

River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region. CHRISTOPHER J. CASTANEDA and LEE M.A. SIMPSON, eds. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013. vii+406, maps, images, index. \$27.95 paper. ISBN 978-0-8229-6250-2.

This fascinating urban environmental history provides a wide-ranging overview of the diversity of landscapes both natural and built that make up the understudied Sacramento region. The book is divided into four distinct sections: Boomtown Sacramento, Valley Reclamation, Government Town, and Reclaiming the Past. It ambitiously covers the time period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. Each author's contribution provides depth and breadth to a growing body of knowledge of the organic relationship between environmental history and the history of urban growth and development in the American West. Each author attempts, successfully on the whole, to come to terms with "the paradoxical nature of Sacramento's 'commingling' of nature and culture" (p. 5) from a variety of perspectives ranging from Sutter's 'Indian business' and the Gold Rush to the American River Parkway, one of the largest urban parks in the country. Each essay contributes to the overarching notion that Sacramento was a city unwelcoming to urban development and explores the engineering feats required to create a city out of a region that, on the surface at least, was inhospitable to urban growth and development.

The book opens, appropriately, with a nuanced reflection on Sutter's "Indian business" (p. 26) which ran the gamut from slavery to coercion to paid labor. This, according to Hurtado, ultimately led to the situation in which "Indian labor exacerbated the conditions that led to Indian dispossession and dependence" (p. 30). The reader is presented with a three-dimensional story of Indian experience rather than the too-often used outdated, simplistic representation of Indian as victim. The chapter on the Gold Rush offers a new way to consider it by examining the pressure that the Gold Rush population explosion exerted both on the human community and nature. Gold Rush histories tend to represent the population explosion as primarily transient while Owens considers the "ordinary people who decided to stay and make this place a home" (p. 60). These are the people who ultimately grew into a middle class that turned to urban planning, engineering, and technology to carve a city out of an unfriendly natural environment. We are introduced in this first part of the book to the geopolitics of urban planning and the influence of the railroad. The chapters on early urban planning and the railroad offer new insights into the relationship between these activities and the ecology of the region. In short, the authors in this section successfully depict the birth and growth of Sacramento as a "war against nature" (p. 35), a war, of sorts, that included such 'weapons' as building levees and diverting the course of the American River rather than relocate the town site off the floodplain.

The chapters in Part II interweave stories of swampland, water, farmers, state and federal governments, grassroots activism, and increasingly sophisticated engineering that contributed to the transformation of the Sacramento Valley. The process of ecological and environmental alteration shaped Sacramentans' relationship with their city and their region. The relationship between California and Federal flood control initiatives clearly illustrates the politically charged business of controlling access to water in California. The final chapter in this section seems, at first glance, like it doesn't fit the overarching theme of the book with its focus on boosterism, suburbs, and narrative, but one quickly sees the connections with the other topics. The development of 'agriburbs' and agricultural boosterism were built on the alteration of the natural environment highlighted in the previous three chapters.

Part III provides an enlightening synthesis of the disparate effects of New Deal projects, World War II military installations, and nuclear energy on the landscape, both human and non-human. There is a relative dearth of academic analysis on these topics in this region that the reader feels the section offers new and interesting analysis on this aspect of Sacramento's

history. Sacramento was hard hit by the Depression and benefitted from New Deal programs that resulted in, for example, construction of the iconic Tower Bridge, which connected Sacramento to itself (across the river) as well as to the San Francisco Bay area. The Depression saddled the city with crippling unemployment and Hoovervilles filled with desperate people who couldn't afford homes. The chapter on the military influence provides an in-depth examination of the role the military played, and continues to play, on defining the region both in terms of human population and natural landscapes. The story of Rancho Seco is one of social responsibility and a grassroots movement to shut down the problematic nuclear reactor. It is also a story of people from different backgrounds and different political stances coming together to work for common cause. This has, in other eras and other situations, at times been the story of Sacramento.

The three chapters in Part IV explore the development of the American River Parkway, Indian gaming, and historic preservation of Old Sacramento. The American River Parkway is considered the crown jewel of Sacramento. This large urban park was first envisioned over a century ago. The brief, but thorough, exploration begins, appropriately, with the river itself. The reader is taken through the political, economic, and social processes and consequences of establishing such a massive park that remains "for the most part a natural environment rather than a rendition of a landscape architect's vision" (p. 241). Perhaps the one weakness of the book is the chapter on Indian gaming. While environmental change has a place here, it is on the margins of the essay. It also seems too wide-ranging for a book on the Sacramento region, as it is more about the state than Sacramento. I found myself wanting the author to focus on Sacramento and explore the impact and importance of Indian gaming there more deeply. However, when taken in the context of the development of a tourist industry with the Parkway, gaming, and historic preservation of Old Sacramento, it belongs. The chapter on Old Sacramento presents a vision of contrasts between preservation of the past and urban development for the future. The author asks questions that have not yet been answered and leaves it appropriately to future generations to determine the value of historic preservation and where it fits in urban development.

The Epilogue ties up loose ends and situates Sacramento in place in the Great Central Valley while exploring political, social, and environmental contrasts between the southern and northern ends of the Valley. As Smith argues, whatever the future for Sacramento, understanding "the region's environmental history before and after the gold rush" (p. 320) is central to meeting the political, social, and economic challenges lurking on the horizon. This volume, accessible to the layperson as well as academics, provides some of that important foundation. It also makes the reader want to revisit (or visit for the first time) the city of Sacramento armed with a new understanding of its rich, varied, and sometimes troubling history.

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