

## **Delta Narratives is a project to showcase the Delta's place in history.**

With funding from the Delta Protection Commission, Professor Emeritus Robert Benedetti, former Delta Protection Commission Executive Director Margit Aramburu, and a team of scholars, museum professionals and archivists, have begun the first phase of an ambitious plan to organize cultural and historical exhibits in the Delta. They strive to make Delta narratives, today mostly obscure, widely available to the public.

Local historical societies, museums, and libraries have preserved valuable pieces of the Delta story. The Delta Narratives project aims to create a way for these pieces to be interrelated, showcasing the Delta region for what it really is - one of the most historically important regions in the United States.

Human beings have occupied the Delta continuously for over ten thousand years. In the mid nineteenth century, the Gold Rush brought thousands from around the world to San Francisco. They crowded the water highway to the rivers and mines. On the way many saw the potential of the Delta's rich soil and it soon became an agricultural destination. With its labyrinth of sloughs and rich wildlife habitats, the Delta later attracted those who would relax or hide out in its byways. Today its significance for California's ecosystem has been recognized and the use of its water hotly debated.

As a first step to recovering the stories that lay behind these events, four scholars are relating Delta narratives to trends in regional and American history. The specific themes they are pursuing include transportation and communication, reclamation and restoration, the building of ethnic and economic communities, and the changing perspectives of writers and visual artists.

The project also brings together museum professionals and archivists who, working with the scholars, will propose a series of exhibition strategies to make scholarly findings come alive and to help the public become aware of the many cultural institutions serving the region. The Delta is one of the most historically important areas in the West, or even the country, and its narratives deserve to be understood and widely shared.

The final report of the project will be a draft plan for enhancing the distribution of Delta Narratives through exhibitions and other joint projects of the several cultural and historical organizations in the region. The plan will be crafted at a conference to be held in the Delta on July 16, 2015 in West Sacramento. Those interested in receiving invitations to participate should contact Robert Benedetti ([rbenedetti@pacific.edu](mailto:rbenedetti@pacific.edu)).