the Sierra Nevada, hiking in the foothills, and swimming in the American River. As I grew older, I constantly thought of the imagery of the natural borderland in its pristine state. What did this place look like without the suffocation of banks, blacktop, cars, concrete, fast-food restaurants, gas stations, highways, manufactured lakes, and prison? Whom were the people living within the area? What was their way of life? Is it even possible gaining a glimpse into their world? Why did the foreigners arrive? Why is the river so much a part of contemporary Folsom? The answers to these questions formed the inspiration of my thesis. Gaining insight into the land directly in front of me allowed a glimpse into the era when humanity and the natural world were one. Ultimately, this led to an alternative interpretation of the history of the Folsom locality.

This alternative interpretation was not possible without the help of a number of people. I would like to acknowledge the scholars who have written before me, particularly those favorable to environmental and indigenous fields of history. Their work allows historians to taken an active
role in the world. Special thanks to Mary Mast, the director of the Folsom History Museum, along with all the volunteers who spend countless hours and energy on preserving the past. Their work allows future generations the ability to gain insight into the world around them through an understanding of the past.

Thank you to the faculty within the History department at California State University, Sacramento. Particularly, thank you Joseph Pitti, Lynda Leitner, Patrick Ettinger, and Scott Lupo. Professor Pitti’s California seminar was my first in graduate school and will always stand out in my mind. He contributed immensely to my understanding of California’s past and my overall pursuit of environmental and indigenous studies. I sincerely extend my gratitude to Professor Leitner. Her endless wisdom on academia and life, along with her warmth, kindness, and friendship are greatly appreciated. Thank you to my second reader, Professor Ettinger. His critique, patience, positivity, and understanding greatly contributed to the following work. I am deeply indebted to Professor Lupo, my first reader. Over the past three years, his knowledge and guidance allowed me to grow tremendously. I am lucky to know one of the true intellectuals still in existence within academia.

Words cannot describe how I feel about the following people. An infinite amount of appreciation goes out to my parents Melanie and Tim who journeyed “out west” at the seasoned ages of seventeen and nineteen. Their hard work, sacrifice, and love allowed my sister Ashley and I to have a wonderful life. Mom and Dad, my Master of Arts degree in History is dedicated to you. Your constant reminder of my future attendance of college not only allowed me to expand my mind and question the world around me, but my attendance at CSUS placed me in the most essential moment in my life: the opportunity of crossing paths with my best friend, soul mate, and wife. Dominique, I am truly blessed to have you a part of my life.
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INTRODUCTION

Within a mile radius of “old” Folsom, California is an American Indian trade store, two streets named “Leidesdorff” and “Mormon,” and a state park called “Negro Bar.” While writers of previous histories on Folsom briefly mention the relevancy behind such names and places, the various works fail to give recognition to the contributions of the people behind them and their influence on the early development of Folsom. There have only been three scholarly works written on Folsom, which was originally known as Granite City until 1856. The two major ones are theses developed by two students at California State University, Sacramento and the third is an illustrative history titled Images of America: Folsom California.

Wayne Williams Roberts developed the earliest work on Folsom in 1950 with his thesis titled, “A History of Early Folsom, California, 1842-1862.” Roberts writes: “Folsom is the product of the fusing, for common purposes, of a number of gold camps within a two mile radius of Folsom. When these gold camps began to decline, their citizens, realizing their potential fate, converged upon Folsom in an effort to continue their prosperity.”1 Roberts, therefore, suggests the establishment of Folsom was for economic purposes. He also writes: “With the decline of the gold fever and the establishment of a city in Folsom, many of these towns were abandoned and the residents moved their households intact into Folsom in search of new business opportunities.”2

2 Ibid., 85.
Roberts focuses on a few individuals, mining camps, and economic industries within the Folsom area, leaving off in the early the 1860s.

Herbert Wray Barrows developed his thesis a few years after Roberts titled, “A History of Folsom, California 1856-1900.” Barrows’ work picks up where Roberts left off and focuses on the progression of the town of Folsom after 1856. Barrows suggests: “There was no gradual growth…It was a planned city; and after it was laid out, homes, hotels, businesses, a newspaper all moved into the area within a brief period of less than one year.”

Barrows examines economic factors and events outside the mining industry pertinent to the history of Folsom during the second half of the nineteenth century. One of his main objectives is reflecting the history of the United States through the history of Folsom.

Historical writing is heavily influenced by the era in which the work is produced. Thus, it is understandable why scholars fail to discuss other factors in Folsom’s history. The Folsom histories mentioned above were produced prior to the utilization of social and ecological interpretive models in the writing of history. Barrows understands this when he writes: “…Since history is made by people, outstanding events may be some seemingly insignificant incident in their short lives.”

While these two scholars greatly contributed to the understanding of Folsom’s past, their work neglects analyzing the contributions of various individuals and groups on the early establishment of Folsom. Roberts observes primarily the Anglo actions within Folsom and details their

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4 Ibid., 1.
contributions. He completely neglects other cultural groups. Barrows moves beyond Roberts and incorporates Chinese settlers into his work, but they are briefly discussed after Folsom developed into a town.

Additionally, both scholars fail to mention how and why the location of Folsom was established, which is where this study picks up. The core reason Folsom prospered during the second half of the nineteenth century is because of its location. It appears they believe the strategic location upon the southern bluff overlooking the American River developed out of thin air. I acknowledge that Roberts and Barrows did not refer to the location within their interpretation on the history of Folsom, but without the location of Folsom there is no history, whatsoever. This is completely my interpretation on the early history of an area within northern California.

The proceeding study focuses on the early “development” of Folsom, referring to the events leading up to the location and it offers a revisionist approach utilizing a socio-ecological interpretation. It examines those individuals and groups left out of earlier studies and their actions in developing the location of the city. The work does not move beyond 1856, the year Granite City became known as Folsom. As Roberts and Barrows suggest, the development of Folsom within the natural borderland did not take place overnight, but rather from a sequence of foreign actions on the land over the course of four and a half decades. The Folsom locality was established due to the participation of various individuals and groups. Ultimately, I am describing how the natural borderland catalyzed successive waves of foreigners to enter the area and whose actions on the land collectively and over time displaced the Nisenan and established the location of Folsom.
The commandeering of the Folsom locality is marked with specific phases. The first phase in the transformation from the land of the Nisenan to the Folsom locality was the natural borderland itself. For millions of years nature created the natural borderland and for thousands of years it existed without human activity. Without this initial phase the Folsom locality would never have materialized. The second phase was the Nisenan living sustainably within the natural borderland for centuries. Without their knowledge and understanding of the interconnectivity of the natural world, the natural borderland would not have appeared abundant. The third phase was the intrusion of foreigners into the natural borderland and subsequent commoditization of all elements of the natural borderland. The fourth phase was the transition from a natural to a fabricated borderland. At the center of this transition was a change in the relationship between humanity and nature. The prevailing outlook in viewing nature in a reciprocal way ceased to exist, whereas the foreign worldview in looking at nature in terms of profit and personal gain became the norm. The fifth phase originated with the foreigners’ awareness of gold which catalyzed an influx of foreigners and the ensuing fabrication of towns. During this phase the Nisenan were removed from their homeland. The seventh and final phase is the establishment of Negro Bar and transition into Granite City. Collectively, these phases explain the simultaneous uprooting of the Nisenan way of life and establishment of the Folsom locality.

The first chapter provides insight into the Nisenan way of life and their natural borderland. One main objective within this work is attributing a voice to the group of humans who lived on the land for over one millennium. One cannot withhold the Nisenan
from the history of Folsom since the location was their ancestral homeland. Their story is just as vital as to the discourse of Folsom as any other group. The Nisenan lived within a natural borderland enclosed by the southern fork of the American River, the Sierra Nevada, the Cosumnes River, and the valley floor east of the Sacramento River. By the concept, “natural borderland,” I am specifically referring to the physical territory this particular group of Nisenan resided in.

The natural borderland simultaneously refers to a particular area of human activity within northern California. Human activity within the natural borderland was based upon an astute awareness of nature. Through hundreds, if not thousands of years of interaction and observation, the Nisenan came to know their land. Meaning, they understood certain actions on the land would bring certain outcomes to their world around them. Their relationship with the natural world was based on a reciprocal understanding. I am not suggesting the Nisenan did not exert some control over their environment, but I am suggesting they had a sense of the interconnectivity within nature. By observing a brief glimpse of the Nisenan culture, one is able to observe the sustainable way of life they practiced on an everyday basis. Thus, it is only natural the land surrounding the city of Folsom is described as well.

The second chapter focuses on the intrusion of foreigners into the natural borderland. The Spanish explorer Gabriel Moraga initiated the penetration of foreigners into the natural borderland. The term “foreigner” appears frequently throughout the work and describes the diverse groups and individuals who entered the natural borderland of the Nisenan. The fact is, every person who was non-indigenous arrived from some distant
country and was a foreigner within the Nisenan land. The term also derives from Edwin Bryant’s *What I Saw in California*, published in 1849. Bryant, along with nine other men left Independence, Missouri on the first of May in 1846 and arrived at New Helvetia about mid-summer. Upon arriving at the gate outside Sutter’s Fort Bryant wrote: “I saw two Indian sentinels pacing to and fro before it, and several Americans, or foreigners, (as all who are not Californians by birth are called,)….” Accordingly, it was the common way of describing the various individuals who entered the area in the mid nineteenth century. In the context of the following work foreigner describes all individuals and communities from throughout the world who entered the natural borderland. The individuals and communities were not considered “foreign” based on their appearance, but rather the way in which they viewed the natural world. Although the term is dated, it is useful in grasping the essence of the following story and the outsiders’ entrance into the world of the Nisenan.

Moraga’s entrance into the homeland of the Nisenan signified foreign awareness of the natural borderland. The possibility of an endless source of beaver provided the American fur trapper Jedediah Smith with a reason to enter the natural borderland. Smith’s presence initiated the exploitation of the natural borderland and the ensuing transition into a fabricated borderland. His knowledge of the land with an “abundance” of water, animals, and plant life eventually spread to other foreigners. Foreign awareness of the perceived abundance within the natural borderland traveled and soon foreigners such as John A. Sutter, William Daylor, and members of the Church of the Latter Day Saints

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entered the area. They were drawn to the area for the seemingly endless abundance of natural resources. Through their actions they transitioned the natural borderland into a fabricated borderland. The transition is a part of the multi-dimensional development of the Folsom locality.

The fabricated borderland simultaneously denotes a physical area and symbolizes the essence of human activity. I utilize the term “fabricated” to describe the change that took place with the arrival of foreigners. The Nisenan practiced an early concept of sustainability while the foreigners practiced exploitation. Foreigners brought with them a certain worldview from their cultures and subjected it on the land, which changed the dominant relationship between humanity and nature within the natural borderland. The mentality behind human activity changed from viewing nature in terms of reciprocity to viewing nature in the context of capitalist economics. With the transition, the natural borderland was opened up to ever-lasting change.

The term highlights the transition from a permanent space of human activity based upon nature, to a non-lasting, non-tangible area of economic exploitation. The permanence of the natural borderland was removed and replaced with a transitory realm of natural resources. Foreigners manufactured an area in which nature was commoditized for economic gain. Aspects of the natural borderland such as animals, trees, and water were viewed as resources for the taking. Furthermore the foreigners did not have a sense of interaction with the environment, rather a strict mentality to control nature and exploit its abundance. I am not suggesting the Nisenan did not affect or alter the natural borderland; the fact of the matter is they viewed nature alternatively from the foreigners.
Thus there were two counteracting forces of sustainability and exploitation working simultaneously within the fabricated borderland, creating a theme of binary opposition throughout the study. Ultimately, the hands of nature did not carefully craft the fabricated borderland, rather the hands of foreigners.

The physical fabricated borderland was based on three locations created at different times between 1840 and 1848. The three points of interest were chosen simply on the basis of economic productivity. Foreigners chose specific locations within the natural borderland that yielded the greatest resource potential. Each fabricated boundary was established in order to utilize the locations’ natural resources. For example, Sutter desired a location that promised the most productive agricultural output, which is why he established New Helvetia or “New Switzerland” at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers. Daylor desired open grassland for livestock to graze, thus he looked to the Cosumnes River Valley for the establishment of a ranch. Sutter also desired a continual supply of trees and water, which was his reason behind selecting a prime location within the Kulloma Valley. In their entirety these locations established the physical fabricated borderland and solidified the foreign relationship with nature as the dominant worldview. Additionally, the culmination of the fabricated borderland was marked by the foreigners’ awareness of gold. Unlike conventional thought, gold was simply another element of the natural borderland exploited by foreigners. The unintentional and unplanned transition to a fabricated borderland provided the setting in which the desirable location of Folsom was established.
The third chapter focuses on the foreign settlements within the Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island. The Mormon “discovery” of gold catalyzed an influx of foreigners into the fabricated borderland, thus transitioning the two locations into booming towns. Sutter’s mill within the Kulloma Valley expanded into the town of Coloma and the mining community at Mormon Island expanded into the town of Mormon Island. The “development” of foreign towns changed the Nisenan way of life through direct oppression and the overconsumption of natural resources. The violence committed against the Nisenan at Coloma spread throughout the fabricated borderland, while the awareness of gold at Mormon Island established numerous mining communities within the Folsom area. The rise of Coloma and Mormon Island directly influenced the solidification of the Folsom locality through the removal of the Nisenan, considering villages within and near the towns were forced to disperse.

Chapter Four focuses on one of the mining communities established within the Folsom area, Negro Bar. One objective within this chapter is giving agency to the African-Americans who established Negro Bar. From 1849 to 1852, Negro Bar was a diverse gold extracting camp located on the riverbank below contemporary old Folsom. Due to flooding, Negro Bar moved to the location above the American River in 1852. Once the community relocated, the African-Americans who founded the town dispersed from the area. Negro Bar increasingly became known as Granite City, due to the granite composition of the area. From 1852 to 1856, the foreigners who lived within the fabricated borderland increasingly moved to Granite City. With an ideal location positioned within the fabricated borderland, the community of Granite City was chosen
as the eastern terminus of the first railroad west of the Mississippi River. It was not until after the road was chosen that the city was mapped out, businesses were established, and the people of the various mining camps moved to Granite City.

One focus throughout the following work is “movement.” The movement of people and culture is a vital part to the history of the Folsom locality considering foreigners from all over the world participated in the solidification of the location. Moraga, Smith, Sutter, and Daylor were respectively from Spain, America, Switzerland, and England. These foreigners traveled thousands of miles in order to reach the Nisenan homeland. Their diversity and routes entering the natural borderland foreshadowed the future arrival of foreigners. I have chosen, therefore, to briefly discuss the different journeys foreigners made in arriving within the area. Furthermore, as the Nisenan moved out of their homeland, thousands of foreigners moved in.

No matter the individual or group, new arrivals entered the natural borderland seeking personal economic gain from a land in which they knew nothing of. One focus of the work is highlighting the fact that the catalyst bringing foreigners into the area was a desire to exploit the land. From Sutter’s dream of building an agricultural empire, to the thousands of gold seekers’ search for wealth, every foreigner who entered the area sought to exploit the various elements of the natural borderland. The following quote from the Placer Times summarizes the actions of each foreigner: “History is only a repetition of the workings of the passions of human nature on somewhat modified form and shape.”

While the concept of foreign exploitation of the land may seem obvious and unimportant

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to contemporary people, there is a need to shed light on this story considering the drastic change that took place within the natural borderland. The natural borderland underwent a paradigmatic shift through the underdevelopment of the relationship between humanity and nature. The Nisenan view of nature was replaced with a foreign worldview geared toward the commoditization, consumption, and extraction of the natural world. This shift not only occurred extremely fast, it completely uprooted an entire people who thrived in this specific location for hundreds of years. The overthrow of the prevailing relationship between humanity and nature allowed foreigners to become the dominant culture within the area.
Chapter 1

THE NISENAN AND THEIR HOMELAND

The following chapter offers an overview of the land surrounding the location of Folsom prior to the arrival of foreigners, including a glimpse into the people who first inhabited the region. The Nisenan way of life existed from the bountiful land and they attained a vital awareness of their surroundings from being embedded into their natural borderland. By observing a brief glimpse of the Nisenan culture, one is able to gain a minimal understanding on the sustainable way of life they practiced on a day-to-day basis. In the following study, “culture” refers to a: “…complex system made up of knowledge and beliefs, of art and morals, tools and technology, language, laws, customs, legends, myths, and other components, all of which fit themselves into a singular whole.” As will be shown, the Nisenan lived as harmoniously with the land as humanly possible while sustaining life.

Foundations

Many indigenous peoples throughout North America understand their early history through ceremonies, creation stories, dances, legends, songs, and other forms of artistic expression. No matter the form, they all explain the human experience pertaining to their unique place in the world. One reason why these forms of expression were not written down is the fact that they describe how a particular group of people viewed themselves within their surrounding world. Indigenous peoples lived with the awareness

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1 Within this work, “sustainability” refers to a method or means of harnessing a resource for the use of future generations.
that humanity and nature were one, with no disassociation between the two. M. Kat Anderson, a leading ecologist, successfully articulates this concept:

In native California societies, gathering and hunting knowledge was not just a set of facts to be memorized and mechanically followed in the daily harvesting rounds but rather led to a comprehensive cultural framework of values, beliefs, and behaviors that clearly define the place of humans in the natural world. To an extent that it is difficult for a non-Indian to appreciate, nature and culture were closely entwined and interlocking. Knowledge of plants and animals inform culture and culture shaped the way in which this knowledge was emulated.3

Thus ceremonies, creation stories, dances, legends, and songs were all based in nature. Seeing aspects of one’s culture reflected through the natural world allowed people to stay constantly connected to their roots. Therefore, there was no reason to write their beliefs. In California, the abundant and diverse cultures were no different. Possibly more so than any other indigenous North American culture, the Nisenan were intricately woven into the natural world.

One of the most unique forms of expression through which indigenous peoples based their identity was creation stories or myths. Creation stories describe the beginning of the world and establish certain principles a particular group of people adheres to. Usually the elders of each tribe pass these on from generation to generation. Through this cultural practice the Nisenan were reminded of the foundation of their way of life. On a day-to-day basis all aspects of the land reminded the Nisenan of their rich history, whether it was a plant, rock, or river. Brian Bibby, author and friend to the indigenous cultures of California offers the following enlightened words:

3 M. Kat Anderson, Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California’s Natural Resources (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 55.
Each culture is rooted in its mythology; tribal myths encompass nearly every aspect of the human experience. Myths recount the creative acts that gave the land its form - the oddly shaped hill, the deep cut of a canyon, the location of a lake. They also allow for informed interaction with the environment and all its creatures, instilling character and personality into the nonhuman portion of the world. Often passed off as cute “legends” possessing little intellectual impact, native myths are not intended to be factual explanations of how the earth was created…They reveal a spiritual mystery and wonder that were a part of life in a world-long ago that was not well known. Ironically, for all our knowledge, the world and the way of life that they reflect are now nearly unknown. Because of this, we are usually unaware of the metaphors embedded in the myths and therefore often miss their deeper, less obvious meanings…

Through this visualization and interaction with the environment, the Nisenan stayed connected to the ways of their ancestors and in doing so solidified their permanent connection with nature.

The origin of this relationship with nature is exemplified in the many episodes and versions of the Nisenan creation stories. While there are hundreds of creation stories, the following interpretation was told from the perspective of Mrs. Lizzie Enos and recorded by Richard Simpson in Ooti: A Maidu Legacy. Mrs. Enos was a Nisenan woman whose family was based out of the Clipper Gap area. She lived with the “old time” Nisenan until she was seventeen, during which time the people taught her the way of “…basket making, collecting foods and medicines, dancing the old dances, and practicing the old magic.”

Through observing one interpretation of the Nisenan creation story, one gains a sense of the founding principles of their way of life.

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In the beginning there were two opposing forces, infinite water and air. The clear water was forever pushing up, while the heavy air forever pushed down.\(^6\) On the unseen line separating air and water, a raft floated for all eternity shifting with the “invisible elements of pre-creation.”\(^7\) Within the raft existed only two spirits, Turtle and Peheipe, until the time came when the sky split open in which many different colors burst out and a “rope of feathers” fell to the raft.\(^8\) Through a vibrant stream of colors shining out from a hole in the sky, World Maker, the flaming god, descended the rope. Upon reaching the raft, the shining body spoke: “I come from above. I come from beyond the broken shell of timelessness.”\(^9\) With the arrival of World Maker, the two spirits gained an awareness of time.

World Maker sat between the two spirits in a meditative state and many silent years passed. With the sense of time, Turtle became impatient and spoke: “I can not fly…no, and though I sometimes swim in the unseen water, I must ever rise for air. And so I exist upon this raft; swim in one, and breathe the other. Is this then all there will ever be for me?”\(^10\) Immediately Peheipe announced his impatience and spoke: “Is there no place where those who neither fly nor swim can be, besides this pitching raft that’s never still?…ever squeezed between these two unseen forces that I feel?”\(^11\) After years of

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\(^7\) Ibid., 13.
\(^8\) Ibid., 14.
\(^9\) Ibid., 14.
\(^10\) Ibid., 14.
\(^11\) Ibid., 16.
silence, World Maker replied: “I am of air, and to make the world, I need a ball of earth found only below these raging currents, far beneath this ocean scum.”

Upon hearing the words of World Maker, Turtle tied a rope around his body and dove into the water. Prior to his descent, Turtle instructed World Maker to lift the rope when he pulled twice. World Maker waited with Peheipe until Turtle gave the signal. After a four-year swim through waters of heat and ice, Turtle came upon a body of green water that turned into a primal slime. Upon reaching the ancient world, Turtle scraped the spongy earth until he grasped a large ball. Immediately, Turtle pulled the rope twice and was pulled out of the water faster than he descended. After bursting out of the water Turtle found his way to the raft, but the upward journey lasting two years had removed the ball of slime from his grasp. However, World Maker scraped the slime from Turtle’s fingernails and rolled the slime into a ball within his palm. World Maker continued sitting on the raft and meditated further, with his energy gazed upon the ball of slime. Upon opening and closing his eyes four different times, the pebble-sized ball grew as large as the world, with various mountain ranges in the distance. The raft came ashore near a mountain range and the three spirits stepped upon land. The location where the raft came ashore is known as “Tadoiko,” contemporarily known as the Sutter Buttes.

World Maker’s next creation was his sister sun and brother moon. Following their creation the stars were born and Turtle asked World Maker if this was all they would see

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12 Ibid., 16.
13 Ibid., 16.
14 Ibid., 17.
15 Ibid., 19.
and know. World Maker replied to Turtle: “The time is near to begin that for which the world was made- the time is near for life to grow.”17 With the rise of the sun on the following day, World Maker knelt to the ground and removed a “shiny greenish oblong ball” from his palm and proclaimed: “Ooti, the acorn; taken from the Upper Meadow, brought with me from heaven. Into the earth I will place this seed of good.”18 World Maker planted the seed and did not remove his gaze from the spot. While keeping his gaze, the glistening rays of the sun forced steam to rise from the earth and sea, creating the first storm within the world. The drops of water accumulated while flowing down the mountains and turned into streams. Each stream turned into a creek and eventually formed rivers. Thus, the world was blessed with the nourishment of water.

A tree emerged from the ground where World Maker planted the seed. World Maker spoke: “OOTIMTSAA, the acorn tree: every season in its branches, all twelve kinds of acorns will grow there, endless food for life to come.”19 The tree grew and grew until it seemed as though it could grow no larger. From the shade of the great acorn tree World Maker, Peheipe, and Turtle rested into the night. Under the moonlight, World Maker announced: “In life as in the dormant earth, there ever dwells both Good and Evil. Always, in this world, these two elements will oppose one another. Good is the wisdom of life, which I have now awakened from the earth. Evil is nothing more than the ignorance of this life, a drowsiness difficult to know or see; a drowsiness that leads to sleep.”20 On the next moonlit night World Maker spoke again:

17 Simpson, Ooti, 21.
18 Ibid., 22.
19 Ibid., 22.
20 Ibid., 23.
So Good must resist the pull of the invisible Evil. Thus there comes a third element to the world which will rise from this earth in the form called coyote. Coyote looks like Evil should, knows what evil is doing and always does it first; tries to awaken Good to that which Evil. In no other way will Good, which never sees true Evil, ever know where Evil is or how evil works. Coyote likes the game he plays, ever loud and full of humor, ever full of tricks and cunning. And Good, seeing Evil in coyote’s antics, must flee in mortal fear of his games. No matter what Coyote does or says, always do the opposite…only then can life continue. Only then will this tree we sit beneath forever stand, giving nourishment to the greatest life yet to come.  

On the following morning World Maker created animals from reddish clay and sent them throughout the world. He waved his hand through the air and birds filled the sky. Walking throughout the land World Maker scattered seeds of grass, bush, and tree. Later that day World Maker spoke to the forces within his realm: “Now I will finish that for which the world was made. Now I shall give life to mankind, that he may use all that has been created.”

World Maker created humans by digging a hole near the acorn tree and filled the hole with dark red earth and seawater. From the mixture World Maker created two long figures representing men and women. He created the figures within his image and allowed the figures to rest in the sun and moisture. He took the figures into his hut and placed man and woman next to him. With sunlight spearing through the roof, World Maker began to sweat and puddles formed upon the floor. World Maker sweated throughout the day and soon the moon reflected their images in a large pool within the hut. “First Woman” and “First Man” soaked up World Maker’s sweat through every pore and absorbed the moisture. Ultimately, they accumulated aspects of their creator.
From First Man and First Woman, the Nisenan were created. In the early stage of life food was abundant, no one worked, and there was no death until the moment when the people no longer turned their back to coyote. Each person wanted more and more, until the people were forced to work, became sick, and died. The people were sent out in all directions and began speaking different languages. Thus the people were forever divided within, laughing with coyote and running from coyote.\(^{24}\) To the people contemporarily known as Nisenan, this is one version of the way they entered into the natural borderland.

While this creation story describes the beginning of the world and entering of the Nisenan upon the land, the scholarly interpretation contains various hypotheses regarding the migration of human beings into North and South America. There are three schools of interpretation on the human migration and are labeled radical, liberal, and conservative. All three schools agree on the migration of humans across the Bering land bridge that once connected Alaska and Asia. The radical school of thought suggests human beings have inhabited North America for at least 100,000 years.\(^{25}\) Whereas the liberal school of thought suggests Upper Paleolithic peoples throughout northeastern Asia entered North America swiftly around 25,000 BCE.\(^{26}\) Furthermore, the conservative school only accepts unique American artifacts as proof of human existence and argues humans entered North America 11,000 years ago.\(^{27}\) No matter the school of thought, scholars agree within the

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 35.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 6.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 8.
past 10,000 years the human population of North America rose from a few hundred thousand to many million.28

While some scholars posit human beings were in California as early as 30,000 years ago, there is evidence of a big-game hunting culture present in southern California around 9,000 years ago, known as the San Dieguito Culture.29 The San Dieguito Culture was synthesized from an early Desert Culture and Old Cordilleran Culture. While the debate is still open regarding the presence of a big-game culture within California, that period came to an end when milling stones were implemented in 5,000 BCE.30 The transition to milling stones thrust California’s indigenous population into a heavily seed-based diet, supplemented by hunting and fishing.31 Scholars have coined the term “Early Period” to describe the cultures existing in California earlier than 4,000 yeas ago. The “Middle Period,” dated as 4,000 to 1,500 years ago, initiated the vitality of acorns throughout California’s cultures with the presence of “basket-mortars.”32 Acorns became the vital source of food, which is the reason agriculture was never adopted. During the thousand years between the end of the middle period and 1500 CE, California’s indigenous population blossomed into diverse cultures. Various processes occurred simultaneously such as: “…the continuing growth of population, the accommodation to different environments, and the independence of various groups…”33 By 1300 CE the

29 Alvin M. Josephy Jr., The Indian Heritage of America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 139-140.
30 Ibid., 140.
31 Ibid., 140.
32 Ibid., 140.
33 Ibid., 141.
diverse array of indigenous Californians established permanent residences at the exact locations Europeans invaded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{Maidu}

Prior to the late eighteenth century, California’s indigenous population is estimated to have numbered more than 350,000, with liberal estimates well into 500,000.\textsuperscript{35} These indigenous peoples inhabited the entire state of California, ranging from the Tolowa in the northwest area of the state, to the Tipai at the southern most section. Situated between these two were over one hundred more groups. Each of these groups was associated with a specific linguistic family. For example, the Maidu are a part of the Penutian speaking family, which also included the Miwok, Modoc, Nomlaki, Ohlone, Patwin, Wintu, and Yokut.\textsuperscript{36} Each member of the Penutian family has a distinct dialect within the Penutian language. Thus, the term “Maidu” reflects their specific Penutian dialect, Maiduan. Furthermore, each group contains subgroups, which is exemplified with the Maidu.

The Maidu inhabited the eastern section of northern California, encompassing the territory from the “High Sierra” valleys in the north to the Cosumnes River in the south and from the Sierra Nevada in the east to the Sacramento River in the west. The Maidu consists of three branches: the northeastern Maidu or “Mountain Maidu,” the northwestern Maidu or “Konkow,” and the southern Maidu known as the Nisenan. This is due to the Maidu’s permanent residence within certain geographical locations. The

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{36} These groups inhabited the Central Valley, the greater bay area, and the Sierra Nevada foothills.
Mountain Maidu were the northernmost group and lived near the open meadows of the High Sierra at elevations ranging from 3,400 to 4,500 feet above sea level.\textsuperscript{37} Their territory stretched across present day Plumas County, whereas the Konkow’s territory spanned Butte County. According to Bibby, the term “Konkow” originated from a mispronunciation of the indigenous term “koyongkawi,” which translates as “the meadow, or open country.”\textsuperscript{38} This territory contained the three forks of the Feather River, a plateau known as “Table Mountain,” and numerous waterfalls. Lastly, the geographical territory of the Nisenan spanned six contemporary counties of northern California: El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, and Yuba.

While the Mountain Maidu, Konkow, and Nisenan generally shared a similar culture, their unique environments developed slight variations in their way of life. The Maidu became situated within their surrounding environment and were fairly cut off by natural boundaries such as rivers and mountains. Each group stayed within their own territory defined by specific boundaries based upon the land. Native American historian Albert Hurtado suggests: “The Maidu community relationship was usually confined to the people occupying a specific ridge in the mountains, or other contiguous ecological area.”\textsuperscript{39} Each environment, while somewhat different, provided everything they needed in order to survive, thus they had no reason in leaving their specific environment for long periods of time. Furthermore, Native American historian Alvin M. Josephy Jr. suggests: “The members of each group used their own territory and refrained…from trespassing

\textsuperscript{37} Bibby and Aguilar, \textit{Deeper Than Gold}, 3.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 22.
across boundaries into the lands of other groups. Ultimately, the distinct geographical locations produced distinct dialects.

Each group’s inhabitation of distinct geographical boundaries over numerous centuries gave way to further partition among the people. There are various dialects of Mountain Maidu, Konkow, and Nisenan for the same reason there are three subgroups among the Maidu: the land. Within the various geographical territories of the Mountain Maidu, Konkow, and Nisenan there existed smaller geographical territories that corresponded to the various dialects within each group. These particular geographical territories can be defined as “natural borderlands.” Thus each geographical territory of the Mountain Maidu, Konkow, and Nisenan contained numerous natural borderlands and every one of them was inhabited by a specific dialect. One of the natural borderlands within the geographical territory of the Nisenan surrounded contemporary Folsom. This natural borderland and the Nisenan who inhabited this particular location are the focus of this study.

*The Natural Borderland*

The natural borderland encompassed the area between the south fork of the American River, the north fork of the Cosumnes River, the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, and the Sacramento Valley. Within this natural borderland the rich earth sustained an abundance of life that provided all the essentials the Nisenan required to survive. In order to gain a glimpse into the Nisenan way of life, it is useful to

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40 Josephy Jr., *The Indian*, 142.
gain familiarity with their land. The following is a brief ecological history of the natural borderland.

The Sierra Nevada developed roughly 210,000,000 years ago and culminated roughly 100,000,000 years ago when magma was injected into Earth’s preexisting crust.\textsuperscript{41} The molten granite originated when the eastward edge of the pacific plate was pushed down near the earth’s core and melted.\textsuperscript{42} The stress from the slow shrinking process caused granite material to rise up out of the crust. In short, the Earth’s crust shrunk. Furthermore, twenty-five million years ago the continental crust east of the Sierra Nevada began expanding in an east to west direction, creating the moderate rise from west to east.\textsuperscript{43}

Throughout the last hundreds of thousands of years, glaciers also shaped the terrain of the Sierra Nevada. Glaciers were formed with a cool climate and the accumulation of freezing snow atop mountains.\textsuperscript{44} The weight of the ice forced glaciers to slope downward and they formed within a preexisting stream or valley.\textsuperscript{45} At the end of the last Ice Age, roughly 10,000 years ago, a warming period melted all the glaciers within the Sierra Nevada.\textsuperscript{46} The land did not see glaciers again until one thousand years ago with what is known as the “Little Ice Age.” In lower elevations as the glacier melted, the water emptied into lakes and established the various rivers that replenished California’s great Central Valley.

\textsuperscript{41} Tracy I. Storer, Robert L. Usinger, and David Lukas, \textit{Sierra Nevada Natural History} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 16.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 18.
Besides the slow accumulation of water from glaciers, the Sierra Nevada accrues water from a vast amount of precipitation. Storms from the Pacific Ocean bring rain to the valley and foothills, along with snow to the Sierra Nevada. The rotation of the earth pushes the prevailing winds from west to east and carries storms across California.\textsuperscript{47} The heaviest precipitation occurs northeast of Folsom, on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, at Donner Summit. On Donner Summit, snow accumulation is anywhere between thirteen and sixty-six feet a year.\textsuperscript{48} The Sierra Nevada, therefore, is one of the locations throughout North America that accumulates vast amounts of snow. This ultimately yields a great runoff in the spring.

The animals, plants, and humans of the natural borderland were nourished with water melting from the snow pack. This yearly runoff overflowed the twelve rivers that drain the Sierra Nevada.\textsuperscript{49} Two of these life sustaining rivers were the southern and northern boundaries of the natural borderland. Without these rivers, the natural borderland would not have existed. As with all organisms on Earth, water was the life source of the natural borderland.

Specifically, the south fork of the American River is the northern boundary of the natural borderland. The river received its name, “Rio de los Americanos,” when California was considered to be Mexican territory. The American River is larger than the Cosumnes, cutting through El Dorado, Placer, and Sacramento counties. The south fork of the American begins at Echo Lake and winds eighty-seven miles. The white water

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 12.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 13.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 8.
crashed over numerous rapids, flowed through heavy forested canyons, and eroded various granite formations before meeting the Sacramento River.

The Cosumnes River was the southern boundary of the natural borderland. The Cosumnes is roughly eighty miles long and is comprised of three forks that flow through scenic canyons within contemporary Amador, El Dorado, and Sacramento Counties. The Cosumnes begins in the Sierra Nevada at an elevation of roughly 8,000 feet and empties into the Mokelumne River. Specifically, the north fork was the southern boundary of the Nisenan. The territory south of the Cosumnes was the traditional homeland of the Miwok. As of November 1, 2011, the Cosumnes River Preserve listed on its website that more than 500 fish, plant, and bird species contemporarily inhabit the lower reaches of the river. Seeing as how the Cosumnes is currently home to a biologically diverse array of life, one can imagine in the days of the Nisenan the river sustained an even greater abundance of life.

While cutting their way through the Sierra Nevada, the American and Cosumnes Rivers traverse rolling foothills. The foothills contained oak groves, meadows, and woodlands. According to the *Californian*, the foothills were: “…covered with the richest verdure, intertwined with flowers of every hue.”\(^5^0\) In the spring the unobstructed foothills were green with an abundance of moisture, while during the summer they turned a golden brown with the fierce heat, considering summer temperatures throughout the natural borderland exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit. During the winter immense fog accumulates at the merging of the foothills and valley along the American River. On occasion, fog

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\(^5^0\) “New Helvetia, June 30 1848,” *Californian*, July 15, 1848.
covers the entire Sacramento Valley; the western and final boundary of the natural borderland. The valley runs 150 miles from north to south and roughly maintains a width of forty miles. The flat valley is the northern third of the four hundred mile long Central Valley of California.\textsuperscript{51}

More precisely, the valley floor east of the Sacramento River was the western boundary of the natural borderland. The Sacramento River begins in the north flowing past the western side of the Sutter Buttes. The headwaters of the Sacramento begin in the Trinity Mountains and join the San Joaquin River forming the Sacramento-San Joaquin delta of Northern California before emptying into San Francisco Bay. Nine of the twelve rivers draining the Sierra Nevada empty into the Delta.\textsuperscript{52} During the winter various rivers such as the Feather and American pour into the Sacramento and flood the valley floor. According to Jedediah Smith who traveled in the natural borderland of the Nisenan in 1828, the Sacramento River was: “…about 300 yards wide, a gentle current and apparently deep…”\textsuperscript{53} During the winter months, the rivers flooded the Sacramento Valley and created a giant “inland sea” from the Sutter Buttes to the delta, over one hundred miles in length.\textsuperscript{54}

The annual flooding of the valley gave rise to a fertile soil, enabling various trees to grow. The flatlands of the valley were lined with flood-resistant trees such as

\textsuperscript{52} Storer, Usinger, Lukas, \textit{Sierra Nevada}, 8.
\textsuperscript{54} Kelly, \textit{Battling the Inland Sea}, 1.
sycamore, cottonwood, willow, and ash. California sycamores grew in the overflowing channels of rivers and creeks, along with six foot in diameter walnut trees. Among the thousands of trees within the natural borderland, one of the most prevalent was oak. Of the nineteen oak species that grow in the United States, over seven of them once inhabited the natural borderland. The oak trees grew on the valley floor and the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada. Apparent from the Nisenan creation story, these oak trees were vital to the Nisenan way of life. Along with the trees, the hundreds of ferns, grasses, plants, and shrubs provided sustenance to the diverse array of animals.

The animals inhabiting the natural borderland and the surrounding regions were as numerous as the flora. In the grassy meadows and rolling prairies bees, butterflies, and grasshoppers thrived. Fairy shrimp, Delta Green ground beetles, tiger salamanders, and Western Spadefoot toads inhabited the vernal pools within the area. Scattered throughout the brush were California moles, black-tailed hares, western harvest mice, and squirrels. Swimming in the rivers were beaver and river otter, along with eels, Rainbow trout, salmon and Sacramento Sucker fish. The rivers and streams were watering holes for mammals such as gray fox, badger, bobcat, and coyote. Grazers such as pronghorn antelope, tule elk, and black tailed deer roamed the borderland. California quail, ducks, hummingbirds, geese, Northern Flicker woodpeckers, and an assortment of other feathered animals inhabited the region. Since northern California was positioned within the flight pattern of migratory birds, Sand hill cranes resided in the natural borderland.

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57 Ibid., 13.
twice a year. The red-tailed hawk soared across the sky, searching for Western rattlesnakes. The largest animals were mountain lions, black bears, and gray wolves. Even the great grizzly bear, now extinct in California, once roamed the region. These animals, along with hundreds of more, ultimately shared the natural borderland with the Nisenan.

Just as there are many animals withheld from this discussion, the essence of the natural borderland cannot be captured with words. While some characteristics of the natural borderland were everlasting, there is without doubt numerous characteristics are hidden from the modern world. The sights, smells, and sounds of the once great natural borderland can only be imagined in reminiscence. While nature is always shifting, it is not always visible to the human eye, considering the process that created the natural borderland lasted millions of years. Thus, during the days of the Nisenan the natural borderland stayed relatively constant. This consistency enabled the Nisenan to gain a well-advanced awareness of the natural cycles and inner relationships within the natural borderland, which contributed to a thriving culture based upon nature. In every possible way the land between a valley, two rivers, and mountains provided sustenance to the Nisenan.

Nisenan Culture

The people and language known as Nisenan is pronounced “nish-ee-non” and is translated as “from among us,” or “of our side.”\(^\text{[58]}\) The Nisenan who inhabited the particular natural borderland described above are known as the Placerville dialect. This is

\(^{58}\) Bibby and Aguilar, *Deeper Than Gold*, 52.
one of the seven Nisenan dialects classified by contemporary city names: Auburn, Clipper Gap, Colfax, Nevada City, Oregon House, Valley, and Placerville.\(^{59}\) While the majority of the Nisenan dialects were situated entirely within the Sierra Nevada foothills, the Placerville dialect inhabited a unique area. Their natural borderland sat at a location where the foothills roll into the Sacramento Valley. This was the southernmost natural borderland, bounded by the Miwok south of the Cosumnes River and the Valley Nisenan in the west.

Within the geographical territory of the Nisenan, the communities were oriented from the east to west. In each natural borderland there existed various “tribelets,” a number of neighboring villages joined by a common language, background, and custom.\(^{60}\) These tribelets formed the various Nisenan groups. The communication between tribelets did not extend beyond their natural borderland and was based on familial relationships. While the Nisenan limited their interaction with each other, they met with surrounding villages during ceremonial activities. These occurred throughout the cycle of the seasons. As will be discussed, the Nisenan were synced with the cycles of the natural world.

Throughout the natural borderland permanent villages were positioned in the foothills for their strategic location.\(^{61}\) Villages were located below the snowline and above the flood zone. These villages were located in the contemporary locations of Camino, Placerville, Coloma, Shingle Springs, and Diamond Springs. The names of these

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 196.
\(^{60}\) Josephy Jr., *The Indian Heritage*, 141.
\(^{61}\) Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,”10.
villages were Saskiyan, Koi’umol, Kulloma, Bamom, and Moloko Pakan. According to Bibby:

The terms or names associated with native villages are often hard to translate. Some village names are clearly translatable and refer to obvious local features, but it appears that some villages were known by more than one name, and names may have changed frequently. A settlement might be known by the name of its headman, and then the name could change when he died or was succeeded by another.

Take for example, Bamom and Moloko Pakan. The former is translated as “salt water,” while the latter refers to “condor spring.” In addition to these villages, there were at least fifteen more located throughout the natural borderland.

At least one of these villages existed within contemporary Folsom on the southern bluff above the American River. The village was known as Yolimhii and was located near Folsom’s historic district. This location above the American River was possibly the most strategic location within the vast natural borderland, considering it was elevated above the river and was near the natural river crossing. Furthermore, the location was ideal since foothill and mountain meadows were to the east, oak groves to the south, and open grasslands in the west. From this location the Nisenan sustained their way of life which was synced with nature’s seasonal changes.

The meadows within the natural borderland were comparable to a contemporary grocery store with the assortment of food they offered. Women gathered numerous aspects of the Nisenan diet such as grass seeds, clover, ferns, pinecones, and wild onion.

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62 Bibby and Aguilar, Deeper Than Gold, 77.
63 Ibid., 76-77.
64 Ibid., 77.
65 Folsom, California, Folsom History Museum Archives, Native American Section.
66 The natural river crossing was located below the contemporary Rainbow Bridge near old Folsom.
Outlining the foothill meadows was Manzanita, which can still be seen today while driving east on Highway 50. The Nisenan collected Manzanita berries when they were: “…half-mature for the purpose of making a Manzanita cider.” Women also collected over ten different types of mushrooms, along with toadstools and fungi found within the meadows. Some foods were collected during a particular season such as seeds from the wildflower known as “California Poppy” and nuts from the tree known as “Digger Pine.” These were collected in the summer season. Women also utilized digging sticks in gathering roots, rhizomes, routs, tubers, and bulbs such as Brodiae, some as deep as one foot in the ground. When digging for roots, women also gathered grubs and warms.

One delicacy was grasshoppers for their healthful qualities acquired while eating medicinal plants, which were collected and boiled in salt water. While these harvesting acts appear simple, they were cultivated through countless years of observation. The women’s harvesting awareness and technologies were acquired through a complex understanding of all elements within the natural borderland. Ultimately, this knowledge was gained through hundreds of years of interaction with the natural world.

As mentioned earlier, the Nisenan way of life was based upon the land. Every action of the Nisenan involved a conscious awareness of their surrounding environment. Out of necessity for their survival and adhering to their culture, the Nisenan were aware of every element within their natural borderland. Over the centuries they gained knowledge and insight into their environment which established a reciprocal relationship.

69 Ibid., 13.
with nature. Through trial and error, the Nisenan understood: “…that yearly abundance could be ensured by working with nature instead of taking advantage of it.” With this understanding the Nisenan helped nature along, while simultaneously ensuring their sustenance.

This awareness toward the natural world is known as “traditional ecological knowledge” in academia. However, an academic living in contemporary society will never fully be able to attain a complete understanding of this worldview. This knowledge allowed the Nisenan to benefit from every plant and plant part within the natural borderland such as: “…underground bulbs, rhizomes, and roots; the oozing resin of trees; the sweet nectar of certain flowers; stems, bark, shoots, leaves, thorns, flowers, seed pods, seeds, seed prunes, and cones.” Thus, the Nisenan did not waste any element of the natural borderland. Through this knowledge they were able to decipher multiple uses for each plant, such as poison oak. Since the Nisenan were immune to the plant’s poisonous oil, the leaves were collected and used to wrap acorn bread and other types of food. By burning the plant’s roots a charcoal was produced which was utilized for tattooing. Additionally, the Nisenan figured out multiple uses for plants varying from season to season. For example, milkweed was collected in the spring for greens; its seedpods were extracted in late summer; and its stems were removed in fall and winter. In order not to affect the plant part needed in the other seasons, the Nisenan were constantly aware of every action they made.

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73 Ibid., 4.
74 Ibid., 43.
75 Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 36.
76 Anderson, *Tending the Wild*, 51.
With this knowledge the Nisenan also understood the medicinal qualities of the natural borderland. They utilized many plants for medicinal and spiritual purposes. The Nisenan found natural remedies for cuts, colds, dizziness, kidney problems, toothaches, stiff neck, sore throat, and even tuberculosis.77 Their knowledge allowed them: “...to repeatedly distinguish a species by shape, color, size, smell, and other factors, and assign various uses to it…”78 This was vital to their way of life, especially when dealing with medicinal plants. As with milkweed, many of the medicinal plants fulfilled multiple purposes such as wormwood. The use of wormwood was applied to spiritual purification, ceremonial use, and blessed the sick.79 If one was sick they simply burned wormwood and bathed in the smoke of the fire. While the majority of plants had unique benefits, in order for the medicine to work they had to be “spoken to.” Without the use of prayer, the remedy would not attain its fullest potential.

The spiritual awareness of the Nisenan was also cultivated through their reciprocal and sustainable relationship with nature. This enabled the Nisenan to view the world through a kincentric lens, meaning they did not view themselves disconnected from the natural world and considered themselves relatives to all nonhuman creatures. While referring to California’s indigenous population at large, the following worldview applies to the Nisenan:

Nature is the embodiment of the human community and all of nature’s denizens and elements-the plants, animals, the rocks, and water- are all people. As people, plants and animals possessed intelligence, which meant that they serve in the role of teachers and help humans in countless ways- relaying messages, forecasting the

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78 Ibid., 49.
79 Ibid., 42.
weather, what is good to eat…

Over the years the Nisenan became more aware of this intrinsic intelligence within the natural borderland. While the Nisenan were reminded of their past through the various elements of the natural borderland, they simultaneously enlightened the Nisenan about the natural way of life. This has to do with the fact that: “Nature was considered fully alive and sensate: every rock, hill, valley, wind, plant, and animal was inhabited by spiritual forces.” Not only were mountains, rivers, and trees viewed as living entities, they collectively reflected a living organism. To the Nisenan, therefore, the natural borderland was considered what Bibby has termed a cultural landscape, whose intelligence and history were accessible through an eternal connection with the natural world. Ultimately, this spiritual awareness transcended all aspects of Nisenan life.

Although the Nisenan worldview was based on the interconnectivity of life, they still consumed animals. While the Nisenan only consumed the animals out of necessity, they still participated in the taking of life. However, their spiritual awareness was present when they killed the animals of the natural borderland. With each animal the Nisenan consumed, they said a prayer in the similar way they did with each plant. The following is a generalized interpretation of a Maidu salmon ceremony:

Before the salmon rite the Maidu only ate dried salmon. The head of the Kuksu society caught the first fish, but first prayed to the salmon and asked them not to be angry at the people for catching them. The first salmon caught was cooked on the spot and divided amongst the people present. When this ceremony was concluded, everyone was free to fish.

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80 Anderson, *Tending the Wild*, 57.
81 Ibid., 55.
82 See James Lovelock’s *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. Within this work Lovelock proposed the theory that planet Earth is one living organism.
The prayer ceremony fulfilled three purposes within the Nisenan way of life: respect, balance, and sustenance. By saying a prayer, the Nisenan respected the salmon and gave thanks to the sentient being for the energy provided. By respecting the salmon, the Nisenan did not take the life of creatures they did not need. This concept of mindfulness allowed for balance within the natural borderland. Practicing a balanced way of life prevented the Nisenan from exhausting the plants and animals within the natural borderland. This balance contributed to the sustenance of the Nisenan with a constant supply of salmon. If there is any notion of killing an animal respectively, the Nisenan did so. Whether it was salmon, deer, or grizzly bear, the Nisenan gave thanks for its life. 84

Animals were as vital to the Nisenan existence as the plants and herbs were. Just as the Nisenan observed the various plant communities within the natural borderland for hundreds of years, they observed the animals as well. The Nisenan: “…knew the animals intimately by studying their behavior, walking the same paths, sharing a drink from the same watering holes, and sleeping in same habitats.” 85 Thus the Nisenan were aware of the migratory cycles, reproductive habits, and dietary needs of all the animals within the natural borderland. 86 Ultimately, this awareness of animals was based in their traditional ecological knowledge.

Also within their traditional ecological knowledge was the use of specific cultural tools. When cultural tools were applied to the Nisenan’s awareness of animals, the result was the development of highly successful hunting techniques. Just as women were

84 Anderson, Tending the Wild, 55.
85 Ibid., 45.
86 Ibid., 127.
extremely intuitive at gathering food and herbs with digging sticks, the men were exceptionally skillful with bow and arrow, harpoons, and nets. Bows were constructed from different branches of trees, such as incense cedar and maple wood. Arrows on the other hand were constructed from a shrub known as “mock orange,” which was extracted from canyons during the fall or winter. During these months the shrub lost its leaves and resin, thus enabling the Nisenan to gather and bundle the arrows efficiently. While these tools were constructed during the winter, the men utilized these tools more often during spring and summer to shoot animals such as birds, deer, and bear. These hunting techniques were not utilized as often during the winter.

One cultural tool utilized throughout winter was storage bins known as “sukun.” During the winter the Nisenan faced the severest weather within the natural borderland. For several months between November and February, the Nisenan faced fog, rain, wind, freezing temperatures, and occasional snow. During these several months out of the year food was not in normal abundance, especially in cold winters. However, the accessibility of an abundant and diverse range of food throughout the other seasons ensured the Nisenan did not suffer from shortages of food. The Nisenan women dried various types of food, such as seeds, acorns, wild greens, and meat. Mushrooms were also dried after they were collected underneath black oaks and manzanita bushes in late November and early December. The Nisenan sustained life throughout the winter by storing various

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87 Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 30-33.
88 Bibby and Aguilar, Deeper Than Gold, 76.
89 Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 11.
90 Ibid., 5.
aspects of their diet. Only in a severe drought or rainy season would starvation be a danger for the Nisenan and this occurred once in a generation.\textsuperscript{91}

One of the natural tools utilized by the Nisenan was fire. They produced a flame through different techniques such as “drilling” and “percussion.” Drilling uses friction to create intense heat, while percussion involves striking two objects together to ignite a spark. Besides cooking, they used these techniques to practice conscious land management, in the form of controlled burns. Burning is described as: “…the application of fire to particular vegetation areas under specified conditions to achieve select cultural purposes.”\textsuperscript{92} The Nisenan preferred: “An open, grassy, oak savannah habitat.”\textsuperscript{93} Through the removal of the underbrush, the Nisenan were able to travel easier throughout the natural borderland. This openness provided the Nisenan with an easier way to hunt and collect acorns on the ground. Additionally, through the recycling of nature’s nutrients back into the soil, the greens, fruit, mushrooms, and seeds were abundant.\textsuperscript{94} The Nisenan were able to sustain a healthy diet with a diverse food supply.

Simultaneously, the natural borderland benefitted from the controlled fires. Burning was beneficial by removing underbrush, enhancing feed for animals, and recycling nutrients back to the earth.\textsuperscript{95} The removal of underbrush prevented the occurrence of forest fires by keeping the area open.\textsuperscript{96} With an open area, the possibility of

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 11.
\textsuperscript{92} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 135-136.
\textsuperscript{93} Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 9.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{95} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 136.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 151.
an accidental fire destroying an entire forest was reduced. With more food for animals, nature’s entire community thrived. Lastly, the recycling of nutrients back into the soil allowed fresh seedlings the ability to grow. Thus, what was good for the environment was also good for the Nisenan.

This early form of land management was conducted on a yearly basis. The burning began in the fall and lasted throughout winter. The Nisenan awareness on when to burn, where to burn, and the length of the fires was also based in their traditional ecological knowledge. By observing natural wildfires induced by lightning, they understood the benefits of burning. Over time the Nisenan gained the necessary experience to conduct controlled burns.

Contrary to the belief of some scholars, the use of “burning” was not a form of exploitation. Throughout the following study, “exploitation” is defined as: “To make use of selfishly or unethically.” Burning is not considered a form of exploitation since the act benefitted the natural borderland in its entirety. If it was only beneficial to the Nisenan, then the act of burning would be considered a form of exploitation. However, the controlled burns were conducted with the Nisenan’s awareness of plants and animals. The Nisenan gained sustenance through the controlled burns; nothing more, nothing less.

If the Nisenan indiscriminately exploited their natural borderland, they would have destroyed the balance rather than help sustain it. With their plant and animal awareness, the Nisenan understood the vitality of balance. For example, the Nisenan:

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98 Anderson, Tending the Wild, 135-136.
“...could have extirpated populations of annual wildflowers through over harvesting, but instead they were careful to leave seeds so that the plants were maintained in a magnificent abundance.”\textsuperscript{100} Furthermore, they could have easily exhausted the salmon during their yearly runs. However, through years of observation and interaction they understood it was more beneficial not to exploit any element of their homeland. Lastly, the abundance perceived by foreigners would not have existed if the Nisenan, did in fact, exploit their environment. In this context then, the only “exploitive” practice of the Nisenan was cultivating tobacco.\textsuperscript{101}

While the previous insight into the Nisenan way of life offers knowledge on their relationship with the natural borderland, it is only a brief account. Describing a people’s culture centuries removed will always neglect a full view of their way of life. The embedment of human beings in the dominant culture of twenty-first century America disallows an empathetic lens to view the culture of the Nisenan, considering the American way of life is the antithesis of Nisenan way of life. In an attempt to gain a slight understanding of their culture one has to acknowledge and remove the subjective “filters” every individual has within them. Filters such as political views, religion, ethnicity, age, economic status all inhibit an unbiased interpretation of the Nisenan way of life. Removing the multiple filters allows for a cultural understanding of the people who once inhabited contemporary Folsom.

\textsuperscript{100} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 61.
\textsuperscript{101} The correlation between the Nisenan and tobacco will be discussed in chapter three.
In all reality, the Nisenan existence was based on nature. They achieved a sustainable way of life through their traditional ecological knowledge. The Nisenan gained this knowledge through centuries of interaction with their natural borderland. Through this knowledge the Nisenan understood the interconnectivity of all life, which is why they based their relationship with nature on reciprocity. Within their worldview there was no disassociation between humanity and the natural world. They were aware of the actions of all animals, while they simultaneously understood the benefits and consequences of all plant utilization. The Nisenan, therefore, were aware of every action they made on the land and knew what these actions would entail.

In summation, the Nisenan worldview was based on an ethical awareness toward nature. This worldview brought relative stability and balance to their lives, as well as to the natural borderland. The Nisenan can be considered one of the few cultures in North America to be aligned with the natural ebb and flow of life. They lived as harmoniously with the land as humanly possible. If there is any notion of Native Americans as the earliest ecologists or “green Indians,” the Nisenan are such. Thus, the Nisenan practiced sustainability centuries before the concept was known to “western civilization.” Ultimately, the modern environmental movement is trying to attain the sustainable way of life the Nisenan practiced on an everyday basis. According to the contemporary Nisenan and scholars of indigenous California, this was the Nisenan way of life upon the arrival of foreigners within the natural borderland.
Chapter 2

INITIAL FOREIGN INCURSIONS AND ENSUING ALTERATION

The Nisenan maintained a sustainable and reciprocal relationship with their natural borderland for centuries. In the early nineteenth century this began to change when individuals such as Gabriel Moraga and Jedediah Smith entered Nisenan territory, thus initiating the arrival of foreigners into the natural borderland. The foreign penetration of the natural borderland is one of the main focal points within the following chapter. In order to unearth the history of Folsom’s location one needs an understanding of the forces catalyzing foreign arrival.

The natural borderland was highly desirable to the foreigners in terms of ecological abundance. All foreigners who entered the territory leading up to the solidification of Folsom’s location arrived seeking a specific element or “natural resource.” From Sutter to the veterans of the Mormon Battalion, each individual sought economic gain from the environment. Therefore, the foreign objective in entering the natural borderland is also a focal point within the chapter. The foreigners’ desire to exploit the perceived “abundance of natural resources” within the area drastically altered the natural borderland.

With the coming of “civilization” to the natural borderland the traditional interaction between humanity and the natural world changed. The transition from boundaries based upon nature to boundaries based on economic productivity, symbolically reflects the initiation of the displacement of the prevailing human culture within the natural borderland. The initial location was established with the development
of Sutter’s agricultural empire New Helvetia. Once established, various individuals sought New Helvetia as their western destination from across North America. One such individual was William Daylor who established a ranch and the second location of the fabricated borderland, near the north fork of the Cosumnes River. Among the most influential foreigners who sought New Helvetia was a group of Mormons. The Mormons assisted Sutter in establishing a mill within the Kulloma Valley, the third and final location of the fabricated borderland.

While each participant listed above entered the natural borderland for a specific purpose, the creation of the fabricated borderland was unplanned. Through their collective actions they not only altered the physical landscape, but also uprooted the relationship between nature and humanity within the natural borderland. One of the essential understandings within this chapter is the natural borderland transitioned from the homeland of a Nisenan community, to a manufactured location of economic exploitation for the foreign population. From Moraga to the Mormons, each foreigner contributed to the locality of Folsom through their actions while in the area.

_Columbus of the Sierra Nevada_

One of the first European explorations within the interior of California occurred when a Spanish explorer by the name Fernando de Rivera y Moncada searched for a land route to Bodega Bay in December of 1776.¹ There was no personal account of his expedition, although twenty years later a Spaniard by the name Hermenegildo Sal discussed Rivera’s exploration. Sal concluded Rivera reached the three branches of the

¹ Donald C. Cutter, _The Diary of Ensign Gabriel Moraga’s Expedition of Discovery in the Sacramento Valley, 1808_ (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1957), 30.
San Joaquin River. Rivera also reached the “Rio de la Passion,” which is contemporarily called the Mokelumne River. While Rivera initiated foreign exploration of the eastern Central Valley, there is no documentation suggesting his expedition made contact with the Nisenan.

The next expedition from the California coastline to the eastern interior of California occurred in 1806 and was led by Gabriel Ensign Moraga, also known as the “Columbus of the Sierra Nevada.” While many people regarded Moraga as one of the top Indian fighters within Spanish California, he attained recognition through his explorations of California. During his career serving the Spanish crown, Moraga made over forty explorations throughout California. In 1806 Moraga ventured north of the Rio de la Passion and near the homeland of the Nisenan. However, Moraga’s expedition was cut short due to a change in language between his interpreters and the indigenous population.

While Moraga’s first expedition to the eastern border of the Central Valley was catalyzed by a desire to “know the land,” his 1808 expedition was based upon seeking a viable location to construct a mission. Moraga traveled to the San Joaquin River and worked his way northwest to the Sutter Buttes. Moraga’s expedition journeyed past the Rio de la Passion and “discovered” the next river draining the Sierra Nevada on October 5, 1808. He described the account within his diary: “Today I continued north and in about 2 leagues I hit an arroyo and some pools of water. In about seven more leagues we

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2 Ibid., 31. 
3 Ibid., 30-31. 
4 Ibid., 42. 
5 Ibid., 31.
arrived at the river discovered yesterday and it was given the name of San Francisco. This river is about 9 leagues distant, more or less. From the Rio de la passion.” Moraga reached the Cosumnes River and the southern boundary of the Nisenan. After spending the night presumably at the north fork of the Cosumnes, the following day Moraga traveled northeast of the river and found: “…good plains, pine timber and many Indians.” From Moraga’s diary it appears he immediately interpreted the elements of the natural borderland in terms of natural resources. His worldview foreshadowed that of the thousands of foreigners who eventually entered the area. Ultimately, this is the first documented account of European penetration into the natural borderland.

Moraga became one of the initial European foreigners to view the American River on October 6, 1808. According to his diary: “I went north-northwest with two men, and after about 5 leagues I found a river which runs from north to south. It carries more water than any of the others except the San Joaquin.” After reaching the American River Moraga and the two other Spaniards traveled back to the camp on the Cosumnes and stayed there for the evening. The following morning Moraga’s expedition broke camp along the Cosumnes and arrived at the southern fork of the American River, which he named Las Llagas, in commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus. After camping along the southern bank of the American, Moraga explored the terrain of contemporary Folsom. Moraga proceeded to travel west along the American toward the Sacramento River, in

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6 Ibid., 17.
7 Ibid., 17.
8 Ibid., 18.
9 Ibid., 18.
10 Ibid., 18.
11 Ibid., 32.
which he named. While on his trek he noted within his diary the presence of eleven Nisenan villages. Seeing as how Moraga did not specify the exact location he viewed the Nisenan, it is difficult to know whether these were all permanent villages. If Moraga viewed the Nisenan prior to the transition from the foothills into the valley, it is likely they were permanent villages considering he was in the natural borderland during October. However, the rainy season may not have commenced yet, considering in the Sierra Nevada ninety-five percent of precipitation occurs between October and May, with over half falling in January, February, and March. Thus, some of the villages Moraga viewed were possibly summer camps still utilized by the Nisenan.

With Moraga’s 1808 expedition, he initiated contact between Nisenan and foreigners. Moraga arrived within the natural borderland of the Nisenan seeking a strategic location in extending the mission system of the Spanish. Although the Spanish never established a mission within the natural borderland, Moraga’s expedition initiated foreign penetration into the natural borderland. While seemingly unimportant, Moraga’s arrival signified a cataclysmic turning point within the history of the Folsom locality. Within only two decades an American fur trapper pioneered the first resource extracting expedition into the natural borderland.

*Disease and Fur*

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12 Ibid., 32.
Jedediah Smith was born to parents of Puritan lineage at Jericho, contemporarily known as Bainbridge, New York on January 6, 1799.\textsuperscript{14} The Smith family made their way across Pennsylvania and Ohio prior to Smith’s arrival in Missouri. Smith answered an advertisement by William H. Ashley who owned the American Fur Company and was searching for “one hundred young men” to trap beaver in the Rocky Mountains in 1821.\textsuperscript{15} Within five years Smith acquired Ashley’s company and became the leading fur trapper throughout the American frontier.\textsuperscript{16}

After the purchase of the company, Smith initiated his first expedition into California and arrived in November of 1826.\textsuperscript{17} With Smith’s arrival in San Diego he became the first American to travel overland from the east.\textsuperscript{18} While in southern California Smith gained an awareness of the abundance of natural resources within the territory to the north and initiated the extraction of beaver fur from the San Joaquin Valley. After accumulating vast amounts of fur, Smith left northern California in May of 1827. Furthermore, Smith successfully became the first “white” man to cross the Sierra Nevada and arrived in contemporary Salt Lake City, Utah in July of 1827.\textsuperscript{19}

Within weeks of his arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Smith desired California’s natural resources once again. After Smith met with business partners and planned another rendezvous in 1829, he journeyed to California with eighteen men, two women, and a

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{17} Dale L. Morgan, \textit{Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 201.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 193.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 210.
two-year supply of provisions. According to Smith’s diary he journeyed to California for an: “…examination of the country beyond Mt. St. Joseph and along the sea coast. I of course expected to find Beaver, which with us hunters is a primary object, but I was also led on by the love of novelty common to all, which is much increased by the pursuit of its gratification.” However, the “newness” that he sought was far from the truth.

Smith entered the natural borderland in early 1828. Upon Smith’s arrival he viewed numerous Nisenan villages scattered throughout the land. Smith wrote on February 13: “In the course of the day I passed an Indian village of 20 or 30 lodges made of log flag mats and straw…." One day while riding west along the American River, Smith stumbled upon a Nisenan village which was possibly Kadema, located near contemporary Watt Avenue and the American River. His presence frightened a few Nisenan who immediately ran: “We galloped after them and overtook one who appeared very much frightened and pacified her in the usual manner by making her some presents.” While Smith did not elaborate on his definition of “overtook,” it appears as though he did not harm the woman.

Smith’s goal concerning his interaction with the Nisenan was to maintain peaceful relations and apparently shower them with gifts whenever the opportunity arose. However, Smith was not alone in the extraction of beaver fur from the natural borderland. He brought with him nearly twenty individuals from diverse backgrounds and each with a

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20 Ibid., 235.
22 Ibid., 62.
24 Ibid., 65.
mind of their own. Two foreigners within his party killed one Nisenan and wounded another because they feared the Nisenan were stealing traps. Smith wrote in his diary: “I was extremely sorry for the occurrence and reprimanded them severely for their impolitic conduct. To prevent the recurrence of such an act the only remedy in my power was to forbid them the privilege of setting traps…”25 Smith seemingly did what he could to ensure the safety of the Nisenan, while simultaneously looking out for the members of his expedition.

While traveling from contemporary Folsom to the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers, Smith arrived at one of the Nisenan camps or villages noted by Moraga. Immediately, the Nisenan fled in terror at the sight of the foreign fur trappers mounted on horses and Smith immediately witnessed a woman fall to the ground:

She was still laying there and apparently lifeless. She was 10 or 11 years old. I got down from my horse and found that she was in fact dead. Could it be possible, thought I, that we who called ourselves Christians were such frightful objects as to scare poor savages to death. But I had little time for meditation for it was necessary that I should provide for the wants of my party and endeavor to extricate myself from the embarrassing situation in which I was placed. I therefore to convince the friends of the poor girl of my regret for what had been done cover her body with a Blanket and left some trifles near by.26

While it is apparent Smith did not wish to harm the Nisenan, his use of language within his diary suggests he viewed them derogatively. Prior to the incident Smith considered naming the river “Wild” after the indigenous population within the vicinity and after the occurrence with the Nisenan girl, Smith felt obligated to do so.27 Smith’s mentality

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25 Ibid., 65.
26 Ibid., 66.
27 Ibid., 66.
toward the Nisenan foreshadowed the worldview foreigners brought with them to the natural borderland.

Viewing the Nisenan as “wild” and roaming the territory without any “civilized” direction ultimately led to the expatriation of the Nisenan. The Nisenan were simply viewed as bystanders unconnected to the elements of the land that were being exploited. However, the foreigners’ worldview projected on the Nisenan was false. As mentioned earlier, the Nisenan had an extremely intelligent relationship with nature. Their awareness of the natural world is eloquently expressed in the following:

The rich knowledge of how nature works and how to judiciously harvest and steward its plants and animals without destroying them was hard earned: it was the product of keen observation, patience, experimentation, and long-term relationship with plants and animals. It was a knowledge built on a history, gained through many generations of learning.28

This traditional ecological knowledge enabled the Nisenan to practice a sustainable way of life, which is the reason behind the natural borderland appearing so abundant to foreigners. The abundance within the natural borderland existed because of the Nisenan. Disregarding the Nisenan’s reciprocal relationship with nature catalyzed the foreigners to believe the abundance within the natural borderland was theirs for the taking. Ultimately, the foreigners’ disassociation with the natural world mistakenly allowed the foreigners to view beaver in terms of a natural resource waiting to be extracted.

Upon entering the territory of the Nisenan, Smith greatly contributed to the disruption of their way of life. While Moraga’s entrance into the natural borderland initiated foreign arrival, Smith’s entrance had a greater impact on the Nisenan way of life.

Although he attempted to remain peaceful with the Nisenan, his presence alone altered their livelihood. Smith was unaware that his actions within the natural borderland catalyzed great change to the Nisenan way of life. He initiated the practice of exploiting one particular element of the natural borderland through the commoditization of beaver. While only in the natural borderland for three weeks, Smith accumulated over seventy beaver furs, not including the men within his party. After Smith departed the area and journeyed to the coastline, news spread of his fur-trapping expeditions. Smith’s experience became cemented in the minds of all foreigners who became aware of California and the natural borderland. Thus, the perceived notion of an everlasting, abundant land of natural resources was fabricated. The “abundance” of beaver within the rivers and streams encouraged foreigners to enter the proximity of the natural borderland.

Within five years nearly two hundred fur trappers traveled through the Sacramento Valley annually.\textsuperscript{29} An “unidentified disease” entered the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys in 1833.\textsuperscript{30} The “resultant epidemic” was most severe along the rivers within the valleys and the disease took a staggering toll on northern California’s indigenous population.\textsuperscript{31} According to Sherburne F. Cook this particular outbreak of a foreign disease killed over 20,000 indigenous inhabitants of California.\textsuperscript{32} One can assume the valley Nisenan felt the impact, considering the disease reached the American River.\textsuperscript{33}

\textit{The Swiss Foreigner}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29} Albert Hurtado, “The Maidu and California Indian Policy,” (M.A. Thesis, California State University Sacramento, 1974), 30. \textsuperscript{30} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 78. \textsuperscript{31} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 30. \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 30. \textsuperscript{33} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 78.}
The Swiss adventurer John A. Sutter deserted his family due to financial circumstances and arrived in America seeking wealth.\textsuperscript{34} Sutter spent a few years in the United States and gained an awareness of California’s “abundance.” Before arriving within California Sutter journeyed to Vancouver, British Columbia and proceeded to the Sandwich Islands.\textsuperscript{35} After the islands he traveled to the Russian territory of Alaska before finally arriving within Yerba Buena, contemporary San Francisco, on July 2, 1839.\textsuperscript{36} Sutter immediately sought the Mexican governor Juan Bautista Alvarado to attain land. Alvarado pleasingly granted Sutter’s wish to settle in the interior of California, since there was trouble between the indigenous population and foreigners near San Jose.\textsuperscript{37}

Sutter successfully arrived at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers in August 1839.\textsuperscript{38} At the confluence of the two rivers was a Nisenan community called Pusuni.\textsuperscript{39} Without asking the Nisenan for permission, Sutter immediately began altering the natural borderland. Sutter chose an elevated location a few miles from the confluence, initiating the development of New Helvetia and the fabricated borderland. Unsurprisingly the relationship between Sutter and the Nisenan was unstable during the initial months within the natural borderland. Sutter noted within his diary: “The Indians

\textsuperscript{34} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 28.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 3-4.
\textsuperscript{38} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 31.
\textsuperscript{39} Bibby and Aguilar, \textit{Deeper Than Gold}, 75.
was first troublesome…”⁴⁰ However, as their relationship strengthened the Nisenan
began working for Sutter in the construction of his: “…agriculture-and-trade empire.”⁴¹

Early in the construction a couple hundred Nisenan laborers left New Helvetia
and congregated on the Cosumnes River, which Sutter interpreted as preparations for an
attack.⁴² He set out with eight men and cannons, attacking a Nisenan village before
daylight. Sutter wrote the outcome within his diary: “The fighting was a little hard, but
after having lost 30 men, they were willing to make a treaty with me, and after this lecon
(sic) they behaved very well, and became my best friends and soldiers, with which I has
been assisted to conquer the whole Sacramento and part of the San Joaquin Valley.”⁴³

Thus, Sutter forced the Nisenan to labor for him through his exercise of violence. Sutter’s
immediate presence within the natural borderland drastically altered the Nisenan way of
life. Whereas Moraga and Smith did not outright murder the Nisenan, Sutter did. Each
new foreigner who entered the natural borderland altered the equilibrium of the natural
borderland more so than the previous foreigner. In a matter of months Sutter altered the
Nisenan way of life on a greater scale than both Moraga and Smith combined. Through
Sutter’s actions, he continued and advanced the foreign worldview within the natural
borderland.

Unsurprisingly, after the incident along the Cosumnes River Sutter found the
Nisenan were “tolerable good laborers.”⁴⁴

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⁴¹ Paula Mitchell Marks, In a Barren Land: American Indian Dispossession and Survival (New
⁴³ Ibid., 32.
⁴⁴ Ibid., 32.
square feet within adobe walls eighteen feet high and two-and-one-half feet thick. According to Edwin Bryant: “The Fort is a parallelogram, about five hundred feet in length and one hundred and fifty in breadth…The main building or residence, stands near the center of the area or court, enclosed by the walls. A row of shops, storerooms, and barracks are enclosed within and line the walls on every side.” Sutter felt threatened by other foreigners and indigenous groups, which was his reasoning in building such a large structure. Sutter’s compound was complete in 1844.

Attached to the adobe fortress was a garden. The garden stretched nearly eight to ten acres and contained fruit trees such as almond, fig, olive, pear, apple, and peach. The soil found near the south fork of the American River was ideal for the growth of deciduous fruit. Jedediah Smith’s personal account attests to the fertility of the land when he visited the future site of New Helvetia in 1828: “The soil of the country is generally good being frequently a rich chocolate colored loam.” Along with the various trees, the garden contained a vineyard and numerous vegetables. According to a correspondent of the Californian, he described the abundance of vegetables representing that of: “…a seedman’s catalogue.” Another visitor declared: “Vegetables of several

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45 Ibid., 32.
46 Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California* (Santa Ana, California: Fine Arts Press, 1936), 244-245.
48 Ibid., 32.
49 (Correspondence of the Californian), “New Helvetia, June 30, 1848,” The Californian, July 15, 1848.
52 (Correspondence of the Californian), “New Helvetia, June 30, 1848,” The Californian, July 15, 1848.
kinds appeared to be abundant, and in perfection.” Sutter even experimented with the production of hemp: “I saw near the fort a small patch of hemp, which had been sown as an experiment, in the spring, and had not been irrigated. I never saw a ranker growth of hemp in Kentucky.” Thus, Sutter advantageously cultivated all types of plants considering New Helvetia was located within one of the richest and most fertile locations within all of California.

The use of agriculture was as foreign to the natural borderland as the foreigners themselves were, considering the Nisenan only cultivated one plant; tobacco. As mentioned in the previous chapter the Nisenan diet was vast. The Nisenan thrived off diverse nutrients which supplemented their dietary needs. There was no need to practice an agrarian way of life. One can only imagine what the Nisenan were thinking when they witnessed the foreigners removing thousands of square feet of indigenous grasses and plants.

Along with his garden, Sutter cultivated numerous wheat fields. The wheat fields were outlined with ditches, along with corrals of horses and cattle. As early as 1840, Sutter had well over 1,500 cattle. After the establishment of the fortress, Sutter employed many Nisenan within his fields. According to John Bidwell:

Imagine three or four hundred wild Indians in a grain field, some armed with pieces of hoop iron roughly fashioned into shapes like sickles, but many having only their bare hands with which to gather by small handfuls the dry and brittle

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54 Ibid., 246.
grain; and as their hands would soon become sore, they resorted to dry willow sticks, which were split to afford a sharper edge with which to sever the wheat.\footnote{Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 34.}

The Nisenan adapted to Sutter’s foreign labor system with the utilization of traditional tools from their own culture. Their traditional ecological knowledge allowed them to identify what specific element of the natural borderland was needed in order to complete the task at hand. Thus, the Nisenan were productive in ranching operations. Besides his exercise of power through violence, Sutter was able to harness a large Nisenan labor supply with his form of payment. He paid the Nisenan with tin currency only redeemable at his store within the fortress, along with handkerchiefs and cheap trade goods.\footnote{Bryant, What I Saw, 245.} The tin coin was stamped with: “…the value in merchandise to which the laborer or holder is titled.”\footnote{Ibid., 245.} While seemingly unimportant, this form of acculturation into the foreign worldview had an effect on the Nisenan. Through the utilization of such methods, Sutter controlled a steady labor force and ultimately his relationship with the Nisenan.

Sutter initiated the trend of utilizing an indigenous labor force within the natural borderland and the practice became customary among other ranchers.\footnote{“The Indians of California,” Sacramento Transcript, June 24, 1850.} One such foreigner was William Daylor who arrived in New Helvetia from London, England in 1840.\footnote{Thompson and West, History of Sacramento County (Oakland: West Coast Printing Company, 1880), 227.} During the summer of his arrival while roaming the countryside in search of wild cattle, Daylor rode atop a valley near the Cosumnes River. Upon arriving on the bluff overlooking the river, he witnessed a picturesque valley stretching for miles. Daylor took interest in the land and reported the discovery to his friend Jared Sheldon who was at...
New Helvetia. Sheldon was a naturalized Mexican citizen who left Vermont in 1832 and had claims against the Mexican government for constructing buildings in Monterey.  

After Daylor informed Sheldon of the Cosumnes Valley, Sheldon arranged for the attainment of a Mexican land grant.

Sheldon contacted his friend W.E.P Hartnell, the Secretary of State and the Government Interpreter for California under the Mexican government. In granting Sheldon the claim, the government no longer owed Sheldon for his carpentry work.

Daylor and Sheldon made an arrangement regarding the “Omochumnes land grant” and became equal partners. Sheldon purchased 300 cattle from a Dr. John Marsh in contemporary Antioch, California and paid for the herd with carpentry work. Prior to the arrival of the cattle, Daylor and the Nisenan constructed a corral. The local Nisenan village was possibly Poyope’. Apparently Daylor arrived after Sutter’s display of power against the Nisenan considering they were willing to work for any foreigner associated with Sutter. The Nisenan also contributed to the construction of a field of one hundred acres of wheat, enclosed by a ditch. While Daylor developed a peaceful relationship with the Nisenan, he simultaneously contributed to the establishment of the fabricated borderland. Hundreds of foreigners followed in Daylor’s footsteps in constructing ranches within the area. The “rancheros” exploited thousands of acres of native

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62 Ibid., 228.
63 Ibid., 228.
65 Thompson and West, *History of Sacramento County*, 228.
66 Bibby and Aguilar, *Deeper Than Gold*,
grasslands for their herds of cattle and sheep. Throughout northern California more than 500 of these ranches existed by 1846.\textsuperscript{67}

When the fabricated borderland began taking shape, men such as Sutter and Daylor familiarized themselves with the surrounding area. While Sutter explored the territory within his land grant, he also obtained information about the land from his Nisenan laborers. They informed Sutter of a popular trading location at a natural river crossing.\textsuperscript{68} Different groups of people utilized the location, considering throughout the Sierra Nevada foothills the American River was “extremely dangerous in crossing.”\textsuperscript{69} A man from Mississippi arrived at New Helvetia and inquired from Sutter about a strategic location in trading furs with the local indigenous population in 1842.\textsuperscript{70} From the knowledge of the Nisenan, Sutter suggested a superlative site in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada for such an activity; the natural river crossing located below contemporary old Folsom. The spot was located less than a day’s ride from New Helvetia and the man from Mississippi heeded Sutter’s advice. However, within two miles of the natural river crossing the man mistakenly camped at the wrong sandbar. Taking it upon himself, he named the sandbar “Mississippi” after his beloved home state.\textsuperscript{71}

Sutter sought the natural borderland out of his desire to gain wealth from the perceived “ecological abundance” in Northern California. He brought the same worldview Jedediah Smith transplanted onto the natural borderland. Although the two foreigners were from two different cultures, they viewed every element of the natural

\textsuperscript{67} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 80.
\textsuperscript{68} Roberts, “A History of Early Folsom,” 5.
\textsuperscript{69} “Four Men Drowned,” \textit{Sacramento Union}, April 21, 1851.
\textsuperscript{70} Roberts, “A History of Early Folsom,” 5.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 5.
borderland as resources waiting to be exploited. Whereas Smith extracted beaver fur, Sutter exploited the land and people within the natural borderland. The land became fertile gardens, fields, and pastures, while the people were violently coerced into foreign cultural practices. Ultimately, Sutter’s desire to construct an agricultural compound altered the natural borderland more than the Nisenan did in centuries.

*The Mormon Battalion*

Within the years following the arrival of the Mississippi man, Sutter became a leading Mexican citizen and New Helvetia was the foremost destination west of the Rocky Mountains. Various foreigners made their way to New Helvetia such as John Bidwell, Captain James Fremont, Christopher “Kit Carson,” and William Alexander Leidesdorff in 1844.72 One commonality among these men is their contribution to the history of California. Through their actions their names are permanently embedded into various locations within northern California.73 While these men gained recognition for their involvement in the history of California, one group of foreigners who contributed greatly to California’s past are rarely recognized. This group of foreigners was the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormons.

Specifically, the Mormon Battalion veterans arrived within the natural borderland seeking to “work the land” and gain material benefit at Sutter’s agricultural compound. The Mormon Battalion originated from an exiled camp of Mormons searching for a new

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73 Bidwell is the name of a street in contemporary Folsom; Fremont is the name of a city in northern California; Carson is the name of a city, river, trail, schools, and streets; Leidesdorff is the name of a street in Folsom and San Francisco and is also the name of a stretch of Highway 50 heading east out of Sacramento.
homeland.\textsuperscript{74} The emigrating Mormons were a part of a mass migration which originated in New York. The community moved to Illinois and established a city called Nauvoo. However, the group suffered religious persecution and dispossession of their land in every location they entered. Thus the Mormons left Navoo on February 4, 1846. They wished to settle in the region west of the Rocky Mountains and many dreamt of settling in California. While no Mormon had ever seen the beautiful landscape west of the Colorado Rockies, they believed their New Zion existed in the Mexican territory of California.\textsuperscript{75}

The United States’ Congress declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846.\textsuperscript{76} With the United States army relatively weak, President Polk called upon 50,000 volunteers. When the U.S. army called upon the Mormons for their services, their leader Brigham Young was willing to offer his men, because emigrating Mormons were suffering from a lack of clothing, were underfed, and they were generally unprepared for the elements. Young was quoted as saying: “Let it be distinctly understood that the organization of the Mormon Battalion will prove our loyalty to the United States- Let the Mormons be the first to set foot in California.”\textsuperscript{77} The Mormons volunteered 500 young men within a week. The “Mormon Battalion” initiated their 2,100-mile long journey from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego, California on August 1, 1846.

They began in the land of the frontier, contemporarily known as Kansas. Their main objective was constructing a wagon trail to provide a supply route for the United

\textsuperscript{74} Annaleone D. Patton, \textit{California Mormons: By Sail and Trail} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961), 36.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{76} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 82.

\textsuperscript{77} Patton, \textit{California Mormons}, 36.
States army during the war. The Mormon Battalion initiated their expedition to San Diego out of the everlasting Great Plains and traversed an arduous land. The men suffered foot sores walking over: “sharp rocks and cacti and at times they made shoes from rawhide, animal skins, or discarded canvas.”

While in Santa Fe, the Mormon Battalion experienced: “high, timberless, waterless mountains,” and suffered the hot days and cold nights of the desert. They worked on a terrain ranging from mountains and canyons to deserts and valleys. After a six-month journey from Fort Leavenworth the Mormon Battalion arrived in San Diego on January 29, 1847. The Mormon Battalion labored in San Diego until July, when they were discharged.

One company of the Mormon Battalion reenlisted, although the majority of the men and few women made plans to join their families. Those members of the Mormon Battalion who reenlisted for another six months did so hoping their fellow Mormons would eventually settle in California. The Mormon Battalion veterans who did not reenlist split into different groups and initiated their journey northbound. The largest group journeyed along the route of contemporary Interstate 5 toward Tejon Pass in the Tehachapi Mountains; a smaller group followed the El Camino Real, along the coast. While traveling north through California, the group of veterans taking the coastal route found themselves in Yerba Buena. While in Yerba Buena the Mormon Battalion veterans met fellow Mormons who had been living there for a full year. These Mormons arrived in

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78 Ibid., 36.
79 Ibid., 37-38.
81 Ibid., 93.
California by sea below the deck of a cargo ship, the *Brooklyn*. Overall, the Mormon families from the *Brooklyn* stayed at Yerba Buena, while the Mormon Battalion veterans journeyed northeast to New Helvetia. The groups of the Mormon Battalion sought New Helvetia because of its strategic location near Donner Summit.

The Mormon Battalion veterans camped five miles east of New Helvetia along the American River in early September of 1847. The Mormon Battalion veterans’ arrival within the natural borderland greatly impacted New Helvetia considering the Mormons arrived when sickness was hindering the Nisenan from laboring for Sutter. Sutter hired at least eighty Mormons to work his fields, labor around the fortress, and advance his prosperous agricultural compound. The veterans of the Mormon Battalion received instruction to stay in California for the winter since living conditions were harsh for their fellow Mormons in Utah. The veterans sought to work the land in order to gain livestock to take with them to Salt Lake City the following year. Within five days the veterans were constructing a canal for Sutter’s gristmill three miles from New Helvetia.

With the supplementation of the labor from the Mormon Battalion veterans, New Helvetia expanded. Sutter sought a peripheral location containing a large amount of trees

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82 Will Bagley, *Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, Scoundrel’s Tale: The Sammuel Brannan Papers*, (Spokane, Washington: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1999), 37. Mormons from the east coast chartered the *Brooklyn*, and sailed from New York on February 4, 1846. Many of the 238 Mormons seeking passage on the *Brooklyn* were unfamiliar with one another and the ship contained sixty females and forty small children. The Mormons sailing on the *Brooklyn* arrived in San Francisco Bay on July 30, 1846; nine days after the veterans of the Mormon Battalion were discharged in southern California. The trip around Cape Horn was the first to include women and children. These pilgrims crossed the equator on both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, went from the icy Antarctic to the tropical Hawaiian Islands, and finally arrived in California. The *Brooklyn* was the second ship to enter the bay under an American flag and the Mormons were recognized as the first nonmilitary group of Americans to arrive in California by sea.


84 Sutter, *The Diary of Johann August Sutter*, 42.

85 Ibid., 103.
for finishing his “flouring mill.”\textsuperscript{86} Sutter’s desired site for the extraction of trees was located within a valley forty miles from New Helvetia.\textsuperscript{87} The tranquil valley in the Sierra Nevada foothills contained tall straight pines and a steady supply of water nearby from the south fork of the American River. However, also located within the valley was a Nisenan village named Kulloma. The name of the village derived from a word within the Nisenan dialect equivalent to “Beautiful.”\textsuperscript{88} When Sutter entered the valley, there were at least 480 Nisenan living there.\textsuperscript{89}

At the center of this Nisenan village was a large roundhouse, with various dwellings scattered around. The dance house was constructed differently than the dwellings. The floor of the dance house was three to five feet deeper than the surrounding land and was thirty to seventy five feet in diameter.\textsuperscript{90} There were two to four oak center posts and they utilized pine trees for rafters, while leaving a smoke hole in the middle of the roof. The men covered the frame with multiple layers of brush, pine needles, and dirt.\textsuperscript{91} Dwellings were also circular, constructed of wooden poles, bark slabs, and grass.\textsuperscript{92} Jedediah Smith described the entrances to their houses as: “…a low passage covered with dirt.”\textsuperscript{93} Pertinent to this work is the fact that these dwellings were assembled in such a manner that if the village was disserted, they would simply decompose back into the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{86} Folsom, California, Folsom History Museum Archives, Native American Section.
\bibitem{87} “We Were Informed....” The \textit{California Star}, March 18, 1848.
\bibitem{89} Bibby and Aguilar, \textit{Deeper Than Gold}, 72.
\bibitem{90} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 14.
\bibitem{91} Ibid, 14.
\bibitem{92} Sullivan, \textit{The Travels of Jedediah Smith}, 58.
\bibitem{93} Ibid., 68.
\end{thebibliography}
earth. This way in constructing dwellings is in complete opposition of the structures the foreigners fabricated within the valley.

Sutter developed a co-partnership in constructing the mill with a man named James Marshall. Marshall journeyed to New Helvetia over the Oregon Trail from New Jersey and was thirty-seven years old in 1848. Marshall was one of the few carpenters in New Helvetia and he spent his days at Daylor’s ranch prior to the fabrication of the mill. After working at the gristmill for a few weeks, Sutter hired Mormon Battalion veterans to help Marshall construct the mill within the Kulloma Valley. According to the Mormon Battalion veteran Azariah Smith, Sutter enlisted a group of Mormon Battalion veterans to help Marshall within the Kulloma Valley on September 27, 1847: “Sutter sent after some hands to go up in the mountains, about thirty miles, to work at his sawmill and I with several others went.” The other men included Henry Bigler, William Johnston, and Israel Evans. The veterans agreed to stay within the natural borderland until spring of 1848, when they would commence their journey to the Salt Lake Valley.

Besides the four Mormon Battalion veterans mentioned above, there were at least nine other Mormons laboring within the valley. There was also an Oregonian by the name of Charles Bennett, a thirty-six-year-old man. While Marshall was the man in charge, Bennett was his right hand man and was hired roughly the same time the veterans were. Peter Wimmer, his wife Elizabeth Jane, and their children arrived at New Helvetia from Oregon on November 15, 1846. The Wimmers met after Jennie’s father gave up

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94 Richards, *Coming of the Civil War*, 10.
96 Ibid., 108.
tobacco farming in Virginia and moved to Georgia seeking gold. Jennie cooked for the men and watched the children, while Peter oversaw Sutter’s Nisenan crew who helped construct the mill.\textsuperscript{97} Thus, the Nisenan drastically outnumbered the foreigners living within the third location of the fabricated borderland.

\textit{The Golden Element}

The Mormons along with the Nisenan crew constructed a ditch for the purpose of transporting water through the mill. Seemingly unimportant when constructed, this ditch may possibly be the greatest historically significant ditch in the modern era. While the flow of water through the mill finalized the fabricated borderland, the water gushing from the American River carried sand and dirt through the ditch, leaving gold behind.\textsuperscript{98} Thus, foreigners became aware of the metal in northern California.

Marshall, Peter, and the veterans of the Mormon Battalion walked along the tailrace one morning analyzing their work and became the initial foreigners to view gold within the natural borderland. Azariah Smith, Israel Evans, and William H. Barger were the first Mormons to lay eyes on the metal.\textsuperscript{99} Henry Bigler, Alexander Stephens, and James Stephens Brown were working on the second story of the mill and quickly arrived on the scene.\textsuperscript{100} Immediately, the gold was taken to Jennie who was in the process of making soap. Already familiar with gold from her days in Georgia, she placed the piece

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Richards, \textit{Coming of the Civil War}, 10.}
\footnote{Gold is formed when magma intrudes solid rock. As the magma cools and solidifies, water and other substances separate from the magma under high pressure. The high pressure of hot water and steam forces a long opening in the rock, through which hydrothermal fluid travels. When the fluid cools, the material is deposited in rocks such as quartz. With gold’s low melting temperature, it is carried by fluids in the long openings of rocks and solidifies in the quartz vein. When the quartz veins erode, the gold is found in streams and rivers.}
\footnote{Bigler, \textit{The Gold Discovery}, 115.}
\footnote{Thompson and West, \textit{History of Sacramento County}, 42.}
\end{footnotes}
of gold in a soap kettle and left it over night.\textsuperscript{101} In the morning the gold was brighter than the day before, thus Jennie immediately informed the men that it was in fact gold.

There are literally hundreds of scholarly and non-scholarly works written on the discovery of gold within California. However, the most overlooked aspect within the discourse on the California gold rush is the notion that gold was “discovered” in 1848. There is no possible way gold was “discovered” in 1848 considering archaeologists suggest the Kulloma Valley was inhabited by human beings for the past 2,500 years.\textsuperscript{102}

Seeing as how the Nisenan homeland was: “…the most lucrative mining district in California,” there is without doubt the Nisenan were aware of its presence.\textsuperscript{103} According to Mrs. Lizzie Enos, gold was plentiful throughout the Nisenan borderland and it simply provided them with a tool for cracking open acorns:

My mother used to tell about this Indian lady that had gold cracking rock, big round one. She crack acorn with that for a long time I guess…until this white man hear about it. White man come there and give that old lady fifty cents for it and take it away. But she don’t care. That old lady had lotta those regular cracking rocks and fifty cents besides. Old time Indian never seem to care about gold like white people.\textsuperscript{104}

With an abundant supply of gold, the Nisenan treated the metal no differently than any other rock. The Nisenan did not have any value or need for gold other than using large pieces as food utensils. The foreigners, therefore, did not discover gold within the Sierra Nevada foothills. They simply became aware of its presence.

Besides the Nisenan awareness of gold, there is reason to believe foreigners were aware of gold prior to the “Marshall Discovery.” While there is no doubt James Marshall

\textsuperscript{101} Sutter, “The Discovery of Gold in California,” 202.
\textsuperscript{102} Bibby and Aguilar, Deeper Than Gold, 72.
\textsuperscript{103} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” iv.
was present on the 24, there are sources suggesting gold was found near contemporary Folsom by veterans of the Mormon Battalion. The strongest claim suggesting foreigners became aware of the metal earlier on occurred with the establishment of Mormon Island. The traditional story of gold at Mormon Island suggests two of the thirteen Mormons working at the mill by the names of Ephriam Green and Ira Willis received permission to extract gold from that location.\(^{105}\) Accompanying Green and Willis were Israel Evans, James Sly, Wilford Hudson, Jesse Mertin, and Sydney Willis.\(^{106}\) In Owen C. Coy’s *California*, he states the “discovery” of gold at Mormon Island occurred in March of 1848.\(^{107}\) While these sources suggest foreign awareness of gold at Mormon Island occurred after the awareness of gold within the Kulloma Valley, there are numerous sources suggesting gold was known to foreigners at Mormon Island earlier than January 24, 1848.

In a reference to Mormon Island, an eyewitness from William Kelly’s *A Stroll through the Diggings of California* suggests: “These diggings take their name from first being discovered and worked by a body of Mormons, who got out great quantities before the public found it out.”\(^{108}\) Along with the unnamed source within Kelly’s work, Walter G. Reed states within his *History of Sacramento County*: “Coming nearer home, we find a claim backed by strong proof, that the Mormons who came to San Francisco on the steamer ‘Brooklyn’ and settled at Mormon Island, found gold before Marshall did but

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106 Ibid., 15-16.
107 Ibid., 17.
108 Ibid., 16.
kept it a secret.” While neither of the two sources provides a name, another source elaborates on the claims. According to a Sacramento County historian, Harry Landes, a group of Mormons made various trips traveling from New Helvetia to the Kulloma Valley. Prior to foreign awareness of gold within the Kulloma Valley, Landes claims the group removed thirty-six dollars worth of gold along the south fork of the American River.

One of the possible Mormons who became aware of gold at Mormon Island is Henderson Cox, a veteran of the Mormon Battalion. An article published in the *Portland Times* in 1854 is of considerable value to the revisionist discourse on the California gold rush. George Evans writes:

> When the Mormon Battalion was disbanded in 1847, a number of Mormons came to San Francisco, and among them was one Henderson Cox and one Beardsley, who boarded in the same house with me. They, having worked in the Georgia Mines told me, in conversation, that they were prospecting for a road for the Mormons to return to salt lake city, in so doing, they prospected the streams along the route. On the following January 1, I returned to San Francisco where I received an invitation to go to Mormon island, so named by Henderson Cox. On the nineteenth of January 1848, I went there, and with the bounty they gave me, and what I worked out myself, I had nineteen thousand dollars on the eighth day of February, 1848. The Mormons, having wished to keep their discovery a secret from people not Mormon, had worked out the gold and said nothing.

As mentioned above, the traditional account of the awareness of gold at Mormon Island occurred in March. If Evans received an invitation in early January, the Mormons therefore, knew about gold at Mormon Island at least three weeks prior to the awareness within the Kulloma Valley. Also, it appears that Evans credited Cox. The only motivation

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109 Ibid., 16.
110 Ibid., 14-16.
111 Ibid., 16.
112 Ibid., 17.
Evans had was boasting about his early awareness of gold by foreigners. It seems highly unlikely Evans would go out of his way to do so six years after the fact. Furthermore, there was no benefit for Cox since he died on the way to the Salt Lake Valley in the summer of 1848.

The Mormon Battalion veterans became aware of gold at Mormon Island in a number of ways. Azariah Smith wrote on November 1, 1847: “…But Friday a wagon came with a little flour, salt, Pumpkins, &c. and last night Mr. Marshall came with some more provision…”

Throughout his diary he records similar entries suggesting there was a continuous supply of provision heading to the Kulloma Valley from New Helvetia nearly every week. Considering there were at least 80 Mormon Battalion veterans working within the fabricated borderland, there is without doubt the men delivering supplies were veterans. Thus, en route they obtained an awareness of the land between New Helvetia and the Kulloma Valley.

On numerous occasions Marshall was not at the mill, leaving the operation in the hands of Bennett. By early January, Azariah Smith noted Marshall had been gone for over two weeks.

Smith entered the following in his journal on January 16, 1848: “Mr. Marshall has now been gone to the fort a month and has not came back yet, (with his mill irons) and Mr. Bennett has got very much out of patience waiting for him, but we expect him all the time.”

One can assume work was relatively slow at that time within the Kulloma Valley, since Marshall’s “right hand man” lost patience with Marshall’s

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113 Bigler, The Gold Discovery, 106.
114 Ibid., 107.
115 Ibid., 108.
absence. The crew was waiting for Marshall’s arrival with a vital piece of the mill; consequently the foreigners had free time to explore the area.

From Azariah Smith’s journal it is clear the veterans searched the surrounding terrain. He wrote: “Last week I worked five days laid by yesterday, it being Christmas. And to pass time I with 5 others went up on a mountain, on the other side of the American fork to see the country around, and roll down rocks.” Thus, it is quite possible they explored the location of Mormon Island and became aware of gold while out on an expedition. The Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island were roughly twenty-four miles apart and the two locations were well within a day’s journey.

Upon the awareness of gold at Mormon Island, the surrounding land contained: “a handsome, rolling country, beautifully shrubbed and wooded.” The location was merely a sandbar along the American River in the winter of 1848. If one takes a map of Sacramento County and proceeds to draw a line from New Helvetia to the Kulloma Valley, the line runs straight through the location of Mormon Island. Furthermore, the American River guided the foreigners while traveling within the fabricated borderland. The early reference of Mormon Island could quite possibly refer to a location specifically known only to Mormons, in between New Helvetia and the Kulloma Valley: an island within the fabricated borderland. Without question, Mormon Island was founded on behalf of the Mormon Battalion veterans’ awareness of gold.

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116 Ibid., 107.
With the arrival of foreigners, the natural borderland began to change rapidly in terms of its history. Once Smith initiated resource exploitation within the natural borderland, every foreigner who entered the area literally and figuratively followed in his footsteps. While the foreigners who initially entered the natural borderland were from America, Switzerland, and England, they all had one commonality: exploiting the land. Despite their cultural differences they all entered the area with the same worldview regarding the elements of the natural borderland. Elements such as the grass, water, and trees were commoditized and consumed. Simultaneously, their cultural diversity and objective in entering the natural borderland foreshadowed the arrival of future foreigners.

Each foreigner built upon the experience of the previous foreigner and had a greater impact: Moraga established foreign awareness of the natural borderland; Smith and his men successfully pioneered the first resource extraction within the natural borderland and spread the misconceived notion of the abundant land; Sutter entered the area seeking the “abundance” and fertility of the natural borderland which gave way to an agricultural compound; Daylor established a ranch near the Cosumnes River; and the Mormon Battalion veterans finalized the fabricated borderland, became aware of gold, and initiated Mormon Island. Whether foreigners trapped beaver or cleared meadows, every foreigner who entered the natural borderland contributed to its alteration.

Their individual actions collectively altered the physical makeup of the natural borderland. The agricultural compound, ranch, and mill altered the traditional use of each location by subjecting the land to the foreign worldview. These locations based on economic productivity jointly formed a fabricated borderland and it is within this
triangular area that foreigners exploited the land. Within this fabricated borderland, specifically at these locations, the Nisenan were forced to participate in the foreign way of life. Thus, the chapter also highlights the change between the Nisenan as caretakers to the foreigners as exploiters.

While the fabricated borderland represents a physical space, it also signifies the change in humanity’s relationship with nature. The relationship changed because the prevailing worldview was uprooted by the foreigners. No longer was human activity geared toward a reciprocal and sustainable relationship with nature. This ethical awareness toward the natural world in which the Nisenan followed the cycles of the seasons began to decrease with the arrival of the foreigners and the subsequent coercion of the Nisenan. While it is true the Nisenan built Sutter’s compound and helped the Mormon Battalion veterans construct the mill, their agency in the deconstruction of the prevailing worldview was minimal, if not obsolete. The foreign disease, acts of violence, and acculturation coerced the Nisenan to go against the natural flow of nature. Ultimately, the prevailing worldview based on an ethical awareness toward nature began to collapse.

The foreigners subjected their worldview on the natural borderland and their outlook on nature became the norm. Human activity within the fabricated borderland was based solely on exploiting the natural elements through extraction and manipulation. The culmination of the transition from a natural to a fabricated borderland was marked by the “discovery” of gold. As will be seen in the following chapter, gold catalyzed an increase in foreigners, bringing immediate change to the world of the Nisenan. With an influx of
foreigners into the fabricated borderland, the Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island transitioned into foreign settlement towns.
Chapter 3

CHANGE WITHIN THE FABRICATED BORDERLAND

The continuity between the arrival of foreigners and their search for natural resources within the natural borderland advanced. Foreigners increasingly entered the area and consistently sought the abundance of natural resources. The foreign awareness of gold within the Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island catalyzed a population explosion within the fabricated borderland. Gold brought more foreigners into the area more than any other resource. When gold seekers entered the fabricated borderland, human activity was already geared towards exploitation of the natural world. Their actions only advanced this particular worldview.

One main focal point within the following chapter is the foreigners’ thirst for gold extraction affected all elements of the fabricated borderland. The focus of exploiting one element took its toll on all animals, plants, trees, and humans indigenous to the area. As demonstrated from the first chapter, all life within the natural borderland was connected. Each individual organism had a specific niche within the natural cycle, thus the exploitation of just one organism catalyzed immense change within the natural borderland. Therefore, the collective actions of foreigners drastically altered the land.

The alteration of the land went hand in hand with the alteration of the Nisenan way of life. Foreigners rapidly advanced the degree of exploitation within the fabricated borderland, thus they accelerated the rate of change within the Nisenan homeland. The Nisenan immediately felt the impact of gold extraction in the alteration of the rivers, streams, and meadows; in the commoditization of oak groves; and in the consumption of
animals. The foreign extraction of gold brought more change to the land than the Nisenan had done within centuries.

The physical alteration of the Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island led to foreign settlement towns. The fabrication of these towns greatly impacted the Nisenan way of life. Ancestral land such as the Kulloma Valley became a foreign environment, thus the Nisenan became foreigners in their own land. Villages along the American River near Mormon Island were uprooted from the settlement town. Another major focal point within the following chapter is the overuse of Nisenan land was matched with the violent acts committed against them. The abundance of foreigners brought violence toward the Nisenan which spread throughout the fabricated borderland. Ultimately, the Nisenan were forced to leave their villages due to an abundance of foreigners, overconsumption of “natural resources,” and violence.

*The Rush for Gold*

Sutter initially made an agreement with the Nisenan living within the Kulloma Valley in constructing his mill. However, the treaty from the fall of 1847 was insufficient in securing exclusive rights to the land. Immediately after the foreigners’ awareness of gold within the valley, Sutter negotiated an alternative treaty with the Nisenan. Unsurprising the beneficiary of the treaty was Sutter, gaining joint possession of the land and a promise from the Nisenan not to kill livestock or conduct controlled burns. The Nisenan received just over two hundred dollars in trade goods a year. Sutter immediately

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1 Thompson and West, *History of Sacramento County* (Oakland: West Coast Printing Company, 1880), 41.
2 Ibid., 41.
submitted the treaty to Governor Mason in hopes of gaining sole exploitation rights within the valley. Governor Mason rejected the lopsided agreement in March of 1848: “The United States do not recognize the right of Indians to sell or lease the lands on which they reside or to which they may have a claim, to private individuals.”\(^3\) With the rejection of the treaty between the Nisenan and Sutter, the latter would soon witness the crumbling of his prosperous agricultural empire, while the former became an outsider within their own land.

Similar to Mormon Island, the area within the Kulloma Valley quickly filled up with foreigners from California. After news spread outward in every direction from the bay area, cities such as Yerba Buena were deserted and appeared as ghost towns overnight. According to the *Californian*: “Launch after launch left the wharves of our city, crowded with passengers and freight for the Sacramento…whole streets, that were but a short week before alive with a busy population, were entirely deserted, and the place wore the appearance of a city that had been suddenly visited by a devastating plague.”\(^4\) The next four months were considered to be what is known as “the golden times” of the California gold rush.

The abundance of gold within the Kulloma Valley and the surrounding territory brought foreigners from all over California and the world. During the first summer a day of prospecting along the American River rewarded a foreigner anywhere from one to nine ounces of “pure virgin gold.”\(^5\) Within the year of 1848 gold was easily accumulated, not

\(^3\) Albert L. Hurtado, “The Maidu and California Indian Policy, 1846-1855” (M.A. Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1974), 62.
\(^4\) The *Californian*, September 23, 1848.
\(^5\) The *Californian*, July 15, 1848.
only in the rivers and streams, but also throughout the entire area. According to the *Californian*, one foreigner: “...spent some time in exploring the country, and had dug 52 holes with his butchers knife in different places, and found gold in every one.”\(^6\) While this appears as an “old miner’s tale,” the *Californian’s* correspondent visiting the area had this to say about the region:

One of our party dipped up a cup full of sand from the bed of the creek, washed it and found five pieces of gold. This was our first attempt at gold digging. About dark we arrived at the saw mill of Sutter...having rode over gold, silver, platina, and iron mines some 20 or 30 miles. The past three days I have spent exploring the mountains in this district and conversing with many men who have been at work here for some weeks past. Should I attempt to relate to you all that I have seen and have been told concerning the extent and productions of the mines, I am fearful your readers would think me exaggerating too much, therefore I will keep within bounds. I could fill your columns with the most astonishing tales concerning the mines here far excelling the Arabian nights, and all true to the letter.\(^7\)

The *Californian’s* correspondent visited the Kulloma Valley in mid June and witnessed foreigners extracting large amounts of gold. In September, an average low for extracting gold was an ounce per day and many people produced hundreds of dollars worth of gold within a few days.\(^8\) With newspapers announcing stories of such magnitude, it is no wonder why thousands of people arrived within the tranquil valley.

Within the months of the “golden times,” the Kulloma Valley rapidly transitioned into a land of foreigners. Throughout the fabricated borderland: “Large companies of men, women, and children could be seen on every road leading to the mines, their wagons loaded with tools for digging, provisions, &c.”\(^9\) The vast amount of people was

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\(^6\) Ibid.  
\(^7\) *The Californian*, July 15, 1848.  
\(^8\) Ibid.  
\(^9\) *The Californian*, September 23, 1848.
matched with the vast amount of provisions. Shopkeepers and merchants were stunned with the amount of supplies entering the fabricated borderland: “Immense quantities of merchandise were conveyed to the mines, until it became an astonishment where so much could be disposed of.”\(^\text{10}\) However, the Nisenan witnessed firsthand where the majority of the supplies ended up.

*The Kulloma Valley*

The wave of foreign immigration immediately changed the fabricated borderland. The village of Kulloma was home to nearly five hundred Nisenan in 1848.\(^\text{11}\) In September 1848, the population of foreigners within the vicinity of the Kulloma Valley swelled to 6,000.\(^\text{12}\) Instantly the foreigners outnumbered the Nisenan twelve to one. The foreigners made no attempt to ask the Nisenan for permission to extract gold from their land, let alone Sutter. Although Sutter himself was technically a squatter, he at least attempted to establish treaties with the Nisenan (after his display of violence). The foreigners indiscriminately pitched canvass tents throughout the valley, near the river and surrounding streams, on hillsides and grassy meadows, drastically outnumbering the original dwellings. Using newspapers as his medium, Sutter made it clear that the arriving foreigners were unwelcome upon “his” land. One of Sutter’s warnings stated: “Notice to Squatters- all persons are hereby cautioned not to settle without my

\(^{10}\) Ibid.


\(^{12}\) *The Californian*, September 23, 1848.
permission, on any land of mine in this territory." Ultimately, the foreigners did not respect Sutter’s wishes and rapidly altered the valley.

The Kulloma Valley lived up to its name, considering it was truly beautiful. Foreigners entering the fabricated borderland arrived within a landscape summarized with the following:

Strangers arriving in our valley at this time, are delighted with the appearance of the country, which, in truth, never looked more charming. The season is unusually forward, and Mother Earth, attired in her spring robes, seems zealously striving to gratify the refined taste of her numerous visiting children. Gold hungry mortals - yet not wholly insensible to the old dames blandishments. The broad plains are blooming with flowers of every hue, the weather, baring a few days of high wind, has been utterly please, the rains are over and the marry month of may has returned; all who can appreciate the beauties of a California spring should be with us now to view the valley of Sacramento.

The land offered not only the south fork of the American River, but numerous gifts from nature that foreigners sought to exploit. Dr. Henry Bates who previously worked at New Helvetia utilized the picturesque setting to his benefit in establishing a hospital within the valley. While promoting his hospital through the Placer Times, he capitalized on the natural beauty of the valley and sold its imagery. The initial line within his advertisement read: “It is situated on the northern edge of the valley, with beautiful views of the river and trees.” After this statement he proceeded to mention his personal care of every individual patient and was the leading surgeon within his hospital. This particular foreigner was the first to commoditize the image of the land in order to gain an economic benefit within the natural borderland.

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14 Ibid.
15 The Placer Times, May 19, 1849.
16 Ibid.
Amidst the natural beauty throughout the fabricated borderland, oak trees grew in abundance. In addition to the clearing of meadows for ranches, groves of oak trees were removed as well. The foreigners’ intent in removing oak trees was their use as timber for the construction of the town. With an abundant supply of trees the area immediately transformed: “…buildings are going up about as fast as the mill can saw out the lumber…and there is every indication that Coloma will be among the foremost of our inland towns, situated as it is in the heart of a large and prolific mining region.”17 Buildings such as the “Wholesale and Retail Mountain Merchant,” were constructed within seventy-five yards of the mill. 18 The foreigners also utilized trees in the construction of shelter such as the Bailey and Winster’s hotel.19 While the construction of various buildings consumed numerous oak trees, others went to the construction of a bridge.

J.T. Little constructed the first bridge over the American River just above the mill.20 While a bridge benefited the majority of the foreigners with further access to the land, Little’s intention was based solely on profiting from the river. The cost in building his bridge totaled nearly $20,000.21 Although the figure is high by contemporary standards, a day’s worth of receipts from toll crossings were over two hundred and fifty dollars.22 He immediately capitalized on the manufactured river crossing. Paralleling the rest of the foreigners who entered the Kulloma Valley and the fabricated borderland,

17 The Placer Times, June 21, 1849.
18 The Placer Times, June 1, 1849.
19 The Placer Times, April 6, 1850.
20 The Placer Times, June 21, 1849.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
Little exploited the land to his benefit. Seeking personal gain from the land, foreigners such as Bates and Little underdeveloped the Nisenan way of life. The consumption of oak groves significantly had an effect on the Nisenan, considering the oak trees once praised for their spiritual and physical significance, were simply commoditized by the foreigners.

As apparent from the Nisenan creation story, the oak tree supplied the Nisenan with the most significant aspect of their diet, the acorn. Among the various ceremonies throughout the year, the acorn ceremony was possibly the most vital to the Nisenan way of life. The significance of the acorn within the Nisenan creation story leads one to assume the Nisenan practiced an acorn ceremony similar to the following:

In April a special ceremony was enacted to increase the acorn crop. The leader of the society prepared for the ceremony by singing for several nights. When all the proper preparations had been made, a dark night was chosen and the society members went out among the oaks singing and clapping. The members left feather wands under each tree. A short time later the clown stepped out among the oaks and gathered the wands. The clown said, I am here. No other spirits are here. All the society members are here. Then the trees spoke to the Maidu through the leader. The clown interpreted the message to the society members. There would be plenty of acorns in the fall.

While the previous description reflects a Maidu ceremony at large, this general account gives insight into the vitality of the acorns within the Nisenan culture. Without a doubt, the Nisenan practiced this ceremony in one form or another. The Nisenan practiced these sacred ceremonies that flourished for nearly a thousand years. Nisenan believed the dances ensured adequate rains to nourish the earth and continue the abundance of food. Some Maidu, possibly Nisenan, believed the dances prevented epidemics, earthquakes,

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23 The Californian, December 22, 1849.
and other natural disasters.\textsuperscript{25}

In the fall over seven different types of acorns were harvested and stored for winter, though the California Black Oak produced the favorite type of acorn.\textsuperscript{26} Those acorns not stored were baked into a loaf of bread.\textsuperscript{27} Women transported the acorns within their baskets to granite rocks near the river to naturally process the food.\textsuperscript{28} Women proceeded to: “…wash the ground acorn meal with water to convert the naturally poisonous acorn into an edible food.”\textsuperscript{29} The nutritious flour was turned into a mush by boiling it in “earth ovens.” Besides boiling acorn mush, the Nisenan also cooked other foods within earth ovens such as mushrooms, greens, berries, and small animals.

Earth ovens were different from traditional fires, considering they were beneath the surface of the ground. Once a pit was dug in the ground, a fire was ignited. When the fire was hot enough, the excess wood was pushed aside and stones were placed in. Food was wrapped in poison oak or other leaves and placed on the stones. After this was performed, more rocks were then placed on the wrapped food. When the food was fully cooked, the leaves were removed and the food was consumed. This simple yet efficient way in cooking is just one of the cultural practices hindered by the increase in foreigners.

As mentioned earlier, oak trees were viewed as living entities and brought the Nisenan within the realm of eternity. Their appearance and longevity ultimately

\textsuperscript{25} Kroeber, \textit{The California Indian}, 11.
\textsuperscript{26} John Whitfield Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany” (M.A. Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1964), 50.
\textsuperscript{27} Maurice S. Sullivan, \textit{The Travels of Jedediah Smith: A Documentary Outline of the Great American Pathfinder} (Santa Ana, California: The Fine Arts Press, 1934), 58.
\textsuperscript{29} Hurtado, “The Maidu,” 7.
contributed to the Nisenan reverence of these organisms. Valley oaks, the largest of California oak trees, grew to nine feet in diameter and lived for over 600 years. With the unique characteristics of each oak tree, every individual tree played a role in the cultural landscape of the Nisenan. Each oak tree provided knowledge to the Nisenan in the form of historical and cultural understanding. One can imagine the Nisenan interacted with the largest of these trees and sustained an intimate relationship with them for centuries.

While seemingly unimportant to the foreigners, these gigantic oaks were viewed simply as “trees,” without any inherent wisdom. Without a doubt, the largest oak trees were first extracted from the land due to their appearance. With the commoditization of oak trees by foreigners, not only did the utilization of acorns within the Nisenan diet decrease, but their spiritual practices were also damaged.

With an increase in the foreign population, the traditional hunting techniques of the Nisenan were also obstructed. Not only was the foreigners’ method in taking the lives of animals dissimilar from the Nisenan, but their purpose in doing so was drastically different. The following insight into a bear hunt was described by a Nisenan storyteller, William Joseph, also known as Billy Joe who lived from 1860 to 1934:

The one who shot first owned the skin. They cut up the meat. Then they divided it. When they had done this they shouted four times before getting home. The people in the camp said, ‘They must have killed a bear.’ When they arrived, they told about it. They hung it (the skin) up in a tree. They left it there four nights. They took it down at a little celebration. They gave that bear skin to the chief of this camp. Another man tanned it…Then the chief gave another big time (celebration).  

From this account it is clear the bear was intricately woven into the Nisenan way of life,

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30 Bibby and Aguilar, *Deeper Than Gold*, 76.
considering the hunters prayed and sang to the body, asking the bear’s spirit not to think unkindly of them. Ultimately, the bear was a part of something greater than itself and was acknowledged as being more than a simple commodity.

With the arrival of foreigners, grizzly bears were commoditized, which is expressed in the *Placer Times*: “A grizzly bear was shot…He weighed over one thousand pounds, and the meat has been retailed during the week at $41 per pound. The skin sold for 35.” While it is true the Nisenan also consumed the meat of the grizzly bear, they did so in order to sustain life. There was no economic gain from the killing, whereas the foreigners placed a price on certain aspects of the animal. The high price for grizzly bear meat placed a target on the 10,000 plus grizzly bears that ranged from Humboldt County to San Diego. Thus, grizzly bear meat became orderable within most California restaurants by 1851. Within the foreign worldview, there was no need in saying a prayer or holding a ceremony for the taking of the bear’s life. The grizzly bear, along with all other animals, were simply viewed as commodities waiting to be consumed. This is only one account of the commoditization of life within the fabricated borderland with the arrival of foreigners. This foreign practice became the norm within the fabricated borderland and was implemented on an everyday basis. Various animals once hunted by Nisenan such as the tule elk and antelope began to scatter due to the large amount of foreigners. Thus, the Nisenan had to compete with thousands of foreigners.

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31 The *Placer Times*, February 9, 1850.
33 Ibid., 92.
indiscriminately killing animals for profit. With the rapid decline of the traditional gathering and hunting techniques, the Nisenan were forced to alter their way of life once again.

Besides the alteration of the Nisenan way of life through foreign consumption of animals, gold extraction directly altered traditional cultural practices. Through interaction with Sutter, Marshall, the Mormon Battalion veterans, and the other foreigners who lived within the fabricated borderland, the Nisenan were introduced to various economic activities of the foreigners. Through their participation in the fabrication of New Helvetia, Daylor’s ranch, and Sutter’s mill the Nisenan were acculturated to the foreign worldview. Hence, when the Mormon Battalion veterans initiated the extraction of gold with knives, the Nisenan participated in the foreign economic activity. With their traditional ecological knowledge of the natural borderland, the Nisenan transferred a cultural tool to a foreign activity once again. The Nisenan began utilizing their traditional winnowing baskets.

Traditionally, it was the women’s role in constructing intricately woven baskets.\textsuperscript{35} Baskets were constructed from willow bushes and redbud.\textsuperscript{36} Originally women collected seeds, grasses, mushrooms, and acorns with the baskets. They also carried salmon from the granite mortar holes along the riverbanks to their villages with these baskets. The baskets varied in color, size, shape, and use. One form was utilized: “…to separate seeds from their husks by rubbing them in the basket, then tossing the seeds into the air,

\textsuperscript{35} These baskets of the Nisenan and the Maidu are world renown. Their intricately woven designs and colors are among the greatest in the world.

\textsuperscript{36} Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 10.
allowing the breeze to carry off the husks and leaving the heavier seeds to fall back into
the deep tray.” Since these baskets are highly durable, they were taken out of their
cultural role and applied to the gold extracting process. Governor Mason attests to this
while visiting Mormon Island on July 5, 1848: “The day was intensely hot; yet about two
hundred men were at work in the full glare of the sun, washing for gold, some with pans,
some with closely woven Indian baskets…” The tedious and labor-intensive way of
extracting gold with knives initiated by the Mormons transitioned into utilizing woven
baskets of the Nisenan. During the “golden times,” the Nisenan basket was a standard
tool in gold extraction.

Early on in the California gold rush the Nisenan labored alongside the foreigners
and the atmosphere was relatively peaceful. With the arrival of hundreds of foreigners
weekly, Nisenan began working as laborers. Sutter began contracting out his Nisenan
laborers to foreigners. Sutter was left with no other choice considering his Nisenan
laborers decreased in 1847 due to disease and the remaining Nisenan working for Sutter
spent their time searching for gold. With their contribution to the extraction of gold the
Nisenan were able to maintain a niche within the fabricated borderland for a brief amount
of time. However, the contracting of Nisenan labor to foreigners lasted only momentarily.

The Nisenan foothold within the fabricated borderland rapidly diminished due to
the advancement of foreign control over the land. While the Nisenan succeeded in
extracting gold, foreign merchants advantageously undermined their labor. According to

37 Bibby and Aguilar, Deeper Than Gold, 79.
39 “Indian Miners,” The Californian, September 23, 1848.
the *Placer Times*: “…Indians give an ounce of gold for a thimble full of bread or a glass
of grog.…”\(^{41}\) Despite the Nisenan’s experience with trade goods at New Helvetia, the
foreign economic system was unfamiliar to the Nisenan. Additionally, the exploitive
nature of the foreign worldview disallowed the Nisenan any form of equality within the
fabricated borderland. Ultimately, the exploitation placed directly on the Nisenan
increasingly became worse.

*Violence in the Valley*

The Nisenan relationship with their ancestral land began to shift due to the
overwhelming amount of foreigners. While sources such as the *Californian* report the
Nisenan laboring individually as late as September 1848, they were forced away from
gold extraction.\(^ {42}\) The arrival of various foreigners with a negative predisposition toward
American Indians forced the Nisenan to focus on their survival. One Heinrich Lienhard, a
laborer for Sutter and a fellow Swiss pioneer, witnessed the foreigners’ reaction to the
Nisenan:

Some travelers who had come in on the California, the first steamer on the New
York-San Francisco run, arrive, and several of these ex-passengers, now en route
to the mines, stopped at our camp. They were heavily armed and had all the
earmarks of being the scum of large cities in the East. Glancing at the Indians
loitering nearby, they said they would like to try their guns on them. I pointed out
to the newcomers, who would like to shoot them, the fact that no matter how our
natives looked, they were a placid, good-natured race, and that we would not
allow them to be harmed. Finally they departed.\(^ {43}\)

This instance reflects the difference between foreigners who arrived prior to the
awareness of gold and those who entered the area seeking gold. Lienhard, Marshall, and

\(^{41}\) *The Placer Times*, May 12, 1849.

\(^{42}\) *The Californian*, September 23, 1848.

\(^{43}\) Bibby and Aguilar, *Deeper Than Gold*, 53.
the Mormon Battalion veterans were generally peaceful toward the Nisenan, whereas the majority of foreigners who entered the fabricated borderland seeking gold wanted to kill Nisenan simply for their presence. More importantly this signified a major turning point in the history of the Folsom locality. The abundance of foreign miners, particularly Anglo-Americans, initiated a stream of violence catalyzing the expulsion of Nisenan from their ancestral homeland.

Among the foreigners arriving within the fabricated borderland, was a wave of Oregonians in late 1848 and early 1849. Between 1,000 and 1,800 Oregonians were estimated to have arrived within the area in 1848 alone. During the fall one group of Oregonians were traveling south through the Sacramento Valley and approached a group of Maidu or Valley Nisenan east of the Sacramento River. According to the Placer Times, the Oregonians killed several Nisenan on their way to the Kulloma Valley. After a few months a Nisenan murdered a foreigner within the vicinity of Bear Creek, located near contemporary Placerville. Following the transgressions the foreigners were enraged, which is expressed in the Placer Times: “It is now that the cry of extermination is raised—a thirst for indiscriminate slaughter rages, and men, women and children, old and young, vicious and well-disposed, of the Indian race…” In the following weeks “white” foreigners destroyed a Nisenan camp killing twenty-five men, women, and children.

Among the Oregonians arriving within the fabricated borderland, were veterans of the Cayuse Indian war in Oregon. In April 1849 seven veterans were camping along the

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44 The Californian, September 23, 1848.
45 The Placer Times, April 28, 1849.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
American River three miles below Spanish Bar.\textsuperscript{48} Two members set out prospecting for five days, while leaving five fellow veterans behind. On returning a few days later the two members found the camp empty with blood, arrows, footprints, and a bag of gold dust suggesting foul play on behalf of the Nisenan. The two Oregonians immediately set out for the town of Coloma and sought help in locating the bodies of their partners. The veterans organized a group of young men and led them to the encampment. While the group failed at locating the bodies, they discovered a trail leading to a Nisenan village. The group transitioned into a war party while following the American River. Upon examination of the Nisenan village, the veterans recognized a blanket of their fellow veterans and accused a few Nisenan of the murders. According to the \textit{Placer Times} some of the Nisenan showed signs of “fear and guilt” and attempted an escape; two of the Nisenan were shot down and killed.\textsuperscript{49} This tragic event signified a turning point for the Nisenan since they were no longer safe within their ancestral villages.

The situation for the Nisenan became worse. Two foreigners were murdered within a few days. One afternoon while working alongside the river, a man by the name of “Leonard” received an arrow in his back and “Sargent” received one in his side. While the two wounded foreigners tried escaping across the river, “Carter” began throwing stones at the Nisenan. Leonard was able to join up with Carter but Sargent immediately lost his life. While running away, Leonard soon fell due to his wound, while Carter left him behind. The pursuing Nisenan eventually found Leonard and proceeded to: “…put

\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{Placer Times}, May 5, 1849.  
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
him to death by beating in his skull."\(^{50}\) Carter escaped to the nearest camp and soon
another war party was initiated containing nearly forty foreigners. As the men organized
with great enthusiasm, one man stepped up and attempted to persuade the war party not
to go. James Marshall was immediately shut up and labeled a traitor.\(^{51}\)

The war party set out and returned to the town of Coloma with forty Nisenan and
immediately journeyed to search for more. The war party stumbled upon a village on
Weber Creek and kidnapped nearly sixty Nisenan.\(^{52}\) This particular village was possibly
Moluilui which was located south of Smith Flat.\(^{53}\) A meeting was held at Coloma in
determining what to do with the captives on April 18. Carter was among the foreigners at
Coloma and recognized seven of the twenty Nisenan who attacked him and his two
companions. The remaining Nisenan were released and placed on “trial.”

Prior to the trial, Jennie Wimmer who was still residing at Coloma attempted to
hide a few Nisenan in the log cabin near the mill. Before the rush for gold, the Nisenan
gained a sense of familiarity with Jennie since her husband oversaw the Nisenan crew
who worked with Marshall and the Mormon Battalion veterans. They also frequently
sought her advice about gold: “…the Indians also picked up many small thin pieces, and
carried them always to Mrs. Wimmer.”\(^{54}\) Despite Jennie’s attempt to save the Nisenan,
they were found and taken to the bank of the American River by a heavily-intoxicated
mob.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., 41.
\(^{53}\) Bibby and Aguilar, \textit{Deeper Than Gold}, 77.
\(^{54}\) Thompson and West, \textit{History of Sacramento County}, 41.
Once again Marshall tried to intervene, though, this time one of the hostile foreigners attempted to shoot Marshall. After the commotion between Marshall and a foreigner the seven Nisenan immediately began to disperse in an attempt to save their lives. The situation rapidly transitioned from bad to worse and Sam Osgood witnessed the event and wrote:

...one of the Oregon men drew one of the Colt’s revolvers and put a ball through his brain, he never moved afterward, and when I passed again a few minutes after he was entangled in the bushes… The other swam to the opposite shore, but was prevented from landing by two mounted men, who threw stones at him, until one the numerous stones from this side struck his head, and he sunk to rise no more. When the chase was over and the party returned to where the first shots were fired, the two Indians were still alive; one was lying on his face, with his bed blanket spread over him. One of the captors perceiving that he still breathed, drew a knife and plunged it into his side, while another beat his brains out with a large stone…

No one can say for sure what might have occurred if the Nisenan did not attempt to escape. One can imagine the intoxicated foreigners would have executed the seven Nisenan in the name of justice, because in response to the initial murders of the five Oregonians one foreigner suggested “blood for blood;” another said “human nature.”

There is no doubt the violent murders sparked fright amongst the Nisenan within the vicinity and there is reason to believe this incident remained a graphic image within the minds of the foreigners.

James Delevan published an account of the events at Coloma within his *Notes on California and the Placers: How to Get There and What to do Afterwards by One Who has Been There*. Within his work Delevan corroborates Osgood’s firsthand account and

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55 Seacrest, *When the Great Spirit Died*, 42.
56 *The Placer Times*, May 5, 1849.
57 Seacrest, *When the Great Spirit Died*, 42.
58 *The Placer Times*, April 28, 1849.
claims the war party raided a Nisenan village, coercing one hundred Nisenan to the banks of the American River in Coloma. As it is apparent from the title of his work, he suggested this is how California’s indigenous needed to be dealt with.Foreigners entering the fabricated borderland appreciated the work and it became: “…an established practice in California for whites to retaliate indiscriminately for crimes allegedly committed by native people.”59 Thus, the Nisenan living within the fabricated borderland became foreigners on their own ancestral land.

Besides Marshall, the war party immediately affected another foreigner who had been living on the land for nearly a decade, William Daylor. A man by the name of Doyle was found slain near the “Columa” mines and had “…his heart taken out and skull fractured in several places.”60 According to the Placer Times, the foreigners within the area suggested Anglos killed the man, considering: “Doyle had with him, when last seen, about $2,000 of which his person was found plundered, and it is supposed the manner of death, and gross mutilation of the remains, had been resorted to convey the impression that Indians had committed the deed.”61 There is little doubt white foreigners were to blame since the Nisenan who disposed of the five Oregonians at Spanish Bar left a bag of gold dust at the camp. Once again the war party was on the move, even though various foreigners within the area insisted it was not the Nisenan.

60 The Placer Times, May 5, 1849
61 Ibid.
As mentioned earlier, Daylor was living along the Cosumnes River one mile east of Sloughhouse. In less than a decade Daylor established a prosperous ranch, hotel, trade store, and developed a seemingly friendly relationship with the Nisenan. Daylor and a crew of Nisenan established a camp near Coloma on April 20, 1849. Daylor left the group and nearly a week later received word that a group of foreigners rode into their camp and immediately killed a Nisenan while working on his knees. The war party shot another in the arm and he immediately ran for his life, only making it a few yards before the foreigners put another bullet through his thigh and immediately had his: “…brains beat out with rocks and stones.”

The remaining members of the Nisenan crew took flight and were followed by the war party. While the war party did not find the remaining crew members, ten miles from Daylor’s ranch the foreigners stumbled upon a group of Nisenan traveling to their village, possibly Chitok Pakan. The war party proceeded to separate the men from the women and children. Upon sensing danger the men took flight; three men escaped while the remaining fourteen were killed on the spot. The next day while Daylor was digging a grave for a deceased family member, he received word from a Nisenan that the war party was near his house and was searching for Nisenan. Upon arriving on the scene Daylor witnessed the shooting of two Nisenan. This group of foreigners showed no remorse to

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63 Ibid., 306.
64 The *Placer Times*, May 12, 1849.
65 Ibid.
66 Bibby and Aguilar, *Deeper Than Gold*, 77.
the Nisenan, let alone Daylor. Afterward, the war party asked Daylor to kill one of his cattle for beef, but Daylor refused.67

The next day Daylor was informed the war party kidnapped a group of Nisenan women and children and their whereabouts were unknown. Daylor, along with four of his Nisenan laborers, buried sixteen Nisenan. Before arriving at Daylor’s house, the war party boasted about killing twenty-seven Indians and another: “…twenty two men, and thirty four women and children are yet missing from the rancheria.”68 The unsolicited violent actions of foreigners directly changed the Nisenan way of life.

While the war party included other foreigners besides Oregonians, there is something to note about the Oregonians and their violent acts toward the Nisenan within the fabricated borderland. The Cayuse Indians of Oregon suffered a horrendous epidemic from a measles outbreak and in turn the Cayuse murdered the Whitman family for the deaths.69 The murder of the Whitman family unleashed a brutal war between Oregonians and the Cayuse. The war raged on well into 1848, because: “Indian troubles were still existing in Oregon, up to the 20th of May.”70 As mentioned above, a wave of Oregonians soon entered California and on the southward journey, numerous California Indians and Nisenan were murdered.71 Once within the vicinity of Coloma, the Oregonians had two goals in mind; extracting gold and killing the indigenous population. Newspapers such as

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67 The Placer Times, May 12, 1849.
68 Ibid.
69 The Alta California, May 30, 1850.
70 The Californian, July 15, 1848.
71 The Alta California, May 30, 1850.
the *Alta California* suggest: “…and Indian outages alarmed the quiet diggers of the American River, but a short time after the Oregonians arrived in California.”\(^{72}\)

Prior to the arrival of the Oregonians, relations between foreigners and the Nisenan were relatively peaceful within the fabricated borderland. According to the *Californian*:

We can state from personal experience (and we take pleasure in doing so), that, for the number of people gathered together at one place, we saw a more orderly and generally temperate population than may be found at either of the principal “diggings.” The rights of individuals have never, to our knowledge, been infringed in one single instance, and this, too, in a region where the only law was public opinion, and among men engaged in a pursuit which all others, is most exciting— that of gold hunting.\(^{73}\)

The theory suggests Oregonians initiated the violent acts toward the Nisenan. The first person to write about such a theory was Theodore Taylor Johnson, a California settler from New Jersey. He wrote one of the first books relating his personal experiences about life in the California gold mines. He claimed the slaughter of the Whitman family in Oregon was the cause of the Indian troubles in California.\(^ {74}\) Whether it was a wave of inhumane Oregonians who initiated the violent acts toward the Nisenan or a mixture of various foreigners, the acts committed against the Nisenan resemble a form of extermination.

*The Mormon Exodus*

Within two months after the announcement of gold at Mormon Island the land was drastically altered by the increase of foreigners. The fabricated borderland contained

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) The *Californian*, July 15, 1848.

nearly 2,000 foreigners by mid July 1848.75 This was apparent to Azariah Smith while in Mormon Island: “Before we came away, men, women, and children, from the Bay and other places in California, were flocking to the gold mine, by the dozens, and by wagon loads.”76 The foreign population of the fabricated borderland increased daily. While gold fever catalyzed the influx of foreigners within the fabricated borderland, the veterans of the Mormon Battalion focused on finishing their contract with Sutter, which enabled them to journey to the Salt Lake Valley. They were afraid Sutter would void their agreement and lose their payment of livestock and supplies, which was their sole purpose for arriving within the natural borderland in the first place.

Mormons such as Azariah Smith traveled from the mill to New Helvetia seeking payment from Sutter: “Today I went down to the fort which is the third or fourth time since I came from the mine and have not got any animals of the Captain yet.”77 Roughly a week later Smith went back to New Helvetia searching for compensation. However, Sutter told him once again to return within a few days. Finally, Smith received partial payment for his work: “I happened to catch him in a humor, and he turned one of his Mill Mules over to me.”78 Smith obtained further supplies while at the compound and finalized his preparations in leaving the fabricated borderland. While Mormons such as Smith had to remind Sutter for their compensation, Sutter was generally pleased with the Mormons: “So long as these people have been employed by me, they have behaved very

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75 (Correspondence of the Californian) “New Helvetia, June 30, 1848,” The Californian, July 15, 1848.
77 Ibid., 116.
78 Ibid., 117-118.
well and were industrious and faithful laborers; and when settling their accounts, they was not one of them who was not contented and satisfied.”

Sutter became accustomed to their strong work ethic. Throughout the first weeks of June other Mormon Battalion veterans such as Wilford Hudson and Henry Bigler made arrangements for their journey to the Salt Lake Valley.

A few weeks earlier, Mormon Battalion veterans were searching the territory southeast of the fabricated borderland for an alternative route out of California. The veterans desired to pioneer a trail rather than journey to the Salt Lake Valley through Donner Summit, considering there were over two-dozen switchbacks across the Truckee River. The group of Mormons searching for an alternative route included Ira Willis, James C Sly, Israel Evens, Jacob Truman, Ezra Allen, James R. Alfred, Henderson Cox, and Robert Pixton. The veterans decided to cross the Sierra Nevada at a natural divide between the American and Cosumnes Rivers. The route was expected to be faster than the trail passing through Donner Summit.

Prior to leaving the fabricated borderland, the Mormons congregated at Pleasant Valley, near contemporary Placerville on June 26. At Pleasant Valley Mormon Battalion veterans and fellow coreligionists from the Brooklyn organized seventeen wagons. On July 2, forty-five men and one woman set out to pioneer a new trail destined

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81 Ibid., 113.
82 Ibid., 122.
83 (Correspondence of the Californian) “New Helvetia, June 30, 1848.” The *Californian*, July 15, 1848.
84 Bigler, *The Gold Discovery* 125.
to meet loved ones in the Salt Lake Valley.\textsuperscript{85} While waiting for the community to arrive, three Mormon Battalion veterans journeyed ahead and initiated the road for their brethren: “Brother Daniel Browett, Ezra H Allen, and Henderson Cox have gone on over the mountains, to find the best pass.”\textsuperscript{86} Once the Mormons initiated their journey, the community expected to catch up with the men, although the men were not seen for weeks.

The Mormons began realizing what happened to the three men when they witnessed “Indians” wearing clothes similar to their brethren.\textsuperscript{87} The following day the Mormons stumbled upon the location of the murder, which they called Tragedy Springs, a tributary of the Cosumnes River. The Mormons found: “…a heavy shower of arrows, blood, and Allen’s purse of gold.”\textsuperscript{88} The Mormons searched the location ensuring all three men lied there, proceeded to build a wall around the bodies, and placed rocks on top of the soil.\textsuperscript{89} On a tree nearby the gravesite, Wilford Hudson carved the words: “Sacred to the Memory of Daniel Browett, Ezrah H. Allen, and Henderson Cox. Who was supposed to have been murdered and buried, by the Indians on the night of the 27 of June 1848.”\textsuperscript{90}

Seeing as how the Mormon Battalion veterans were attacked outside Nisenan territory, the “Indians” who attacked the veterans were probably the Washoe. Tragedy Springs is located in what was traditionally known as Washoe territory. This event set the tone for

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 130.
the Mormon exodus out of California, considering the Mormons faced a grueling three month journey before they were welcomed into the Salt Lake Valley by their loved ones.

All seventeen wagons arrived within the Salt Lake Valley on September 28, 1848.\(^91\) The Mormons crossed two of the largest summits within the Sierra Nevada, West Pass towering 9,600 feet and Kit Carson Pass a thousand feet less.\(^92\) They successfully established an alternative route into California that was known as the Mormon-Carson Pass Emigrant Trail, traversing treacherous canyons, cavernous valleys, and numerous lakes.\(^93\) Throughout the days of the California gold rush, tens of thousands of foreigners arrived within the fabricated borderland by the trail. In 1849 alone, over 6,000 gold seeking foreigners entered California through the new route the Mormons constructed.\(^94\) Thus, the Mormon Battalion veterans exit out of the fabricated borderland paralleled their entrance. Furthermore, the Mormons’ entrance into and out of the natural borderland foreshadowed the journey thousands of foreigners would take.

*Mormon Island*

After the Mormon Battalion veterans made their exodus out of Mormon Island, the mining community blossomed into a town. Governor Mason visited Mormon Island and observed the rapid expansion of the foreign community on July 5, 1848: “…The hillsides were thickly strewn with canvas tents. A store was erected and several boarding shanties were in operation.”\(^95\) In less than four months, the Mormon Battalion veteran’s

\(^91\) Ibid., 146.
\(^92\) Ibid., 132.
\(^93\) Ibid., 132-133.
\(^94\) The contemporary road beginning fifty miles south of the original trail is now known as Highway 88.
refuge within the fabricated borderland transitioned into a prosperous town. The fabrication of Mormon Island greatly contributed to the solidification of the Folsom location.

With an increase in foreigners, the technology of gold extraction rapidly advanced from the Mormons’ initial use with knifes. The incoming “49ers” utilized alternative mining techniques, which relinquished the need for Nisenan baskets. The foreigners extracted gold with metal pans prior to the utilization of the “rocker” or “cradle.” The rocker was the leading technological tool in extracting gold in 1849: “Of the variety of new gold washing machines introduced by new comers, not one, it is said is adapted to the purpose for which intended. The primitive cradle, easily worked and simply constructed, is only used with success….” As with the Nisenan baskets the rocker was constructed from the land, but the production of rockers needed an abundant supply of timber. According to the California the rocker consisted of:

…an ordinary trough made of plank, round on the bottom, about ten feet long, and two feet wide at the top, with a riddle, or sieve, at one end, to catch the larger gravel, and three or four small bars across the bottom, about half an inch high to keep the gold from going out with the dirt and water at the lower end. This machine is set upon rockers, which give a half-rotary motion to the water and dirt inside.

While one “rocker” may not require a great amount of timber, several “rockers” would amass a steady timber supply. Thus, the leading technological tool also affected the groves of oak trees within the vicinity. Ultimately, the rocker was the leading tool enabling foreigners to extract large amounts of gold from the American River.

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96 (Correspondence of the Californian) “New Helvetia, June 30, 1848.” The Californian, July 15, 1848.
Mormon Island quickly became one of the largest and most productive areas within the fabricated borderland, possibly containing the richest deposits of gold within northern California. In Monterey, four Mormons claimed in June 1848: “to have recently gathered one hundred pounds of Gold in less than thirty days while at Mormon Island.” According to the *Alta California*, “Near Mormon Island last week, three men with two machines took out $4,848 in three days. These mines are undoubtedly the most productive that are now being worked.” The *Sacramento Transcript* suggests one man harvested: “…nineteen thousand dollars in a period of three days and three pounds of dust in just one afternoon.” And the South Fork Damming Company no.1, consisting of 30 men, extracted forty pounds of gold within one day’s work at Mormon Island. With such an abundance of gold within Mormon Island, hundreds of foreigners entered the location within the first year. There were fifteen hundred miners at Mormon Island in October of 1850.

The highly populated Mormon Island forced foreigners to organize companies in order to extract gold: “The men had joined together in a Company to cut a canal and divide the profits equally.” As early as the summer of 1849, the Mormon Island Mining Association altered the course of the river in order to reach the riverbed. The foreigners were so eager to extract gold they did not care about destroying the American

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100 Ibid., 17.
101 The *Sacramento Transcript*, August 30, 1850.
102 “Gold On the South Fork,” The *Sacramento Union*, August 8, 1851.
106 “Notice,” The *Placer Times*, June 16, 1849.
River. With a large amount of foreigners exploiting the river at Mormon Island, they spread out in every direction searching for gold. Numerous creeks draining into the American River such as “Alder” and “Willow” catalyzed the foreigners to establish camps throughout contemporary Folsom.

Once Mormon Island expanded, numerous mining communities within the Folsom area popped up. Mormon Island was only three miles away from contemporary old Folsom. According to Roberts: “Mormon Island was the second gold bearing site, and was quickly followed by the finds at Negro Hill, Negro Bar, Slate Bar, Mississippi Bar, Beam’s Bar, Alabama Bar, Big Gulch, Texas Hill…” The list includes at least four other mining camps. These mining camps brought thousands of foreigners to contemporary Folsom, such as Prairie City. This camp was possible due to the Natomas Water and Mining Company. The company was organized in 1851 by A.P. Caitlin to supply water to the various mining camps in the Folsom area. The main canal was dug in 1851, which originated from the American River two miles above Salmon Falls. Without the alteration of the land and the ensuing construction of the canal, Prairie City would not have existed. The establishment of these mining camps disrupted the natural world of the Nisenan once again. The Nisenan were forced to disperse due to the violence associated with foreigners and their mass consumption of animals and plants.

The Nisenan villages near Mormon Island immediately felt the impact of foreign gold extraction. While the Nisenan sustained themselves on various sources of energy,

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108 The gold extracting site known as “Mississippi Bar” initiated from the man who mistakenly camped at the wrong sandbar in 1842.
salmon was one of the essential aspects of their diet. As mentioned earlier, the Nisenan were mindful of the balance within the natural borderland and did not overfish the rivers. With thousands of foreigners living within and around Mormon Island, salmon were consumed at a high level. The competition within gold extraction forced some foreigners to find specific niches within the gold extracting communities, thus some foreigners focused on fishing. The economic incentive behind fishing placed a price on an element once considered “free” within the fabricated borderland. With an abundance of foreigners, a continuous supply of food was needed. This drove numerous foreigners to participate in capitalist fishing ventures and compete with one another. As the foreigners brought alternative gold extracting techniques, they also brought alternative fishing techniques. The fishing technology of the foreigners, ranging from metal hooks to small fishing boats, advanced the degree of salmon consumption. Thus, the Nisenan’s dietary reliance on salmon was jeopardized.

The Nisenan fished at Salmon Falls, located roughly five miles east of Mormon Island and was the salmon’s traditional spawning grounds. Through their traditional ecological knowledge, the Nisenan caught salmon at the falls with “togglehead spears” and harpoons. These techniques were also utilized by the Nisenan on the Cosumnes River at Yomet: “…in the eddying pools below the falls, the Indians are very fond of fishing….“ However, with over twenty mining companies exploiting the American River near Mormon Island by October 1851, the salmon were inhibited from reaching

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110 Duncan, “Maidu Ethnobotany,” 16.
111 Sutter, “The Discovery of Gold in California,” 220.
their traditional spawning grounds.\textsuperscript{112} The yearly salmon runs were obstructed by the alteration of the American River. With the disruption of the natural movement of salmon, the ceremonial rites at the heart of Nisenan culture were disrupted as well.

The extraction of gold also altered the American River itself. The extracting of gold through panning and cradling not only contributed to the loss of salmon but also muddied the water. According to W.H Brewer the Sacramento River was drastically altered with foreign awareness of gold: “Previous to 1848 the river was noted for the purity of its waters, flowing from the mountain as clear as crystal, but since the discovery of gold, the ‘washings’ render it as muddy and turbid as is the Ohio at spring flood.”\textsuperscript{113} While the runoff from gold extraction muddied the water, it also silted the American, Cosumnes, and Sacramento Rivers. The gold extracting debris accumulated on the riverbed, forcing the rivers to become shallower and the land surrounding the river more susceptible to flooding. Ultimately, the pollution caused by gold extraction devastated other aquatic life and streamside vegetation.

The foreigners’ awareness of gold opened up the rich territory of the fabricated borderland to foreign penetration never before known to the Nisenan. Foreigners arrived seeking economic gain through gold extraction. This particular form of exploitation brought thousands of people into the fabricated borderland and had the greatest impact on the Nisenan. The following summarizes the outcome of foreign gold extraction within the fabricated borderland:

\textsuperscript{112} “South Fork Damming Company,” The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, October 30, 1851.
\textsuperscript{113} Anderson, \textit{Tending the Wild}, 85-86.
…the presence of growing numbers of Anglos, as well as gold-struck adventurers from all over the globe, wrecked Indian subsistence patterns. The salmon were disappearing from streams silted, dammed, and diverted by mining activity. Game became hard to find, and Anglos were pushing natives off productive foraging lands, not even allowing them to harvest acorns or grass seeds, elements of a traditional diet. As they had done on previous frontiers, the whites outlawed native burning of the prairies, forcing them ‘to forgo a resource management strategy that enhanced the productivity of the environment’…

The Nisenan way of life was underdeveloped through every action noted above. Within only a few years the foreigners brought more destruction to the land than the Nisenan did in hundreds, if not thousands of years.

The foreigners’ presence catalyzed the establishment of settlement towns within the Kulloma Valley and Mormon Island, which ultimately brought more change to the land. The establishment of Coloma initiated violence toward the Nisenan, while the establishment of Mormon Island brought thousands of foreigners into the Folsom area. At both locations the extraction of gold, commoditization of natural elements, and the violent acts not only prevented the Nisenan from continuing their reciprocal relationship with the nature, but also forced them to leave their ancestral land. Once the Nisenan began to leave the fabricated borderland, the strategic location above the American River opened up to the foreigners and their worldview.

114 Ibid., 140.
Chapter 4

FROM NEGRO BAR TO GRANITE CITY

Located three miles downriver from Mormon Island, foreigners developed the mining community of Negro Bar. The foreign community was located on the southern bank of the American River a few hundred feet below the present site of old Folsom. Just as Coloma and Mormon Island were initiated with the foreigners’ search for a natural resource, Negro Bar was as well. When foreigners began settling on the bluff above Negro Bar, the strategic location once utilized by the Nisenan gave way to a foreign community. This ultimately led to the development of Granite City which solidified the location of Folsom along the American River.

New Foreigners

After the Mormon departure from the fabricated borderland various Americans and Europeans arrived. The foreigners who entered the land were different from the Mormons, considering they were not a homogenous group. By 1850 the inhabitants of Mormon Island were different from the founders of the town. The Americans who arrived were men such as E.N. Townshend from Maine, J.F. Duvol from Massachusetts, L.G. Culver, John Hurley, and John McComber from New York, along with men from other states such as North Carolina. Men arriving from Europe were James Robinson from Nova Scotia, Jacob and Oswold Broder from Switzerland, John Bennett, John Nuttal, and

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1 Currently, the California State Park known as Negro Bar is located on the north bank of Lake Natomas. The mining community of Negro Bar was originally located on south bank of the American River, below the contemporary water line.

2 Thompson and West, History of Sacramento County (Oakland: West Coast Printing Company, 1880), 268.
Thomas Stephenson from England, and Pat Murray and Peter Burns from Ireland.³ The Americans and Europeans were individuals with various social backgrounds, significantly different from the Mormon Battalion veterans who established Mormon Island.⁴ While each foreigner was different, they found a commonality based on skin tone.

In the face of “others,” the American and European foreigners fabricated a common ground. According to leading scholars such as Susan Lee Johnson, early on in the gold extracting communities of California various ethnicities such as those from America and Europe defined themselves as “white” in opposition to the many ethnicities that were “nonwhite.”⁵ The various “white” ethnicities homogenized into one group based on skin tone and fabricated a commonalty, “whiteness.” The Sacramento Transcript recorded:

In noticing varied species of humanity which are to be found in our state, says that the different costumes of the many nations, together with their peculiar cut and figure of person, constitute a masquerade in the streets quite as strange as ball-room could present… The enlightened nations of the earth have sent their proportion to make up our people. English, French, Spaniards, by birth or descent, Germans, Hungarians, Italians- all have been recast, as it were, and come out of the mould Americans.⁶

According to the Sacramento Transcript the particular group labeled as white simultaneously came to be known as American. The physical identity and national identity became one of the same. No matter the country of origin, members of the

³ Ibid., 290.
⁴ One of the most recent works on a cultural interpretation of the California gold rush is American Alchemy by Brian Roberts.
⁶ The Sacramento Transcript, April 3, 1851.
“enlightened nations” were categorized under such terminology. Furthermore, the choice of language within the quote above suggests a bias toward a particular group within the fabricated borderland: every non-white foreigner. Thus, the newspaper suggests all non-white foreigners were secondary within the area. This mentality altered the prevailing worldview once again.

The prevailing worldview within the fabricated borderland was based on the foreigners’ belief that human beings have the right to control, commoditize, and consume nature irrespective of ecological awareness. The worldview also contained the notion that the abundance within the natural borderland was infinite. Lastly, the foreigners interpreted the Nisenan and all California natives as uncivilized people wandering aimlessly through the woods, disconnected from the flourishing natural borderland. These foreigners entered the natural borderland with preconceived notions about indigenous peoples from eastern North America and projected them on the Nisenan. With a profusion of foreigners entering the fabricated borderland with worldviews paralleling the Oregonians within the Kulloma Valley, the hatred and violence toward the Nisenan transitioned to other foreigners. The prevailing worldview was combined with the Sacramento Transcript’s documentation of an “elite” group of foreigners. Thus, American foreigners attained cultural hegemony within the fabricated borderland. This synthesis explains the origin of Negro Bar.

Early on in the fabricated borderland there were rare cases of violence directed at other foreigners. In September 1848, the Californian described one of the few incidents involving different foreigners. An African-American was accused of “harassing” a white
woman and was taken before a jury. The man was sentenced to thirty-nine lashes on his bareback. While the *Californian* does not specifically state the incident took place at Mormon Island, it appears as though it did. The newspaper wrote: “Three days provisions were given to the Negro with the warning that if he was seen again within three miles of the diggings, a rifle ball would be the penalty.”

As stated above, Mormon Island and Negro Bar were exactly three miles apart. Additionally, the area surrounding Mormon Island contained numerous gold extracting camps. The exiled African American, therefore, had limited locations to extract gold.

Supplementing this occurrence is the fact that the majority of instances recorded within newspapers regarding Mormon Island and African-Americans documented the mistreatment of African-Americans by the white foreigners. Newspapers within the fabricated borderland documented the day-to-day life of the Mormon Islanders and contained many instances of negative treatment toward this particular group. One headline simply stated: “African-American hung for robbery.”

Another article discussed the accidental discharge of a gun in the “possession of a Negro.” While these are only a couple of examples, the newspapers contained at least a dozen more. From examining local newspapers such as the *Placer Times* and the *Sacramento Union* from the early 1850s, it appears there was more animosity toward African-Americans at Mormon Island than any other group. The negative treatment of African-Americans within newspapers

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7. The *Californian*, September 9, 1848.
8. The *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 29, 1853.
suggests the African-American exiled from Mormon Island was one of the individuals who initiated the gold extracting camp of Negro Bar.

Negro Bar received its name from the presence of a few African-American foreigners who initiated the extraction of gold at this specific location. According to the *Placer Times*, “colored gentleman” became aware of gold in 1849, thus giving the bar its name.\(^{10}\) One source suggests an African-American prospector named Samuel Smith initially became aware of gold near the contemporary Rainbow Bridge.\(^{11}\) Other African-Americans soon joined him and Negro Bar developed into a community based upon gold extraction. Other sources suggest the African-American foreigners were southern slaves who gained their freedom.\(^{12}\) While there is no precise source regarding African-American emigration into Folsom besides Leidesdorff, there are documented excursions of southern slave holders entering California, which offers one interpretation on African-American arrival within the fabricated borderland.

The majority of southern slave owners journeying west in search of gold came from the western slave states such as Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas. In the early nineteenth century the northeastern textile industry of the United States replaced that of England’s and there was a sudden demand for cotton production.\(^{13}\) In searching for new lands to cultivate cotton, southerners looked west for agricultural expansion. The majority of southern slaveholders heading west originated from the states listed above.

While a few southern individuals brought a few African-Americans such as Wood Tucker

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\(^{10}\) The *Placer Times*, May 27, 1850.  
\(^{13}\) Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 68.
from Arkansas, the majority of the southern foreigners journeyed in large parties along the southern route that the Mormon Battalion veterans developed.¹⁴

Thomas Jefferson Green is considered one of the first southern foreigners journeying to California seeking wealth from the extraction of gold. Green left Texas in the spring of 1849, bringing fifteen slaves along with him, and reached the Yuba River by July. On the eastern bank of the river at a section called Rose’s Bar, Jefferson established a claim under his name and a claim titled to each one of his slaves, totaling about one third of a mile of the river. Jefferson’s greed infuriated the foreigners and they immediately told the Texan his actions were unwarranted. Green and his fellow Texans refused to back down and were poised to fight.

A general meeting was held and the foreigners voted no African-Americans were able to own claims or even work in the mines on July 29. After the meeting at Rose’s Bar another group of foreigners informed the Texans of the status quo. Even without arms in hand, the foreigners made the rules clear and immediately that night all fifteen African-Americans fled. Sources do not indicate where they went, but the community of Negro Bar was developing by this time. As early as June of 1848 Jonas Spect traveled from Mormon Island to Rose’s Bar within one day.¹⁵ Thus by the time the African-Americans fled, a route to Negro Bar was known. Furthermore, the distance between Rose’s Bar and Negro Bar was far less than their initial journey into California. It is highly likely, therefore, that the African-Americans headed to Negro Bar.

¹⁴ Ibid, 68.
¹⁵ Thompson and West, History of Sacramento County, 43.
Another excursion from Texas to California was led by Colonel Thomas Thorn. Thorn commanded troops during the war with Mexico and journeyed to California searching for gold in 1849. He organized 200 wagons and headed west on the Gila Trail, bringing along thirty slaves with his company.\(^\text{16}\) While in southern California several of Colonel Thorn’s slaves deserted him and upon reaching Mariposa, foreigners encouraged numerous slaves to escape, considering they did not wish to compete with slave labor. Colonel Thorn’s twenty slaves deserted him by 1850.

While African-Americans were brought to California against their will, they soon realized the opportunity within their new environment: the chance at gaining their freedom. In an excerpt from a Mexican newspaper, the *California Star* reported:

> In Mexico there are no slaves, nor is there a man in the country liable to treatment worse than the beasts should receive, as in the case with the unfortunate Negro of Louisiana and other states. The mere act of stepping upon our soil brings freedom to the stranger from other lands. The aborigines are not here persecuted and crushed as they are in the United States of the north. There is no moneyed aristocracy established here as in Philadelphia and other parts of the United States, where the possessor of half a million dollars is a gentleman, no matter how he acquired them. In a word, Mexico possesses many more elements of freedom than the United States.\(^\text{17}\)

Slaves might gain more freedom living in a territory where the status of slavery was in question, because in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, California was to remain a free state and honor Mexico’s abolition of slavery. As mentioned above, the foreigners did not want to compete with Southern slave owners. Sam Brannan, one of the original Mormons who established Mormon Island, also agreed with the foreigners. After the discovery of


\(^{17}\) *The California Star*, May 29, 1847.
gold, he issued a call for an all “white California,” claiming ninety-nine percent of the people agreed on “no slaves or free blacks.”

The California Star agreed with Brannan ten days later in March of 1848.

Although when delegates throughout California met at the state’s first constitutional convention in late 1849, the discourse regarding slavery in California was solved. The majority of the delegates visited the gold extracting areas and held conversations with foreigners, such as those at Rose’s Bar. The United States’ Congress admitted California, but not without a bargain between the North and the South, creating the Compromise of 1850. William Gwinn, a delegate and future U.S. senator from California summed up the issue: “…In California, labor is respectable. In our mines are to be found men of the highest intelligence and respectability performing daily labor, and they do not wish to see the slaves of some wealthy planter brought there and put in competition with their labor, side by side….“ Without the persistent voices of the foreign gold extractors, California could very well have become a slave state.

African-Americans also contained a hopeful awareness upon arriving in California since they might find new possibilities when surrounded by a diverse population. In 1849 the population included thousands of antislavery northerners, South Americans, Mexicans, Polynesians, and Asians. From the Hawaiian Islands alone, hundreds sought California’s gold: “The little city of Honolulu has probably never before witnessed such an excitement as the gold fever has created. Probably not less than 200

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18 The Californian, March 12, 1848.
19 Johnson, Roaring Camp, 70.
20 Richards, The California Gold Rush, 73.
21 Ibid, 69.
will leave for California in the course of two months, if passages can be procured.”

There were also other Pacific Islanders within California. When Sutter relinquished the duties of all his laborers, he released over fifty foreigners from the Sandwich Islands. Furthermore, thousands of Chinese entered the fabricated borderland. In 1852 alone, 20,000 came to California according to customs records in San Francisco. Throughout the 1850s, various ships brought hundreds of passengers, such as the British ship Margaretta, which carried 380 Chinese in May 1851. Similar to the Margaretta was the Robert Small, which arrived in May 1852 with 353 Chinese passengers.

There is reason to believe Negro Bar became the destination for various ethnicities forced from other gold extracting locations. This has to do with the fact that the majority of foreigners within Negro Bar were either African-Americans or members of other ethnic groups that were “nonwhite.” Foreigners from the Caribbean, Latin America, and the South Sea Islands all extracted gold at Negro Bar. The actions of the white foreigners within and around the fabricated borderland pushed the various nonwhite foreigners to this location. The Placer Times recorded: “The Peruvians and Chileans have been pretty thoroughly routed in every section of the Middle and North Forks, and the disposition to expel them seems to be extending throughout the whole mining community.” The newspaper was referring to the American River. While there

22 The Californian, September 9, 1848.
23 Thompson and West, History of Sacramento County, 45.
26 The Sacramento Union, May 11, 1852.
28 The Placer Times, July 21, 1849.
were a few white foreigners extracting gold from Negro Bar, the majority were nonwhite foreigners. Ultimately, the newly defined worldview within the fabricated borderland constructed the location of Negro Bar.

*Change to the Land*

The extracting of gold from the American River severely altered the land once home to the Nisenan. As with Mormon Island, the foreigners laboring individually at Negro Bar played a role in altering the land. However, large companies inflicted a far greater influence on the land. Negro Bar was no different than Mormon Island and the foreigners working the riverbank organized at least three companies: The Virginia Mining Company, the Long Island Company, and the Tennessee Company. The labor of the Virginia Mining Company led to the partial destruction of Negro Bar in 1850, with the draining of the riverbed.\(^\text{29}\) Furthermore, with the construction of a “race over a mile in length,” the foreigners successfully altered the traditional role of the area.\(^\text{30}\) The alteration of the river at Negro Bar had the same consequences at Mormon Island and Coloma.

Besides the natural resources of water and gold, Negro Bar contained a large quantity of granite. Along with the extraction of gold, foreigners exploited the abundance of granite within the area. On both sides of the American River at Negro Bar the surrounding bluffs were composed of this material. The granite was described as: “…clear, milky grey, fine, close-grain, and easily cut.”\(^\text{31}\) Granite was so prevalent


\(^{30}\) The *Sacramento Union*, July 29, 1851.

sources suggest there was a sufficient amount to build numerous towns.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, Negro Bar became known as Granite City as early as 1850. Ultimately, the natural resource surrounding Negro Bar influenced the transition into the town becoming known as Granite City.

James S. Meredith from Virginia was one of the few white foreigners at Negro Bar in 1849 and was the same Meredith who established a hotel early on in the town. Meredith immediately capitalized on the granite within the surrounding bluffs at Negro Bar and as early as 1850 he was extracting the resource. From 1853 onward, Meredith advertised his company within the \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}: \textquote{The undersigned are prepared to contract for furnishing GRANITE COLUMNS, SILLS, and CAPS, for window and door, Blocks for building, &c. &c., from quarries on the American River, deliverable in Sacramento or san Francisco. This granite is inferior to none in the world.}\textsuperscript{33} The extraction of granite from Negro Bar was ideal since the resource was shipped down the American to the Sacramento River and then abroad.

Along with the extraction of gold and granite, alteration of the land came from \textquote{development.} The first store within Negro Bar was also built Meredith and was a combination hotel, grocery store, and general merchandise. The population of Negro Bar boomed to over seven hundred foreigners by 1851.\textsuperscript{34} The following spring heavy snow in the mountains and warm rains flooded every branch of the American River, thus nearly the entire community at Negro Bar washed away.\textsuperscript{35} The American River had risen nearly

\textsuperscript{32} \textquote{Town of Folsom,} \textit{The Sacramento Daily Union}, January 22, 1856.
\textsuperscript{33} \textquote{GRANITE! GRANITE!!} \textit{The Sacramento Daily Union}, February 19, 1853.
\textsuperscript{34} \textquote{Between Present Folsom and the American River,} \textit{The Folsom Telegraph}, April 23, 1926.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
thirty-one feet in March of 1852.\textsuperscript{36} The \textit{Folsom Telegraph} stated: “After the flood receded and the sun dried out the land, some of the miners wanted to abandon their camp, leave their claims and look for new locations. Some did leave, but those who stayed built a new town- this time on the river bluffs away from the river.”\textsuperscript{37} According to the \textit{Gaslight}: “Once the flood and dwindling supply of gold caused the multi-ethnic group to disperse, the birth of Folsom was well underway…the area hardly remained its pristine, natural self.”\textsuperscript{38} The land atop the bluff overlooking the American River became the future location of Folsom.

While the majority of nonwhite foreigners departed the area, one group relocated with the Anglo-Americans. At Mormon Island along the American River, sixty white miners expelled 200 Chinese in the spring of 1852.\textsuperscript{39} The Chinese did not fight back, however, they moved to the bluff above the American River. The Chinese miners developed their own community while Negro Bar transitioned to higher ground. The Chinese community eventually grew, gaining its own shops, churches, mode of dress, and social customs.\textsuperscript{40} They were forced to fabricate a commonality in opposition of the dominant Anglo-American culture. However, they still shared the same worldview based in the exploitation of the natural world. This was one of the few subcultures to exist throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, since the foreigners were in alignment with the prevailing worldview.

\textsuperscript{36} “On Reference to the Recent Flood,” The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, March 12, 1852.
\textsuperscript{37} “Between Present Folsom and the American River,” The \textit{Folsom Telegraph}, April 23, 1926.
\textsuperscript{39} “Chinese Played Important Role in Folsom’s History,” The \textit{Folsom Telegraph}, December 1, 1966.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
The foreign community that developed at the location replaced the Nisenan village and inherited vast prairies stretching to the south with rolling foothills to the east and flat land to the west. South of the American River stretching across prairies was reasonably flat land that contained an abundant water supply: “Fine springs of clear and cold water run near at hand.”\textsuperscript{41} This terrain is what allowed the various mining camps to sporadically popup after the establishment of Mormon Island. Above all else, the natural slope of the foothills meeting the valley at the Folsom locality provided the greatest opportunity for California’s first railroad.

\textit{The Sacramento Valley Railroad}

Once again foreigners were drawn to the economic potential of the land. A discussion was initiated regarding the establishment of a railroad connecting the Sacramento Valley to the gold mines as early as 1851. The land was ideal for a railroad according to the \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}:

\begin{quote}
The feasibility of constructing the proposed road is apparent to every one who had visited the valley. There will scarcely be a grade of any moment, and no excavations, filling in or bridging will be necessary. No more eligible country can be found in the earth through which to run a railroad and the timber required for its construction can be obtained in abundance…\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

The utilization of the word “abundance” from the quote above suggests the \textit{Sacramento Daily Union} ultimately contributed to the prevailing worldview of the foreigners. The newspaper paralleled the worldview of Smith, Daylor, Sutter, the Mormon Battalion veterans, and the gold extractors in perceiving an everlasting abundance within the

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\textsuperscript{41} “Town of Folsom,” The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, January 22, 1856.  
\textsuperscript{42} The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, May 20, 1851.
fabricated borderland. Through this worldview the foreigners commoditized the natural elements of the fabricated borderland.

The two main factors suggested by the *Sacramento Union* requiring a railroad were travel and freight. With such an abundance of freight transported between New Helvetia and the gold mines, the railroad would bring more efficiency in transporting goods.43 The railroad would also solve the inconvenience of traveling to and from the gold extracting locations. During the winter in Northern California, rain and floodwaters turned the dirt roads into mud. Even San Francisco was known as the: “horrible mud-hole.”44 The hundreds of wagons traveling between New Helvetia and Mormon Island were at times prevented from delivering goods and communicating with the gold mines. Throughout most of the winters prior to the establishment of the railroad, five months would pass in which all communication was cut off.45

Initially Mormon Island was the suggested eastern terminus.46 By 1851 there were “…hundreds of huts and twenty-five fair sized buildings including a Post Office, Express office, several hotels and many saloons.”47 J.W. Shaw ran the Mormon Island post office and also constructed a wooden bridge over the American River.48 Mormon Island also contained the first public school in the area, with Mrs. Clark as the founder and teacher, whose husband Sterling B.F. Clark owned the Union Hotel in 1853.49 Thus, Mormon Island was one of the most prosperous towns within the fabricated borderland. With the

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43 “Railroad To Mormon Island,” The *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 20, 1851.
44 The *Placer Times*, February 9, 1850.
45 The *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 20, 1854.
46 “Railroad To Mormon Island,” The *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 20, 1851.
48 The *Sacramento Union*, January 15, 1853.
valley floor rising only a few hundred feet leading to Mormon Island, the effort to complete the railroad would be minimal. However, Mormon Island was bypassed for Granite City.

With the success of the community at Negro Bar moving to the bluff above the river, the strategic location with an increasing population was initiated. When Negro Bar transitioned into Granite City, more people began looking at the bluff above the American River as the eastern terminus, rather than Mormon Island. Furthermore, Mormon Island was three miles east of Granite City and was beyond the natural crossing location that eventually transitioned into a bridge for the railroad.50 The prevailing thought was that Negro Bar would develop economically with the arrival of the railroad:

It is anticipated that a considerable of a business town will grow at Negro Bar, so soon as the road is able to deliver freight at that point, as all goods for El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, &c. &c. must be delivered to wagons at that point. Parties have already laid out a town, upon a level piece of table land, which is about a half mile wide by a mile in length. The location is favorable, and the elevation such as to give a fine western and south-western view…The town has been named granite city, but the city should be dropped as surplusage (sic) and as inappropriate. We have now so many little towns, with names ending with city, that the thing is becoming ridiculous. This town should be called simply granite. It would be appropriate, definite, and convenient.

Thus, it is rather apparent the community of Negro Bar would grow rapidly with the arrival of the railroad.

The “call to action” from the Sacramento Union came to fruition. A group of businessmen attempted to organize the “Sacramento, Auburn, and Nevada Railroad” in August of 1852, but the plan failed to materialize.51 A second group of foreigners took

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50 The Sacramento Daily Union, March 13, 1856.
interest in the railroad. Colonel Charles Lincoln Wilson and the Commodore Cornelius Garrison established the organization of the Sacramento Valley Railroad a few months later. After traveling to the east coast in search of knowledge and financial support, Wilson returned to California with a young: “Energetic, intelligent, and scientific…” engineer by the name of Theodore Judah. After Judah arrived he surveyed a route to Negro Bar, developed a report, and delivered it to the directors of the railroad in 1854. The report made its way to the newspapers, which announced the future railroad: “It is very certain. As remarked in the letter to the express, that the Sacramento valley railroad…will be running to Negro bar in six months…” After the report all necessary measures were conceived, thus the grading for the railroad began on February 12, 1855.

Two days earlier Captain Joseph L. Folsom replaced the railroad’s president Wilson for unknown circumstances. Captain Folsom first arrived in California as an assistant officer of the quartermaster department and collector of the port of San Francisco for the United States Army in March of 1847. Initially he disregarded the foreign awareness of gold, until he arrived within the fabricated borderland in late summer during the golden times of the California gold rush. With the world rushing in to the fabricated borderland, he immediately took interest in the Leidesdorff land grant. Folsom was no different from the other foreigners who entered the fabricated borderland since he desired to make an economic gain.

52 The Sacramento Daily Union, August 19, 1854.
53 Ibid.
54 The Sacramento Daily Union, February 9, 1855.
William Alexander Leidesdorff was born to a Danish sugar planter, William Leidesdorff and Anna Marie Sparks, a native of the Virgin Islands.\textsuperscript{55} In his youth, Leidesdorff left the Virgin Islands and landed in New Orleans engaging in maritime trade. Once he accumulated a respectable amount of wealth, Leidesdorff journeyed to California on his 106-ton schooner, the \textit{Julie Ann}.\textsuperscript{56} By 1844 he was a naturalized Mexican citizen and this enabled the businessman to purchase land near New Helvetia.\textsuperscript{57} The 35,000 acre land grant was adjacent to Sutter’s and extended all the way to contemporary old Folsom. Leidesdorff acquired the land grant from Governor Manuel Micheltorera on October 8, 1844.\textsuperscript{58} While Leidesdorff did not reside within the fabricated borderland, he became one of the most influential and well-respected citizens within Yerba Buena.\textsuperscript{59} He purchased a “pleasure boat” from the officers of the Russian Fur Company in October 1847 and turned the \textit{Sitka} into a “launch,” naming the ship, \textit{Rainbow}.\textsuperscript{60} Among other ventures, Leidesdorff built Yerba Buena’s first hotel in 1846, was an active participant in the tallow and hide trade, became the Vice Consul to Mexico, a member of the town’s first council and school board, and indulged in sports such as bringing the first horse race in 1847 to a meadow near mission Dolores.\textsuperscript{61} Just as the California gold rush was erupting, Leidesdorff died of a brain fever at the age of 38 on

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, May 19, 1864.
\textsuperscript{58} Thompson and West, \textit{History of Sacramento County}, 222.
\textsuperscript{59} Thurman, \textit{Pioneers}, 4.
\textsuperscript{60} The \textit{California Star}, October 23, 1847.
\textsuperscript{61} Thurman, \textit{Pioneers}, 3.
May 18, 1848. Leidesdorff’s wealth would have increased tenfold, considering his land grant encompassed all the gold extracting camps within Folsom.

Leidesdorff did not have any children and his remaining family lived in the Caribbean. Thus Captain Folsom went to the island of Saint Croix and persuaded Leidesdorff’s mother in selling the “Rancho de los Americanos” in November of 1849. A few years later, Mrs. Sparks refused Captain Folsom’s payments and sued him on September 4, 1852. During his court proceedings Captain Folsom constructed a home about ten miles from New Helvetia. The case between Captain Folsom and Mrs. Sparks lasted several years. The court did not rule in favor of Captain Folsom until June 1855. During the three years, Captain Folsom became aware of the land’s potential when Negro Bar transitioned into Granite City.

The *Alta California* reported the grading and bridges leading to Negro Bar were near completion in July 1855. After a few months working as the president of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, Captain Folsom died in July and left the land grant to his attorneys Halleck, Peachy, and Billings. While a community was developing at Granite City, the town was not established until the arrival of the Sacramento Valley Railroad: “before the new survey, made by Theodore Judah, was completed and a new town was laid out, Colonel Folsom died at Mission San Jose on July 19, 1855, leaving his heirs the task of establishing the town he had conceived.”

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62 The *Placer Times*, April 28, 1849.
64 The *Alta California*, July 30, 1855.
65 The *Folsom Telegraph*, April 6, 1885.
laying ties and the work was so successful the first rail was laid the following day.\textsuperscript{66} Once the railroad was near completion, foreigners began selling town lots on January 17, 1856 to: “Land speculators and squatters who purchased the land on which they had been living.”\textsuperscript{67} Within a matter of months Granite City had over 300 buildings and 1,500 foreigners. The Sacramento Valley Railroad was complete to Granite City on February 22, 1856. Soon afterward the people changed the name from Granite City to Folsom, in commemoration of the captain.

Through the actions of African-Americans establishing Negro Bar and the flood of 1852, the movement of foreigners to the bluff above the American River was initiated. With each passing day Negro Bar slowly became known as Granite City, since the African-Americans and other foreigners who initiated the town departed. The location was ideal considering it was above the yearly flood zone, provided fertile soil for agricultural production, had access to an abundant supply of water, and the natural sloping terrain was perfect for the establishment of a railroad. The movement of the Sacramento Valley Railroad along its rails from Sacramento to Folsom in 1856 symbolically reflected the solidification of the American culture within the fabricated borderland. After the establishment of the railroad, the Folsom locality was finalized.

\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{Sacramento Daily Union}, January 1, 1856.
CONCLUSION

While this is a history of Folsom, it is also a broad history of a given locality. Events that unfolded within the Folsom area played a significant role in the history of California and the United States. As mentioned earlier on, Barrows suggested the history of Folsom during the second half of the nineteenth century is also a window into the history of America: “Thus, local history is more meaningful in its relationship to the greater whole than in any lonely isolation it may possess. This meaning is significantly illustrated by the reflection of the nation’s history within the history of Folsom.”\(^1\) While the history of America is much more complex having many levels of exchanges, experiences, events, and interactions, Barrows’ interpretation is unquestionably true. However, this interpretive model can also be applied to the early history of the Folsom locality.

In both histories of early America and the Folsom locality foreigners entered a “new world” full of abundance and seemingly everlasting resources. The indigenous population welcomed the foreigners and in some cases helped them to survive. Despite the help of the indigenous peoples through their traditional ecological knowledge of the area, the foreigners immediately exploited the land through commoditization and extraction. Before long the foreigners established various locations based on economic productivity. Within a matter of years the indigenous worldview was displaced and the foreign worldview was solidified. More foreigners entered the area and soon violent acts were committed against the indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the foreign culture thrived, while the indigenous culture struggled to survive.

While each foreigner who entered the natural borderland originated from a different culture, they all shared a common belief in the exploitation of the natural world. foreigners arrived seeking the perceived abundance within the natural borderland. The foreigners’ disconnect from the natural world disallowed them to view the interconnectivity of the natural borderland. Through the foreigners’ actions the native plants, animals, and human beings were uprooted from their traditional role. Human action geared to the exploitation of nature, therefore, became the dominant worldview within the Folsom area. While the foreigners did not share a common culture early on, their worldview linked them together.

Although the majority of foreigners continued to extract and consume elements of nature, an “elite” group of foreigners emerged within the fabricated borderland. Anglo Americans became the predominant group within the fabricated borderland through their population influx, violent actions, and California’s statehood. Despite the displacement of the Nisenan worldview, the only cultural hegemony within the fabricated borderland was that of the Nisenan. Thus, it was not until Anglo Americans attained eminence within the fabricated borderland that a foreign culture began to emerge. With the prevailing worldview geared toward the exploitation of the natural world, the fabricated borderland was the ideal setting for the transplantation of American culture. Yet, this foreign culture based on economics was the antithesis of the Nisenan culture.

Nisenan culture was based on nature. Their sustainable way of life was not accidental, rather intentional, through years of interaction with the natural world. They gained awareness of the land and this knowledge informed them on the necessity of a
reciprocal relationship with nature. Through this reciprocal relationship, the Nisenan lived within a sustainable society, which: “…functions in a way so as not to deplete the energy or material resource on which it depends. Such a society interacts with the natural world in ways that maintain existing species and ecosystem.”\(^2\) By practicing a sustainable way of life, the Nisenan and their culture prospered for centuries. However, the Nisenan cultural practices were hindered with the arrival of foreigners.

The Nisenan who lived within the fabricated borderland immediately felt the effects of the rapid assault on their land. A leading ecological scholar, M. Kat Anderson suggests: “Growing alien food plants in extensive cropping systems, cutting down trees for fuel and construction materials, hunting native animals for the sale of their meat and fur, and grazing large numbers of non-native ungulates all impacted the supplies of salmon, deer, acorns, seeds…on which the native people depended on for food.”\(^3\) This foreigner assault on the land disrupted the Nisenan mentally, physically, and spiritually. The foreigners’ desire to exploit certain elements of the natural borderland was responsible for the near annihilation of a thriving people.

The foreigners also directly forced the Nisenan into an alternative way of life. Besides the use of violence, the foreigners tried to permanently remove the Nisenan from their ancestral land. Once California was admitted to the United States of America, President Millard Fillmore appointed three Indian agents to California. The United States Congress authorized the agents to negotiate 18 treaties which involved 25,000 California


\(^3\) M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and Management of California’s Natural Resources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 63.
Indians. Each treaty promised a continuous food supply, cattle, and large tracts of land. The California Indians would have received nearly 7,466,000 acres of land. However, land hungry rancheros and affluent politicians did not see the justification in “giving” away California land to the indigenous population. California’s congressional delegation pressured the United States’ Congress to reject the treaties with California’s indigenous inhabitants. Thus, the California reservation system never materialized. Futile attempts were made at establishing reservations throughout the 1850s, but nothing permanently lasted.

The Nisenan were thrown into a foreign way of life and had to fend for themselves against the dominant culture. The Nisenan were driven off their ancestral homeland, faced malnutrition, suffered from state sponsored slavery, and decades of poverty. The following expresses the outcome of foreign arrival within California: “In eighty years with the Spanish among them, Californian Indian population had dropped from 300,000 to 150,000. Now in a mere fifteen years, from 1845 to 1860, the population collapsed from 150000 to 35,000.” While the Nisenan did not become extinct, their way of life was nearly destroyed.

The uprooting of the indigenous inhabitants paralleled the outcome of the initial foreigners who entered the natural borderland. The town of Coloma once thought to be the strategic town within the foothills faded quietly into history. After gold extraction became less productive for individual foreigners, Coloma residents transitioned into

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4 Ibid., 87.
5 Ibid., 88.
farming. One such foreigner was James Marshall. He vacated the town in 1849, after the violent incident along the American River involving the foreigners and the Nisenan. Marshall eventually moved back to Coloma and developed a winery. Despite being one of the initial foreigners to be aware of gold within the natural borderland, Marshall spent his days in poverty. His days after the awareness of gold ultimately reflected that of the Nisenan.

As with Marshall, Sutter shared a similar fate of the Nisenan. While Marshall and Sutter were not stripped of their culture, they were forcibly removed from the fabricated borderland. Sutter had to leave New Helvetia since the majority of his laborers deserted him. Sutter was forced to travel throughout the gold extracting communities and attempt to make a living. Ultimately, he was not successful. He was forced to retire to his land within contemporary Sutter County. While New Helvetia initially boomed, Sutter’s agricultural empire fell economically and politically to the city of Sacramento. Although Sacramento is larger than Folsom, the city was not as productive as Folsom throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The foreigners’ unfamiliarity with the fabricated borderland catalyzed them to establish the city of Sacramento within the flood plain. Thus, throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century the city of Sacramento faced yearly flooding. After the arrival of the railroad, therefore, Folsom became the “booming” town within the fabricated borderland.

Despite the removal of the foreigners who constructed the fabricated borderland, the worldview that shaped the area progressed with the expansion of Folsom. This is true considering the foreign worldview of manipulating nature was the backbone of the
American culture that grew within the Folsom locality. The primary mode of exploitation within the Folsom locality was the extraction of nature’s elements. The extraction of animal fur, gold, and granite was followed by the extraction of rock, electricity, and water.

Since Folsom was founded on the worldview that material wealth is more imperative than natural wealth, it is unsurprising Folsom prospered economically during the second half of the nineteenth century. Within four years Folsom became the final location of the Pony Express due to the position of the Sacramento Valley Railroad. Two years later a man by the name of Horatio Livermore purchased the Natomas Company and initiated his plan to dam the American River in order to provide energy to Folsom’s business community. Livermore also sought to fabricate a prison and use the prisoners to construct the dam. Folsom Prison became the second within California and one of America’s first to be known as “maximum security” in 1880. The prisoners brought in from San Quentin began extracting stone from the prison’s Quarry to construct the dam, which was complete in 1893. Two years the Folsom Powerhouse sent electrical current to the city of Sacramento and became America’s first long distance transmission. The foreigners, therefore, advanced the degree of exploitation within the Folsom locality by extracting electrical energy.

Gold continued to be extracted from the Folsom locality. Although the number of individuals who extracted gold decreased throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the method of extraction advanced. By the early twentieth century the Natomas Company initiated surface mining operations within the Folsom locality. Surface mining
involves removing the top layer of material in order to extract gold or any other element. According to the Folsom Museum’s website, “Dredgers extracted over $100 million dollars worth of gold between 1906 and 1962.” This form of extraction dramatically altered the land. The piles of material left over are still visible to this day while driving along contemporary Folsom Boulevard or riding a bike on the “East Natomas Trail” within the city of Folsom.

The next alteration of the land occurred when the Central Valley Project brought two dams to the Folsom locality. The CVP was initiated by the state of California to curtail the yearly flooding of the Central Valley and provide water to California’s agricultural industry. However, the CVP was transferred to the federal government due to the lack of funding during the depression era. Thus, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the dams, power plants, and reservoirs under the guidance of the Bureau of Reclamation. The construction of Folsom Dam began in 1948, two years after Folsom became a city and was complete in 1956. Subsequently, Folsom Lake expanding 18,000 acres came into existence. In the process, the area once known as Mormon Island was flooded. Negro Bar is also inundated with a manufactured body of water. Lake Natomas begins three and a half miles west of Folsom Dam just underneath the Rainbow Bridge. Lake Natomas regulates the water released from Folsom Dam and is contained by Nimbus Dam. While both dams generate energy for Sacramento County and prevent the annual flooding of the Sacramento Valley, they also exist in order to extract the abundance of water from the Folsom locality.

7 The Rainbow Bridge was constructed in 1917 in order to accommodate the use of automobiles. This replaced Folsom’s Historic Trust Bridge that was constructed in 1893.
The next form of exploitation did not occur until the 1980s. The city of Folsom spread out in every direction due to suburbanization, developing over ten housing communities throughout the city’s 24 square miles. Consequently, the surrounding terrain of rolling prairies, riparian wetlands, and meadows were bounded by tract housing. The existing oak trees were enclosed with asphalt, concrete, and street lights. The few plants and animals that recovered from the foreign invasion of the late 1840s were once again subject to displacement by the dominant culture. Thus, suburban sprawl is the most recent form of alteration subjected on the Folsom locality.

With the suburbanization of the Folsom locality the city rapidly grew. According to the city of Folsom’s website, the population nearly doubled from 35,749 in 1997, to 64,394 in 2009. Contemporary Folsom is a residential community thriving within Sacramento County. Educationally, the Folsom locality is presently home to ten elementary schools, two libraries, two middle schools, three high schools, and one college. Recreationally, the Folsom locality contains one zoo, two movie theaters, three swimming pools, fourteen soccer fields, seventeen tennis courts, eighteen basketball courts, twenty baseball and softball fields, 34 miles of trails, and 420 acres of parks. Economically, the Folsom locality is a corporate haven. The largest employers are the Intel Corporation, the California State Prison, and Verizon. The major industries are the accommodation, food, professional, scientific, and technical services. Retail corporations such as Target and Wal-Mart exist alongside corporate grocery stores and restaurants. At the southwest section of the city is the Folsom Auto mall. The city of Folsom is also connected to Sacramento with the Light rail, which parallels the Sacramento Valley
Railroad. Ultimately, the Folsom locality has grown into a fabricated borderland during the twentieth century. To the east is El Dorado County along with multimillion dollar homes on the hill, to the south is Highway 50, to the west is Lake Natomas, and to the north is Folsom Lake.

While America is obviously greater in terms of diversity, scale, and territory, Folsom’s fabricated borderland is a window into America’s post-industrial society within the twenty-first century. As with America, the economy is based on consumption rather than production. Having expended the locality’s natural resources over a century and a half, the only extraction of nature’s elements is that of water. Within such an economy the people are subjected to corporate reliance. Locally owned stores and restaurants are limited if not obsolete. Affluence and vanity advance unethical consumption habits. These consumption habits not only force Americans to rely on foreign commodities produced by exploitive labor practices, they destroy the environment. From clothing and gas, to food and computers, these products at the base of our society are unsustainable. The only reason why consumers are beginning to see environmentally friendly products is the fact that the “green” movement generates economic profit. Thus, human action within Folsom’s fabricated borderland is geared toward the same action when the town was founded: economic gain through exploitation of the natural world. This worldview is the backbone of the American culture of the twenty-first century.

The city of Folsom reflects America’s post-industrial society since they share a culture based in economics. While numerous cultures exist throughout the United States, there is a dominant culture throughout the land. Despite the diversity of cultures, they
operate in the same worldview that constructed the fabricated borderland. Therefore, their action is geared toward material gain. Aspects of America’s dominant culture such as abundance, comfort, conformity, consumption, corporate reliance, entertainment, exploitation, materialism, militarism and pollution link all the subcultures together. This dominant culture based on capitalist economics is the only force uniting twenty-first century Americans. Ultimately, this culture existing in present Folsom is in complete opposition of the culture that thrived on this land for centuries.

Human culture based on the natural world is nearly nonexistent in the twenty-first century. Globalization and cultural imperialism are rapidly forcing the last of the world’s cultures based on nature to the brink of extinction. However, the inherent resiliency within nature also exists within these cultures. Just as nature still exists within the fabricated borderland of Folsom, the Nisenan culture still exists to this day. Despite the dominant culture’s foreign invasion, direct violence, forced removal, state sponsored slavery, and decades of poverty, the descendants of the Nisenan are still living throughout the territory once considered Nisenan. Their culture lives on in the twenty-first century in the form of artists, poets, and activists. They survived within the prevailing culture that nearly decimated their own due to their base in the natural world. With their connection to nature they were able to survive through the cataclysmic alteration in their way of life.

I believe learning about our past is a strategic tool in understanding the world around us today. While history does not necessarily repeat itself, we can learn from the past and help build a better tomorrow. If one learns nothing else from the history of the Folsom locality, take away the understanding that human beings are capable of living in
harmony with the natural flow of nature. Currently, our American culture based on
economics is not capable of allowing us to build a sustainable society. The continuation
of conspicuous consumption and the advancement of unnecessary technology will only
inhibit the progression of human consciousness. However, we still have the opportunity
to realign ourselves with the natural world and live within a sustainable society. We need
to synthesize the traditional ecological awareness of the Nisenan with America’s
 technological intelligence, in order to survive the fabricated world we now live in. Just
try to comprehend what happened to the world of the Nisenan when they based their way
of life on nature. Imagine what will befall the way of life of Americans who are
disconnected from nature?
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