

DELTA VOICE

The voice of those who
live, work and play
in the Delta.

Spring 2016

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Below: Pollinating apple blossoms, courtesy
of the California Apple Commission.



Nerds in the Wilderness

A novice geocacher finds a new way to enjoy the Delta

No, I had never been geocaching. Frankly, I'm not sure I had ever turned on the GPS on my phone (I make phone calls with my phone - I know, really old school). So when my colleagues told me I had to try geocaching, it was only the lure of a gorgeous day in the Delta that got me out there.

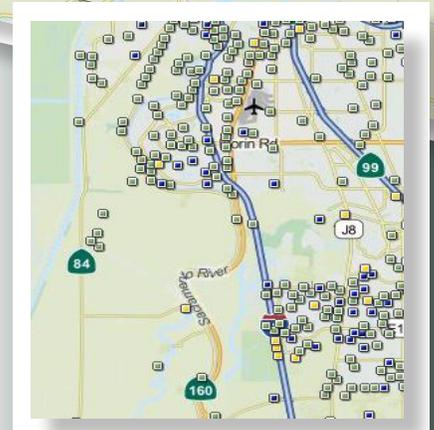
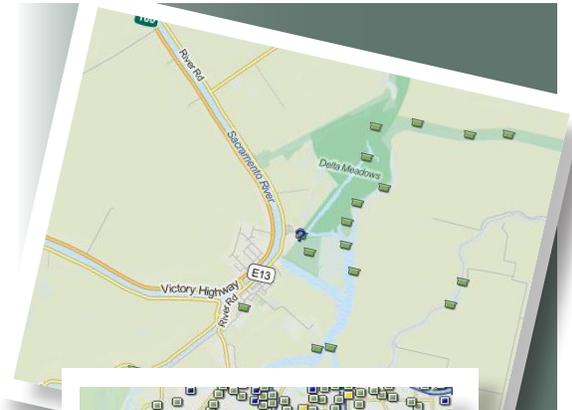
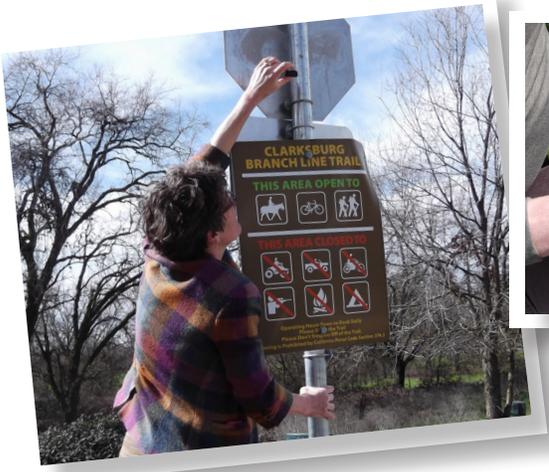
I was delighted to discover that I didn't have to have any specific brand of phone - any smart phone or GPS enabled device will do. I found the site, www.geocaching.com, created a username and password (be careful - lots of people are going to know this username), and we got started.

What is geocaching? Geocaching uses GPS-enabled devices and a set of GPS coordinates to find a hidden container or "cache." The origins of geocaching can be traced to 2000, when the U.S. discontinued its use of "selective availability," the deliberate degradation of GPS signals for national security. Overnight, GPS accuracy and responsiveness improved dramatically.



The day's first cache eluded us.

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Left: It took standing on a tractor tire to reach this one. Above: Adding my name to the list of finders - some from other countries.

Continued from page 1

According to Geocaching.com, there are now over 2 million geocaches around the world and more than 15 million people who participate in the hunt. In the Delta, geocaching is a perfect pastime - scenic, fun and challenging, and a GPS is always handy, as anyone who has turned down a levee road assuming "it's going my direction" already knows.

First, we downloaded locations from Geocaching.com - our first cache was on a path along a Delta waterway that shall remain unnamed, so you can have the fun of finding it too. My phone buzzed when I got close to the GPS coordinates, but did not give any further hints as we searched in the tall grass. Worse, I had no idea what I was looking for. Caches are usually camouflaged, sometimes very cleverly, so I was picking up every rock and oak gall. After fifteen minutes of acting like I'd lost a contact lens, we moved on.

The second cache was alongside an established Delta trail and I found it right away, a tiny vial hidden in plain sight stuck to a signpost but about ten feet off the ground. Now what?

We jumped, we stretched, we tried

the human pyramid. No luck. But then the magic happened - the man who had been mowing the trail verge (and looking at us like we were crazy) pulled his tractor over and offered to let me climb on the tire to reach the cache - and that's when I fell in love with geocaching. It's an adventure!

You make new friends, sometimes friends with tractors! There are several locations near wineries and breweries, and we can all see the benefit in *that*. Delta businesses and destinations can hide their own caches and bring visitors in - and these folks won't get lost!

Geocaching has a few simple rules: 1) respect private property; 2) if you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value; and 3) don't put dangerous items in containers. It's strangely addicting, and I can't wait to get out there and find another Delta cache...maybe one of the "you'll need a boat!" variety. If you haven't looked at the Delta through the eyes of a GPS satellite - try it yourself. It's a blast.

Nicole Bert is the Communication Specialist for the Delta Protection Commission, and (as of last week) an avid geocacher.

Geocaching in the Delta

Above are small snippets of the maps on www.geocaching.com. The top is near Locke, and below is West Sacramento. As you can see, the Delta is a "target rich environment."

Plan to spend a day this spring geocaching in the Delta - or hide your own cache! Right now there's one in Clarksburg, four near Courtland, a couple dozen around Walnut Grove, five in Isleton, 21 in Rio Vista, and a whole string along White, Potato and Little Potato Sloughs.

Stop by a local restaurant for lunch, dawdle along the road to watch the birds or the fishermen, and definitely plan to reward yourselves for your efforts at a Delta winery tasting room on the way home.

DELTA NARRATIVES

Building Communities: Economics and Ethnicity

“Building Communities – Economics and Ethnicity” by Jennifer Helzer, Ph.D., of CSU Stanislaus, will be summarized in the Delta Voice in three parts – Transport Towns, Legacy Communities and Ethnic Enclaves. Part of a project funded by the Commission in 2015, the full paper is available at www.delta.ca.gov/Delta_Narratives.htm.

The Influx

The great migration linked to the California Gold Rush is purported to be the largest movement of people to a single area on the continent. Other areas have comparable numbers associated with frontier migration, but California’s distinctiveness lies in its rapidity and the uneven pattern of settlement over the land. In 1860, 75% of the state’s population was concentrated around San Francisco and the interior mining region. As mining declined, former miners moved into the San Francisco region, but also settled nearby areas.

Transport-Focused Settlement

The Delta’s earliest towns were important points of convergence and transfer for gold-seeking Argonauts. Preferred trade routes emerged, favoring sites where goods could be off-loaded and carried by mule and ox teams to the goldfields.

Stockton

The founding of Stockton coincided with the rush for gold. By May 1850, Stockton’s residents approached 2,400,



Above: The Delta King steams up the Sacramento River in 1938.

with an added transient population of 2,000. The growing town was an important “goods-forwarding” site.

Stockton is distinguished by several “firsts”: the early survey of the town made Stockton the first planned community in California, and the city’s name, bestowed in honor of Commodore Robert F. Stockton, was the first in the state that was not of Spanish or Native American origin.

Freeport

One of the oldest communities in the Delta, Freeport was established so businesses could avoid paying taxes as they shipped passengers and freight from the Bay to Sacramento and on to the goldfields. A ten-mile rail line was built from the Brighton Station on the Sacramento Valley Railroad to a “free port” which became the town of Freeport.

In the late 1800s, the Freeport area was a major “truck-farming” center. These small, vegetables-for-market farms were run by Italian, Portuguese, Chinese and German immigrants. Over time, Southern Europeans became the primary operators.

Antioch

Brothers William and Joseph Smith founded Smith’s Landing in December 1849. Smith’s Landing was eventually renamed Antioch, and became a significant gateway settlement,

maintaining regular trade in surplus produce and hay with San Francisco.

From its beginning, Antioch was a successful shipping town, and the discovery of other resources including coal in its southern hills (1859) and copper ore (1863) added to the city’s importance, as did its function as a major bootlegging hub during Prohibition.

Taken together, these early transport towns share an outward focus of supporting regional development and linkages to areas outside the Delta, including transit to and from the gold-bearing region and the emerging population centers of Sacramento and San Francisco.

Other early towns took advantage of favorable sites on natural levees with access to waterborne traffic, or central locations for trans-shipment. These factors facilitated the rise of steamboat landings, wharves and packing houses that often became the heart of early business districts. These are the Legacy Communities, which will be discussed in the next issue as our Delta Narrative series continues.



Cherries: The Delta’s Spring Bounty

A short, sweet season offers up a delicious Delta treat

In the Delta, daffodils and cherry blossoms are the harbingers of spring. Starting in late February, the highways and byways of San Joaquin County, Brentwood in Contra Costa County and the North Delta break forth in clouds of pink as the Delta cherry crop explodes into bloom.

Cherries are a member of the Rosaceae family, which also includes roses, raspberries and almonds. The genus *Prunera* (sweet cherries are cultivars of *Prunus avium*) contains stone fruit cousins of the cherry such as peaches, plums and apricots. In California, cherry season runs from mid-May to the last part of June (hence the early bloom), a roughly six-week season that makes local, fresh cherries a special treat.

Besides being delicious, cherries are exceptionally good for you. According to the California Cherry Board (www.calcherry.com) sweet cherries are an excellent source of potassium, which plays a role in controlling blood pressure and reducing the risk of stroke, and melatonin, a natural sleep aid. They are low in calories and release sugars slowly during digestion, giving cherries a low “glycemic index” that makes them a good carbohydrate choice for dieters and diabetics. They have anti-inflammatory properties and may even help reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. With all of that going for them, cherries should be your go-to spring fruit – and fortunately, in the Delta, they’re not only tasty and healthy but FUN.

Many cherry growers in the Delta offer “u-pick” access to their orchards, a terrific way to spend a gorgeous sunny Delta afternoon and the best way to make sure your cherries are the most perfect they can be. Harvest Time in Brentwood (www.harvest4u.com) features a downloadable map showing growers, their crops and the picking season. Out of the 50 farms listed on their 2015 map, 31 feature cherries, either pre-picked or u-pick. Sacramento River Delta Grown (www.sacriverdeltagrown.org) lists two farms offering cherries, both pre-picked but grown right there on the premises.

10 nutritious facts

- Combat Hypertension
- Discourage Diabetes
- Fight Cardiovascular Disease
- Reduce Risk of Stroke
- Sleep Better & Battle Jet Lag
- Protect Against Alzheimer’s
- Reduce Pain
- Reduce Inflammation
- Fight Free Radicals
- Ward Off Cancer



Continued on page 5

Cherry infographic courtesy of the California Cherry Board



BLOSSOM TIME

Spring in the Delta is blossom time – the pink waves of cherries in San Joaquin County and the Brentwood area, and the apples and the pear trees in the North Delta, are all in spectacular bloom.

A Sunday drive down Highway 160 will reward you with clouds of white and pale pink blossoms on either side of the river. Depending on the weather, some of the vineyards should be in bloom as well – not quite as easy to see, but a beautiful sight when you do, pale stalks with tiny white flowers against the bright new leaves and the dark silhouette of the trunk of the vine.

Do you have a favorite Blossom Route in the Delta? Send your favorite flower-strewn drive along with some photos to dpc@delta.ca.gov. Fresno has a Blossom Trail that has been enchanting local families for almost three decades (www.goblossomtrail.com) and our Delta orchards and vineyards are no less lovely.

Continued from page 4

There are also many large-scale cherry growers in San Joaquin County, whose orchards create lovely blossom drives along the side roads on both sides of Highway 5 and Highway 99 during blossom season.

Duck with Savory Herb Cherry Sauce

If you know a Delta duck hunter, you are doubly lucky. Domestic duck can be found at area markets, but if you can prepare this with wild duck you are in for a real treat!

- 4 - 6 duck legs (wild ducks will be smaller, adjust quantity to suit)
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, sliced into slivers
- 1 tablespoon fresh marjoram, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
- 3/4 cup Delta red wine, like Wilson Petit Sirah or Bogle Essential Red
- 3/4 cup water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Sugar to taste
- 1/2 pound Delta-grown fresh Bing cherries

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Rub the duck inside and out with salt and place in a large casserole dish. Arrange the carrots and onion around the duck. Sprinkle the duck and vegetables with the garlic, marjoram and basil. Pour in the wine and water, and add salt, pepper and sugar to taste.



Cover the casserole and bake for 2 hours or until the duck is tender. Uncover and pour off the liquid and vegetables into a large saucepan. Put the duck onto a plate and set aside to cool. Boil the contents of the saucepan over a high heat until reduced by half. Strain the liquid into a small bowl and chill in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, stem and pit the cherries. Take the chilled liquid out and remove the solid fat from the surface. Reheat the remaining liquid until not quite boiling, add the cherries and heat through. Place the duck legs in the sauce to warm - serve warm with a spoonful of sauce on the top and wild rice on the side. Serves four.

recipe courtesy of Nicole Bert



Jack London, his wife Charmian and a friend on a winter trip through the Delta on his boat *Roamer*.

Meteor Passing Through

Author Jack London's time in the Delta

2016 marks the 100th anniversary of Jack London's premature death at age 40. At the time of his passing, he was one of the most widely read writers in America. London's stories focused on human interactions with nature and the plight of workers, reflecting his many travels around the world, his upbringing in poverty and his socialist political views. His legacy lives on in the many places he visited and wrote about during his life, including the Delta as well as Alaska, the Sonoma Valley, and Oakland. In the Delta's Pittsburg, one of his favorite haunts was the Bay View Saloon, and the Pittsburg Historical Museum contains a reproduction of the interior in its London display. He is honored in the Pittsburg Entertainment and Arts Hall of Fame, and his name is on a street there, an elementary school in Antioch, and a park in Benicia.

London's first adventures in the Delta started when he found himself on both sides of the law, first as a teenage "oyster pirate" – a poacher – and then as a member of the "fish patrol" – a group of maritime game wardens headquartered in Benicia. He turned these experiences into *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1906), a book of adventure stories for young adults. The stories reference Antioch, Benicia, Collinsville, Pittsburg, and Merryweather, an old coal-mining town east of Antioch.

As he became more successful, London enjoyed spending time in the Delta aboard his boats, called the *Snark* and the *Roamer*. Records show that one of his boats was built for him in Pittsburg, but the name of the craft was not recorded. It was outside of Pittsburg (then known as Black Diamond) that he and his wife, Charmian, appeared in his 1913 novel *Valley of the Moon* as "Jack and Clara Hastings" aboard a boat named the *Roamer*. The Hastings take the novel's protagonists on a tour of the southern Delta, pointing out the productivity of the Delta farmland and sermonizing on sustainable agriculture, a passion of London's.

**"I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet...I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them."
-Jack London**

Valley of the Moon also describes the great cultural diversity of the Delta, though London's views on other racial and ethnic groups certainly reflected his era. As the Hastings and their guests travel on foot and boat from Rio Vista to Sacramento, London writes that, "They encountered - sometimes in whole villages - Chinese, Japanese, Italians, Portuguese, Swiss, Hindus, Koreans, Norwegians, Danes, French, Armenians, Slavs, almost every nationality save American."



Jack London was incredibly prolific, writing books, short stories and poems while serving as a war correspondent, touring the world, and managing his ranch in Glen Ellen (now Jack London State Park). Celebrate his adventurous life during this centennial year by reading *Tales of the Fish Patrol*, *Valley of the Moon*, or one of his many other writings - or visit one of the centennial celebrations in Glen Ellen (www.jacklondonpark.com).



AND WHILE YOU'RE OUT DRIVING... ADOPT A HIGHWAY!

In early 2016, the Delta Protection Commission "Adopted-A-Highway", sponsoring roadside cleanup, wildflower plantings and weed maintenance along a 3.5 mile stretch of Highway 12. The Commission's segment begins 3.5 miles west of the Sacramento River and ends just before the Rio Vista Bridge on the westbound side of the highway.

The Commission is proud to be part of the beautification of the Delta's highways, and encourages other groups to "adopt" a portion of Highway 12 as well – there are still segments eligible for adoption! Visit www.adopt-a-highway.dot.ca.gov to learn more about locations available or to contact a coordinator at CalTrans.

Join your Commissioners and the Commission staff in this worthy endeavor, and help make Delta driving even more scenic!

Sharing the Delta's Beauty -
One Landscape at a Time.

DeltaFOREVER

presented by the Delta Regional Foundation, proud to partner with the Delta Protection Commission promoting the unique values of Delta As Place.

MARCH 29 - APRIL 23
THE LIBRARY GALLERY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY,
SACRAMENTO

www.deltaforeverart.com



Top to bottom: Delta landscapes by Jeff Hart, Gregory Kondos and Sami Lee Woolhiser, courtesy of the artists.

DELTA EVENTS



April

- 1st - 23rd: *DeltaFOREVER Landscapes Show*, CSUS. www.csus.edu, www.deltaregionalfoundation.com
- 9th: *Opening Day Parade & Blessing of the Fleet*, Pittsburg Yacht Club, Pittsburg. www.pittsburgyc.com
- 9th: *Second Saturday Art Walk*, Old Sugar Mill, Clarksburg. www.oldsugarmill.com
- 15th- 17th: *San Joaquin Asparagus Festival*, Stockton. www.sanjoaquinasparagusfestival.net

May

- 1st: *Delta Century Ride*, Jessie's Grove Winery, Lodi. www.stocktonbikeclub.org
- 7th: *Delta Loop Opening Day*, Delta Loop. www.deltaloop.net
- 13th- 15th: *Lodi Zinfest*, Lodi. www.zinfest.com
- 19th: *Delta Protection Commission Meeting*, Isleton. www.delta.ca.gov/meetings.htm
- 21st: *Asian Pacific Spring Festival*, Locke. www.locke-foundation.org
- 22nd: *AMGEN Tour of California Bicycle Race* - Sacramento through the Delta. www.amgentourofcalifornia.com

June

- 25th- 26th: *Cajun and Blues Festival*, E2 Winery, Lodi. www.isletoncajunfestival.net

Missing any? Send your event info to dpc@delta.ca.gov!



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