



The Gold Cup Celebration of 1891

by Phil Pezzaglia

As we prepare for this year's Bass Derby, it seems an appropriate time to look back at other iconic Rio Vista celebrations. Throughout the years, the town of Rio Vista has been 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, 1891, by a committee consisting of J. Stern, Dr. Makemson, J. S. Foord, Ben Fleischer and John McCormack.

Bands and school children practiced intensely for two weeks to prepare for the celebration and the parade, while other citizens decorated and organized programs and parades for the upcoming daylong 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 about town. 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.

During this down time, the local children partook in devouring 35 gallons of free ice cream.

When Friday morning arrived the skies were still filled with clouds, and the streets were wet and muddy. In 1891 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 town of Rio Vista.

The celebration did not kick off at 10:30 in the morning as originally planned. However, it did 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 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 nuns of St. Gertrude's assigned different colored caps to each grade, for both effect and as a grade level designation.

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 where the present day Bank of Stockton is located. At this point in time both sides of Main Street were lined with wooden

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buildings, containing general stores, blacksmith and harness shops, pharmacies and hotels. This was just a year prior to the fire that would destroy the majority of the buildings on 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.

Horribles typically referred to people wearing comic and grotesque costumes

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.

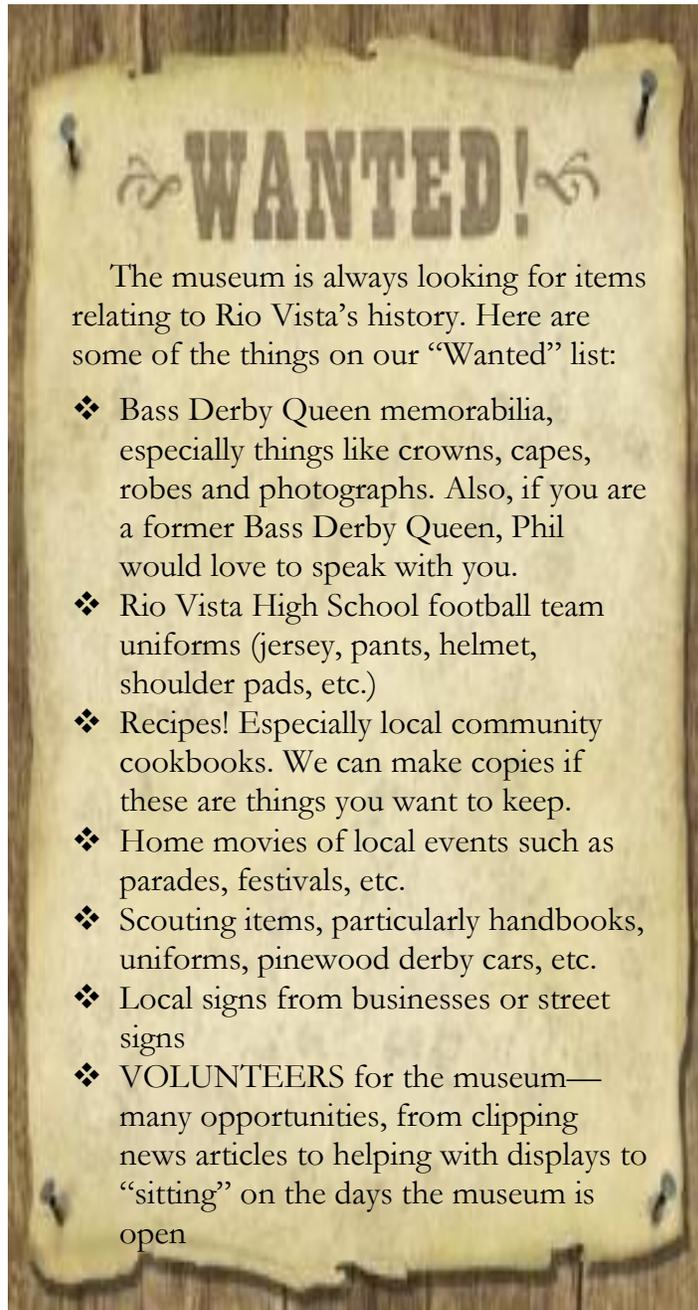
After the open air, moving concert, there was a presentation of “horribles,” marshaled by General Chas Kearney with “Red K,” “Ginger,” and “Chinaman Bob.” This amused the people, but unfortunately there were far too few of them to judge. Horribles typically referred to people wearing comic and grotesque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

It was approximately 9 o’clock when the very popular River View Coronet Band hit the first note of their performance. The dance 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 committee in charge of the day’s events, and well deserving of the praise, consisted of J. Stern, Dr. Makemson, J. S. Foord, Ben Fleischer and John McCormack

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.



The museum is always looking for items relating to Rio Vista’s history. Here are some of the things on our “Wanted” list:

- ❖ Bass Derby Queen memorabilia, especially things like crowns, capes, robes and photographs. Also, if you are a former Bass Derby Queen, Phil would love to speak with you.
- ❖ Rio Vista High School football team uniforms (jersey, pants, helmet, shoulder pads, etc.)
- ❖ Recipes! Especially local community cookbooks. We can make copies if these are things you want to keep.
- ❖ Home movies of local events such as parades, festivals, etc.
- ❖ Scouting items, particularly handbooks, uniforms, pinewood derby cars, etc.
- ❖ Local signs from businesses or street signs
- ❖ VOLUNTEERS for the museum—many opportunities, from clipping news articles to helping with displays to “sitting” on the days the museum is open



1949
Unknown,
Helen
Slawek, Dr.
Simmer,
Harry Alley

Volunteers Make It Happen

A Special Thank You to the Metcalfs

The Rio Vista Museum depends on volunteers for all that we do. Two of those dedicated people are Jim and Joyce Metcalf. For years they have actively supported the museum, serving on the board and taking regular shifts to keep the museum open for visitors. Jim served as our president, and Joyce has decorated our windows for many years. As they step down from these roles, we want to thank them for all that they have done for the museum. Thank you both for a job well done!

Kathy Meers

The board of the Rio Vista Museum offers its deepest condolences to the family and friends of our board member Kathy Meers, who recently passed away. Kathy was an important part of the Rio Vista Museum. She was actively involved in our annual Christmas Faire and our first ever Spring Tea, held last March. Kathy was instrumental in providing information on the history of the natural gas industry in Rio Vista. Moreover, due to her family's leadership in so many Rio Vista organizations – Rotary, Soroptimist, Little League, to name a few – Kathy was a valuable resource on Rio Vista's past. Kathy will be deeply missed.

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Local Recipe

The following recipe comes from a cookbook entitled *Country Kitchen*. The cookbook was assembled by the Women's Guild of the First Congregational Church in 1977. It was sold at the Congregational Church's Harvest Festival.

Harold Cram was the minister of the Congregational Church in 1960s and early 1970s. One story goes that Reverend Cram was duck hunting before church, and running late, he delivered his sermon with his duck hunting clothes still on under his robe.

Roast Duck (Harold F. Cram)

Load two 12-gauge shotgun shells, each containing the following:

1 WW-Trap casing 1 ½ oz. No. 4 shot
1 Winchester 109 Primer 1 Pacific Blue wad (Verelite)
31 grains Hercules "Merco" powder

Shoot 2 ducks. Pintail (sprig) are excellent. Pick, draw and thoroughly clean the ducks; refrigerate.

Roasting:

Oven dish or pan with cover
1 can pitted black olives
1 small jar French Grey Poupon mustard
A little wine

Wipe birds thoroughly dry; apply heavy coat of Grey Poupon mustard over the entire birds. (I like a little mustard inside also for better penetration of flavor.) Stuff the birds with olives just as they come out of the can. Garnish the tops with a few sliced olive rings. Put a little water and wine to cover the bottom of dish. Bake at 350°, leaving the cover off for a time to set coating of mustard. Add a little water and wine if needed; cover and bake for an hour or more, depending on how you like it.

We are looking for more local cookbooks and recipes. If you have any to share, please talk to a board member.

***Come visit the museum during the
Bass Derby!***

Special extended hours

Friday evening: 5 pm – 9 pm

Saturday: 10 am – 8 pm

Sunday: Noon – 4:30 pm

Upcoming Events



Bass Derby Through the Years

Come hear Phil Pezzaglia share stories and pictures of past Bass Derbies at your Rio Vista Museum Monday, October 7, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.
Free and open to the public

Get ready for this year's Bass Derby by exploring the history of this popular Rio Vista event. See more pictures like this one of 1949 Queen candidate, Vineta Lamoureux. Watch a 1951 promotional video, and hear our curator, Phil Pezzaglia, share stories of past festivals.

Coming in December!

This year's Christmas Faire will take place on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, December 6, 7, and 8. Be sure to visit the museum the following week to see a display of crèches from around the world.

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