

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

*"For what is the present, after all,
but a growth out of the past."
— Walt Whitman*

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 12, No. 1

JUNE 1992

SOCIETY NOTES

ANNUAL DINNER

The annual dinner got the year off to a good start. Lively music was provided by River City Banjos during the tasty potluck dinner. Delta cooks are the best! A brief and efficient business meeting included the Treasurer's report, Museum report, and election of the following officers for 1992: President James Dahlberg, Vice-President Leonard Souza, Recording Secretary Terry Alchorn, Corresponding Secretary Carol Watson, Treasurer Clarice Jonson and Directors Cathy Hemly, Becky Wheeler, Don Quesenberry, and Jim Tracy. Bob Augusto remains on the Board as Past President and the following directors have another year: Marshall Pylman, Tom Herzog, Robert James, and Jerald Waterworth. Then the fun really began with an animated presentation of vintage clothing and delta history. (See article Page 4.) The great SUCCESS of the Dinner rests with the Co-Chairpersons CATHY HEMLY and JOANNE WISEMANN. They were ably assisted by their arrangements and decoration committee comprised of Bob Augusto, Don Quesenberry, Jim Dahlberg, Lillian Souza, Becky Wheeler, Doris Waterworth, Mary Fulster, Joan Wilcox, and Jan Quesenberry. Needless to say there was much more than meets the eye to putting together such a well-organized and smooth-running evening enjoyed by the happy hundred who attended. KUDOS to the organizers.

It seems appropriate to mention once more the excellent job done by our immediate Past-President Bob Augusto. Three years is along time and Bob worked it all out with wisdom and diplomacy. His will be a "hard act to follow." (We wouldn't have done very well without Joy either.) Our gratitude is boundless!

DAI LOY

At the annual dinner, Robert James, Museum Committee Chair, reported a successful year for the DAI LOY Museum with 8000 visitors, many more days of availability, and better than "break even" finances. The system of joint operation with Clarence Chu of Asian City Development is working well. The Museum building has been sold to the company with the provision that it remain a museum. The Society rents the artifacts to the Corporation and the complicated arrangement seems to have everyone happy. This system makes the Dai Loy more available to the public and offers financial security to all parties.

MARCH MEETING

Dr. Robert Laperriere spoke on the history of medicine in Sacramento County. Dr. "Bob" is currently President of the Sacramento County Historical Society. See his article in our December 1991 Newsletter. The meeting was well attended and the presentation was dramatic and colorful. Many thanks to Don Quesenberry for making the arrangements and to Jan Quesenberry, Doris Waterworth, and Cathy Hemly for tasty refreshments.

MAY MEETING

Bob Augusto produced another captivating meeting. He got five enchanting Isletonians to tell of their experiences living and growing up in Isleton. Did you know: that the oldest Chrysler agency in California is operated in Isleton? that the Patwin Indians quietly moved away from the banks of Jackson Slough when the white men and women arrived? that there were very busy dance halls throughout the area? that "Ferreira" means blacksmith? or that A.P. Giannini visited in Isleton? Robert Dunn, Jean Harvie, Alice Himebauch, Mabel Rogers and Aileen Richardson shared these and other memories with the lucky attendees. (See article page 4.) Our thanks to the speakers and to Joy Augusto for hot and cold yummy refreshments.

RESOURCE CENTER PROGRESS

The Resource Center, located in the Jean Harvie Community Center in Walnut Grove, is being catalogued and defined with an eye to collecting books, papers, oral and written family histories, photographs, etc., relating to the history of the Sacramento River Delta area. Soon we will be able to collect and preserve this memorabilia and to make it available to the public. Gerry Waterworth, Jennie Sheean, and Jean Harvie, along with the rest of the committee, have been working this spring.

EARLY FAMILY HISTORIES

Details for an early family register program are being worked out. There are many fascinating stories of who, how, and when our area was settled and developed. We hope to capture and preserve these tales so that everyone can enjoy them. We are patterning our program after the San Joaquin County Historical Society program. They have been most helpful.

DELTA PEAR FAIR JULY 26, 1992

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ISLETON HISTORY CLOSE UP

Our May meeting gave us an enjoyable picture of the history of Isleton from broader aspects to the more intimate and personal stories.

Robert Dunn started us off with his view of growing up in the river town. Born in 1925 he was raised in a house at Fourth and B, two doors east of Jean Harvie, near the Methodist Church. His father Herbert R. Dunn was a pioneer Dodge dealer. Robert's résumé includes a start as a magazine deliverer (the Ladies Home Journal and Saturday Evening Post) and paperboy (Oakland Tribune, SF Call Bulletin, and Sacramento Bee). His second job was with the Gardiner Improvement Co. as stock clerk and later as delivery boy. These routes took him through Japantown, Whitetown, Chinatown, and the Canneries. He also visited the local stores, gambling houses, and whore houses as a delivery boy. Isleton was a town of 3000 people with a beautiful school, albeit segregated one for white students and one for Oriental students. There was a one-man police force. Robert went to Rio Vista High School which at the time was 60% Japanese until the Second World War. As a high school senior he joined the Navy and spent 3 years in the South Pacific on the cruiser San Francisco. Robert's mother went to work during the depression in the early 1930's. She was the third Postmaster (after Philip H. Gardiner and his daughter Crete de Back and Gertrude Denison). Mrs. Dunn remained postmaster for 33-1/2 years. Today (1992) Robert runs the oldest Chrysler dealership in California.

Jean Harvie next filled in the broader perspective with California History which led the early settlers to Isleton. California had many different settlers. Were the Chinese the first to the California and Mexican coasts? Then there were the Russians at Fort Ross. The Spanish came through Mexico all the way to Sonoma. English fur traders (Hudson Bay Co.) were here too. In 1848 gold was discovered and by 1849 there were 80,000 prospectors from all over the world in the gold fields. In 1850 California became a state. A peaceful tribe of the Patwin Indians, who seasonally occupied a site at the entrance of Jackson Slough to the Sacramento River, quietly moved away as the white man moved into the area. The bear, beaver, elk, and muskrat were also disturbed in their swampland habitat. The California Legislature had 1-3/4 million acres of swampland they inherited as a grant from the Federal Government. In 1853 they offered 320 acres of this land at \$1 an acre to homesteaders. In 1857 they offered 640 acres per individual. George Andrus, who named our island for himself, was the first settler, followed quickly by J.M. Wilcox. Tidal levees were built by the Chinese who had been driven from the gold fields. In the early 1850's Hugh Davis settled in the area north of today's Isleton bridge. His son, C.K., married Hilda Johnson, also from an early settler family, and they had a large family who were early pioneers. Hart Smith was an early settler from Texas. He left the gold fields because they were too much work and drifted down the river to farm. He bought 650 acres some 2 miles below Isleton where he raised potatoes, onions, beans, and apricots among other crops. He and his wife had 7 children, one of whom was

"Locomotive" Smith, a halfback on a UC football team. Josiah Poole, a medical doctor and Mexican War veteran, moved into the area and then moved to Rio Vista to the River View Creamery Ranch. After a couple of years he moved back to the site of Isleton. In 1814, he planned the community, i.e., platted the town. In 1876 he built the Isleton Wharf, next a drugstore, a harness shop, and a blacksmith shop. Isleton was established. Poole brought in the company that built a sugar mill to handle the beet crop. The 1879 flood washed out the beet crop and the mill disappeared too. Another flood two years later in 1881 ruined Josiah Poole and he moved to Tucson. Phillip Hogate Gardiner was born in 1846 in New Jersey and moved to the delta at age 25. In 1871 he bought 250 acres and began to farm with Fitch Wilcox. Mr. Gardiner opened a general store and married Ida Poole, daughter of Dr. Josiah Poole, and had 7 children: J. Wilber, Lester, Philip Jr., Jewel, Crete, and 2 infant daughters who died soon after birth. Philip H. Gardiner built the Gardiner Building which is still a feature of Main Street. The top floor housed the IOOF Hall and the ground floor was the general store. Gardiner was also the Wells Fargo agent, the California Transportation Co. agent, and in 1879 the first Postmaster. His daughter, Crete de Back, became postmaster after him. Charles Perkins was another early settler who became a commission agent for Scatena Bros. of San Francisco. The Isleton Methodist Church had been established in 1876 and John Hutton was a circuit rider assigned to preach in the Walnut Grove, Isleton, Sherman Island circuit. He got around on horseback. His son, Will Hutton, settled here, established a home, delivered the mail, and worked in Gardiner store. His son, Vernon, served as city councilman and mayor. Other early settler names are Jensen, Dickey, Westgate, Crump, Dron, Lind, Hodapp, etc. At one point in time Isleton produced 90% of the world's canned asparagus. Isleton was incorporated in May 1923. L.P. Gardiner was the first mayor and his mother Ida was on the board and brother Wilber was city treasurer.

Speaker #3: Alice Perkins Himebauch, an early Asparagus Queen, told of her folks farm 1/2 mile below Isleton and their later move to a house in Isleton. Her father was a commission agent (bought crops for the San Francisco market). One of his associates was A.P. Giannini, who later founded the Bank of Italy--now Bank of America. Her mother taught school in Isleton and later on Twichell Island. Alice and her brother used to row over to the island with her. Mrs. Perkins returned to teach in Isleton where there were two schools, white and Oriental. Alice and her brother went by boat to Rio Vista and walked to the high school. She spoke of Wood Island with its dance hall and boat to Antioch. Alice became a teacher and started at Toland School in Rio Vista. She remembers her first chore every morning was to clear the black widow spiders out of the two hole "chick sales." There were 12 students, seven from one family. After three years at Toland she taught at the Sherman Island School, married and taught in Robbins, Yolo County, and again in Isleton.

(continued on page 4)

SCHOOLS

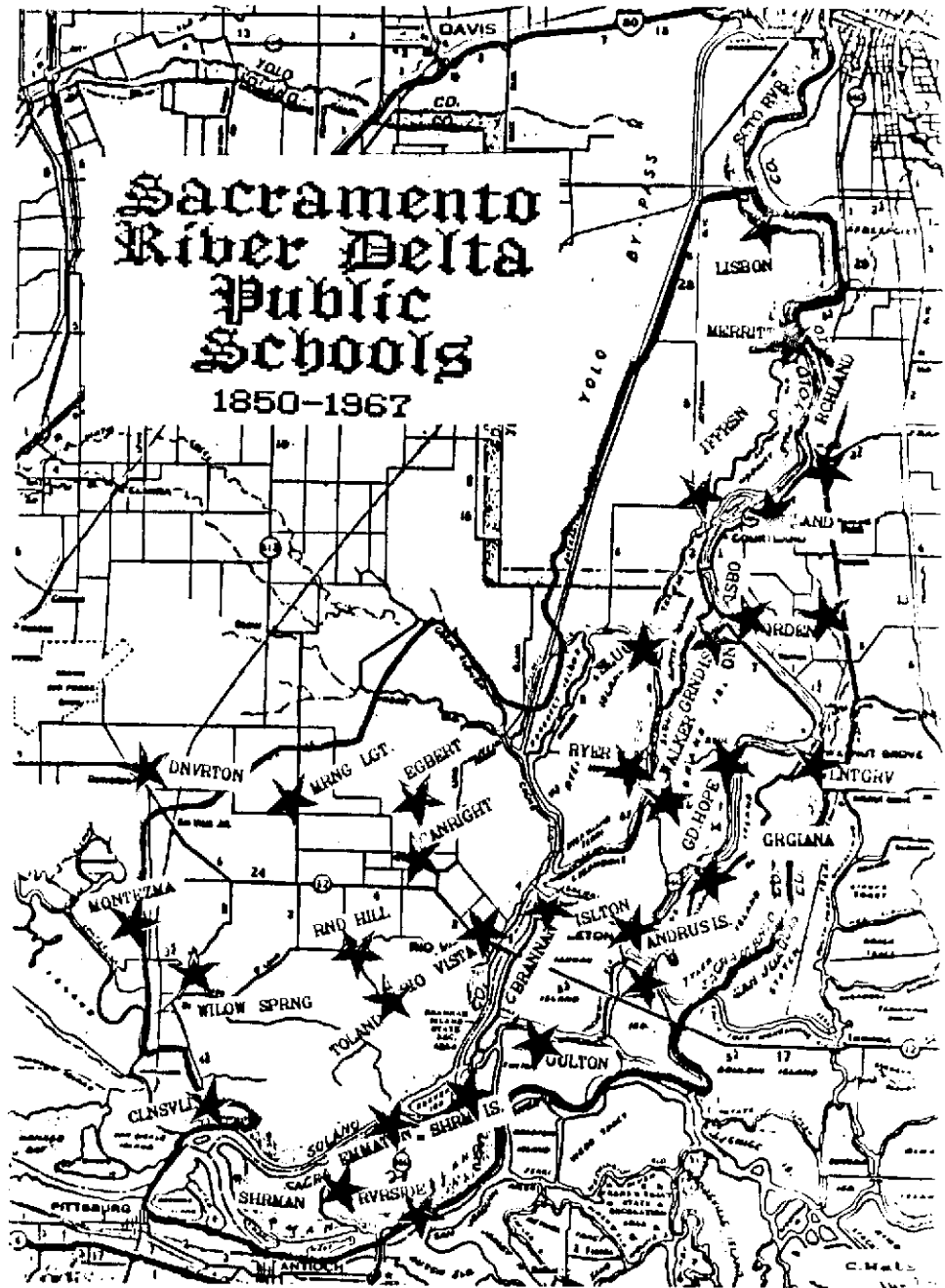
In the beginning (1850's) school districts were named after the township, i.e., Franklin #1, Georgiana #1, etc. Sutter Township ran down the river from Sacramento through Sherman Island. In 1854 Georgiana Township was formed from the lower islands. In 1856 Franklin Township was created between Georgiana and today's Freepoint area.

In 1855 when the Franklin #1 (Eaglepoint) district was established the petition was for a school district in Sutter Township. That district ran from the Beach Ranch (near Freepoint) to the Georgiana Township line. Between the formation of the district and 1871, Onisbo, Richland, and Freepoint districts were formed out of that territory.

In 1856 when Georgiana #1 was petitioned, the school district occupied most of the Township. The Walnut Grove District was formed in 1860 and the funds from Georgiana #1 were transferred to Walnut Grove District in January 1862. It is unclear if this was a simple name change or if there was another school in the area besides Mrs. Sharps' parlor.

Most of the school districts were one district-one school. The technical district name was not always the one in common use. Good Hope was known as the "Ryde School" and Courtland was known as "Randall Island." Many of the schools had more than one name and many had more than one location (at different times).

If anyone knows of any other districts formerly located within the current River Delta Unified School District, we would appreciate hearing about them. Direct any communications to Carol Watson.



This is a list of the School Districts that have existed within the current River Delta Unified School District.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Rio Vista High School 1912-1967 | Courtland High School 1916-1966 |
| Rio Vista Elementary 1857-1967 | Eaglepoint (Franklin #1) 1855-1871 |
| Montezuma 1863-1932 | Georgiana #1 1856-1862 (Later Walnut Grove) |
| Denverton 1866-1925 | Walnut Grove 1861-1967 |
| Egbert 1867-1886 | Bates Joint Union 1915-1967 |
| Collinsville 1869-1950 | Onisbo 1859-1914 |
| Round Hill 1864-1929 | Richland 1861-1920 |
| Canright 1872-1944 | Courtland 1882-1914 |
| Slough Joint 1875-1897 | Grand Island 1883-1920 |
| Toland 1875-1897 | Vorden 1904-1920 |
| Willow Spring 1875-1950 | Jefferson (Yolo) 1876-1920 |
| Morning Light 1878-1916 | Clarksburg High School 1927-1967 |
| Ryer 1878-1962 | Clarksburg Union Ele. 1923-1967 |
| Montezuma Union 1950-1967 | Merritt 1857-1922 |
| (Collinsville & Willow Spring) | Lisbon 1870-1922 |
| Isleton Union 1921-1967 | Sacramento River 1861-1967 |
| Georgiana 1866-1920 | (Became West Sacramento 1928) |
| Brannan 1870-1920 | |
| Isleton 1878-1920 | |
| Andrus Island 1897-1920 | |
| Sherman 1870-1881 Flood | |
| Emmaton 1875-1882 Flood | |
| Sherman Island 1903-1943 | |
| Riverside 1907-1945 | |
| Oulton 1902-1942 | |
| Beaver Union 1921-1967 | |
| Good Hope 1894-1920 | |
| Walker 1910-1920 | |

(Compiled by C. Watson for the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society.)

ISLETON (continued)

Speaker #4: Mabel Ferreira Roger's family settled on the Hart Smith ranch where her father grew asparagus. The children cut the asparagus. There was no indoor plumbing, electricity, nor roads. People did not understand her father's name at first and they were known as the Smith family after the ranch. Their asparagus was hauled by wagon along the Jackson Slough levee to the Libby, McNeill, Libby cannery. they bought meat at the Chan Kee store and meat market. They had cows, pigs, and chickens at home. Girls worked at the cannery and at the telephone office. Main street had the Bank of Isleton, a butcher shop, telephone office, blacksmith shop, and church. During World War I her brother went to Fort Lewis Washington and Mabel sang "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France" at bond rallies. There was a two-room school house. Grades 1-2-3 were in one room and 4-5-6 in the other. She was moved to the Brannan Island School in third grade--too many kids. They built a big school and she moved back to the Isleton School in fourth grade. Sam Dorsey ran the ferry to Rio Vista until the paved road and bridge were completed in 1923. Mabel also mentioned picnics on Wood Island.

Speaker #5: Aileen Balsmeier Richardson, a former Asparagus Queen, was born in San Francisco and her family moved to the Francis ranch on Grand Island in 1914. Her father farmed and built cottages. Her mother had a wood stove which heated the iron, water, food, and was used in the canning process. Her mother was also raising three children. Ice was delivered from San Francisco in 200-pound blocks as often as needed. Trips to San Francisco to see grandma involved a buggy ride to the passenger ships which left at midnight from Rio Vista with time for a nice sleep before waking up in San Francisco in the morning. The relatives visited the ranch in the summer where the children had a 150-acre play yard. In 1915 they moved to an acre at the end of the bridge and established the plumbing business which continues today. Aileen and her brother walked to school in Isleton. Her mother drove the car to town sometimes but only in low gear all the way in and all the way home. At one time Aileen and her brother, Bud, trapped skunks at 50 cents each. The school bus driver delivered them to the furrier. They had to give up the business because parents and school complained about the smell. Dancing was the big thing to do. Her father had had a dance orchestra in San Francisco and sometimes played at dances. There were dances at Wood Island, Emmaton, Birds Landing, etc. Isleton is a great place to live. It always survives, i.e., flood in 1906, 1907, and 1972.

These people have obviously enjoyed their lives in Isleton which collectively total close to 400 years.

DODGE BROTHERS
AUTOMOBILES

— AND —

GRAHAM BROTHERS
TRUCKS

DUNN & BONETTI

Isleton . . . Rio Vista
California

VINTAGE FASHION

Doe Bayless put together a super show of vintage clothes and vintage delta history. She had the clothes in her collection and garnered the history on her own. It was timely, accurate, and informative. Lots of people were unaware of a WWII POW camp around Ryde.

The clothes almost stole the show but the models beat them out. No one was willing to model undergarments so they were artistically draped on a form called "Gamma." These unmentionables included drawers, chemise, corset, bustle, and canniknockers. (Bras were not invented until 1905 and not worn in the United States until much later.)

The narration began with pioneer days and Jerry Waterworth looking dapper in a snappy brown suit and bowler. He was quickly followed by Clarice Jonson in an 1870 cape and dress complete with hoopskirt. Next Terry Alchorn strolled through in top hat and bright red waistcoat. Kathy Merwin personified the pioneer woman in a hoop-skirted dress with removable sleeves and an apron. Gene Wiseman in nightcap and red flannel nightshirt complete with candle was accompanied by Joy Augusto in an appropriate nightcap and nightdress. Next Cathy Hemly and Dick Marshall strolled the beach in chaste woolen bathing suits. They were followed by gambler Warren Merwin and dancing girl Jan Quesenberry right off the River Boat. Sandy Ogilvie graced the tennis court in a Sacramento High School athletic suit of World War I vintage. Don Quesenberry represented the suave ukulele player of the early Twenties, followed by Joanne Wiseman ready to graduate from the eighth grade in pink ribbons and stockings complete with clocks. The Roarin' Twenties brought gangster (bootlegger) Jim Dahlberg wearing mob black carrying a machine gun with flapper Barbara Dahlberg clad in a beautiful jet encrusted dress. Jane Alchorn paraded by in a marvelous 1930's lounging pajama suit followed by World War II's most popular clothes--an "Air Force 90-day Wonder," Regis Blount, and registered nurse, Doris Waterworth.

One last note, we were given the answers we were promised: Fringe on cowboy clothes--it is torn off and used to repair things. Flappers got their name from the noise their galoshes made when left unfastened. Firemen's suspenders are worn to hold up their pants. We never did find out what a "Second day" dress was.

Our THANKS to Doe Bayless for a beautifully designed and presented pageant.

ASPARAGUS

"Bayside" "Bohemian" "Snow Peak"
BRANDS

**FRUITS
VEGETABLES**

Bayside Canning Co.
ALVISO . . ISLETON . . MAYFIELD
CALIFORNIA

GOINGS ON

The Sacramento Bee reported that money woes will delay reopening the old Walnut Grove branch line to Hood. It is estimated that \$5 million is needed to repair and reopen the line, once owned by the Southern Pacific. "Realistically, this is a very poor time to get something into the State budget," said California State Railroad Museum Director Walter P. Gray III. It is hoped that conditions will improve and that by 1996 four trains per weekend will run round-trip to Freeport. However, extension to Hood will likely take longer. It is projected that two trains might run in the evening and involve dinner.

* * *

The Grove Theater in Walnut Grove is slated for restoration and repair. Daniel Whaley of Courtland and his partner, Joseph Svogar, project that the theater will provide a local movie house as well as a stage for live entertainment. Plans also include an organ to accompany silent movies. Access will be provided to local and regional school-age children for educational purposes. The theater is the oldest nickelodeon in the state, built in 1919.

* * *

The Rio Vista Museum Association reports that Mildred Tudhope was able to rescue the first successful sugar beet harvester built by Blackwelder's Manufacturing Co. of Rio Vista before creditors took over the company.

* * *

Further renovation and replication in Walnut Grove includes the "Ben's Drug Store Building" on Market Street and River Road. This is the first major restoration in Walnut Grove's Historic District and is undertaken by owners Roger and Gina Morgan. The project is funded partly by the Direct Commercial Loan Program of the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency. The building will look much as it did when built in 1915. The original store fronts will be reconstructed and a boardwalk will front the shops and businesses on River Road and awnings will shade the transom windows and sidewalk along Market Street.

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The Gardiner Co.
ISLETON CALIFORNIA

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Do you know someone, family or friend, who would enjoy hearing about and supporting the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society? It's fun to be part of preserving and sharing our local history.

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ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE (____) _____

Regular	\$6.00
Family	\$12.00
Sustaining	\$20.00
Patron	\$50.00
Life	\$150.00

Make check payable to:
SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (SRDHS)
P.O. Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

BOOKS OF INTEREST

* American and Japanese Relocation in World War II: Fact, Fiction and Fallacy. Lillian Baker. Pacific Northwest Books, Medford, Oregon.

American Scene Painting: California, 1930's and 1940's. Westphal Publishing, Irvine.

* Asian-Americans: An Interpretative History Sucheng Chan. Twayne Publishers, Boston.

Book Collectors of Stanford: An Eclectic Eight Who Shaped the Stanford University Libraries. California State Library Foundation, Sacramento, California.

* California in 1792: A Spanish Naval Visit. Donald C. Culter. University of Oklahoma Press.

Captain A.A. Ritchie, California Pioneer: An Account of His Life, Family and Rancho. Dr. Albert Shimate. California Society of Pioneers, San Francisco.

* Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of California: A History and Guide. Remi Nadeau. Crest Publishers, Santa Barbara.

* Monterey in 1786: The Journals of Jean Francois de la Perouse. Heyday Books. Berkeley, California.

Old Santa Clara Valley: A Guide to the Historic Buildings from Palo Alto to Gilroy, Revised. Wide-World Pub., Tetra, San Carlos.

Sentinels of Love: Rural Churches of California. Bette R. Millis and Jeanne Mord. Fithian Press, Santa Barbara.

* Available in the Sacramento City-County Library System

IN MEMORIAM

C.A. Beach
Marge Cave
Max Hollar

SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 293
WALNUT GROVE, CA 95690

THINGS TO DO

Attend RIVER FEST in the '49er area in Old Sacramento. Don't miss the kickoff of Sacramento History week. 10:00am - 5:00pm August 1. Bring the whole family to a fair of historical and cultural activities.

Sacramento Birthday Celebration August 8 at Sutter's Fort. 7-10pm. Gala Dinner and souvenirs. Tony Koester, veteran sports and newscaster is Honorary Chairperson; Bob Nathan, Master of Ceremonies. Don't miss the climax of Sacramento History Week. Tickets \$35 per person. Call 264-7072 for details.

"Oholone Indians of the Bay Area: A Continuing Tradition" Exhibition at the C.E. Smith Museum, California Street, Hayward, through November 13. Illustrates the lives of the Oholone Indians from the earliest history to present with artifacts, historical photographs, and paintings.

"Landmarks of Early California Painting" 1847-1876 Crocker Art Museum, 216 "O" Street, Sacramento, through September 27.

"Sacramento Radio: From Static to Stereo" Sacramento History Museum, McClatchy Gallery, 101 I Street, Sacramento. June 13 through Oct. 16 Artifacts, photographs, and promotional material of seventy years of radio broadcasting in Sacramento.

PEAR FAIR Historical Exhibit Courtland
July 26 10am-8pm

SRDHS exciting September meeting at Micke Grove????



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THIRD CLASS