



## Local Monuments at the Foot of Main Street

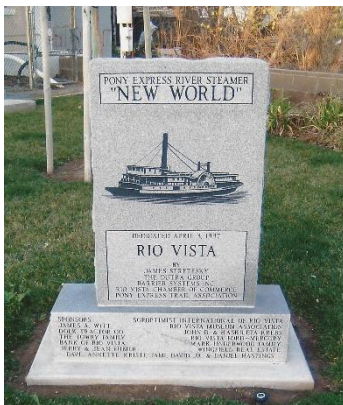
by Phil Pezzaglia

Located at the foot of Main Street are several monuments memorializing aspects of Rio Vista's past.

### **New World - Pony Express Monument (1997)**

The monument to the New World-Pony Express was dedicated by The Pony Express Trail Association on April 3, 1997. This monument pays tribute to the steamship *New World* which first carried Pony Express mail from San Francisco to Sacramento by way of Rio Vista on April 3, 1860. On that historic journey, the *New World* left San Francisco at 4:00 p.m. with 56 pony express letters on board and docked in "old" Rio Vista around 9:15 p.m.

The *New World* was a 530-ton steamship built on the east coast in 1850. She would continue to travel the river until she was broken up in 1879. The *New World* was owned and operated by the California Steam Navigation Company. The company had a contract with the United States Post Office, which dictated that they had to stop at both Benicia and Rio Vista on their route between San Francisco and Sacramento. The steamships would travel the Sacramento River and Steamboat Slough.



### **The Freedom Tree Monument (1973)**

On November 14, 1973, a war veteran's commemorative plaque was placed at the foot of Main Street. The tree is dedicated to all "POW/MIA's" of California. Although the monument has been shaded by several different "Freedom Trees" the significance of the tree remains.

### **Rio Vista Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Monument (1994)**

On Monday May 30, 1994, Rio Vista Post #11389 Caldeira-Gomez Veterans of Foreign Wars unveiled a memorial dedicated to Rio Vistans who died while serving their country during time of war.

The memorial was put up in in two phases. The first phase was that of the dedication of the monument. Phase two was the addition of another stone, which carried the inscribed names of those from Rio Vista who died while serving their country.

The main stone carries the inscription "In memory of veterans in the service of our country who gave of their lives that we may live free." The names which have been inscribed on phase two of the monument to date are of individuals who served in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the War in Afghanistan.



### **Humphrey the Whale Monument (1986)**

The phenomenon that became known as Humphrey the Whale put the town of Rio Vista in the media spotlight in 1985.

On October 14, 1985, Rio Vista drawbridge operator Hank Tussy spotted a whale about a mile south of the Rio Vista Bridge, heading upriver towards it. Within hours local citizens were standing on the shores around town trying to get a glimpse of the humpback. The town of Rio Vista soon became the destination of numerous families, photographers, scientists, and media representatives.

After several days, and a lot of effort from numerous organizations and individuals, Humphrey the humpback whale headed back downstream. He eventually swam out of the San Francisco Bay on November 4, 1985.

The people of Rio Vista thought that Humphrey the Humpback Whale's journey should be immortalized as a remembrance to future generations. It was quickly agreed upon to place a monument at the foot of Main Street, not far from where Humphrey had been swimming. A contest was organized for the local school children to write a poem about Humphrey. The winning poem would be inscribed on the monument and the poet would also receive a \$50 check from the city.

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On Friday, January 31, 1986, a crowd gathered at the foot of Main Street for the unveiling of a monument to the memory of Humphrey the Whale's journey up the Sacramento River. The twelve-inch-thick, four-foot by four-foot monument was unveiled by Rio Vista Mayor Milton Wallace and John Silva of Silva Memorials, who donated the monument to the city.



A beautiful etching of Humphrey decorates the front of the monument with the inscription "to remember the visit of Humphrey the Humpback Whale. Oct. 10 – Nov. 4, 1985."

Two other important guests were present, alongside Wallace and Silva that afternoon. Senator John Garamendi, who coordinated the rescue effort, and Richard Fonbuena, the twelve-year-old Riverview Elementary student, who was the winner of the school wide poem contest. His poem was etched on the monument.

There is current discussion about moving these monuments to other locations in town.

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## Rio Vista Then & Now Annual Membership Meeting and Presentation

An interested audience of Rio Vistans gathered at the museum on Monday, January 30, for the annual meeting and election of officers. Nora Crane was recognized for her years of service on the museum's board of directors. She has assured us that she will continue her superior guidance of our popular annual Craft Faire.

Phil Pezzaglia then presented an entertaining and informative program featuring the Rio Vista Then & Now posters that have been displayed around town and at the museum over the past few months. Old-timers enjoyed reminiscing and newer residents seemed to appreciate learning more about the Rio Vista of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Those in attendance enjoyed Renee Tingey's homemade bread and jams as well as Melissa France's salsa and chips.

We hope to see many of you at next January's meeting.



Aerial photo of Rio Vista, 1972



## Museum's Mad Hatter Tea Party Delights Young and Old Alike

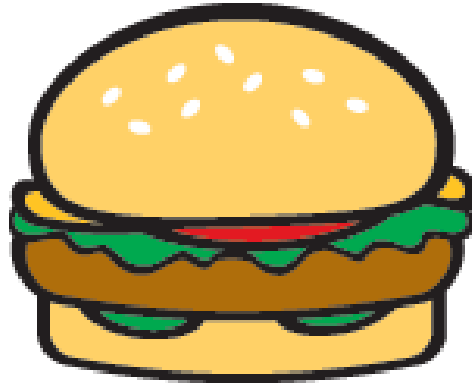
The Mad Hatter Tea Party has quickly become a much-anticipated annual event. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the museum was again transformed into an Alice in Wonderland adventure, and the festive mood was enhanced by the many people who came in costume. There was a great array of fanciful hats worn.

The food was catered by Jenny Emigh, and the variety of finger sandwiches was a big hit. The lemon tarts made by Janet Blegen were described as "out of this world." The Queen of Hearts distributed heart-shaped cookies that were also quite popular.

A large assortment of items were raffled, and there were many happy winners of the raffle prizes. The Mad Hatter Tea Party was a day of fun enjoyed by old and young alike. See you next year!



# **Rio Vista Museum Hamburger BBQ**



**Donation: \$10**

**Date & Time: June 19, 5:00-7:00 p.m.**

**Place: Grace Anderson Senior Center**

**25 Main Street**

**Dine In or Take Out**

**Tickets Available at the Door**

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