

Discover Rio Vista!

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Montezuma Hills Sheepdog Trials

by Jeanne McCormack

You cannot talk about the Montezuma Hills sheepdog trials without talking about the Hamiltons-- Mrs. Eva Hamilton and her sons, Neil, Burrows, and David—for they were the instigators, as it were, in 1946 or so.

It started with a tragedy. On Friday, November 22, 1943, when 15 year-old Burrows was playing football at



the Rio Vista High School, the whole family was at hand to watch except their father Neil, who had come home early and gone to bed because he was sick. Near the end of the game, 11 year-old David decided to walk home and finish his homework. As he opened the door, his father called downstairs to him: "Call the doctor." And thus ensued the calamity. Mr. Hamilton died two days before Thanksgiving from an aneurism, leaving Mrs. Hamilton a widow with two ranches to run and three young boys to raise. And this was a time when women did not pick up the work their rancher husbands had left—not in California anyway, where the scale of ranching and farming was large and extensive from the very beginning.

Mrs. Hamilton had a good head for business however, and she accepted the challenge. With her boys still in school (Neil Jr. left the next year for the University of California at Davis), she stepped into her new role and worked with her two employees to make the family business prosper. And in 1946 she bought the Hoyt Ranch on Birds Landing Road. It was large and distinguished by an olive orchard of several hundred trees—trees

that amused locals because they had never produced olives, the original planter in the 1880's having planted the wrong variety. What it did produce was lovely shade in the spring and hot summer, and it was a perfect place for picnics and watching sheepdogs round up sheep.

There had probably been a few dog trials at the Hoyt place before 1946 but those trials did not acquire the notoriety that subsequent trials did. The Rio Vista Farm Bureau, with Mrs. Hamilton's blessing, sponsored the first trial in 1946 or 1947 with the intent of raising money to build a meeting place for Rio Vista and Birds Landing farmers. And they continued year after year.

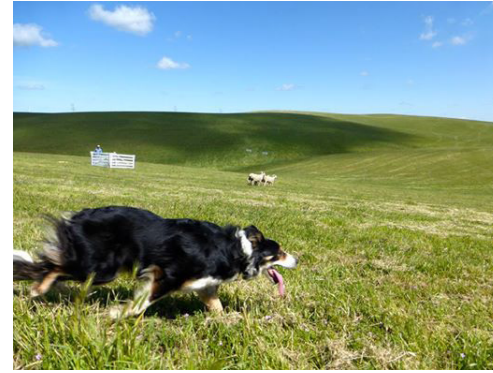
Everyone pitched in at the dog trials on the Hoyt Place. One man contacted ranchers he knew with good dogs, someone else organized the placing of long tables under the olive trees.



Harvey McDougal, famous cattle rancher and feedlot proprietor in Birds Landing, donated hamburger and steaks from Solano Meat in Dixon. Lyle Fraser of Fraser Food in Rio Vista donated the beans and bread and makings of salad. Someone else cooked the Portuguese beans. Mel from Birds Landing ran the beer concession. Admission was just a few dollars, and all locals came. Advertising was by word of mouth.

The sheep dog trials were wildly successful. Some years nationally famous dogs were featured but mostly they were well known dogs from Solano County. In those days, Solano County

was the second largest sheep producing county in California, which was itself the second largest sheep producing state in the Union. The sheepdog trials continued well into the late 1950's or early 1960's. The Rio Vista Farm Bureau surpassed their goal of raising funds for a building and decided instead to create a scholarship fund which still exists today.



In a sense, success killed the dog trials at the Hoyt Ranch. One year three tour buses arrived from San Francisco, bus doors opening to spill drunken passengers clutching beer bottles out the doors. This did not sit well with Mrs. Hamilton, who was if anything a lady. And by the time attendees numbered close to 2,000, it was decided to take a break.

Rio Vistans continued to clamor for a reprise of the dog trials, and periodically in the 1970's or 1980's one would be organized. But the original organizers were older, creakier, or more involved in other things, and the event never resumed with the same regularity and force.

In the 1990's and 2000's the Solano County Wool Growers held periodic trials at the Hoyt Place, but that attempt too died out.



Last year saw the resumption of the dog trials at the Dan McCormack ranch on Montezuma Hills Road. The event was sponsored by the National Border Collie Association, McCormack Sheep and Grain, and Rio Vista Soroptimist. This event is planned to be held annually for three days in late March or early April. This year the dates are March 27, 28, and 29. Admission will require tickets previously purchased. Ticket sales will start in early March. Information about the trials will be published in the local newspapers, on posters, and on Rio Vista Soroptimist and McCormack Sheep and Grain websites. Modestly priced tickets will go on sale in early March. Contact the McCormack Sheep and Grain website (www.mccormackranch.com) or the Rio Vista Soroptimist chapter website (www.siriovista.org) as the date approaches.



Winter 2015 Calendar

January 15

Friends of the Library

We meet at the library. 7:00 PM in the June Rowan Room

January 26

Rio Vista Museum Annual Membership Meeting

7:00 PM. 16 N. Front Street, Rio Vista
Open to the public, refreshments served and no admission charge.

January 31

Crab Feed

This is a fund raiser that will benefit the Rio Vista Boy and Cub Scouts and American Legion Post #178. Ticket price is \$40 per person and dinner seating is at 6 PM. Dinner includes unlimited crab, pasta, salad and garlic bread. Bring your own adult beverage and glass. Veterans Memorial Building, 610 St. Francis Way. Seating is limited - reservations required. Ticket sales start January 5 at Pets 4 All, 167 Main St., Rio Vista, or you can call the American Legion office at 707 374 6554 and make an arrangement to purchase tickets. Questions? Call Jerry at 650 296 9921.

February 17

"Age Well, Drive Smart"

8 - 11 AM -No Charge. Sponsored by and conducted by the CHP. This program is part of California Highway Patrol's mission to reduce motor vehicle collision and pedestrian deaths and injuries experienced by older Californians and to increase seniors' alternate transportation options when driving is no longer an option. Further information and registration guides will be published in the "Beacon".

February 19

Friends of the Library

We meet at the library. 7:00 PM in the June Rowan Room

February 20

Hootenanny featuring Roger Kohn and friends.

6 PM \$10 per person in advance; \$15 at the door. Larry's Hot Dogs, popcorn and ice cream are on the menu - just bring your own adult beverage and glass. Veterans Memorial Building, 610 St. Francis Way. Ticket sales start January 5 at select downtown Rio Vista businesses to be announced later. Questions? Call Ron at 707 374 6714.

March 19

Friends of the Library

We meet at the library. 7:00 PM in the June Rowan Room

March 22

Free concert – "Just like a Woman"

feature vocalists Rhonda Benin and Terrie Odabi celebrating the achievements, struggles and challenges of women in music from jazz through R & B and beyond. 2 - 4 PM. Sponsored by the Solano County Library Foundation, a non-profit organization, utilizing funds donated from the Solano County Women's History Luncheon held in April. Free tickets will be available at the Rio Vista Library. Veterans Memorial Building, 610 St. Francis Way.

March 27-29

Montezuma Hills Sheepdog Trials

McCormack Ranch, Montezuma Hills Road, Rio Vista. Ticketed event. Rio Vista Youth Services is selling burgers, hot dogs and drinks. Soroptimist International of Rio Vista is organizing and working the gate.

Rio Vista Little League

Prices

T-Ball (4-6) - \$45

Farm (6-8) - \$85

Minors baseball/softball (7-11) - \$85

Majors baseball/softball (10-12) - \$85

Juniors baseball/softball (13-15) - \$150

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Tryouts for all levels, except T-Ball, are scheduled for Saturday, January 31st.

Time will be determined closer to the date and parents will be notified



The 1947 sheepdog trials at the Hoyt Ranch, hosted by Mrs. Eva Hamilton. At intermission, Wally McCormack drove his team of 6 black Clydesdale draft horses to entertain the crowd. Photo by Jeanne McCormack

Discover Rio Vista Contact Information

Discover Rio Vista is published by RioVision.

If you would like more information about placing an ad or reserve space for a subsequent edition, please contact Laurie Oleksiewicz at minmayinc@aol.com, or if you have questions or comments regarding the articles, please contact the *Discover Rio Vista* Editor, Lynne Hansen at LYNNEH10@aol.com. Deadline for articles and ads are the 15th of the month before the start of each quarter.

Winter: Jan-Mar, Spring: Apr-Jun, Summer: Jul-Sept, Fall: Oct-Dec.

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Follow the Birds!

by Jan Vick



The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, just outside our door, is part of the Pacific Flyway, is critical to migratory birds: geese, ducks, cranes and more. There are several Wildlife Refuges throughout the Sacramento Valley that provide a place for these birds to rest and spend the winter before returning north to breed. This habitat is very important to the bewildering variety of birds that stop over. Habitat has decreased during the drought; flooded rice fields have been important stopping places, but many farmers are unable to spare the water to flood fields.



However, the Delta area continues to provide this important habitat in the Yolo Bypass, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and Cosumnes River Preserve, all close to Rio Vista. They all have less water than normal due to the drought, but wildlife still abounds. The Cosumnes River Preserve particularly has some great viewing areas for all kinds of ducks, wading birds, herons and egrets, and particularly the Sandhill Cranes.

To get to the Preserve, travel north on Highway 160 through Walnut Grove to Twin cities Road. Continue East over I-5 to the stop sign at Franklin Boulevard. Turn right into the Preserve (there are several signs). There are many trails, a boardwalk area, and a visitor's center. The center has many displays describing the populations in the preserve during all four seasons. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in the Preserve, particularly during the winter, including several nesting pairs of Swainson's hawks, Ross, white fronted,



Aleutian and Canada geese, tundra swans and many species of ducks.

The main attraction from October to March is the Sandhill Cranes, which can be found at many viewing areas. Sandhill Cranes are a majestic, large grey bird with a distinguishing red mark on its head. They are 4-5 feet tall, with a wingspan over 5 feet wide; in flight they can be distinguished from herons by their extended neck rather than the curved neck of herons. Sandhill Cranes spend their time feeding in freshwater wetlands and eat mostly plants and grains. They can live for 20 years or more and mate for life. Cranes often display, not just during mating season. They "dance" involving wing flapping, bowing, and jumping, sometimes seemingly just for fun.

During the time the cranes are in the

Delta, they can be found in several areas. It is fun to "hunt" for cranes, trying to find where most of them are. There are three main viewing areas: 1. The Cosumnes River Preserve near the Visitor's Center on the Wetlands Walk trail and boardwalk, as well as along Desmond Road off Franklin Boulevard; 2. Staten Island south of Walnut Grove off Walnut Grove Road. The corn fields are flooded after harvest in early October just for the migratory birds, and cranes are plentiful. You might also see tundra swans, white-fronted geese and Canada Geese. Please obey the "No Public Access" signs about 4 miles in. Do not walk into the fields as they are private property; 3. Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve (Woodbridge Ecological Reserve), managed by the California Department of Fish and Game. The reserve is on Woodbridge Road, off Thornton Road. The best viewing time is just before sunset as the cranes fly in for the night in large numbers. You can pick up a good map with all the viewing areas at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center. So, take a day and Follow the Birds. Be sure you bring your camera and good walking shoes. A bird scope or binoculars are also helpful.



Third Thursday

Each and every month many of the downtown merchants stay open every Third Thursday until 7pm. Local artists are featured in some stores, participating stores have discount coupons or in-store specials and often food trucks from



around the area make an appearance. Each month every Third Thursday has a special theme and very often local musical talent can be heard entertaining us somewhere in the downtown area.

If you are looking for something special to do once a month, come to our downtown area every Third Thursday and check out what is happening. You'll be happy you did and don't forget to shop, eat and Discover Rio Vista First on every Third Thursday! We hope to see you soon.

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Bank of Rio Vista Today



Rio Vista Theater



What the Old Rio Vista Theater is Today



Upper Main Street



Upper Main Street Today

Rio Vista “Before and After”

Pictures by Jan Vick



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Magical Delta Road Trip

by Jan Vick

The Delta is a magical place to explore. There are miles of levee roads, sloughs, farms, wetlands. It's fun to just drive and take any road that catches your fancy. To give you a glimpse of the possibilities, here is a short tour you can do in a day or an afternoon.

Begin in downtown Rio Vista. Go north on Front Street, under the bridge and turn right. You will be on Highway 84, also known as River Road. Continue through town alongside the river until you come to the Real McCoy II Ferry landing. The ferry is free, and is run by Caltrans. It runs about every 20 minutes and



will take you to Ryer Island. This is a largely agricultural island, with a marina and a small resort. Turn right off the ferry and go around the bottom of the island. You will come to another ferry, the J-Mack, which is a cable ferry that will take you to Grand Island.

Turn left on Grand Island. This is a narrow road, but fun to drive – just take it fairly slow. On the way, you will pass by the Grand Island Mansion. The Mansion was built in 1917 for San Franciscan

Louis Meyers and his wife Audrey, daughter of Lubin of the Weinstock Lubin departments' stores in Sacramento. This beautiful showplace is now an event center, but offers Sunday Brunch to the public. (See grandislandmansion.com) As you continue around Grand Island you will pass many well-tended man-

sions, both old and new. You will journey past fields of pears, corn, grapes and many other agricultural products, which illustrates the importance of Delta agriculture. When you come to a stop sign, turn left across Steamboat Slough. You will now be on the Sacramento River. Continue north until you reach another bridge across the river – this is the Paintersville Bridge. Cross and turn right to go south along the river.

Several miles down the road is the tiny town of Locke. This is a town that was built by the Chinese, for the Chinese on land leased from George Locke due to prohibitions of Chinese owning Land. Take a break from your trip; park the car and walk the main street. There is a small but interesting museum, several galleries, and Al the Wops (or Al's Place). This old watering hole is a glimpse into the slow Delta lifestyle. Go in to look at all the dollar bills on the ceiling.

Continue south along the river to Walnut Grove, a slightly larger town. It also has interesting places to see, including a couple of restaurants. As you leave Walnut Grove, do not cross the river on the green drawbridge, but continue just through town. On your right is the Georgiana Slough Bridge; cross it and turn right at the other side of the bridge. I like to travel the east side of the river, which can have less traffic than Hwy 160 on the other side. Continue along the river until a stop sign at the Isleton Bridge where you will meet up with Hwy 160. Continue to Isleton, where you might want to take a look at the old part of town where there are stores, restaurants and a newly-restored tong building.

As you leave Isleton, continue by the river until you come to the Rio Vista Bridge. Turn right and you are back where you started. I hope you enjoyed your Delta Road Trip!

Rio Vista History

by Jim Wheeler

Discover Rio Vista. That's the new name for this publication because that's what we want you to do.

Whether you are already a resident, currently visiting, or a potential visitor, check us out. This year marks 30 years since one of our most famous visitors came calling. He came by water (we're right on the shores of the Sacramento River). Some visitors do get here by water but they usually use a boat. Of course some people arrive by land since we are on the eastern edge of San Francisco Bay and have Highway 12 that runs through town, but back to that famous visitor. His name was Humphrey, a humpback whale, who paid us a visit in 1985. Apparently he loved his visit so much that he came back to San Francisco Bay again in 1990. We even erected a granite marker to commemorate his visit at the foot of Main Street.

Rio Vista is a quiet little town that allows you to step back in time. The town was started in 1858, but was moved following the flood of 1862 to its current location and was incorporated in 1893, and still reflects the charm of days gone by.

Our tallest building is only three stories tall! The downtown area, centered along Main Street, is only a few square blocks in size but boasts some great old neon signs, a wonderful museum and some beautiful old buildings, along with views of the Sacramento River. If you want a drink or a bite to eat we have several places for you to do that (and you can walk to all of them). Right on Main Street, one place to stop in is Foster's Bighorn which has a bar and restaurant along with an amazing collection of big game trophies.

Several other restaurants also line Main Street as well as a couple blocks over on Highway 12. The Point restaurant has just re-opened on the edge of town, right on the water.

Of course we do recognize that we are now living in the 21st century by the sight of wind turbine fields on the edge of town. They supply power to California and look like a field of giant fireflies at night with their blinking lights.

So welcome to our little town and Discover Rio Vista.



Rio Vista Museum: A Treasure of the California Delta

by Beverly Bellows & Tom Surh

156 years of Rio Vista's colorful history awaits your discovery in the Rio Vista Museum. Founded in 1975, the Museum has collections of items including 19th century clothing, handcrafts, tools and household implements of all kinds, military uniforms, firefighting implements,



This unassuming building on Front Street, at one time a blacksmith shop, houses the largest historical museum in the California Delta

farmland, farming equipment, carriages and wagons. You will also find many photographs and an archive that includes 100 years of Rio Vista High School yearbooks, collections of historical magazines, obituaries, and newspapers from all around the region. The exhibits are beautifully presented with notes and explanations that bring everything to life. It would take several days to fully appreciate all five large rooms of floor to ceiling artifacts, information, photos and exhibits packed into this largest museum of Delta history. The collection is a living testament to the grit and determination of the City's founders and residents, who survived floods, fires and other disasters to keep Rio Vista alive and thriving. Local families, several with roots that go back to the City's founding, donated most of the artifacts. One unique piece is a part of the current Rio Vista Bridge that was mangled on January 15, 1967, when an Italian

freighter rammed the bridge in the fog and took out a section that took 22 days to repair, meanwhile shutting down the only highway crossing the Sacramento River below the City of Sacramento. Another exhibit documents the thriving asparagus packing operation that was a major industry in the town, and yet another features all of the appliances and equipment that would be found in a turn of the century kitchen and household.



Some of the elegant turn of the century dresses on display

The collection of horse drawn carriages, wagons and farm implements alone is worth the visit. Children are usually quite pleased to be able to climb into and around the old fire engine on display and to ring the very loud bell (just once!) The Museum is in the building that formerly housed a blacksmith shop at 16 North Front Street, and still has the blacksmith tools on display.

Two publications by the Museum's curator, Philip Pezzaglia, are "Rio Vista" and "Towns of the Sacramento River Delta." These books are available at the Museum and draw heavily on the treasure of historical information located at the Museum. The Museum is open every Saturday and Sunday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and tours may be arranged at other times. Admission is free, and donations are welcome.



Some of the blacksmith's tools and equipment



This display shows 29 different kinds of barbed wire in use by local ranchers through history



The hand-cranked washing machine is among the many household implements

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