

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

“For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past.” – Walt Whitman

NEWSLETTER

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President's Notes

Hello Friends,

Summer has arrived! It's so nice to greet you and wish you all an enjoyable summer season.

Many thanks to all Sacramento River Delta Historical Society members for your continuing interest in the historical and cultural heritage of the Sacramento River Delta area and its communities. Your support is so necessary and appreciated!

A big thank you to all who came to our January General Meeting. In addition to enjoying a delicious Potluck Dinner and a chance to visit with friends, both new and old, we were entertained by Mary Ellen Burns, an enthusiastic local "foodie", recipe collector, author, and inveterate cookbook collector. She gave a presentation on the history of Sacramento region cookbooks and had a most interesting display of vintage cookbooks for us to look at.

That evening we also welcomed Ron Globus as the newest SRDHS Board member. Welcome, Ron! We also bid farewell to our previous SRDHS Board President Cathy O'Connor. Thank you, Cathy, for all your work as President. (It was she who proposed the excellent idea of the SRDHS publishing an annual calendar together with sponsorships, an idea which has become a great success!).

The next General Meeting in March featured filmmaker and author Bill George, who showed us his award-winning film "The Hidden Wonder of the World: Construction of the Transcontinental Railroad," together with a lively discussion afterward about this immense undertaking. Bill's film traced the building of the railroad from Sacramento over the Sierra Nevada in the 1860's.

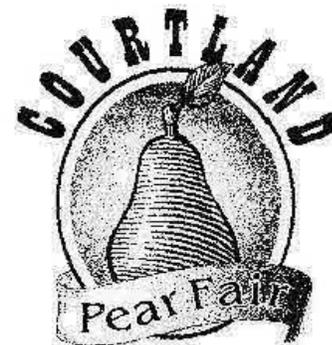
We were doubly delighted when Bill George returned for the May General Meeting to present his "Chinese Builders of Gold Mountain," another excellent film, together with a great discussion afterward about this fascinating part of history. Bill's documentary chronicled the contributions of Chinese immigrants in California in the 1800's, tracing the path of Chinese who came to California in the 1850's.

In addition to the thanks due to the SRDHS membership for your continued support, there are many "behind the scene" efforts which contribute to the success of this organization, some of which I'd like to mention. Tom Herzog, Board member and Program Coordinator, continues his quest to find the most varied, interesting, and informative speakers for our General Meetings! We all

benefit from their knowledge about different aspects of this unique region.

Kathleen Hutchinson's fine editorial oversight and authorship of many articles found in this twice-yearly NEWSLETTER must also be acknowledged. How lucky we are to be able to read these articles! Thanks Kathleen for your insight and scholarship. Readers can also go to the SRDHS website (SRDHS.org) and access archived NEWSLETTERS containing many articles about the Delta and the people who made this area the special place it is. Greatly enjoyable reading!

Speaking of mainstays, there must be a mention Esther Koopman and Bobbie Collier, who on Tuesday mornings are at the SRDHS Resource Center, housed in the Jean Harvie Community Center in Walnut Grove. Here is a treasure trove of maps, photos, published articles and memorabilia of the Sacramento River Delta area, dating back to its early settlement, archived and organized by Esther and Bobbie, available to amateurs and serious historians alike. If any of you NEWSLETTER readers have material which would add to the understanding of this unique region, Esther and Bobbie would be very happy to add it to the collection. Original material can be copied or the originals themselves can be archived, as the donor wishes. Also, if anyone would like to volunteer at the Resource Center, Esther and Bobbie will find a project for you to work on! New SRDHS member Connie Salswedel has been volunteering on many Tuesdays, lending a much appreciated hand. Connie has said that this is a very enjoyable way to learn about a lot of local history. Thanks, Connie! (continued on page 6)



43rd Annual July 23, 2015

A Tale of Two Mansions

By Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

Your editor Kathie Hutchinson gave the following talk last August (2014) at a private luncheon at the Mansion.

Lured by gold Henry Meyer came to California from Germany around 1850. A year later he bought property on Grand Island facing Steamboat Slough.

His son, Louis and his wife (?) Audrey built "The Mansion". It was nearby his brother Edward's house (which still stands) also facing Steamboat Slough. The Mansion was built in response to the William Smith's "Castle" across the island on the River.

Smith had inherited a fortune from his father George A. in real estate, riverboats (California Transportation Company) and farmland. A modest farmhouse was remodeled by Henry Mortensen of Rio Vista to, in Smith's view, look like a castle on the Rhine: three stories replete with castellated walls (to view his land holdings, according to his son George W. G.), ballroom and proposed elevator. (There was only the shaft, not the cab). Over \$500,000 was spent, a large chunk of money around 1910.



Not to be outdone the Meyer's countered. They also spent a fortune. The house, four stories, 58 rooms was designed by J. W. Dolliver of San Francisco. Artisans were imported from Europe to work on the plaster and woodwork. A spring dance floor was installed in the ballroom and a one lane bowling alley in the basement. But, the house was never finished or lived in. An agricultural depression followed World War I and Louis Meyers was bankrupted. He lost his house and land and quite possibly his San Francisco real estate investments.



Louis, I was told, committed suicide and his wife went to live "somewhere else". His son Lou, Jr. who moved in Sacramento society and married a girl also named Audrey "Audie" for short who married secondly Edwin "Eddie" Bedell who ran the restaurant at the Clunie Hotel and later owned the well-known Bedell's restaurant at 11th and L streets in Sacramento. "Sacramento" lunched, and legislators met at Bedell's. The Meyer's daughter Petronella married John Diggs of Thompson Diggs Hardware Co. of Sacramento. The other Meyer daughter Henrietta married and moved to Idaho.

The Smith's also lost most of their fortune by the late 1930's. Their son George W. G. Smith lived in the old Smith house downriver of Courtland which was built by his great grandfather, George Augustus Smith. He raised his family there and lived well into old age having farmed and dabbled in Republican politics. The "Castle" near the corner of Highway 160 (Grand Island above Leary Road) burned to the ground in the early 1940's.

The Mansion having been abandoned fell into disrepair. The land with the house was sold to Ensher, Alexander and Barsom who owned a cannery at Isleton and Delta farmland. It was used as a granary for a number of years and was full of vermin. In 1949 it and the land was purchased by DH&P (Darsie, Hutchinson & Pettigrew) farming corporation. In the later 1950's several operators attempted to rehabilitate the house and it became a spot to rent for parties. One of the operators installed a large pipe organ. After a number of years and false starts Terry Black and associates purchased the property and finally began making a success out of the white elephant of Steamboat Slough.

*****Tidbits of Interest by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson*****

OLD SACRAMENTO GENERAL PLAN ADOPTED!

ON MAY 2, 2014, THE CALIFORNIA State Park and Recreation Commission unanimously adopted the General Plan for Old Sacramento State Historic Park—including both proposed excursion train lines. California State Parks has acquired property over the last 40 or more years to make this exciting vision a possibility for the people of California to enjoy, and those visiting from other states and nations.

Imagine a safari train from Old Sacramento to the Sacramento Zoo filled with families and children ...

Imagine a wildlife train through the scenic Delta to see the birds, animals and wildflowers of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge ...

Image a heritage rail tour from the small farming communities of Freeport to Hood to learn about Sacramento's history, its rivers and the Delta—aboard the historic Sacramento Southern railroad built 100 years ago to transport passengers and produce ...

Imagine a "Farm-to-Fork" train ride along the Sacramento River through the rich agricultural farmland of the Delta to a special chef's lunch among the orchards to savor local produce, fish and wines ...

Image boarding a riverboat in Old Sacramento to enjoy traveling down the Sacramento River to Freeport, then catching a vintage train to Hood as you step back in history as others did years ago ...

These dreams would not be possible in the next 20 years or so if the Old Sacramento General Plan had not been adopted, including both excursion train lines.

CSRM Foundation is excited about the vision in the draft General Plan to develop Old Sacramento, the riverfront, the Railroad History Museum, the planned Railroad Technology Museum in the Railyards, and extending the Museum's



Sacramento Southern Railroad excursion trains lines (1) to the Sacramento Zoo and (2) from Freeport to Hood through the Delta.

For more than 25 years, the California State Railroad Museum Foundation—an independent 501 (c)(3) organization—has partnered with State Parks as a cooperative association to raise and manage funds for the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento State Historic Park.

Working together we believe we can find creative approaches to both these new excursion train lines that will benefit all those living in the Sacramento region, Californians and their children—as well as national and international visitors.

CSRM Foundation has a passion to help develop interpretive programs so they can travel by train to the Sacramento Zoo—as well as to enjoy the natural beauty of the Delta to see the wildlife, learn about the Delta's rich agricultural history, and more!

These proposed excursion trains to the Delta tie in with efforts lead by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer,

California Congressional representatives John Garamendi, Doris Matsui, Mike Thompson—and many other elected officials and organizations—to designate the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as a National Heritage Area. This legislation is intended to encourage interpretive programs, recreational and education opportunities and to increase public awareness of the natural, historical, scenic and cultural resources of the Delta. Key goals are to support agriculture, wildlife habitat, recreational activities, historic preservation, economic development, heritage tourism, ecotourism, and agritourism in the Delta.

The Old Sacramento General Plan is a guiding document for the next 20 years or so. Forty years ago the California State Railroad Museum was not open yet—it was a vision and a work in progress. Now the California State Railroad Museum

is world renowned. In fact, the Museum is a vital part of the local economy, and is one of the most popular—and the most widely visited—cultural attractions in the region, drawing visitors from near and far to Old Sacramento.

We believe that in 20 years the Museum will be the finest railway museum complex in the world, with the addition of the excursion trains to the Crocker Art Museum, the Sacramento Zoo, and the Delta, and the acquisition and development of the Railroad Technology Museum in the Railyards.

We look forward to working with State Parks, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, all of you, and many others to make this bold vision a reality.

On June 30, 1864 President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act in the midst of the Civil War to preserve Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove for the people of California as the nation's first state park. As State Parks celebrates 150 years this year, we are reminded that today's decisions will leave a lasting legacy for future generations. ■

The above is a reprint from the California State Railroad Museum Foundation Newsletter 2014.

Your editor notes: And wouldn't it be nice to combine the railroad experience with a riverboat ride between Hood and Walnut Grove! Hornblower Cruises currently offers combotours near Sacramento in competition with the SSRR.

Sacramento Southern Railroad established in 1907 was developed as a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific and was known as the Walnut Grove Branch Line. The picture is of the one-time swing railroad bridge passing over Snodgrass slough near Locke. The railroad continued as a trestle through east Walnut Grove to the Depot, now demolished.



Stillwater Orchard pears were the featured fruit in 2014 on the Sacramento Southern Railroad excursion train which makes a round trip from the Central Pacific Depot in Old Sacramento to Freeport.

An article from *The San Deigo Union Tribune*, March 4, 2015

MICHAEL MARKS Produce Picks

DELTA ASPARAGUS IS SURE SIGN OF SPRING

Punxsutawney Phil may predict when winter will end, but in the produce market, one vegetable tells us when it's spring: asparagus.

These days, we can buy asparagus 365 days a year, with supplies coming in during our offseason from Mexico, Peru, Argentina and Chile. Then, in January, we start seeing the first California-grown spears from the desert growing region of the Coachella Valley. But by mid-to-late February, the famous Delta growing region in the San Joaquin Valley comes alive with tractors, trucks and harvest activity, sending to markets around the world some of the most famous asparagus grown anywhere.

Nothing says spring quite like the tender, sweet spears of Delta asparagus. Just west of Stockton and Lodi, there are hundreds of miles of waterways surrounding "islands" that to an untrained eye don't have much on them. But when you look closely at



the tall, furrowed rows of rich soil, you will find the green tips of asparagus poking through the soil.

These Delta islands are the Club Med of asparagus — perfect growing conditions. The dark peat soil is some of the most mineral-rich soil you can find. The waterways of the Delta bring ocean breezes to cool the spears during warm spring days.

Fresh asparagus will always be the best asparagus. When I buy asparagus at the market, it's on my dinner menu within 48 hours.

For the next 100 days, California spring is in the markets in the form of tall, velvety green spears of asparagus.

In 1887 Solomon Runyon was listed among the Directors of the Sacramento Electric Street Railway. From its downtown depot the line ran to J Street and out to Oak Park where it terminated.

A reprint from The "Delta Voice", 10/29/2014 Newsletter of the Delta Protection Commission

First Salmon Cannery on the West Coast

A floating cannery in what is now West Sacramento mined the Delta's silvery bounty.

Stroll along the River Walk in West Sacramento on a Delta autumn evening, and you will notice a plaque commemorating California Registered Historical Landmark number 1040, north of the Tower Bridge. The plaque marks the original site of the Hapgood, Hume and Company's salmon cannery, the first salmon cannery established on the West Coast.



Built on a barge moored to the bank in 1864, the cannery processed salmon caught on the river by cooking with a boiler, rather than salt packing as was more common at the time. William and George Hume are believed to have lived in a cabin nearby, but the precise location isn't known. At the time, salmon were so plentiful that it is recorded that cannery fish were caught mostly with gill nets and - believe it or not - spears.

By 1866 - less than three years later - the Humes moved their operation to the Columbia River in Oregon, as the salmon runs in the Sacramento River were already beginning to decline. The decimation of the river fishery was swift: in 1881 there were 20 canneries in Northern California, six in 1885 and by the turn of the century California ranked last in West Coast canned salmon production with only three canneries in operation, two on the Sacramento River and one on the Klamath. The state where salmon canning began saw its last cannery close in 1919.

Once the easy pickings in the river were depleted, commercial salmon fishermen concentrated their efforts on fish in the ocean heading home to spawn - a practice that continues today. Only a few West Coast canneries remain, located in Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

The four remaining Bill Hutchinson letters featured in previous newsletters will appear in future newsletters.

Carol Watson Obituary



Longtime Sacramento area teacher Carol Marie Watson passed away peacefully at her Pasadena home on March 23, 2015. She was eighty eight years old. Miss Watson was born at Pasadena Hospital, now Huntington Memorial Hospital, on July 19, 1926. She was the only child of Oscar E. and Hermena J. Watson. Carol attended and graduated from Eliot Junior High School and Pasadena Junior College, where she received both a High School diploma and an AA degree. She then attended and graduated in 1948 from the University of California at Berkeley. She continued with post graduate work there and received her General Secondary Teaching Credential in 1949. She also completed a master's degree in PE at Berkeley in 1953. She enjoyed a long career in teaching which began at Courtland Joint Union High School located in the Sacramento River Delta area of California. She taught history and girls' physical education; she coached tennis, and after a short time was given additional duties as Dean of Girls and Girls Counselor. She stayed at Cortland High School until the school closed and students and staff were transferred to Clarksburg High School where she taught until she retired. Carol was a highly respected educator. The students at Courtland High School dedicated their yearbook, *La Perita*, to her in 1961 in appreciation for all the things she had done for them and the school over the years. Carol loved staying at her friends' cabin on the west shore of Lake Tahoe during the summers. She particularly enjoyed playing golf there as well as skimming over the lake in their vintage GarWood speedboat. Carol was an active member and officer in the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society. This membership led to her becoming a true historian of the area. When she retired to her parent's home in Pasadena she threw herself into volunteer work in the archives of the Pasadena Museum of History. She enjoyed her volunteer work there as much as she had enjoyed her previous involvement with the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society. Carol will be greatly missed. A graveside service was held on April 1, 2015 at Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale. In lieu of flowers contributions can be made in her memory to the Pasadena Museum of History, 470 W Walnut Street, Pasadena, CA 91103.

Above is an obituary from the Sacramento Bee and below are memories of Carol from our editor Kathleen Hutchinson.

I first remember Carol when I was a grade schooler at Bates. She was the new tall – fresh out of Cal – girls P. E. teacher at CHS (Courtland High School) – white shirt, white gym shorts, white socks and Keds. For me, she was for years “Miss Watson”, and was my Frosh/Soph P. E. teacher.

Much later, by then I called her Carol, we worked together on the SRDHS Newsletter. Both of us contributed articles and Carol also contributed transcribed meeting lecture notes which we published in early years. We took the reins for around fifteen years after taking over from Yvonne Pylman who had capably initiated and wrote the newsletter for around two years.

As noted above in the obituary Carol moved back to Pasadena sometime after retirement to care for her aged (well over 100) father. We continued editing and writing the newsletter long distance until she suffered a stroke which made reading for her very difficult.

(President's Notes continued from page 1)

In addition to printed material, another way the Delta community has contributed to the understanding of this unique area is by Oral Histories, told by long-time residents, many of whose families have been here for generations. Board member John Stutz is now responsible for recording these one-of-a-kind treasures. If you wish to participate or know of someone who would like to, please email the SRDHS (srdhs@riverdeltawireless.com) and John will contact you.

A mention, too, of the Locke Centennial Celebration, on May 9, 2015, a great success! I hope many SRDHS members had the opportunity to enjoy this very special celebration and learn more about Locke's unique place in Delta history.

And at last we come to the mention of our new 2016 Pear Label Calendar! Once again we are offering our calendar featuring a beautiful new assortment of 12 frameable historical Pear Labels chosen from Jim Dahlberg's label collection. We are so grateful to Jim for his generosity in sharing this art with us all. The 2016 Pear Label Calendar will be offered for sale at the Pear Fair in Courtland on Sunday, July 26th. Please look for us at the table right inside the main auditorium building, where you can find our newest calendar along with a selection of previous calendars. All of the calendars have become sought-after collector's items! *A sample of our calendar and order form is on next page.* So please come to the Pear Fair, see the new calendar and buy for yourself and gifts! Also, take the time to see the wonderful historical photo collection on display!

Wishing you all the best this summer!
Warm Regards,
Barbara Damion, President
Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

RESOURCE CENTER NEWS

Thank you for your historical donations to our resource center! Special thanks to Robert James for contributing his "California History Magazines" collection. They are full of many historical and interesting articles on the Delta.

We are recording each donated collection in our data base – many collections are done, but many still need to be entered. **Would you like to help?** We work almost every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and need people to enter data (it's already handwritten and just needs to be entered into the computer.) Please call Esther at 777-2227 or Bobbie at 777-6792 to make sure we will be there and join us.

INFORMATION

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society web site is srdhs.org. Please view and enjoy the information. If you wish to email the resource center, the email address is srdhs@riverdeltawireless.com

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

We would like to thank all those who made memorial contributions to the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society.

SRDHS 2015 SCHEDULE

July/August.....	Summer Break
September 15.....	General Meeting
October 20.....	Board Meeting
November 17.....	General Meeting
December.....	Board Meeting
	December Newsletter
January 19, 2016.....	Annual Potluck

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Then make sure you pay your 2015 dues – Use this form or one of our handy dues envelopes

Name: _____
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- I'm paying Annual dues for the following year(s):
 - 2015 2016 Other _____
 \$25.00 a year for Annual Membership
- I've enclosed \$150 to become a Lifetime Member
- I'd like to register as an Honorary Member – Free to those members 80 years and older

Please mail this form with a check payable to SRDHS to:

SRDHS Membership
P.O. Box 293
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

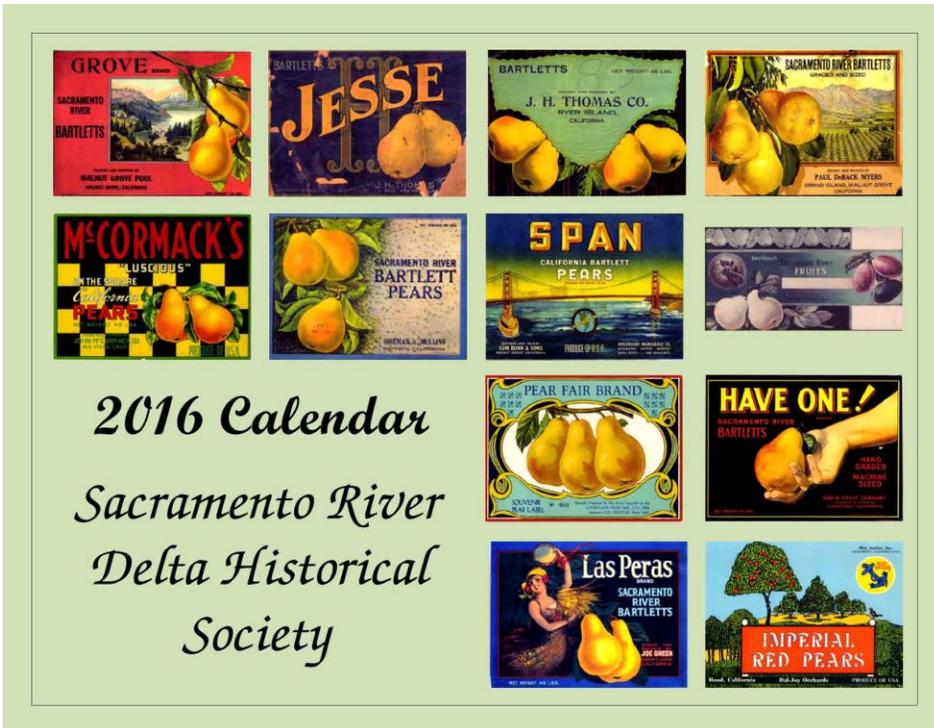
NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor..... Kathleen Hutchinson
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*The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society publishes the Sacramento River Delta Society Newsletter twice a year.

**NEW “2016” SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CALENDAR AVAILABLE AT PEAR FAIR OR AFTER AUGUST 1st**

Here is a preview of the cover of the delightful 2016 Calendar representing more Pear Labels from Jim Dahlberg’s Collection. Each month shows a different Pear Label and there is one page with explanations of some of the labels shown.



The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society’s “Pear Label” Calendar for 2016 may be purchased at the Courtland Pear Fair July 26th or at the Resource Center and at the Society Meetings after August 1st. You may also order the calendar by filling out the form below and mailing it with your check to:

SRDHS
P O Box 293
Walnut Grove, CA 95695

*2016 Calendar
Sacramento River
Delta Historical
Society*

The price for each 2016 calendar is \$15.00 plus postage
2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 calendar price is \$10 each plus postage

If you wish to have the calendar(s) mailed please add the following postage:

- 1 Calendar \$2.10 postage
- 2 Calendars \$3.20 postage
- 3 - 6 calendars \$5.75 for priority mail (2 to 3 day delivery)

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Calendar Order Form

Please send _____ 2016 calendars @ \$15 per calendar

____2012 ____2013 ____2014 ____2015calendars @ \$10 per calendar

Enclosed is payment in the amount of \$_____ (include postage in total)

Name _____

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