



Past 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 our museum we have a machine which was used on Highway 12 and on the Panama Canal. Well, to be a little more accurate, several just like it were used on the Panama Canal. Pictured in use is a Fresno Scraper. It was invented in 1883 by James Porteous, a Scottish immigrant wheelwright who had a wagon shop in downtown Fresno. Working with local farmers, he had recognized the dependence of the Central San Joaquin Valley on irrigation and the need for a more efficient means of constructing canals and ditches in the sandy soil.

Porteous and three other men, William Diedrick, Frank Dusy, and Abijah McCall, continued to revise and improve the implement, variously called a Buck Scraper and Dirt Scraper. Eventually, Porteous purchased the patents of the other men and the perfected machine was called the Fresno Scraper.

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Fresno Scraper in action. (Photo by Loyd Griswald)

The First Bass Derby, 1933

by Phil Pezzaglia

October 10, 11, and 12, the City of Rio Vista and the Chamber of Commerce will be hosting yet another Bass Derby, or Bass Festival as it is now being called. But just how did this event get started, you might wonder. That will be the subject of this article.

By 1933 Rio Vista was well known for being the home of some very special festivals, including the Harvest Festival, Holy Ghost Festival, Rio Vista Street and Water Carnival, and Rio Vista Horse Show. That year Rio Vista would launch the first of what would turn out to be many derbies to follow.

While the first Bass Derby was held in 1933, this annual event was only to be held until 1938. The idea would then be resurrected in 1949 for what most people consider to be the first "official" Rio Vista Bass Derby.

The idea of a Derby was originated by two newspapermen. Newspapermen Phil Rose of Redwood City and Harry Proctor of Oakland had the idea of holding a

bass derby at Rio Vista to try and interest people in the sport of fishing. In October of 1933 the two aforementioned gentlemen walked into the Main Street office of *The River News* and presented their idea to the editor, C. W. Flodin. Together the men approached the City Council and Chamber of Commerce with the idea. Both the City of Rio Vista and the Rio Vista Chamber of Commerce were very enthusiastic about the proposed idea.

The first annual Striped Bass Derby was scheduled for two consecutive Sundays in the middle of December 1933. There was a lot to be done in a short amount of time to prepare for the large number of visitors expected to descend upon the town. Committees were formed and appointments made. The many jobs will sound familiar to those involved in the current event: registration, weighing-in, entertainment, decorations, parking, first-aid, clean-up, and publicity. Many local citizens

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and organizations were involved, including the Rio Vista Fire Department, the American Legion, and the Boy Scouts.

Invitations were sent out by the Rio Vista Chamber of Commerce President E. S. Egbert to former President of the United States Herbert Hoover, Governor James Rolph Jr. and Will Rogers, requesting that they attend the festivities as special guests of the Chamber of Commerce. Governor Rolph replied that unfortunately he could not attend as he would be in the southern part of the state on the said weekend. A telegram was also received from Will Rogers, stating that he appreciated the invitation but was working on a picture and could not possibly get away.

With all the committees named and positions appointed, it was time to get prizes lined up. Prizes were gathered from businesses in the Bay Area that valued more than \$2000.

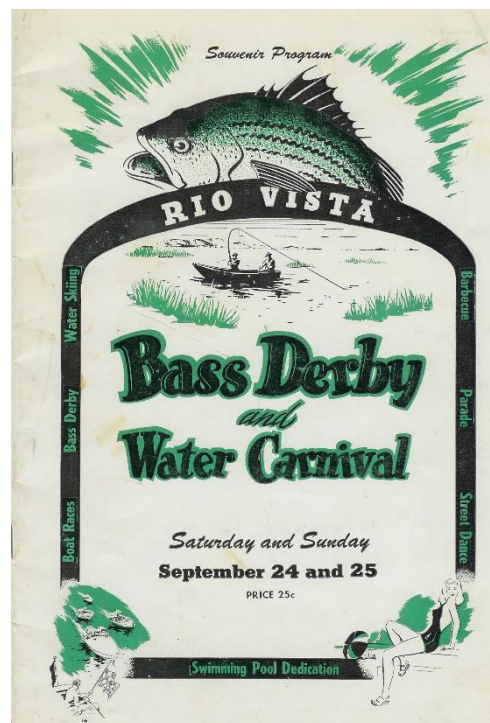
More than 1300 fishermen registered for the First Annual Rio Vista Striped Bass Derby, and they cast their lines into the fog-covered river on December 10, 1933. One fisherman was quoted with the following description of the fog's effect on the event: "I thought I had the river all to myself until the fog lifted in the afternoon and I found myself in the midst of about 100 boats."

Of those who participated, more than 220 brought in catches weighing five pounds or more. Of the few hundred weighed in, a 29½ pounder, brought in by a resident of Alameda, was the largest of the day.

The event was covered by a number of members of the press. Representatives of Paramount, Fox, Hearst and Universal filmed newsreel footage. Reporters and photographers were on hand from International News Services and the Associated Press as well as feature writers Bill Robinson and Eddie Longan of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Frank Murphy of the *Oakland Tribune*.



Bass Derby, early 1930s



1949 Bass Derby program

The Rio Vista Band performed throughout the day, often dedicating musical numbers to various individuals in the crowd.

The 100 contestants who caught the largest fish on this day would compete the following Sunday at the Rio Vista Bass Derby Finals.

Unfortunately, once again, weather conditions were not the best. The month of December is often shadowed with fog and muddy waters. Both of these conditions were found true on the day of the finals. However, all who were involved in the event thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and ideas for the 1934 event were already being talked about.

The winning fish was caught by Rotaro Nakamura of Woodland and weighed in at 8 pounds. Morton Bendell of Oakland won Second Place with a catch weighing in at 6 pounds 12 ounces. D. Yamachi of Yuba City, S. D. Musgrave of Oakland, S. Yamachi of Yuba City, Dick Pratt of Oakland, and A. Goldneck took the third through seventh places. Gertie Hoag of Davis was the lone winner of the Ladies Prize

According to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, it was one of the most important agricultural and civil engineering machines ever made. In 1991 the Fresno Scrapper was designated as an International Historic Engineering Landmark by ASME.

The design of the Fresno Scrapper forms the basis of most modern earthmoving scrapers, having the ability to scrape and move a quantity of soil, and also discharge it at a controlled depth, thus quadrupling the volume which could be handled manually.

How does it operate? The Fresno Scrapper, unlike prior earth movers, does not push the soil. It lifts the soil into a C-shaped bowl where it can be dragged along with much less friction. The operator, who walks at the rear of the machine, lifts the handle to control the depth of the bite and then raises it very high when he comes to a low spot that he wants to fill in with soil.

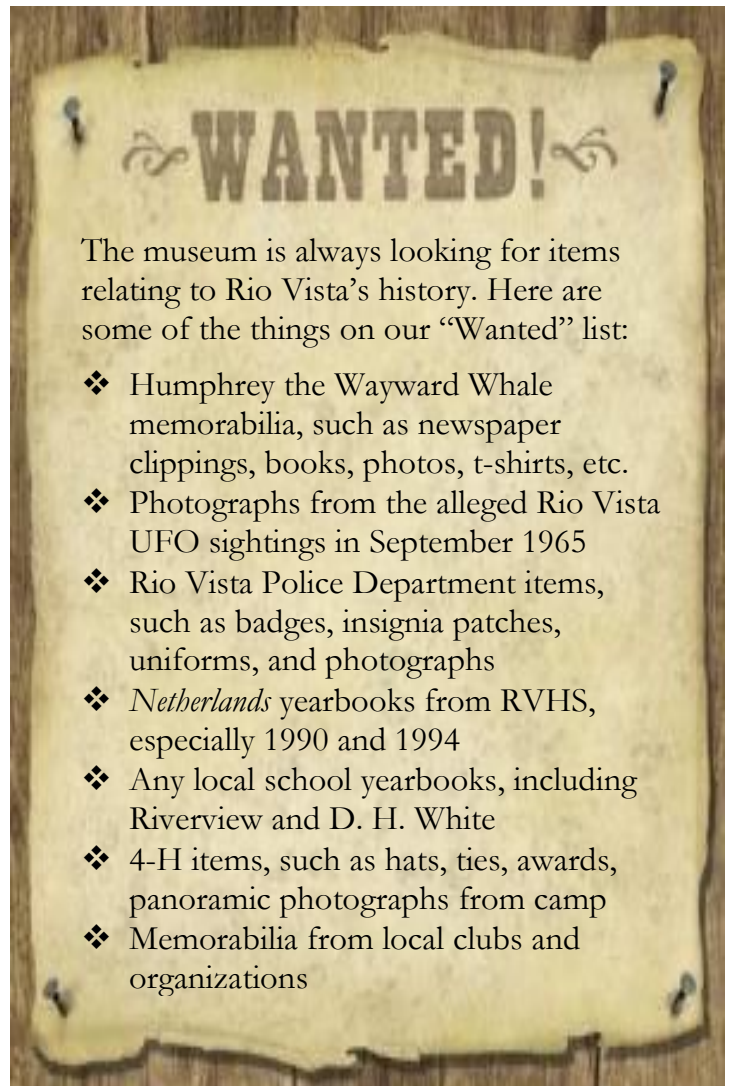
Between 1884 and 1910 thousands of Fresno Scrapers were produced at the Fresno Agricultural Works which had been formed by Porteous. They were used in agriculture and land leveling, as well as road and railroad grading and the construction industry. They played a vital role in the construction of the Panama Canal and later served the US Army in World War 1.

Come by the Museum and see the Fresno Scrapper that was used in the construction of Highway 12.

Note: Much of this information came from Diana Bulls' article in the Kings River Life Magazine, an on-line magazine with a focus on California and Central Valley history.

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Sister City Visit

While the students from Tobishima, Japan were visiting Riverview, the chaperones had a chance to visit the museum. Thanks to Ron Jones for keeping this program going and for bringing the visitors to the museum.



Rio Vista Museum's
6th Annual

Olde Tyme Christmas Faire

Scarves &
Hats

Pottery

Soaps

Jams, Jellies
& Syrups

Bake Sale



Christmas
Wreaths

Quilted
Items

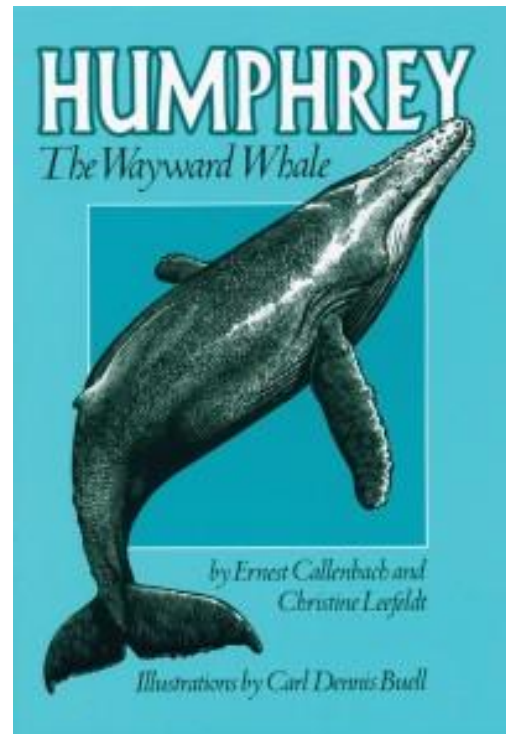
Jewelry

Unique
Handmade Crafts

Saturday, Dec. 6, 10:00 a. m. to 4:30 p. m.

Sunday, Dec. 7, 12:00 noon to 4:30 p. m.

Rio Vista Museum
16 N. Front Street



*Now available for purchase at
your museum!*

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