

What Was, and Is....

29 November 2017
by Carol Bower Foote

..and is to come. This is the tapestry of the holidays...weaving the past, tradition, and memory with the creativity and companionship of the present, and the promise and possibilities of the future. Don't miss these two unique opportunities this weekend: a visit to the Dutra Museum of Dredging on the Holiday Home Tour and the Rio Vista Museum at the Olde Tyme Christmas Faire.

The 700,000 acres of California Delta we know and love today would not exist without dredging. The first 30 years and 100,000 acres of its reclamation, and the management of flooding driven by hydraulic mining in the Gold Country, were on the backs of laborers with hand tools and horse drawn scrapers building up the levees. Around 1875, the floating steam shovel, followed by the innovation of the sidedraft clamshell dredge, took over to reclaim another 400,000 acres by 1920. Three generations of the Dutra family have been involved with the construction and maintenance of the Delta levee system, beginning in 1904 with Antone Dutra. The family is descended from Portuguese whalers.



The Dutra Museum Foundation [501(c)3] was established by the family to educate and promote an understanding of the evolution of the California dredge, the role of dredging and the Dutra group in our state history, and the value of reclamation in the Bay and Delta. The museum and [The Tule Breakers](#), co-written by Ed Dutra, do just that. The Foundation also funds philanthropic donations to charitable non-profits in the community including RVHS scholarships. The museum provides a glimpse into life along the Sacramento River

when it was the major transportation corridor between San Francisco and Sacramento with ships, riverboats, and barges.

The private collection is housed in a building which served as a residence, company office, and museum. Purchased in 1978 by the Dutra family, the building is a century-old craftsman style mansion originally built for John McCormack. Now it houses a large mural by the late Delta artist, Martin Stanley, depicting Dutra family history, plus photos, logbooks, documents, engineering drawings on linen, antique tools and artifacts, models of innovative dredging equipment, and a mammoth bone pulled up from a Delta island. (Source: dutrasmuseum.org)

Since the museum on St. Gertrude Avenue can be viewed by appointment only for the public in tours of at least ten persons, the Holiday Home Tour is a special opportunity to catch a glimpse into a cornerstone of Delta history, beautifully decorated for the holidays by RioVision volunteers.

Another treasure for appreciating the rich history of our town and surrounding Delta is the Rio Vista Museum on Front Street, open Saturdays and Sundays 1:30-4:30pm. Inside its small "storefront", you'll discover an abundant display space. After more than 3 decades of volunteer collecting, cataloging, and creating displays, the museum's exceptional collection of photos, equipment, and artifacts provides the perfect backdrop for the Olde Tyme Christmas Faire. See riovisitamuseum.com (October 2015 newsletter) for more about its beginnings.