



## *President's Corner*

by Jim Metcalf

I hope you will join me at our annual meeting of The Museum Association on Monday January 28, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. There will be door prizes, a raffle, and dessert. A Featured Historical Program will also be presented.

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.

Today's featured museum artifact is a Studebaker buggy. If I mention the word Studebaker, many of you will think of the gasoline automobile that was produced in the 1950s which had a "bullet nose." However, today I am going to talk about the company's early beginnings. On February 15, 1852, Henry and Clement Studebaker opened the H&C Studebaker blacksmith shop at the corner of Michigan and Jefferson Streets in South Bend, Indiana.



The shop did more blacksmithing than wagon making until 1855 when a brother returned from the gold fields in California. J.W. had never found time to hunt for gold in California, because the demand for carts and wagons was so great that he

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## **Annual Old Tyme Christmas Faire a Big Success**

Stormy skies and rain did not deter the many visitors who helped make this year's Old Tyme Christmas Faire a rousing success. Nineteen vendors were set up throughout the museum. Their handcrafted wares included ornaments, soaps, lotions, pottery, cards, wreaths, quilted and knitted items, and the ever-popular jams and jellies. The bake sale again offered a wide variety of delicious cookies, cakes, pies, and other yummy munchies. Santa was on hand for the younger visitors. Thank you to all who made this year's event a triumph.



*Annual Membership Meeting*

*Monday, January 28*

*7:00 p.m.*

*At YOUR museum, 16 N. Front Street*

*Enjoy a featured historical presentation!*

**DOOR PRIZES • RAFFLE • DESSERT**

## Pioneers of Rio Vista: Joseph Bruning, Rio Vista's First Benefactor

by Phil Pezzaglia

Joseph Bruning was born on July 18, 1822, in Vichtee, Grand Duchy, Oldenburg. In 1834 he moved to the City of Amsterdam where he was employed as a clerk in a general store for about six years, after which time he spent the next ten years following the sea. It was in 1850, at the age of 28, that he landed in San Francisco and immediately went to work in the mines on the Yuba River. After time spent in the mines, Mr. Bruning moved back to San Francisco and engaged in the hotel business, which he followed until 1858.

It was during these years that he met and married Miss Elizabeth Gertrude Blase, a young girl from Germany, while she was living in one of his hotels in San Francisco. The two met and were married in St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, on April 25, 1855, by Rev. Hugh Gallagher.

Miss Gertrude Blase was born July 25, 1829, in Glandorf, Germany. She came to this country, in 1850, with her father and mother, arriving in New York. It was five years later that the family came to California on the ship *Levis* via the Panama, arriving in San Francisco in early 1855.

Due to ill health and doctor's orders, Mr. Bruning and his wife decided to leave San Francisco in 1858 and move to the country. He bought land in the Los Ulpinos grant, extending west from the Sacramento River and south into Montezuma Hills from the line running along present day Main Street. It was at this point in time that he constructed a home and took up farming on a rather large scale.

Mr. Bruning had the unique opportunity to watch the pioneers as they went about the business of building a town, having been their closest neighbor during those early years. When floodwaters came in January of 1862 and washed the small settlement away leaving 150 residents homeless, he was ready and willing to help, as much as he could.

When a delegate of four gentlemen—Samuel R. Perry, John M. Sidwell, William K. Squires and Issac Dunham—approached Joseph Bruning in March of 1862, he was more than willing to offer his assistance.



He offered to furnish a town site, proposed on higher ground, so that the recurrence of a flood was very unlikely. This event can be remembered as the first of many philanthropic gestures that the kindly German ranch owner would make during his life, to the betterment of Rio Vista.

His interest in public education was apparent when he donated the site for the first public school. The Bruning School was constructed in the summer of 1862, on the corner of Fifth and Montezuma Streets, the present site of the River Delta Unified School District's office.

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### MUSEUM OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS TO BE VOTED ON AT ANNUAL MEETING

Jim Metcalf	President
Phil Pezzaglia	Vice President
Peter Hamilton	Recording Secretary
Mary Anne Peterson	Corresponding Secretary
Gail Machado	Membership Secretary
Renee Tingey	Treasurer
Bob Bard	Past President

Harvey Felt  
Joyce Metcalf  
Suzanne Goldberg  
Doug Tingey  
Beverly Bellows  
Janet Blegen

*If you are interested in becoming a board member, please email us at [riovistamuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:riovistamuseum@yahoo.com)*

## Tours

In addition to our regular openings on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., our museum provides special openings for tours, special local events, school tours, auto clubs and other similar out-of-town clubs. These tours and events are set up through our Directors and range from a simple walk through to meetings where presentations and meals are provided.

One of our regular tour groups is the Dolphin Tours' Best Tour of the Delta with 25 to 30 people aboard. They usually start in Ryde or Antioch, tour the Delta, and arrive in Rio Vista for lunch and a visit to our museum.

We provide docents from the museum membership. We usually are able to get two or three members who have been born and raised here to provide accurate and interesting answers to the visitors' questions.

Over the past years we have provided an interesting meeting area for many of our local organizations. Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, the Sister City of Japan group, as well as local citizens have taken advantage of our museum for meetings and family functions. They seem to have enjoyed our facilities.

If you or your organization might be interested in using our museum, please call (707)374-5169 or email [riovistamuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:riovistamuseum@yahoo.com).

*Would you like to become more involved with the museum? There are many opportunities, no matter what your interest. Here are a few:*

- *Tour Guide*
- *Docent*
- *Inventory*
- *Research*
- *Restoration*
- *Baking for special events*

Talk to any board member or email [riovistamuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:riovistamuseum@yahoo.com)

Check out the website:  
[www.riovistamuseum.org](http://www.riovistamuseum.org)

kept busy buying and selling them. Unlike most of the gold seekers, he came back with \$8000. He went into partnership with his brothers and showed them what he had learned about wagons from prospectors and settlers.

The Studebakers set up an agency at St. Joseph, Missouri which was a jumping off place for west bound travelers, and they became the chief suppliers for the great western migration for the next 30 years. During the Civil War they made wagons and ambulances for the Union Army. In 1868 they had sales of \$350,000 and were rated as the largest wagon company in the world and remained so until around 1910.

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*Contrary to popular perception, it was not the low cost Model T Ford, but the low cost horse-drawn vehicle that introduced Americans to personal transportation.*

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Customers of Studebaker were buying 900,000 buggies and carriages a year by 1900.

Because of increased competition buggy prices went from \$150 during the Civil War to just \$20 in 1900 for a better equipped vehicle.

Our Studebaker buggy was one of those two-seat lightweight buggies that was used by Steve Leutholtz's grandparents on their Montezuma Hills Ranch prior to their move to the present Birds Landing location. From the sign on the buggy, "According to family lore, the buggy was used by Steve's grandfather to fetch the doctor from Rio Vista who then delivered Kenneth, Steve's father."

We are grateful for this donation by Steve Leutholtz in the name of his father Kenneth and grandfather James Jacob. He said his grandfather would be pleased. The picture shows the buggy decorated for Christmas. I bet grandfather and father are smiling.

I do hope all of you will visit the museum regularly throughout 2013 and see what is happening at your museum.



Stroll the Rio Vista Bridge to Beach Trail and enjoy the historic architecture and scenic river views.

## Memorials

On behalf of the Rio Vista Museum we would like to thank those who made a donation in memory of their loved ones who passed in 2012.

Ed Anderson  
Mary Anderson  
Shirley Beaver  
Warren "Warney" Bennett  
Nancy Bennett Gaun  
Brady Family  
Tony Brown  
William C Freidel, Jr  
Josephine Pezzaglia  
Bernice Weigel Engell  
Leroy Webber



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

Besides education, Mr. and Mrs. Bruning were devoted Catholics, it was for this reason that he donated the land for the first church to be built in Rio Vista. St. Joseph's Parish was founded in June 1868, and named after its generous benefactor.

The Brunings were a childless couple, a fact that may have motivated them to be so charitable towards the education of Rio Vista's youth. The year 1876 brought about another addition to Rio Vista's educational system in the form of a girls academy. It was in that year that Joseph Bruning donated land and financed the construction of St. Gertrude's Academy for young ladies, bearing the name of his wife Gertrude.

During his forty-four years in the area, Bruning always had confidence and big dreams for the Rio Vista Township. It was with this continued confidence that he provided the foundation for, and assisted in the building up of the town and the welfare of its citizens. He gave his earnings and land for the improvement of Rio Vista. For this he will be forever remembered as Rio Vista's first citizen, and one of its founders.

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