

**Delta Narratives:
Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of
The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta**



Delta Narratives: Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

A Report to the Delta Protection Commission
Prepared by the Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

August 1, 2015

Project Team

Steve Boilard, CSU Sacramento, Project Director
Robert Benedetti, CSU Sacramento, Co-Director
Margit Aramburu, University of the Pacific, Co-Director
Gregg Camfield, UC Merced
Philip Garone, CSU Stanislaus
Jennifer Helzer, CSU Stanislaus
Reuben Smith, University of the Pacific
William Swagerty, University of the Pacific
Marcia Eymann, Center for Sacramento History
Tod Ruhstaller, The Haggin Museum
David Stuart, San Joaquin County Historical Museum
Leigh Johnsen, San Joaquin County Historical Museum
Dylan McDonald, Center for Sacramento History
Michael Wurtz, University of the Pacific
Blake Roberts, Delta Protection Commission
Margo Lentz-Meyer, Capitol Campus Public History Program,
CSU Sacramento

Those wishing to cite this report should use the following format:

Delta Protection Commission, Delta Narratives: Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, prepared by the Center for California Studies, California State University, Sacramento (West Sacramento: Delta Protection Commission, 2015).

Those wishing to cite the scholarly essays in the appendix should adopt the following format:

Author, "Title of Essay", in Delta Protection Commission, Delta Narratives: Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, prepared by the Center for California Studies, California State University, Sacramento (West Sacramento: Delta Protection Commission, 2015), appropriate page or pages.

Cover Photo: Sign installed by Discover the Delta; art by Marty Stanley; Photo taken by Philip Garone.

Delta Protection
Commission



CENTER for
CALIFORNIA STUDIES

Executive Summary

From August 2014 through July 2015, the Delta Narratives project, on contract to the Delta Protection Commission, addressed two questions. First, in what ways does the historical experience of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta contribute to an understanding of key themes in regional and American history? Second, how might Delta stories gain wider appreciation within the region, throughout Northern California, and among people in the rest of California and beyond?

Scholars on the project team documented ways the history of the Delta illustrates trends in land management and reclamation, technological shifts in transportation and agriculture, the impact of ethnicity and labor specialization on community building, and finally, the shifting visioning of America's promise and fall from grace by artists and writers in response to the intense cultivation of the Delta and the conditions which workers there endured. Their essays testify to the intrinsic value of Delta stories and to the additional perspectives they bring to regional and national history.

With these essays in hand, the project team investigated the current infrastructure for the preservation and dissemination of historical and cultural information in the Delta. It created a directory of institutions committed to promoting Delta stories. In order to stimulate conversations between these stakeholders, the team organized two workshops at which the scholars and archivists shared insights and invited commentary and conversation. Subsequently, with the support of the Center for California Studies at Sacramento State University, a conference entitled "More than H2O: Saving the History and Culture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta" presented findings and discussed strategies with an audience of state and local stakeholders. Delta Narratives culminated with a conference organized around an American Assembly model. The conference generated a list of suggestions for further action regarding the recognition, preservation, and dissemination of Delta stories.

High on the list of initiatives were adequate mapping of historically significant locations, an organization that would draw together the many cultural and historical groups in the Delta toward common action, the initiation of annual Delta Days to celebrate the region, and the creation of educational materials including web applications (apps), and a website devoted to the region.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	i
2. Introduction: Delta Narratives, Final Report	1
3. Defining the Delta	2
4. Significant Themes in Delta History	4
5. Historical and Cultural Organizations of the Delta	9
6. Strategies for Dissemination of Delta Stories	11
7. Action Steps	14
8. Appendices (Available On CD Rom, Website, and Flash drive)	
A: Summaries and Full Texts of of the Four Scholarly Essays	
“Managing the Garden: Agriculture, Reclamation, and Restoration in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta,” Philip Garone, <i>CSU Stanislaus</i>	
“Building Communities in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta: Economics and Ethnicity,” Jennifer Helzer, <i>CSU Stanislaus</i>	
“Stitching a River Culture: Trade, Transportation and Communication in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta,” William Swagerty, <i>University of the Pacific</i> Reuben Smith, <i>University of the Pacific</i>	
“Literature and Visual Arts of the Delta, 1849-1975,” Gregg Camfield, <i>UC Merced</i>	
B: Description of Delta Narratives	
Summary of Delta Narratives Project Delta Narratives, Project Team Project Process and Outcomes, Memo to DPC March Workshops with Delta Cultural Organizations Delta Narratives Meeting with Museum Representatives, Archivists and Historians, April 11, 2015 Agenda and Participants, Policy Conference June 17, 2015 Agenda, Participants, and Action Steps, Workshop, July 16, 2015	
C: Directory of Delta Historical and Cultural Organizations	
D: Delta Narratives Primary Resources prepared by Michael Wurtz and project team to indicate significant archival resources available for future research. This is in additional to the bibliographic citations contained in the essays by the four scholars above.	

Introduction: Delta Narratives, Final Report

The Bay Area, Sacramento, and Stockton have a "back lot": the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. These days the Delta is most often considered a reservoir or a habitat. Major roads run around its rim, policymakers debate channels to move its water toward its periphery. Although it has at times been referred to as "the heart of California" because of its centrality and rich natural endowment, its history and culture have been neglected. The Delta is a place that few know for its human stories.

However, the area is rich in narratives, and the experiences of Delta communities enhance one's understanding of California and American history. The San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers supported one of the densest concentrations of Native Americans on the continent at the time of Spanish exploration; it has been estimated that Native Americans lived in the Delta for 8 to 10,000 years before Europeans arrived. The imprint of every stage in California's history is visible along its shores: the fur-bearing animals that attracted trappers and traders, the ports of call for those rushing for gold, the transportation and reclamation technology that made farming successful, the factories built near its coal reserves to construct ships and process the area's agricultural bounty, and the communities created by diverse immigrant groups whose labor fueled the Delta's cyclical economic success. This 1,000-mile-long water network that connects its man-made "islands" generated a culture that attracted the attention of 19th century intellectuals like Josiah Royce, and continues to stimulate new generations of writers and artists. Its unique lifestyle, rich water and resources, and abundant fish and bird populations also provide recreation for over 200,000 annually. Each generation, each immigrant population, and each industry has given voice to different visions of the Delta.

These varied perceptions have led to divergent and at times conflicting relationships with the natural environment. The Delta itself has responded with a history of flooding, fluctuating populations of fish and birds, saltwater intrusion, and silting. Given its isolation from major interstate highways and its low lying and shifting ecosystems, the Delta has resisted the recent and rapid suburban development stimulated by the several metropolitan areas that surround it (San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento, and Stockton). It remains somewhat suspended in time and dependent on a unique, if fragile, ecological niche. Though Delta stories speak to significant topics in American history, these narratives await systematic collection, presentation, and contrast with national trends.

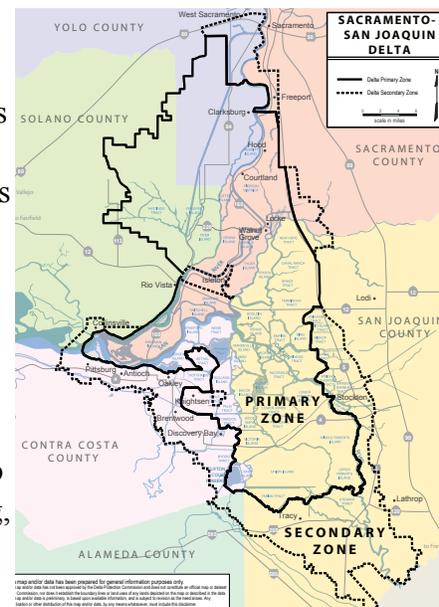
Defining the Delta

Delta Narratives is a preliminary step toward correcting this neglect. The project assembled a team of scholars, museum professionals, and archivists to research ways that the Delta experience relates to regional and national history, to survey the resources of the cultural and historical organizations that currently serve the Delta, and to suggest strategies for increasing awareness of Delta narratives.

The first result of this project was a suggestion that the Delta be represented by new maps, maps that conceptualize its historical and cultural heritage.

Currently, mapping the Delta focuses on environmental and land management. It has become State policy to divide the Delta into a primary and a secondary zone. The primary zone is particularly environmentally sensitive, whereas the secondary zone can support human development where certain regulations are observed.

This map focuses on future practice rather than past usage. As such it does not emphasize the human settlements, past and present, or the alternate transit routes through the Delta. Furthermore, it does not encompass all of the territory that has been historically linked by the settlement patterns of those who have called the Delta home. What follows is a revised mapping, which attempts to address these issues. It does not, however, locate significant Native American sites, a challenge for future investigation. While atlases of Delta maps exist, they emphasize geological and agricultural data; what is needed is an atlas on historical principals. Specifically, such a collection of maps needs to bring together the shifting patterns of waterways, the changing patterns of land ownership, the succession of crops, transit routes (ferries, roads, rail, bridges, etc.), and urbanized areas. It could also usefully highlight events, as Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City: a San Francisco Atlas* does.

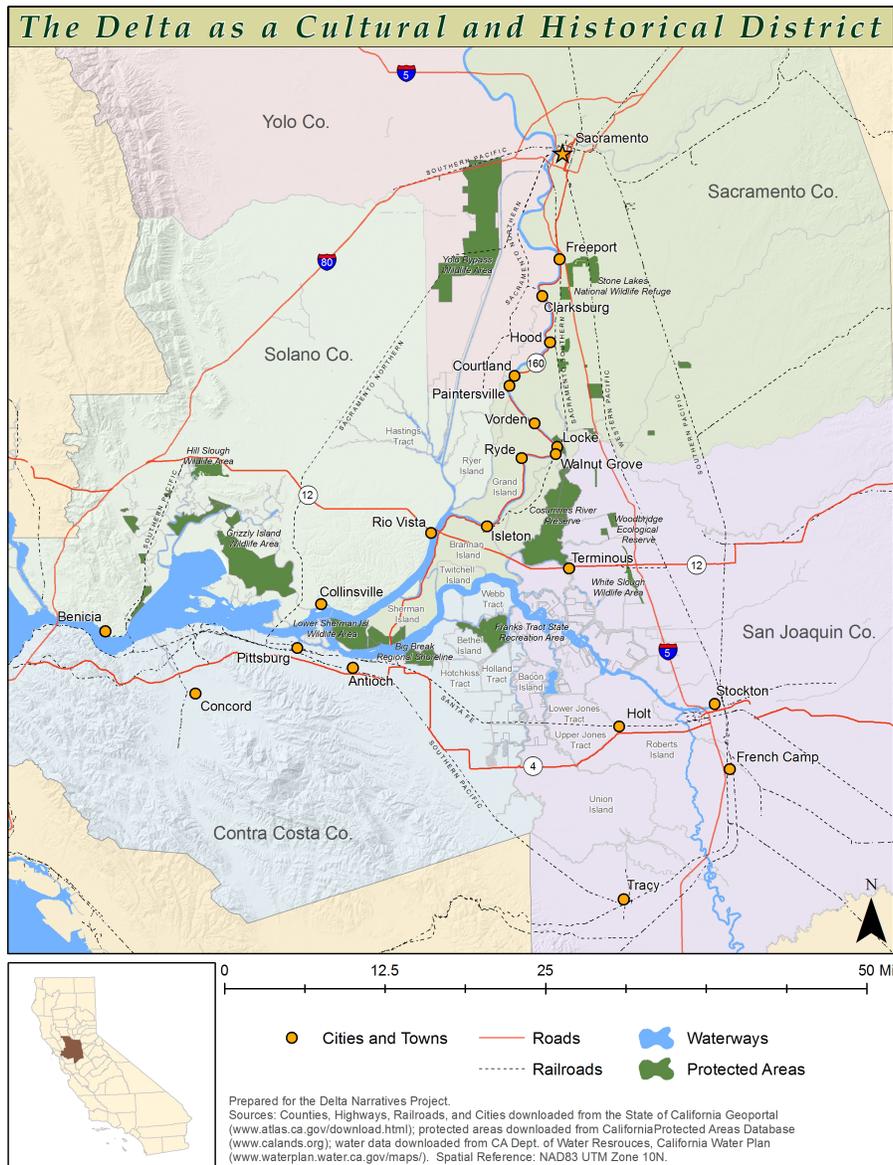


Delta Protection Commission <http://www.delta.ca.gov/res/docs/Delta%20Map%20Exhibit.pdf>

Since the location of the Delta by any definition is unknown to many, including those whose communities share its boundaries, the development of maps that include historical and cultural material is an important first step to making Delta Narratives available to wider publics.

Three of the challenges in mobilizing access to Delta stories are immediately apparent from the map below. First, much of the Delta is rural and without significant urban settlements. In fact, San Joaquin County, which has jurisdiction of the largest segment of the Delta, does not benefit from any urbanized centers, though parts of Stockton are technically in the legal Delta. Second,

those urban settlements that do exist are divided between Solano, Sacramento, Yolo, and Contra Costa Counties. Although they were easily linked when boat travel predominated, they are not effectively linked by roads. As a result of the Delta's rural environment and isolated urban centers, Delta narratives have not been always widely known and shared even among its residents. Third, the Delta was once tied by transit routes and profitable economic relationships to the triangle of cities that surround it: San Francisco, Sacramento, and Stockton as well as to the Mother Lode. These ties have atrophied and, with them, communication networks between the Delta and what one might designate as its "rim land."



Alison McNally, Assistant Professor Geography CSU Stanislaus, Delta Protection Commission.

Significant Themes in Delta History

Kevin Starr, historian and former California State Librarian, has made the case that California is the site of a particularly intense pursuit of the American Dream. Three aspects of that pursuit manifest themselves with particular clarity in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and have been elaborated in essays by the Delta Narrative scholars.

First, this region is an exemplar of the American experience with nature. The literary historian Leo Marx summed this national experience with the phrase, “machine in the garden.” The Delta was a garden carefully tended by Native Americans when the Spanish explorers first glimpsed it in the late 18th century. The trappers and traders who made French Camp, near Stockton, their home base praised the richness of the Delta’s flora and fauna. However, when the Gold Rush stimulated migrations to the Delta and the federal government encouraged land reclamation, the machine had its way with the Delta garden.

Philip Garone follows this story in detail in his essay, “Managing the Garden: Agriculture, Reclamation, and Restoration in the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta.” To increase agricultural productivity, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century a complex system of levees was constructed in the Delta, creating new islands for cultivation and habitation. However, flooding and salinity intrusion during periods of drought continued to be a threat to agriculture and community life. These concerns and statewide demands for water resulted in new and ambitious reclamation projects undertaken by both the state and federal governments during the 1930s and 1960s. As a consequence of these projects, the Delta has been "reorganized" by pumps and aqueducts to provide water for the southwestern portion of the Central Valley and metropolitan Southern California.



Dredge District No. 17, later called the BACHMAN, shown near Stockton, California. Built by Tretheway, Dasher and Newell in Stockton, in 1893, Dutra Museum, Rio Vista.

In the struggle to re-allocate this resource between growing cities and expanding farms, the environment of the Delta has been threatened.

Environmentalists have identified unique habitats, some of which could provide an opportunity for citizens to learn more about nature’s secrets if they are preserved and appropriately managed. Since the waterways also support recreation, including boating, hunting and fishing, the recreational community and the tourists that they attract have become increasingly engaged in conversations about the region. One result has been the creation of a series of preserves in the Delta region, attempts to respond to dislocations caused by reclamation. Thus, the narrative is a

complex one of dramatic restructuring of a garden and of attempts to respond to the environmental changes human intervention has precipitated.

Another aspect of the impact of machines on the Delta's garden is told by William Swagerty and Reuben Smith in their essay, "Stitching a River Culture: Trade, Transportation and Communication in the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta." By the mid-19th century, steam powered water transport tamed the region, creating docks and warehouses. The garden was also restructured as bridges carrying trains and trucks increasingly replaced boats to facilitate the movement of people and goods. Factories rose and fell, processing agricultural goods and building farm machines. The key technological changes here were based on the advent of electricity and the internal combustion engine. The result was innovation, including tractors and specialty boats required to exploit the Delta environs to move resources and products from place



1922 Samson Flatbed Truck, San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum

to place and to provide for recreation. In fact, in the early 20th century, the Delta and its surrounding cities (San Francisco, Stockton, and Sacramento) evolved a "silicon valley" in the service of agriculture, inventing and refining equipment later used worldwide for planting, harvesting, packing, and transporting a wide range of crops.

Yet another aspect of California's commitment to the American Dream emerges from the Delta's attraction for immigrants from the East and from other nations hoping for a life free from the restrictions of more traditional societies. Scholars are increasingly interested in beginning the immigrant story before the arrival of Europeans in North America. Charles Mann has popularized this perspective in his book, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. The Delta has a rich story to tell in this regard. Archaeologists have concluded that California's first human settlers arrived in the Delta at least 8,000 years ago. Distinctive spear points associated with these settlers have been found throughout the Delta region. Between 4,000

and 5,000 years ago, something changed, making the Delta area hospitable for a second wave of native immigrants, ancestors of the Miwok-speaking people who later spread from the Delta to the Sierra foothills and the Pacific Coast. The demography and distribution of indigenous peoples across North America has a Delta sub-story rich in artifacts and significance. Spanish settlers began to arrive in the late 18th century; they utilized the Delta primarily as a recruiting area for laborers to support their colonial expansion. This was to change in the middle of the 19th century. As historian James Holliday has written, in 1849 the world rushed in to find gold in California and the rushing continued thereafter in search of the fertile soil necessary to strike it rich in agriculture. Delta towns have established immigrant communities of Portuguese, Italians, Sikhs, Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, and Mexicans to name only the most prominent groups. Some, for example the Chinese in the community of Locke, successfully reconstructed their homeland in miniature on the Delta shores. However, for others, the pursuit of the American dream was not without intergroup tensions; the Delta was the site of the last segregated schools in California.

As Jennifer Helzer demonstrates in her essay, “Building Communities in the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta: Economics and Ethnicity,” the founding of communities in the Delta has roots in the economic orientation of immigrants. Many came to the Delta with specialized skills; they and their communities remained only as long as there was economic demand for their skills. Thereafter, they moved on, leaving ghost towns or communities of reduced vitality. Thus, community building was linked to the demands for labor. In some cases, laborers bypassed Delta communities altogether, living in rim cities like Stockton and Sacramento. In all cases, labor conditions and demand called the tune.



A lifetime of pruning pear trees in the Delta
(1966 Roger Minick photograph).

A third aspect of the American Dream is the opportunity for social and cultural mobility. America has been envisioned in Biblical imagery as a place where God has made a good life possible but also where the weaknesses of human endeavor are prophesized. The reality of the Delta experience has provided writers and artists the opportunity to test that hypothesis. *As Gregg Camfield notes in his essay, “Literature and Visual Arts of the Delta, 1849-1975,” 19th and early 20th century writers showed California as an El Dorado where Anglos in particular could find riches.* As one moves into the 20th century, others, like Jack London, see great struggle in California, but also great material for the imagination and for adventure. Mid-20th century poets like William Everson have praised the subtle natural elegance of the landscape even after reclamation. Joan Didion, however, captures the dark side of pursuing the

American Dream, writing about the dependence of the Delta on monolithic financial structures outside the control of local residents. A striking contrast between viewing the Delta as promised land and finding there a prophetic warning of human abuse is manifest by comparing two paintings, one by John Ross Key in 1860 and a second by Wayne Thiebaud in 2000.

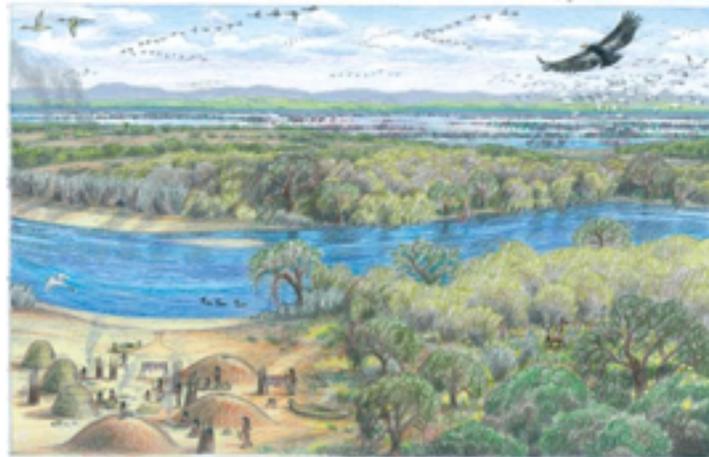


Mount Diablo, John Ross Key (1873) Held by The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley



Wayne Thiebaud, Rivers and Farms, DeYoung Museum, San Francisco

As a locus in the imagination, the Delta has evolved from Native Americans who envisioned the Delta as an ideal place to live their lives as part of the natural order and where they could harvest nature's bounty.



Early spring scene along the Sacramento River, a Plains Miwok village on the bank and a condor overhead.
Laura Cunningham, 2010

For the Spanish it was a place of danger, dominated by native warriors and swampy terrain. It was avoided except to collect necessary laborers. For the miners of 1849, the Delta was a water highway. Later innovative farmers envisioned it as a place where a utopian farm life could be created by the use of modern machinery and reclamation. However, there was sufficient land available in the Delta that others conceptualized it as a place of escape, a hideout, a place to drop out of the modern world. Closer to our time, the Delta is envisioned as a place where nature's dominance has been restored.

To be sure, many of these visions remain alive in the Delta imagination, and they deserve further investigation and elaboration. Delta narratives can increase the understanding of the history of environmental management, of agricultural technology, of ethnic communities, of labor, and of the elaboration of Biblical themes in America. As the scholars' essays make clear, these stories connect directly to regional and national narratives that define America. These stories can also be aggregated into themes on which partnerships among cultural organizations in the Delta and beyond can be built.



Photo by Rich Turner

Historical and Cultural Organizations of the Delta

The keepers of these and other Delta stories are a collection of close to 40 institutions with a variety of missions and resources. They do not have a history of cooperation or coordination, but each has developed loyal volunteers and delivered significant service to mostly local communities.

The region is host to three significant history and cultural museums and a university archive with considerable depth in Delta history. The Haggin Museum in Stockton, the San Joaquin Historical Society and Museum, the Center for Sacramento History, and the University of the Pacific Holt-Atherton Special Collections have been active participants in the Delta Narratives project. They are fully committed to foregrounding Delta stories.

In addition, the region has eight additional museums. Five are dedicated to a particular city or region (Antioch, Pittsburg, Benicia, Rio Vista, and East Contra Costa). The rest focus on a particular topic (railroads, science, and the dredging industry). There are also at least five historical societies not directly connected to a museum or building, but collect materials and promote historical literacy.

Much of the social capital mobilized for historical and cultural awareness is focused on specific locations, either parkland or structures. The State of California has nine park sites and an archive in Sacramento, many of which have Delta connections. In the Delta itself, there are at least twelve operative state parks, including the Chinese Boardinghouse in Locke and the Fisher-Hanlon House in Benicia. The Consumes River Conservancy and San Joaquin County have parks with historical materials from the region. There are two sites serviced by the National Park Service: the John Muir House and Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Finally, there are a number of buildings that are preserved and opened to the public through the efforts of volunteer organizations, for example, the Rea House, the McFarland Ranch, the Bing Kong Tong Building, and the Hill House.

Although these centers of activity have been significant, they only begin to touch the surface of the places and artifacts of historical significance in the region. For example, there is no site presenting Native American patterns of life except for limited displays at the Haggin and the San Joaquin County Historical museums. Recently “The built historical resources evaluation report for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan project” (2012) reported on the eligibility of the 667 structures built in the Delta region before 1968 for inclusion on the California or National Historic Register. Of the 667 identified, 240 could not be surveyed and so remain of possible historic value. Of the remaining 427 structures, 25 were deemed significant enough to merit recognition. However, only seven are currently so recognized. In other words, the Delta has at least 18 sites already evaluated as of national and state significance, but that lack the appropriate protections and presentations to wider publics.

Surprisingly, the Delta has yet to develop a gateway or gateways through which visitors can enter and receive information about its historical and cultural treasures. An attempt has been made to create such a point of entry on Highway 12 near Rio Vista, but the Discover the Delta initiative has stalled due to a lack of funding. At this time, therefore, there is no central point for the distribution of materials or where an introduction to the region is available. Further, since the entire Delta region is not served well by the current road system, multiple gateways would be required if all the major routes into the region are to be serviced. It would also be necessary for the three historic "gateway" cities of San Francisco, Sacramento, and Stockton to embrace their geographic proximity and connection to the Delta, and participate in the effort to introduce their citizens and their visitors to the Delta region.

Strategies for Dissemination of Delta Stories

The Delta Narratives project set out to document the historical and cultural themes that tie the experience of the Delta to regional and national history. Given the significance of these ties, the project identified strategic initiatives with would make greater numbers of people aware of Delta stories. This second phase of the project began with discussions among museum professionals from the Haggin Museum, the Center for Sacramento History, the San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum, the University of the Pacific Holt-Atherton Special Collections, and visiting historians from Sacramento and San Francisco State Universities.

The group focused on projects that could help visitors interpret the Delta by themselves. The first suggestion was the development of a web application (app) because it could assist Delta institutions in communicating with young and family oriented audiences as well as appeal to today's tech-savvy tourists. A second suggestion was to create uniform historical markers throughout the Delta, with some oral history component offered at each one. Should gateways be designated, a film, an interactive map showing alternative tour routes, and a detailed written guide might be offered to orient visitors.

The group realized the challenges of exhibits in the Delta. Few, if any, cultural and historical organizations have adequate exhibition space even for traveling shows. However, it might be possible for an exhibit to be displayed over multiple venues and be supported by larger institutions located in Stockton, Lodi, and Sacramento as well as smaller Delta institutions. Exhibitions could vary by theme and venue and be offered on designated dates where transportation and advertising would be arranged. These efforts might be particularly attractive if they featured oral histories or reconstructed narratives of the actual actors in the historical events to be highlighted.

Additional initiatives might focus on schools and curriculum. One idea would be a specialized website with materials to supplement curriculum. The website could include primary source materials so the Delta could become the focus of academic research. Here as well as with other initiatives, the diversity of stories available should be highlighted in order to apply to different audiences. Especially useful might be the inclusion of a variety of ethnic stories, and accounts of new technologies and agricultural innovations.

Following the meeting of museum professionals, Delta Narratives structured an American Assembly program in which a wide variety of Delta stakeholders were challenged to address ways to better promote partnership around Delta stories, to increase the appreciation of Delta stories in communities in Northern California, and to stimulate interest in Delta history and culture throughout California and beyond. The 40-plus stakeholders divided into three groups, each group responsible to brainstorm and then evaluate solutions. At the end of the day, all three groups brought their top results to the group as a whole, which voted on those they found most compelling.

The group that focused on internal Delta cooperation suggested two preliminary steps, the preparation of a digital map of significant historical and cultural sites and the creation of a comprehensive directory of cultural institutions, completing the work already begun by the Delta Narratives Project (see *Directory of Cultural and Historical Organizations* in the Appendix). The group also suggested reviving boat and bus tours of the Delta for residents as well as visitors so that its full extent could be experienced. They stressed that it was critical to involve youth from afar as well as local citizens. In both cases, those attempting to stimulate their interest would be expected to identify a truly common purpose and attempt to meet people on their own terms and in their own environment.

The group focusing on the relationship between the Delta and surrounding communities argued that the Delta's cultural groups, once they have come together, should coordinate with affinity groups beyond the Delta in an attempt to educate the citizenry of these communities beyond the Delta's borders. As these networks learn to cooperate they could target youth and families in these areas. They should design appealing tours and outings that would be easy to execute.

Such initiatives should involve private business to the greatest extent possible. They should be accompanied by public relations campaigns that explain the significance of Delta stories and why coming to the Delta is crucial to understanding them. One idea would be a campaign that stresses visiting the Delta before its treasures are damaged further. On a more positive note, it can be argued that the Delta echoes California history; to experience the Delta is to experience the evolution of California.

In order to accomplish such a strategy, the group suggested approaching three key collaborators: Sacramento State students and faculty, sites in the Bay Area and Mother Lode that have special historic ties to sites in the Delta, and the chambers of commerce in the Delta and surrounding communities, especially Stockton, San Francisco and Sacramento. This group championed the creation of a central clearinghouse for information on the Delta that could be accessed online and at key locations in the Delta. They also considered creating a K-12 curriculum that would integrate Delta narratives into the California story. To stimulate initial visits to the Delta, the group suggested creating Delta Days to encourage visitors to sample a variety of sites.

The group charged with considering links between Delta history and the state and beyond, urged the creation of an on-going central organization to promote education, research, exhibits, and travel through the Delta. It would be an independent organization, but one willing to cooperate with state agencies. Members of this group were generally in favor of a National Heritage Area (NHA) but divided over whether the organization they were suggesting should advocate the NHA before Congress.

The group believed that visitors must see the Delta to appreciate it truly and have the benefit of interpretations by specialists. For example, this group would have trips planned with experts on

such topics as fishing, birding, ethnic communities, and so forth. In addition, they hoped the creation of sophisticated school and college curricula would stimulate an appetite for later visits.

Running through all three groups was the need to mobilize Delta groups into a continuing organization for the promotion of culture and history. They also believe that people must see the Delta to appreciate its cultural riches and that working to integrate Delta stories into primary, secondary, and college curricula could create an appetite for visiting it. Finally, they agree with the museum professionals that the creation of a website and/or web application (app) would help to attract people, particularly the young, to Delta narratives. All three groups believed that whatever strategies were adopted should pay particular attention to the young in the hope that they will help sustain the distribution of Delta Stories to the next generation.

The conference participants did not underestimate the challenges in attempting to build on such strategies. Transportation around the Delta is difficult; the area does not have a strong information technology infrastructure; and Internet, Wi-Fi and cell phone access are underdeveloped. Furthermore, there are currently only limited places for one to stay or to find a meal. The Delta is without a comprehensive hospitality plan. The area is also under multiple governmental jurisdictions, making any coordinated action difficult, and lacks large or commodious buildings for exhibitions, performances and meetings. In addition, it has long promoted escape from neighbors, from visitors from rim land cities, and from strangers of any sort. Finally, the conversations and resources within the Delta today focus on the quality and quantity of water, leaving little room for other subjects.

Action Steps

What then should be the next steps? Clearly some form of Delta-wide organization is a top priority. However, it is difficult to create such a group without a clear focus and challenge at hand. Three possible projects emerged from these discussions: the creation of an app/website/digital maps for the Delta, the integration of Delta Stories into California's educational curriculum and the organizing of regular Delta Days to announce the region's historical and cultural riches. In each case, the four topics that the scholars expanded upon could play a key role in defining the content of these outcomes. Of course, these projects will require leadership, institutional commitments, and funding. They would also benefit by the inclusion of scholars from other educational and cultural institutions like the Oakland Museum, UC Davis, UC Berkeley and CSU East Bay as well as interested groups in the Bay Area and possibly, the Mother Lode. To recruit additional partners in the Delta and beyond, it may be strategic to make the securing of funding a first priority.