

# Sacramento River Delta Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 14, No. 1

JUNE 1994

## SOCIETY NOTES

On January 17 our annual potluck dinner was held in the Jean Harvie Community Center Auditorium. JoAnn Wiseman and Cathy Hemly combined another time to produce a spectacular evening. JoAnn, as general Chairperson, calmly organized and presented a meal enjoyed by all who attended—all of them good cooks. Cathy produced the program and decorations which were most pleasant. These ladies had help with the arrangements from veteran helpers—Gene Wiseman, Jerry James, Leonard and Lillian Souza, Don and Jan Quesenberry, Jerry Watherworth, Ann Sorells, Becky Wheeler and the all-time Community helper Francis Mulvihill. Our heartfelt thanks for an evening of pleasure and education. The program, **REBUILDING ROSEBUD**, was presented by John and Cheryl Cox and their very creative architect, Bob McCabe. Even the highest expectations among the audience were met. The story from the devastating fire in 1990 to the present restoration is fascinating and was colorfully presented. The restoration took three years of time and toil and trouble. The tale drew empathy from fellow restorers and admiration from the rest of the audience. (See article on page 2.)

The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society officers for the 1994 year were announced. Leonard Souza, President; Cathy Hemly, Vice-President; Terry Alcorn, Recording Secretary; Carol Watson, Corresponding Secretary; and Clarice Jonson, Treasurer. The Directors are Becky Wheeler, Robert James, Tom Herzog, Jerry Waterworth, Gene Wiseman, Jim Tracey, Jim Dahlberg, Marshall Pylman, and newly elected Robert Arceo. Robert replaces Don Quesenberry whose shoes will be hard to fill. Don has done a lot of hard work for the Society over a long period of time and deserves a large vote of thanks and appreciation.

\* \* \* \* \*

The March meeting was held in the Jean Harvie History Resource Center on March 21. Mark Morias told the story of the Giusti family and their resort located on Snodgrass Slough. Mark presented the story in his own inimitable style, and members of the

audience contributed stories of their own. It was a fun and fascinating evening. Refreshments were served to a capacity crowd by Jim and Barbara Dahlberg—another big job well done! Our thanks to Cathy Hemly for arranging the meeting, to Leonard Souza for setting it up and to the Dahibergs for the refreshments, not to forget Mark Morias and his first-class presentation. (For more details see article on page 4.)

\* \* \* \* \*

People are borrowing some of our library research work, and it would be nice if they left a note so we would know where to find it. In the age of the copier, anyone is welcome to a copy of whatever we have, and we hope people will give us copies of historically significant papers that they want to keep. **PLEASE RETURN ANY BORROWED PAPERS—ESPECIALLY THOSE NOT SIGNED OUT!**

\* \* \* \* \*

We really appreciate all of your support at meetings and throughout the year. It is **MEMBERSHIP** time again—don't forget to renew.

\* \* \* \* \*

**HELP WANTED. SOUND FAMILIAR? WE NEED HELP IN CUTTING, SORTING AND FILING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES, PICTURES AND OTHER SUNDRY ITEMS. NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY. WE WORK FROM 10-12 NOON ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AND AT OTHER TIMES WHEN WE CAN. PLEASE HELP.**

\* \* \* \* \*

Our President, Leonard Souza, led us on a tour of the Witter Ranch for our May Meeting. Over 25 attended and many brown-bag picnicked on the well-kept grounds. Participants reported that the weather cooperated and a most pleasant evening was enjoyed by all. The tour included the barn complete with a horse, turkeys and rabbits. Our group was given the opportunity to see the inside of the house, to which the general reaction was, "It's just like home." It is a ranch home of the 1920's. It is a truly beautiful spot and a marvelous tour for grandchildren.



# PEAR FAIR

JULY 31, 1994 • COURTLAND, CA

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## ROSEBUD REBUILT

Cheryl and John Cox and their architect, Bob McCabe, presented the spellbinding story of the restoration of Rosebud.

John Cox pointed out that "Rosebud" has a mystique of its own apart from the people who have owned and occupied it. This feature must have prevailed on the November night in 1989 when the Courtland Volunteer Fire Department arrived to find the house engulfed in flame and decided to fight and save what they could. The Coxes were in New York and were told the house was demolished. They were very pleased to see something standing and many things protected — enough was left to investigate rebuilding!

Its original owner, William Johnston, a typical forty-niner, spent time in the gold fields, bought a hotel which burned down and then came to the Delta with a 160-acre homestead which over time became 1600 acres and a beautiful home called Rosebud Rancho. The home was family owned from 1857 to 1968. There have been five different owners since 1968—all of whom are interested in the welfare of Rosebud.

Rosebud was designed by Nathaniel Goodell, who also designed the historic Governor's Mansion. It was either started or finished in 1858 at a cost of \$9800. The Coxes bought the house in 1987 complete with water tower and a blue exterior paint job on the south and white on the north. By 1989 there had been some interior cosmetic work and the outside painted all white — until the fateful November night when the whole thing was blackened. Much of the original furniture was lost.

It took a year to find architect Bob McCabe, sift through the ashes and retrieve everything useful, preserve what could be used again and locate craftsmen to begin the job.

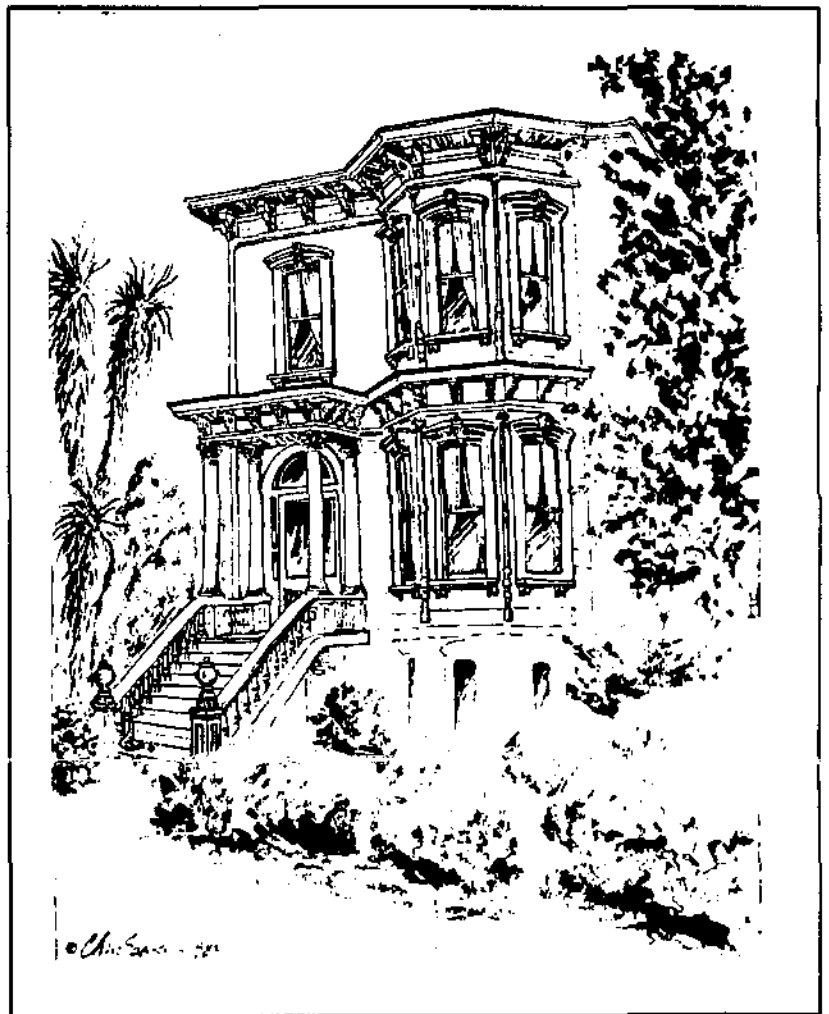
Rosebud had been on the National Register of Historic Places and the hope was to return it to that status—not an easy task. There was a lot of cooperation—the State Fire Marshall's office agreed to leave some charred wood in place if it was completely supported and bonded over. The plasterwork casting of center medallions and friezes were made in San Francisco by the same firm that worked on the Capitol Restoration. Painting of the 10 plaster rosettes was done locally. As much of the old work was saved as possible. This created a great deal of joinery work. Two were sculpted from photos, two were saved, five were pieced together.

After the building was put back together then the furnishing began. Many interior decorating skills were combined in this gigantic project: Interior designing, wallpaper selection, fauxgraining, mahogany decoration (real and faux) and shopping. As much of the old was saved as possible. Many of the "blended" items are impossible to identify without help.

The original plans included a "widow's walk" on the top of the house. This part of the house has a deck with a BEAUTIFUL

view. Throughout the restoration there were constant infusions of time, money and patience. Cheryl Cox admitted it was a full year into the project before she could see that they would live in the house again. There are 10 rosettes. All the fireplaces had to be taken down and then put back together. Two original double doors were mounted and two pieced together. It may be twenty years before all the restoration and modernization is complete. It is amazing how much of the flavor of the grand old house is maintained in the "new" dwelling. The exterior paint is the original rose color with the maroon trim a shade lighter than the original.

The Coxes and their helpers deserve a great deal of credit and admiration for a tremendous project WELL DONE.



## GRAND ISLAND

### Upper Grand Island to Howard Landing Road

Grand Island, as its name implies, is the largest island in the North Delta. It is bounded by Steamboat Slough on the West and the Sacramento River on the East.

Shortly after settlement in 1850, an initial attempt was made to reclaim the upper island by Josiah Greene, Rueben Kercheval and James Collins. In 1861 the first Delta reclamation district was organized. Grand Island #3 and the first levees were built. Constructed in part by Chinese laborers, the levee at its highest was 8 feet and built with sod bricks like the levees in China's Pearl River Delta. The narrow levee was set back from the river berm. A small portion of this original levee can be found near Howard Landing. This levee was later built up using a Fresno Scraper, an early land leveler, used to drag soil. By 1875 the steam-powered floating dredge was introduced to build levees and a year later, in 1876, the Stockton Ironworks manufactured the first side-draft dredge with clamshell bucket. It was this dredge which through the years built the levees to their present level. Grand Island Reclamation District #3 owned its own such dredge. The levees on upper Grand Island are sand, which carries great weight and can be built high and which compacts well.

Before the modern system of upstream dams were constructed, the water in the river system rose high in winter and dropped low in summer. So low that sandbars were common. Large scale flooding was recorded in the Delta in 1878, 1881, 1890 and 1907. Grand Island was not spared but, in 1907, the flood engineer in Sacramento reported that all but Merritt, Grand, Randall, Sutter, and Upper Tyler islands had flooded. To attempt to head off flooding at Ryde, a wingdam was built to divert the flow, and although the island was reclaimed, there remained in its low saucer-like center shallow Beaver Lake surrounded by tules and fed by small and slow-moving Beaver Slough.

In the early years, ferries connected the island to its neighboring islands. There were once ferries at the foot of the island; the triangle ferry which connected Rio Vista, Grand Island and Brannan Island; the Isleton ferry; the Walnut Grove ferry; the Howard Landing ferry. Only Howard Landing survives. Fares at the Walnut Grove ferry in 1886/89 were:

Pedestrian . . . . .	\$ .10
Rider and horse . . . . .	\$ .25
Wagon or buggy with horse . . . . .	\$ .25
Wagon and two horses . . . . .	\$ .50
Wagon and four horses . . . . .	\$ .75
Sheep, hogs and goats . . . . .	\$ .15 (each 1-9)
	\$ .08 (over 10)
Other loose livestock . . . . .	\$ .20 (each 1-9)
	\$ .15 (over 10)
Separator . . . . .	\$ 2.00
Steam engine . . . . .	\$ 2.00
Barley cooker . . . . .	\$ 1.50
Cook Wagon . . . . .	\$ 1.00

In 1906 the first bridge was built linking upper Grand Island, near the head of Steamboat Slough, to the Pierson District. A pivot bridge, the tender risked serious injury if the bridge slipped its moorings and didn't lock properly. In 1916 the first counterweight bascule drawbridge west of the Mississippi River opened at Walnut Grove. At the grand opening Governor Hiram Johnson cut the ribbon. In 1923 the Isleton Bridge opened and in 1924 the Steamboat Landing Bridge connecting Sutter and Grand islands opened. At this time the graded sand levee road was paved with concrete. State Highway 24, dubbed the "Victory Highway," traveled the east levee from Steamboat Landing to the Isleton Bridge. Highway 12 crossed the island from Ryde to Howard Landing.

Since the early 1880's the river has split Walnut Grove, the west bank being the younger settlement. In the early 1920's Bob Clampett bought marshy land from Robert Kercheval, drained it and sold lots. Known as "Clampettville" after World War II its appellation changed to Clampett Tract. Except for the three churches, St. Anthony's (1930), Walnut Grove Community Presbyterian (1956), and the former Christian Science Church, the area has remained mainly residential. On the levee use is mixed commercial-residential. Among the businesses that have populated the levee in past years were Veteran's Garage which had a blacksmith's shop in the basement, Butschy Brothers Body Works, the Studebaker Auto Agency (later Ford Agency), Molino's Chevrolet and Appliances, Morais's Central Market, and Addie Brown's Bakery. On the river side of the levee was a packing shed and/or cannery roughly opposite Veterans, the Texaco wharf roughly opposite Butschy Brothers, the Grove Inn which served short-order meals and was situated next to the bridge, downstream, which blocked the view of the bridge approach. Opposite the bridge was the ferry tender's house. Now occupying a site to the rear of the old Studebaker/Ford Agency, the Catholic Convent was between Veteran's Garage and Komoorians Cleaners.

Principal crops grown have been pears and field crops such as tomatoes, sugar beets, wheat, barley, field corn, safflower, and alfalfa. In the past stone fruit was farmed as well as pink beans, asparagus and celery. These were all shipped to market, by river boat and railroad in the early years and since the late twenties and early thirties by truck and rail.

(See GRAND ISLAND, Page 6.)



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## GIUSTI'S

Mark Morias, entertainingly and with pride and pleasure, told the story of his family and his restaurant at the March meeting. Three brothers born in Lucca, Italy, immigrated to America in the 1880's. They were Paul (Paolo), Mario and Pete (Pietro) Giusti and they settled in the Ryde-Walker Landing area. Paolo, the eldest, opened the first bar/saloon at Walker Landing. He next opened the first hotel at what later became Ryde.\* For several years the brothers traded off managing the hotel, salon and trips to Italy. Around 1912-13 they moved the business to its present location on the back of Tyler Island where Snodgrass Slough flows into the North Fork of the Mokelumne River, just above the Walnut Grove Thornton Road. When Egisto, the youngest brother, came to the Delta, the older brothers moved on and Paul gave Egisto, who became the Grandfather of Mark Morias, the restaurant/saloon business.

The Brown family owned the buildings—the original bar, a separate house and kitchen. There were six rooms downstairs—sleeping quarters and storage area. There was also a dock and a wharf. In 1928, Egisto married Irene Imhof Simoni, a widow. They lived at Giusti's and imported a cousin from San Francisco, Julio Pieretti, to be the first chef. He was chef until 1953. Grandfather ran the bar, restaurant and the ferry. When the original bridge was built it was not motorized. It was opened by man power, six or eight men. Usually bar customers cranked it open. It took 48-72 hours notice. They charged \$10 for a drink and dinner—family style.

In the 1940's Moe Morias from Ryde courted the Giusti's daughter, Dolores. After they were married, from the 1950's to the 70's, they were the proprietors along with Grandmother Giusti who had lived on the premises since 1928. At 240 pounds there was some concern about her falling through the floor but she never did. She spent most of the time in the kitchen. When she died in 1971 Moe and Dolores operated Giusti's. Dolores' birthday parties, where her sister Lorraine played the accordion, were held on the porch, which slanted even then. In 1954, Julio Pieretti died and Giusti's began charging for food. When the Ryde Hotel closed Lo Giannetti became the bartender at Giusti's and Louise Giannetti became the cook. By 1954 there was a menu and daily meal service. Employees included, among others, Dorothy Slauson, Emma Herchcorn, Donna Lane and the cook, Ruth Cazier.

Was Grandfather a Bootlegger? Stories that he was raided were not substantiated. The family belief was the he was never bothered because he "knew the people." There was a collection of 100 proof liquor, bonded and green label and lots of rumors, but when asked about grandfather doing time, Mark said he doubted it. Through the 40's and 50's, there were

many BIG parties, including politicians and law enforcement people, sheriffs department and game wardens. The menus included blackbirds, robins and polenta.

In the "good" or "bad" old days however you looked at them the water had a lot of sulphur—and wine was added to hide the flavor. This made drunks of the children. There were chicken coops and herb gardens in the present parking area and fig trees. Figs and prosciutto were a number one Italian antipasto. Italian custom called for a "little Easter" the Monday after Easter. Originally the meals were individually prepared. When Louie Rider was cooking he was smashed early in the evening—finally found out there was sherry in his coffee. The soup was always burnt on Tuesday—seems the chef overslept after Monday off and to make 60 gallons of soup in a hurry ended with burnt minestrone.

Meanwhile young Mark went to college. He came back to work during the summer of 1972 and somehow is still there. He has been running Giusti's for 20 years. His comment about hanging it up in a couple of years did not set well with the audience. The lease for the building with the Brown family came due in 1975. At that time Art and Myron Brown sold the building to Mark. Mark's mother died and his father, Moe, opened The Liquor Store in Walnut Grove and had plans to rehabilitate the Walnut Grove Hotel and Mark ran Giusti's. The Walnut Grove Hotel burned down in 1970. Mark learned the most by being there—working in summers, washing dishes, pumping gas, watching the bartender and getting some recipes.

After he took over Mark was able to make some changes—slowly. He got tired of seeing people in the bar talking to Moe, having a couple of drinks and then off to Tony's or elsewhere to eat, neither did he like patrons tramping through the bar and out the door of the restaurant's only entrance. Fifteen years ago he put the two buildings together so it is now a bar and restaurant combined. Basically, the building is original as built in 1900 with porches added. It was remodeled in 1935, Knotty Pine in Bar which was originally smaller and off to the right. The large back bar was added later. The refrigerator built in 1935 lasted until the early 1950's when a refrigeration unit was installed. In 1970 a swamp cooler was replaced with an air cooler in the restaurant. The resort had been open seven days a week and began to close on Monday, with lunch Tuesday through Friday and now a small lunch menu on Saturday and Sunday. The House wine was a "dago red" Petri forever but Italian Swiss Colony bought Petri and Pestoso was discontinued three or four years ago. The Carafe wine is now a Tabari Vino Rosso.

(continued on page 5.)

GIUSTI'S (continued)

Mark remembers being in Mexico in February 1986. When he phoned home he was told to get here as fast as possible. After making his way by Antioch and Tyler Island he got by S&W Tires to get some of the downstairs things and watch the water get closer and closer to Kruses. The building was protected, it settled a bit but remained sound and survived.

The bridge finally opened on the first Friday in May and then the State decided to plant some fish. The tanker truck backed onto the open bridge and sank the bridge. It opened again in July!

Moe collected people and thus created the "Wall of Fame." The best known celebrity was Earl Stanley Gardner of Perry Mason fame. The bell, on the right by the piano, was taken from the old bridge when it was replaced. The builders lived at Giusti's and the bell was stowed in the basement. Eventually Moe got help to move the 1500-pound bell, cast in Baltimore in 1916, into the bar, where it is used to announce the "last call" or a round of drinks. There are old menus and pictures. Mark keeps the books, as his Grandmother and Mother did, on a daily basis.

Giusti's had a number of habitués over the years, Brownie and Jack Molino, Ernie Cossi, numerous relatives, domino players, i.e., Sid Ising, Phil de Back, Lo Giannetti, Bill Beck and other patrons like Al Reed, George Buckley and Jack Burchell Sr.

The evening ended on memories of charismatic Moe, popular Dolores and others. Someone remembered being urged to drink in order to get Mark through college. One man remembered(?) his bachelor party on a Wednesday night when he got involved with bourbon, wine and Brandy Alexanders. He awoke on Friday in time for his Saturday wedding. Giusti's has been a "fun" place for a long time and leaves us with the feeling that perhaps charisma is genetic.

\*(NOTE: In the Ryde Gazette there is a picture of the original Ryde Hotel built in 1886 by Paul Giusti and brothers. It was located south of the present structure. The business functioned with sleeping rooms, bar and small kitchen until its demise in 1918 when it was destroyed by fire.)

OUR JEAN\*

*When Jean was just a little girl  
She watched the birds,  
And listened too.  
Caught the song that each one sang;  
And loved it when the churchbells rang.  
She swam the river unafraid,  
And wondered how this world was made  
And why the sky is blue.*

*Jean ran the bases of life's game.  
Not stopped by fear, she'd hit the ball  
Away out there  
To help a friend bring in a run!  
Then shared the trick of what she'd done.  
Taught as she learned—  
The game, the rules, the songs, the fun!*

*She's still that learning, caring Jean.  
We love her for her listening ear.  
We love her for eyes that see  
So much of all that's beautiful.  
And finally  
We love indeed that "off and running" Jean—  
That Jean she was, and is,  
And that she'll always be.*

*\*Written by Mary Joy Entwistle*

Jean Harvie, who passed away on Wednesday, February 16, was a "legend in her own time." She had a knack of knowing what her community needed and also being able to fulfill those needs. Jean was born in Rio Vista, attended Canright Elementary School, Beaver Union Rio Vista High School and San Francisco State College. She lived in Isleton and worked in Walnut Grove so her community was the heart of the Delta. In 1977 Jean determined a need for a local historical society. She gathered community leaders from Freeport to Collinsville, organized a workshop and joined in creation of the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society. Both the Society and its offshoot, the Dai Loy Gambling Museum in Locke, flourish today. All of Jean's projects will survive, but we will miss her enthusiastic support.

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ASK A FRIEND TO JOIN

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

**GRAND ISLAND (continued)**

Upper Grand Island children attended school at Onisbo (1860-1914), Walnut Grove (1861-1967), Ryer Island, Walker (1910-1921), Grand Island (1882-1921), Good Hope (1894-1921) and Beaver Union (1921-1967). After that they attended the Bates Elementary School in Courtland or Walnut Grove Elementary.

Early settlers and principal land owners on Grand Island were Kercheval, Cook, Shelley, Stambaugh, Bogle, Collins, Smith, Meyer, Davis, Johnson, Reynolds, Williams, Hollenbeck, Leary, Goldman, Volman, and Giovannoni. Followed by Kesner, Graham, Seymour, Gwerder, Darsie, and Hutchinson. Some of the early settlers left houses which remain today. Others have long been gone. Among notable residences that have been lost are those of Rueben Kercheval, Robert Kercheval, Russell Graham, Will Metsen (the Kercheval attorney in San Francisco), Kesner, Rugaard, Smith, Stambaugh, Shelley, Coggeshall and Volmans. Among those which remain are Hartley Kercheval, Howard Kercheval, Darsie, John Brown, Crewe, Davis, Goldman, Durbin, Stewart Brown, Stanford Brown, Barry, Hutchinson, Henry Meyer, Collins, Edward Meyer, Frank Kerchival, Porter, Cunha, Hollenbeck and Seymour.

Stay tuned for the December Newsletter when we will complete Lower Grand Island below Howard Landing Road.

**TO DO**

**PEAR FAIR** Historical exhibit Courtland Sunday July 31. 10:00-5:00 am.

**WITTER RANCH** Now available by appointment. Write or call Witter Ranch 3480 Witter Way, Sacramento Ca. 95834 (916) 927-4116 or call Leonard Souza.

**LOCAL MUSEUMS** in Locke, Galt, Elk Grove, Antioch and Rio Vista.

**GALT HERITAGE DAYS** June 17-19

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

**TO DO**

**THE CHINESE IN SACRAMENTO** exhibit at the Discovery Museum (formerly Sacramento History Museum), 101 I Street, Sacramento. Wednesday-Sunday, 10-4:30, until September.

**FOLSOM.** "A Century of Women in Folsom (1849-1949)." Vintage clothing and Photographs. Folsom History Museum, 823 Sutter Street. Wednesday-Sunday, 11-4.

**OLD CITY CEMETERY.** Free tours weekends at 10 a.m. except June 19, July 2 & 3 and September 3 & 4. 10th and Broadway, Sacramento.

**CONSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE,** Twin Cities Road to Franklin Boulevard, south on Franklin for one mile past Desmond Road. Will Slough trailhead is located on your left 1/2 mile past Desmond Road. The office, with historical exhibits, is in a barn located off Desmond Road.

**YOLO SHORTLINE** portion of the original Sacramento Northern. Train rides from Woodland to West Sacramento and return. Adults \$10, Seniors \$8, Children \$5. July 16 and August 27, special trips to Clarksburg. (916) 372-9777 for schedule and tickets.

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