



President's Corner

by Jim Metcalf

The Rio Vista Museum was founded in 1975 for the purpose of preserving the history and artifacts of Rio Vista, for the people of Rio Vista and all visitors.

In the January-February 1967 issue of *California Highways and Public Works* there was an article of special interest to Rio Vistans. A framed copy of the article was given to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. William Hurley. The title proclaims, "Merchant Vessel Carries Away Entire Truss Span in Fog."

"In dense fog late Sunday afternoon, January 15, the Italian freighter *Ilice* missed the open draw on the Rio Vista Bridge across the Sacramento River and carried away an entire truss span." Damage was estimated at more than \$500,000.

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Pioneers of Rio Vista

L. L. Palmer

by Phil Pezzaglia

Lyman Luther Palmer was born in Medora, Illinois on August 30, 1850. He was educated at the Summerville School, near that city. He later attended Blackburn College at Carlinville, Illinois, where he graduated in June 1873. Just a few days later he married Miss Fannie Nantz, and the couple headed for California the following morning by train.

When they arrived in Sacramento they boarded the river steamer *Whipple*, heading for Rio Vista. The voyage cost the couple \$1.00 per person, and they arrived at the Williams' Wharf on July 12, 1873. The couple almost missed getting off the ship at Rio Vista. Mr. Palmer described the events of their departure in his book.

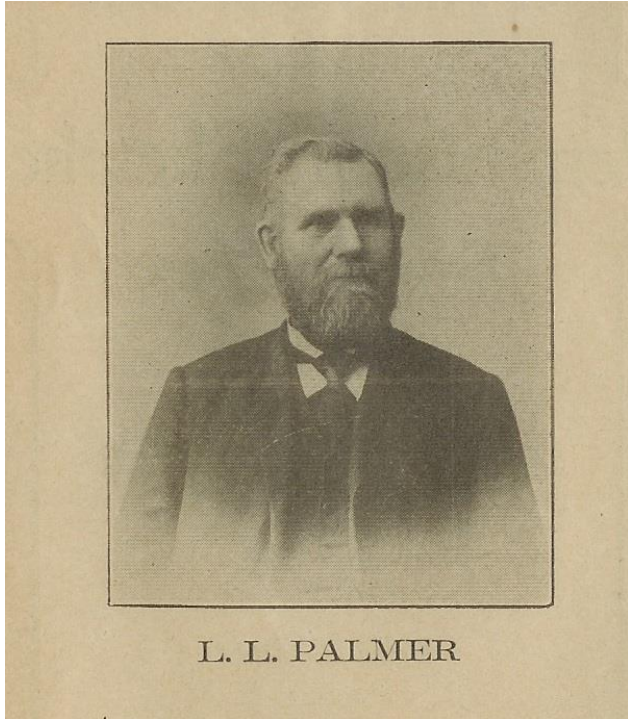
They told us on board the steamer that we would not get to Rio Vista till the middle of the afternoon, so we noticed but little stops along the way. When we came to Rio Vista idle curiosity prompted us to come out of the cabin, where we were endeavoring vainly to keep warm, and take a look at the town. As I stepped up to the rail of the deck some one shouted at me, and lo! There stood my father. I asked in utter astonishment if that was where he lived, and he answered, "Yes, get off quick before the boat goes." I rushed back into the cabin and in a jiffy wife and I were on the dock.

For a short time the L. L. Palmers stayed at the home of his father, which was a large house, painted red, which stood at the top of the hill from the wharf. The senior Palmer was a partner in a prosperous business, Pine & Palmer. After a short time the couple moved into a house which was owned by Edward Dozier. The home was the last house on South Front Street. This would be the first home in which Palmer and his wife would live in as a married couple.

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While in Rio Vista the couple had three children, two daughters and one son. Unfortunately one of the couple's daughters passed away in early childhood and was laid to rest in the local cemetery. The other two children, Estella and Robert, outlived their father.

Palmer was a man who believed that religion was good for the soul. It is known that he was elected



Superintendent of the Congregational Sunday School in 1873. Later it is listed that a Sunday school connected with the Methodist church was organized on December 1, 1878, with L. L. Palmer as Superintendent.

Mr. Palmer was a teacher at the public school for a time, being appointed principal in 1875. As busy as he was with the church and the schools, Palmer also found time to be an active member of Rio Vista Lodge No. 208 of the Free and Accepted Masons.

Mr. Palmer started the first newspaper ever issued in Rio Vista. The *Weekly Gleaner* made its first appearance on September 6, 1877. L. L. Palmer was the editor and publisher. The printing for the paper was done in Suisun, at the *Solano Republican* office and conjointly with that paper.

On April 17, 1878, L. L. Palmer opened an office in town, putting in a full line of news and job type, press, and other equipment for printing the *Gleaner*. On February 22, 1879, the *Gleaner* was discontinued and the publisher purchased an interest in the *Solano Republican* at Suisun.

After living in California for many years, Palmer decided to move to Chicago. It was during this time that

he met and married his second wife, Nora Briggs.

The couple moved to Gainesville, Florida, in 1914, where Mr. Palmer immediately went to work, continuing in the newspaper business, traveling the country in the interest of the *Sun* newspaper.

Lyman L. Palmer only lived in Rio Vista for about five years, but during those years he was always held in very high regard. He continued to keep up with the local news of Rio Vista, even contributing an article to the 1925 *River News Biennial Deluxe Edition*.

Mr. Palmer started the first newspaper ever issued in Rio Vista.

Mr. Palmer will probably be best remembered for his book *Historical Sketch of Rio Vista, Cal. and Reminiscent Sketches, Forty Years Ago*. This book described in great detail the people, businesses, and daily life of 1870s-era Rio Vista. It is by far one of the most valuable references for piecing together Rio Vista's early history.

Mr. Palmer passed away in the evening of Monday, December 27, 1926, at his home in Gainesville, Florida. At the time of his death he was engaged in his favorite pastime, reading newspapers.

It's time to renew your museum membership. Remember that the museum depends on dues and donations.

Regular.....	\$10	Benefactor.....	\$75
Family.....	\$15	Centennial.....	\$100
Sustaining.....	\$25	Life Member.....	\$250
Associate.....	\$50		

**MUSEUM OFFICERS
AND DIRECTORS**

Jim Metcalf	President
Phil Pezzaglia	Vice President
Peter Hamilton	Recording Secretary
Mary Anne Peterson	Corresponding Secretary
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There were no injuries, although two teenage boys, Mark Ackerman and Jamie Cove, both of Stockton, had parked their car at the barrier and were standing at the open draw bridge to see the ship go through. When the freighter hit behind them, both ended up in the river. Both boys were quickly rescued, wet but unharmed.

Upon investigation, it was determined that "although the engines of the 10,000-ton vessel were backing at the time of impact, her momentum and weight carried away the roughly 400-ton span as though it were made of matchsticks." The *Ilice* sustained only minor damage and after about four hours proceeded to the Port of Sacramento under her own power and took on a load of rice bound for Japan.

Caltrans was able to complete a temporary span in three weeks. During that time water taxi service was supplied by Uncle Bobby's Resort, and the Sixth Army operated a landing barge to ferry school children across the river.

On January 18, 1967, Rod Brought cut the piece of the truss from the Rio Vista Bridge wreckage. It shows clearly where the freighter *Ilice* hit the truss. We have this artifact and the article in our farm area display. Come see them!

Memorials

On behalf of the Rio Vista Museum, we would like to thank those who made a memorial donation in 2013 in honor of their loved ones. The following were so honored.

- William A. Brann
- Isabel E. Fevereiro
- Oscar Hall
- Burrows Hamilton
- Phyllis Harwick
- William Hurley
- Charles T. Joranco
- John Mori
- Irvin D. Roberts
- James Stewart

Notes of Note *Museum Happenings*

- ❖ Wanted Items: We are looking for copies of the Rio Vista High School *Netherlands* yearbooks from 1990 and 1994. Can you help us?
- ❖ Would you like to be more involved with the Museum? We are looking for volunteers to "sit" at the Museum when we are open on Saturday and Sunday. Let us know if you are interested in being trained for this activity. Have fun talking with visitors.
- ❖ Have you checked out the Museum's website (www.riovistamuseum.org) lately? There are historical photographs, information about books available for sale, and much more. In addition, recent newsletters are posted on the website. Perhaps you would consider going "paperless" in the future. We will be soliciting email addresses of members, and we can email a link to the newsletter when a new issue becomes available. You can help save trees and reduce museum expenses.
- ❖ Would you like to sponsor a special purchase or project at the Museum? We are looking for "Angels" to help defray costs. Perhaps you would consider funding the purchase of a Film-to-Digital Converter (\$100-150). Or maybe you would like to make a one-time donation to help pay for repainting the Museum sign. All donations are much appreciated.

Annual Membership Meeting

Monday, January 27, 2014

7:00 p.m.

At YOUR museum, 16 N. Front Street

Come listen as your friends and neighbors share stories of earlier times in Rio Vista and environs. Maybe you can add your own reminiscences.

Enjoy coffee and dessert. Elect the 2014 officers and board members.

Old Tyme Christmas Faire a Great Success!



On December 7th, the Museum was once again transformed into a warm holiday space, scented by fresh wreaths and fir trees and decorated throughout. The many vendors displayed the creativity of our community's residents: jewelry, jams, wreaths, soaps, candles, pottery, lighted glass bricks and bottles, a variety of totes and gift items, and many, many more. An astounding array of delicious baked goods tempted visitors and disappeared quickly.

Thank you to the MANY volunteers and board members who helped to make this such a successful event.

Special thanks to Nora Crane for again organizing the Christmas Faire. Remember that proceeds from this event help to defray the many expenses of running the Museum.

Thank you again to Florence Inouye for the donation of her beautiful, award-winning quilt. Thank you to all who purchased raffle tickets. The lucky winner was Tricia Goldberg of Berkeley. She is the sister of museum board member, Suzanne Goldberg.

It was a festive time had by all!

Rio Vista Museum
16 N. Front Street
Rio Vista, CA 94571