



## *Artifact Spotlight*

by Mary Anne Peterson

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.

Pictured here are several examples of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese pottery recently donated to the museum. It goes by several names, Chinese brown glazed pottery, Chinese camp pottery and Chinese railroad pottery. It was brought over from China by immigrants who used the items for food storage as we use our everyday bowls and pots today. The pottery was utilized by the Chinese railroad workers in their camps, all along the Central Pacific railroad lines as it was being built. It was quite common in early Chinese communities and has been found in Sacramento, Stockton and in the Sacramento Delta towns of Locke and Isleton.

Donations such as this are important for the museum and are very much appreciated.



*Railroad Pottery*

## Two Early Silent Movies Filmed in Rio Vista in 1916 and 1917

by Phil Pezzaglia

Since filming went so well when the first Hollywood movie crew came to Rio Vista in 1914 to film the movie *Cameo Kirby*, Hollywood decided to take a chance on Rio Vista once again. This time around, in 1916, a motion picture by the name of *A Man of Sorrow* was the object of filming. With the success of *A Man of Sorrow*, crews returned the following year to film *Jim Bludso*. It looked as though Rio Vista was on its way to becoming northern California's "Hollywood."

With the success of three motion pictures in just three years, Hollywood film crews would end up returning again two more times between 1920 and 1926. But let us not get too far ahead of ourselves. In this issue we shall look into the productions *A Man of Sorrow* and *Jim Bludso*. Both films are a part of Rio Vista's past, and each left its mark on the citizens of Rio Vista.

### ***A Man of Sorrow (1916)***

In January 1916, the Wm. Fox Film Co. came to Rio Vista to film a motion picture. This would be the second time that actors, directors and film crews descended upon the small town of Rio Vista.

The company made their headquarters at the Hotel Rio Vista, on the northwest corner of Main and Second Streets. This was the same hotel where the cast and crew of *Cameo Kirby* had resided just two years earlier. The group of actors, actresses and film crew were very friendly and quite quickly started mingling with the local citizens of Rio Vista.

The movie production, starring William Farnum and Dorothy Bernard in the leading roles, with 28 additional cast members, is an Americanization of an English play, *Hoodman Blind*. It was a remake of a 1913 film of that title and is supposed to take place in a little country town in the state of New York. Somehow Lester Scott, Jr., manager of the Wm. Fox Film Co., had the idea that Rio Vista resembled upstate New York, having been to Rio Vista with the production company for the *Cameo Kirby* filming in 1914.

The movie crew, under the direction of Oscar C. Apfel, stayed in Rio Vista for about a week, as the production required five reels of film. They originally planned to film all the scenes in just three days. Weather conditions, however, did not permit shooting for three consecutive days, and the crew ended up staying for one week in order to capture what they wished on film. In all, sixty-two scenes and approximately 1,000 feet of film were shot locally for this five-reel production.

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This film is probably the most important of the many motion pictures to be filmed in Rio Vista. For this film included numerous scenes shot in the local establishments about town as well as utilizing many local citizens as extras. This motion picture is a fantastic visual look at Rio Vista in the year 1916. The principal locations in town that appeared in motion picture scenes included: the First Congregational Church; Joseph & Serpa's saloon on the northwest corner of Main and Front Streets; a small cottage owned by A. F. Scott on Montezuma Street; Dan McGraugh's place, occupied at the time by Geo. Sidwell; a home owned by Mrs. Jas. Cain; and the city park. Several scenes were also shot on sections of Montezuma, Second and Main Streets.

One of the closing scenes in the movie was shot in the park and required 100 townsmen, 75 ladies and 25 children. The newspaper of January 21, 1916 stated "This is a chance for our citizens to make this 'movie' one that will long be remembered. The 100 men and the 25 children will be an easy matter, but the ladies may be a little backward in presenting themselves in every-day attire. If the weather is right on Monday morning, come out to the park and make the final scene a fitting one for Rio Vista."

### Jim Bludso (1917)

This motion picture was directed by Tod Browning and Wilfred Lucas and is based on a story by Tod Browning. Tod Browning directed more than sixty-three motion pictures. He will forever be remembered for directing the 1931 Bela Lugosi classic *Dracula*. Wilfred Lucas acted in over 347 motion pictures. He also directed thirty-eight films between 1912 and 1933 and was the writer of sixteen movies.

The initial filming for *Jim Bludso* was done near Wood Island, with scenes filmed aboard the sternwheeler *Grace Barton*, which was docked there. For those of you who are not familiar with Wood Island, it was situated in the middle of the Sacramento River in front of the town of Rio Vista. The *Grace Barton* was a sternwheeler constructed in 1890 and used primarily on the San Francisco–Vallejo run. The ship eventually made its way to the Sacramento River and the area around Rio Vista and Wood Island.



Dorothy Bernard and William Farnum  
in *A Man of Sorrow*

Probably the most notable scene from *Jim Bludso* occurred while filming a fake fire on the 1890 sternwheeler *Grace Barton*. Unfortunately, the boat actually caught on fire and was destroyed. Luckily the cameraman kept filming as this disaster was taking place, adding to the realism of the actors actually escaping the fiery boat. These scenes were included in the released film.

Sadly, both of these films from a hundred years ago are presumed lost.

### MUSEUM OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Renee Tingey	President
Janet Blegen	Vice-President
Carlos Zepeda	Treasurer
Phil Pezzaglia	Past President
Peter Hamilton	Recording Secretary
Nora Crane	Membership Secretary
Gail Machado	Business Memberships
Mary Anne Peterson	Corresponding Secretary
Suzanne Goldberg	Newsletter Editor
Jake Ricketts	Steve Willey
Beverly Bellows	Kathy Meers

### Special Bass Derby Hours

The Museum will be open extended hours during this year's Bass Derby.

Stop by and visit:

**Friday, 5 p.m.–9 p.m.**

**Saturday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.**

**Sunday, noon–4:30 p.m.**

## *Olde Tyme Christmas Faire December 3rd and 4th*

Every December the museum is transformed by the museum elves who create a warm, cozy, festive atmosphere, the perfect setting for the annual Olde Tyme Christmas Faire. This year's event will take place on Saturday, December 3, 10:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 4, noon–4:30 p.m.

Enjoy Christmas music and revel in the holiday atmosphere while experiencing our intriguing museum. Local artisans sell hand-crafted items including pottery, ornaments, soaps, wreaths, jewelry, quilted and knitted items, and local homemade jams and jellies. The popular bake sale features homemade holiday confections and goodies you can't pass up.

Interested vendors:

Contact Nora Crane at [707-334-6191](tel:707-334-6191) or [onetwin1960@gmail.com](mailto:onetwin1960@gmail.com). Cost is \$40 per table for one day; \$75 for 2 tables for one day; \$65 for one table, both days; \$125 for 2 tables, both days.



### *Museum Notes . . .*

- ❖ WANTED: Items from the old high school that was torn down in 1964.
- ❖ Check out the new museum website at [riovistamuseum.org](http://riovistamuseum.org)
- ❖ COMING SOON – Rio Vista Museum Facebook page. Be on the lookout for this page and be sure to “like” it when you find it.
- ❖ When Daylight Savings Time ends November 6, the museum will take a break from Third Thursdays.

### *. . . and Happenings*

- ❖ Shadow box of artifacts from the 1943 P-39 Airacobra crash is now on display in the back room of the museum. Stop by and check it out.
- ❖ Inaugural Ring-in-Spring Craft Fair was a big success. Thank you again to vendors, attendees, and especially to those who brought items for the bake sale.
- ❖ When you need a gift, think of the museum. We have several books and other items for sale that would make unique gifts.

## *Museum Tour Coordinator Needed*

### *We Need You!*

Throughout the year, various groups come to tour the Rio Vista Museum. Most of these groups come from out of town. The tours are almost always on weekdays, when the Museum is not normally open. Because the groups that visit usually give a donation, these tours are important moneymakers for the Museum.

The Rio Vista Museum is looking for a tour coordinator. The persons who have served in this position are stepping down. The position does not require an extensive knowledge of Rio Vista or the items in the Rio Vista Museum. The tour coordinator serves as the Museum's host to outside groups.

The duties of the tour coordinator include the following:

- Serve as a contact person for groups wanting to visit the Rio Vista Museum.
- Arrange to meet the group touring the Museum. Groups touring the Museum seldom stay beyond two hours.
- Depending on the size of the tour, contact extra persons who will help with the tour. The Museum has a list of volunteers who are willing to come to the Museum to help with tours.

If you are interested in this position or have questions about it, please feel free to contact Pete Hamilton. His phone number is 374-2145. You can e-mail him at [pshamilton51@yahoo.com](mailto:pshamilton51@yahoo.com).

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