



Artifact Spotlight

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.

We are always looking for more space to display artifacts. If you came to the museum and wanted to know where the 1892 Singer treadle sewing machine is, I would tell you that it is in the restroom along with other items that have been donated to the museum.

In researching this article I learned that hand sewing has been practiced for over 20,000 years. The first sewing needles were made of bones, and the first thread was made of animal sinew. Iron needles were invented in the 14th century, and the first eyed needle appeared in the 15th century.

An English cabinet maker, Thomas Saint, is generally credited with having received the first patent for a treadle sewing machine. There is some question as to whether it actually worked. Throughout the first decades of the 19th century there were many unsuccessful

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Museum's 1892 Singer Sewing Machine

The Gold Cup Celebration, 1894

by Phil Pezzaglia

Throughout the years, the town of Rio Vista has been the host to a number of celebrations, the first and foremost of which is the Harvest Festival. The first Harvest Festival, organized by the First Congregational Church, was held in 1870 and has occurred each and every year since.

The Holy Ghost Festival also has its roots in the nineteenth century having been celebrated locally each and every year since 1899.

Another celebration that was held during the last decade of the nineteenth century was the Gold Cup Celebration. Plans were made weeks in advance for the Gold Cup celebration to be held on October 19, 1894, by a committee consisting of J. Stern, Dr. Makemson, J. S. Foord, Ben Fleischer and John McCormack.

Bands and school children alike practiced for two weeks straight to prepare for the celebration and the parade, while other citizens decorated and organized programs and parades for the upcoming day-long celebration.

Unfortunately, the weather was the only obstacle that could not be manipulated by the celebration committee. Rains were heavy on the day before the celebration, which put a feeling of apprehension in the air. The foul weather apparently did not discourage people from traveling to the area, as all of the hotels in town were gradually filling every room.

When Friday morning arrived the skies were still filled with clouds, and the streets were wet and muddy. In 1894 Rio Vista had no paved roads; all of the town's roads were dirt and sidewalks, where they existed, were wooden.

Luckily the sun broke free of the clouds around 9 o'clock and commenced to dry the streets of town. By mid-morning, the streets around town were gradually filling with children and adults, both local residents as well as visitors to the fair city of Rio Vista.

The celebration did not kick off at 10:30 in the morning as originally planned; it did, however begin in the early hours of the afternoon. During this down time the local children partook in devouring 35 gallons of free ice cream. Even

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though the weather was still a bit chilly, it did not seem to hinder the young children from eating as much ice cream as they could possibly get their hands on.

The parade started at 1 o'clock with the pupils of St. Gertrude's Academy for Girls headed by the Suisun Band taking the lead. The pupils of the Rio Vista School came next, led by the River View Band, and followed closely by the Toland, Round Hill and Willow Springs District schools, all of which were from the surrounding areas.

Rev. Father McKinnon, the priest at St. Joseph's Parish, accompanied the academy students, as did Captain A. Anson, who drilled the students in military tactics. The public school students were accompanied by various teachers from the local schools.

Accompanying the pupils of the Rio Vista School were Principal Tully, Miss Cassie Cook of the Intermediate Department, and Miss Emma Jensen of the Primary Department.

Miss Mamie Gifford attended to her Willow Springs students, as did Miss Berka with her Toland students and Miss Britton with her Round Hill students.

The nuns of St. Gertrude's assigned different colored caps to each grade, for both effect and as a grade level designation. The girls of the public schools also wore caps, which were trimmed with red, white and blue, while the boys wore white yachting caps.

The parade ventured down a variety of streets before going down Main Street and ending at the Masonic Hall, located approximately at the site of the present day Bank of Stockton. At this point in time both sides of Main Street were lined with wooden buildings, containing general stores, blacksmith and harness shops, pharmacies and hotels.



Masonic Hall, Old Main Street

Once the crowd arrived at the Masonic Hall, another set of exercises began with the singing of "Red, White and Blue" by the students of St. Gertrude's Academy. A number of recitations and songs given by students and local residents provided entertainment for the next hour or more. Among the many performers were Miss Hawkins, Bessie Harvie, Norris Mayhood, Miss Erma Lindsay and Miss Lena Murray.

Quite a bit of credit must be given to both the River View Coronet Band and the Suisun Coronet Band for the success of the Gold Cup celebration. The members of both bands marched about the dirt roads of Rio Vista between 4 and 6 o'clock, with Drum Major Kiernan, the town mortician, at the head.

The local children partook in devouring 35 gallons of free ice cream.

After the open air, moving concert, there was a presentation of "horribles," marshaled by General Chas Kearney with "Red K," "Ginger," and "Chinaman Bob." This amused the people, but unfortunately there were far too few of them to judge. "Horribles" typically referred to people wearing comic and grotesque costumes, but nothing else is known of this presentation.

The dance started at approximately 9 o'clock when the very popular River View Coronet Band hit the first note of their performance. It lasted for nine hours, finally closing down at 6 o'clock Saturday morning. The attendance was counted out at nearly 100 couples, all of which had nothing but the highest praise for how the

day's events were carried out. In fact they were pronouncing the event to be the "grandest of the grand" celebrations that Rio Vista had yet held. The list of attending couples was a virtual who's who of Rio Vista, with additional couples arriving from Suisun, Birds Landing, Collinsville, Vacaville, Benicia, Denverton, San Francisco, Isleton, Sacramento, Dixon and Grand Island.

The dance was presided over by the very able W. J. Emigh with the assistance of Daniel McCormack and Emory Fraser.

All in all it was one of the many splendid celebrations that Rio Vistans were so well known for having. It was most definitely an event that nobody would have wanted to miss.

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attempts by Europeans and Americans to invent a sewing machine. In 1830, a French tailor named Barthélemy Thimonnier finally succeeded. Thimonnier's machine used only one thread and a hooked needle that made the same chain stitch used with embroidery. He and his partners opened the first machine-based clothing manufacturing company. They had as many as eighty machines and a contract to produce army uniforms for the French government. However, the garment factory was burned down, reportedly by an enraged group of French tailors because they feared unemployment as a result of Thimonnier's new invention.

American sewing machines were produced as early as 1834 by Walter Hunt. He lost interest in the invention and it was never patented. The first U.S. patent for a sewing machine was issued in 1846. However, Elias Howe, the holder of the patent, was involved in a patent war with Isaac Singer.

Because of these "patent wars," the first commercially successful sewing machine did not go into mass production until the 1850s when Isaac Singer built the first sewing machine that was powered by a treadle. Prior to that all machines were hand-cranked.

Singer's company proceeded to produce hundreds of models through the last half of the 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th. Sales figures show that over 300,000 treadle sewing machines were produced by Singer in 1892. We are grateful to Mrs. Peter Jacobs who donated an 1892 treadle sewing machine to our museum.



2014 Christmas Faire an Enormous Success

Nora Crane and her many elves again transformed the museum into a delightfully warm and inviting holiday space. This year's Faire took place over two days, December 6th and 7th, and the many vendors and visitors expressed their support for the extended format.

The vendors exemplified the extensive creativity of our community's citizens with their many wares including aromatic wreaths, watercolors, ceramics, jewelry, jams, and a variety of textiles, to name just a sampling. The vendors also generously donated items for our "vendor raffle."

There was a tempting and varied display of baked goods donated by numerous wonderful local bakers. Many thanks to those who brought in goodies and to all the many volunteers who helped to make this event a success. Remember, all proceeds from the Christmas Faire help to keep the museum operating.

MUSEUM OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Phil Pezzaglia	President
Renee Tingey	Treasurer
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Annual Membership Meeting

Monday, January 26, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Come to the museum to enjoy a program of historical interest and to elect the 2015 officers and board members.

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

True Tales of the Sacramento Delta

Discover the truth behind Sacramento Delta legends

May 15, 1817, marked the first recorded exploration of the Sacramento River. The expedition changed the Delta region forever. A flood of explorers from all over the world poured into the Lower Sacramento River Delta, and soon towns were settled on the banks of the river. As settlement flourished, each new community gave birth to stories of early pioneers, shipwrecks, murder, robbery, vigilante justice, bootleggers and more. Here for the first time in this remarkable collection, local historian and author Philip Pezzaglia reveals the true stories behind some of the tales that have passed through generations, becoming legends of the Delta.

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A new book from Rio Vista's own Phil Pezzaglia is due out later this spring.

Be on the lookout for details about a museum book signing!

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