



Inaugural Mad Hatter's Tea Party Big Success

Our first fundraiser of the year was our Mad Hatter's Tea Party which was held on Saturday, April 27. It was truly fun for all ages! We started with a walk through the rabbit hole led by two of the cutest Alices ever, Sarah Call and Cali Slonski. Along with games, a photo booth, and lots of prizes, it was a huge success, and we are already looking forward to next year. There are so many people to thank: Birdtown Designs/Cindy Stewart, Brian Crane, California Endive Farms, Catherine Schultz, Chris Carter, Christy Ricketts, Delta Pharmacy, DNL Creations, Fran & Chris Seegmiller, Geraldine Naughton, Janet Blegen, Kathy Meers, Lira's, Marianne Aleck, Mary Anne Peterson, Petals on Main, Pets4All, Pizza Factory, Renee Tingey, Rio Gift & Souvenir, Rio Vista Muffler, and Tiffany Call for raffle and door prizes.

We are grateful to those who lent us their items. Last, but not least, none of this would have been possible without the committee members and servers: Christy and Jake Ricketts, Dana Lapp, Janet Blegen, Kathy and Zack Meers, Lora Farley, MaryAnne Peterson, and Renee Tingey. And a big thank you to all who attended!



The museum was transformed into a Wonderland for the Mad Hatter's Tea Party

Annual Membership Meeting and Presentation

The museum membership gathered at the museum on the evening of January 28. After the installation of new officers, the time was turned over to our guest speaker, Robert Benedetti, who gave a fascinating presentation on the waves of immigrants into the Sacramento Delta from 1850 to 1960. Bob focused on those immigrants—Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Italian, Portuguese, Hispanic and Sikhs from India, by way of Canada—who settled in the towns of Locke, Walnut Grove, Isleton, and Rio Vista, as well as the city of Stockton. He explained the historical context of these migrations and the contributions of the many immigrants.

The presentation was followed by interesting comments and questions from the audience. Bob is currently working on an anthology of Delta writings from the 18th century to the present.

Pioneers of Rio Vista's Past

Murray Leo Isham

by Phil Pezzaglia

It has taken a great many individuals in Rio Vista's past to make the city what it is now. The early pioneers of Rio Vista came from points all around the world. Each one left their own specific mark in Rio Vista's foundations.

Murray Leo Isham was born December 19, 1861, in St. George, Vermont. He was the son of Tiras and Cornelia (Mills) Isham. His father, a ranch owner and farmer, was a native of Vermont while his mother was of Scotch descent.

Young Isham was educated, as were his siblings, in the public schools of his native Vermont town. Upon completion of his primary education he was given the privileged opportunity to attend the prestigious Williston Academy, in Williston, Vermont.

When his education was completed, Murray decided to work assisting his father on the family ranch. This was a hands-on education that he would use throughout his life.

In 1879, at the age of 18, Murray Isham left his parents' ranch in Vermont, and headed for California. He had heard much about this west coast state, and he wanted to see it firsthand. When he arrived in California he found employment in the farming and dairying trade, utilizing his experience from the family ranch.

After seven years of farming, he decided to look into other business opportunities. In 1886 Murray went into partnership in a butchershop with his brother Henry. The Isham brothers' business was very successful. Even so, Murray found himself wanting something else. After only three years in the butcher business, he left for San Francisco, where he ended up opening a livery business.

A year and a half later, around 1890 or '91, he sold his San Francisco business, and returned to the Courtland area, working on the Sacramento River with his brother.

In 1891 he found work in the carpentry trade, eventually opening his own business in late 1891. This new business venture of pile driving and wharf reconstruction took off. For many years to follow he continued to construct numerous wharves and bulkheads, as well as performing considerable work on the levees in and around the area. The *Dell* and the *Limited*, the two launches that his business leased, were common sights upon the Sacramento River.

On November 6, 1902, at the age of 41, Murray took Miss Sarah Sidwell as his bride. Miss Sidwell was a native of Rio Vista, having been born in the small town on January 16, 1868. Miss Sidwell's parents were original settlers of the "Old" Rio Vista settlement. Sarah's father John Sidwell had constructed one of the first hotels in Rio Vista. After John's death in 1885, his wife continued to operate the hotel, which was destroyed by fire in the early 1890s and then rebuilt. When his wife Sarah inherited the Hotel Sidwell, Murray Isham became the proprietor of the Hotel Sidwell.

As we can see, Murray Isham was a gentleman who found enjoyment in hard work. In addition to the Hotel and the pile driving and wharf construction business, he formed a partnership with a Mr. Chandler, under the name of Chandler & Isham. This business did large forwarding and transportation on the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

When the Rio Vista Junction was put into operation in the early 1920s, Murray started the Rio Vista Transit Company, which was a stage service that offered transportation between Rio Vista, Isleton and the Rio Vista Junction. Many an old timer of Rio Vista remembers the company's two classic white vehicles, designed by Bowman's of Sacramento.

Murray Isham was a pioneer of a slightly different era. He was instrumental in Rio Vista's history, during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, and he managed well in both centuries.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Rio Vista Short Stories

by Small Town Schmitty

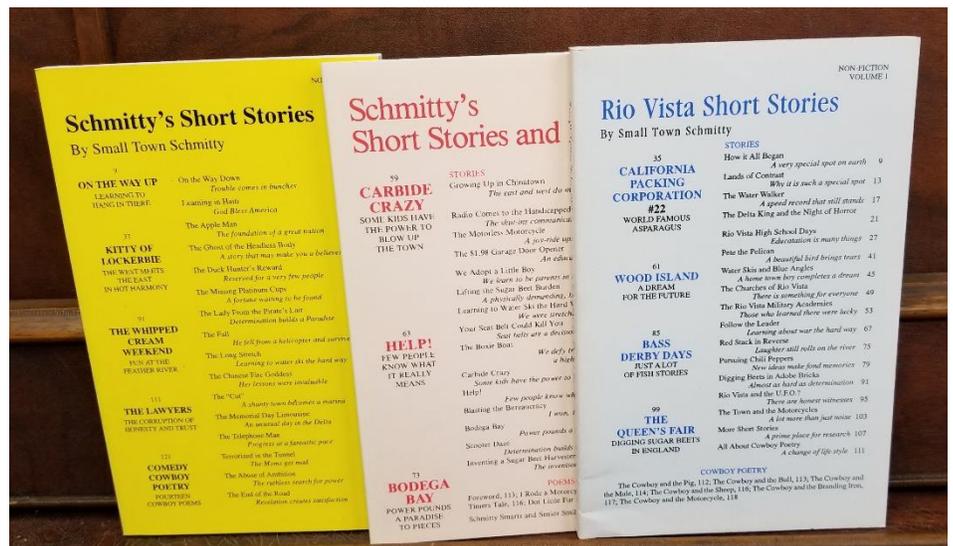
Review by Judy Stinson

When you come into Rio Vista today, it looks like a sleepy little river town that probably hasn't seen too much action as the decades rolled by, but you'd be wrong. Schmitty takes his readers on a fun romp through the history of this town from the unique perspective of a native son.

For instance, did you know that in the 1800s, before roads and bridges connected the large ports of San Francisco and Sacramento, large, beautiful river boats ruled the river and Rio Vista was a midway destination? Most notable of the river boats were the Delta King and the Delta Queen (both built in Scotland), which passed each other as they ferried passengers up and down the river, stopping at Rio Vista with parties in full swing in their luxury bars and ballrooms.

Did you know that at one time there was a huge cannery that specialized in canning all the asparagus that the Delta farmers could grow, providing much needed jobs during the depression of the 1930s?

Did you know that when water skiing was started in the area, a local boy who enthusiastically took up the sport would go on to greater feats of daring in the Air Force as a member of the Blue Angels?



In addition to all this, I learned about the two Military Academies, one for girls and one for boys, that ended in ash and infamy and about Pete the Pelican, along with so many other fun homespun stories about the “sleepy” little town on the river.

I highly recommend this book if you have any interest in Rio Vista and want an easy, enjoyable read.



The Schmitty books are available for purchase at the museum. Buy all three for just \$10, tax included.

Remember that the museum has a number of excellent books for sale, including several by Phil Pezzaglia and *Starvation Days* by George Nelson.

Free Film Screenings at the Museum

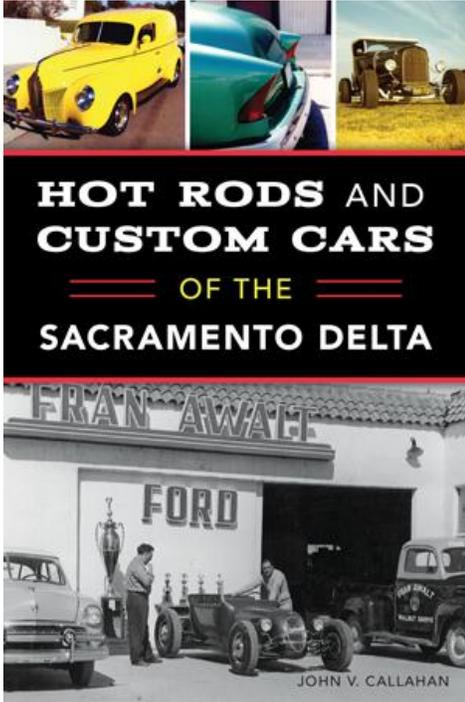
It's summer! And the Farmers' Market has returned along with Rio Vista's Third Saturday, or Sidewalk Saturday, events.

As part of these happenings, the museum is continuing its free film screenings. Past films have included “The McCullochs” and “Howard the Duck.” Like these, future films will have some Rio Vista or Delta connections.

On these Sidewalk Saturdays, the museum will open at 11:00 a.m. Come enjoy free popcorn and see the Delta in these films.

Upcoming Events

Hot Rods and Custom Cars of the Sacramento Delta



Come hear John Callahan share stories and pictures of these custom cars at your Rio Vista Museum
Monday, June 24, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.
Free and open to the public

John Callahan, a “hot rod” enthusiast and Delta hot rod and custom car historian, who grew up in Rio Vista and Lodi, is presenting a program on his first book on the custom cars and car clubs of the towns of the Lower Sacramento Delta. The book has 192 pages filled with dozens of photographs. The book captures the passion of the Delta car builders, evident in the incredible collection of cars which they fashioned, some of which gained nationwide attention.

John Callahan published his first hot rod articles, the monthly “Callahan’s Car Corner,” in 2003 with the *River NewsHerald*, followed by a calendar and DVD, featuring local cars. *Hot Rods and Custom Cars of the Sacramento Delta* is his first published book. Hear John tell the stories behind the cars as he takes us on a trip down memory lane.

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