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River Park Holiday Recap

by Elise Drakes

Holiday Lights this year was simply magical. The creativity in the holiday décor throughout the neighborhood was so much fun to see and experience. The neighborhood spirit was on full display. Many non-competing neighbors played unofficial roles, by hosting driveway firepits, picking up voting ballots for homebound neighbors, and volunteering for the event.

Fifteen houses officially competed in Holiday Lights across three evenly-distributed categories: Most Traditional, Most Unique, and Best Theme. This year, we asked neighbors under the Best Theme category to identify their theme.

Below are the winners and runners-up for each category:

• **Most Traditional**

1st place: 5301 Monalee

Runner up: 5606 Shepard

• **Most Unique**

1st place: 5715 Moddison

Runner up: 3791 Erlewine

• **Best Theme**

1st place: 5713 Shepard
Crazy Griswolds

Runner up: 4151 Clyde
The Holiday Scrimmage

A total of 167 ballots were received and all 15 houses received a decent number of votes. The holiday spirit and good sportsmanship among our competitors was endearing and inspiring!

The Fremont Music Academy, led by Kevin Glaser, was a new addition to the event this year. The roughly 35-member ensemble gathered at the Cocoa Station and played for 90 minutes, attracting

(con't on page 3)



Upcoming Events...

RPNA Board meetings are every Third Thursday of Each Month
Fremont Presbyterian Church
5770 Carlson Dr, Sacramento, CA 95819, Room E 211 (excluding December).

For updates:
www.riverparksacramento.org

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River Park Review is published 6 times per year and is available to all River Park residents at no charge.

District 4 News

by Councilman Pluckebaum

Safe Place Program!

The Safe Place Program was designed to support victims of hate crimes and bullying since its conception in 2015. The Sacramento Police Department is now extending the opportunity for local businesses to partner with law enforcement in creating safe spaces where victims feel empowered to report crimes.

Partner with the Sacramento Police Department to make your business a safe place! The requirements to become a volunteer are straightforward and free. As a participant you are responsible for training and educating your employees and staff to:

- Call 9-1-1 immediately if a victim of a hate crime enters your premises
- Allow the victim to remain on your premises until the police arrive.

To become a Safe Place Program Participant, click the link to fill out an application. https://sacramento.formstack.com/forms/pd_safe_place_program_participant_application

Donate to the Sacramento Food Banks!

The office of Councilmember Pluckebaum kindly encourages donating to Food Distribution Centers around the City of Sacramento. Any donations (especially essential items such as food, clothes, etc.) will be greatly appreciated.

Here's a list of all the distribution centers in District 4:

- River City Food Bank: 1800 28th Street Sacramento, CA 95816
- Hart Senior Center Pantry - 915 27th Street Sacramento, CA 95816
- Union Gospel Mission - 400 Bannon Street Sacramento, CA 95811
- One Community Health - 1500 21st Street Sacramento, CA 95811
- Central Downtown Food Basket - 1701 L St. Sacramento, CA 95811

To find more local food distribution sites near you, visit www.sacramentofoodbank.org/find-food.

Shop 916 Gift Card!

The Shop 916 gift card is relaunching! From November 1 - February 15, 2026, shoppers can easily support local businesses when purchasing Shop 916 gift cards for their loved ones. Since the program's launch in 2021, over \$1.1 million in gift/bonus cards have been sold!

- Buy a \$25 gift card, get a \$10 bonus card
- Buy a \$50 gift card, get a \$25 bonus card
- Buy a \$100 gift card, get a \$50 bonus card

Bonus cards will expire on March 31, 2026. Purchase a card today at shop916local.com

many neighbors. Many of the musicians are River Park residents who, after performing, picked up voting ballots and toured the neighborhood with their families.

Volunteers

Many neighbors came forward to help this year. The RPNA Board is grateful for all the help which made this year's event possible, including:

- Cocoa Station: Big thanks to **Rex Hescocock** for greeting neighbors with infectious enthusiasm and distributing 200+ cocoas and ciders over several hours on Saturday night. We couldn't have done it without him! Neighbors Jessica Riley and Michael Balzer also stopped by to help out.
- Set-up and Take-down: **Lisa Cirill and Kevin Shirley** were instrumental in transporting RPNA's large tents in and out of storage, keeping musical instruments, cocoa, and neighborhood volunteers dry from the rain. Thank you also to **JV Bruno and John Siddens**, who helped take down four tents on Saturday night.
- Ballot Printing: **Karla Mendoza**, thank you for printing and delivering voting ballots!
- Documentation and Posting: Big thank-you to **MJ Aiello**, who manages all our event social media posts. This year, neighbor **Karen Lewis** volunteered to take photos and video of the competing houses and other elements of the event. Karen, thank you for stepping in to help!
- Santa Station: **John and Tricia Riehl** hosted the Santa Station on Huston Ct. for the third consecutive year, despite the rainy forecast. It has become such a fun component of Holiday Lights. How lucky are we that Santa Claus decided to visit River Park?!
- A couple of neighbors donated cash to our cause; thank you both. Donations go directly toward the purchase of cocoa and cider for the neighborhood.
- Several neighbors contributed to the Holiday Lights experience in unique ways. **James McBride**, who was also a competitor, drove his holiday light-covered classic car through the neighborhood to bring good cheer.

Callister neighbor **Victor Rios** drove through the neighborhood as Santa, complete with a moving Rudolph in the back of his truck. Thank you both for sharing your holiday spirit with the neighborhood!

- Big thank-you to neighbor **Jesse Law**, who helped with set-up, take-down, and hours of laborious cocoa and cider creation. We could not have done it without you!

Quotes

Many neighbors shared positive feedback throughout the event and on their voting ballots. Below are a few:

"All were worthy efforts. Kudos to all who entered and took the time to devote to this effort. Way to go!"

"We love River Park!"

"Band was wonderful!"

"We always look forward to this event!"

"Made my heart swell with River Park pride."

Thank you all for building this tradition in River Park. I feel incredibly lucky to have found this neighborhood and these neighbors of ours. Until next year! ■

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Remembering Shelley

by Inna Tysoe

“It’s important for Shelley not to be forgotten,” long-time River Park resident and RPNA board member, Rex Hescoock tells me as we sit in his living room surrounded by photos of her. Shelley was his wife and soulmate, but to River Parkers she was a cherished friend, neighbor, and fierce protector.

He and Shelley dated for five years before getting married. The day of their wedding was the happiest day of his life. They lived in Southern California but decided to get married in Sacramento where most of their family resides. The State Capitol also offered great photo opportunities, and was more affordable, which was important since Rex was on a budget. But this was the year of El Nino. In Southern California, that meant it rained for maybe an hour a day. In Sacramento, Rex and Shelley discovered the hard way, it was a deluge. You wouldn’t want to be out in that weather on an ordinary day, and you certainly don’t want to wade through the mud in heels and wedding dress. So, Shelley and Rex decided to move the wedding from the State Capitol to a reception hall.

Thankfully, this inauspicious beginning did not put them off from moving to Sacramento.

The company where Rex had been managing movie theatres for forty years went bankrupt.



He got a good reference for a job, which is how they came to the State’s Capital.

They came to River Park in 2010 when Rex broke his femur while training for a charity bike ride. They were in a two-story house at the time and Rex couldn’t get and up and down the stairs. So, they decided they wanted a one-story home. Rex had always loved our neighborhood and pushed their agent to show them houses here. At the third house they bid on, Rex noticed that the gentleman selling the house was a retired police officer who used a cane. Rex hoped that by leaning on his own cane from his injury, the seller would notice, and it would help his bid. Unfortunately, the agent didn’t present their offer. So, Rex and Shelley went back to the house under the pretext of measuring windows. And Rex really made a show of leaning on his cane. On the way out they offhandedly remarked that they hoped the sellers liked their bid. Two hours later they got a call from the realtor telling them they had gotten the house. And that is how they came to Caleb Avenue.

Shelley fell in love with River Park. She got on the RPNA Board, took over Neighborhood Watch, and became the morning crossing guard at Caleb Greenwood. She and Rex sponsored the Little League and jog-a-thon. Every night, at nine o’clock, she would send a text reminding neighbors to close their garages, and make sure they didn’t leave any valuables in their cars. On Fridays, and during the weekends when kids would go to Glenn Hall, to drink and cause trouble, Shelley would be there, carrying out her Neighborhood Watch duties. Rex would join her at Glenn Hall Park after work. He “wanted to see her” he says.

He also wanted to impress her. He did three charity bike rides from San Francisco to Los Angeles. After all, Shelley would do 100-mile rides and skydived 98 times. “She had such a sense of adventure,” Rex tells.

That sense of adventure lives on in the charity

she and Rex started: Shelley's Annual Bike and Helmet Drive. Shelley loved the sense of freedom she experienced on her first bike. So, in 2003, when Rex and Shelley started their real estate careers, they wanted to tie their business to charity. For every house they sold, they donated a bike to a local charity. Over the years, they donated around 200 bikes.

After she passed, Rex decided to super-size the charity in Shelley's memory. He wanted to donate bicycles to kids who are going through tough times. He tells me that giving a child a bicycle would surely make Shelley smile. He purchases the bikes the Monday before Thanksgiving and stores them in his office. Then, on the first Saturday in December, his River Park friends, bowling buddies, family members, and friends



from the Optimist Club help to assemble them. Last year he had 20 volunteers. The bikes go to women fleeing violent relationships, some of which are mothers, so they can have a means of transportation. Shelley's Bike and Helmet Drive will go on for a decade after Rex passes. He has made provisions for that in his will.

In addition to the Optimist Club, Rex's other charity involvements are the Keaton's Child Cancer Alliance, Olivia Chan Foundation, and Western

Service Workers. The Keaton's Child Cancer Alliance helps patients to secure appointments, money for gas, and counseling. The Optimist Club of Sacramento is a group of older men who get together to help the community. Shortly before Rex and I talked, they had packaged 220 turkey dinners they then delivered to the less fortunate. But Rex doesn't really want to talk about himself, just Shelley.

Shelley loved the people who make up the River Park community. It was truly a family to her. To know Shelley was to not forget her. She gave so much to River Park, from organizing the neighborhood-wide garage sales everyone still talks about, to sharing a complimentary calendar, all with her infectious smile.

A plaque and tree next to the kids' playground in Glenn Hall Park commemorates her devotion to Neighborhood Watch. There is also a bench at Caleb Greenwood Elementary where Shelley used to stand to help the children she adored cross the street.

Rex is grateful to all those who made these memorials to Shelley possible.

SHELLEY'S 5TH ANNUAL BIKE AND HELMET DRIVE

Thank you for your continued support in keeping Shelley's Bike Drive going in her memory!

Over the years we have:

- 2020 donated 95 bikes & 60 helmets
- 2021 donated 99 bikes & 70 helmets
- 2022 donated 120 bikes & 104 helmets
- 2023 donated 90 bikes & 90 helmets
- 2024 donated 100 bikes & 100 helmets
- 2025 donated 100 bikes and 100 helmets

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS IN 2024!

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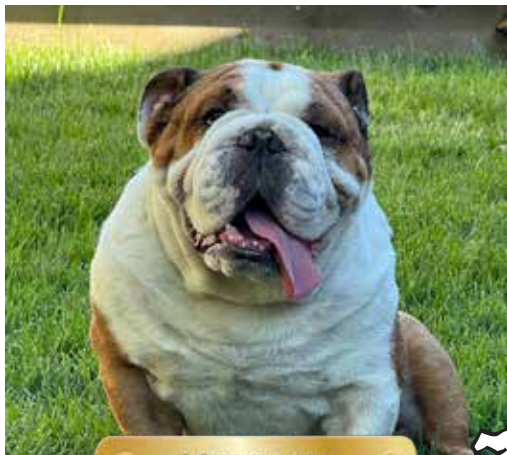


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~ Drew S.



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janet@ideasbydesign-graphics.com

River Park Garden Club Update

by Ron McCormack



Who doesn't love an orchid? But who knows how to successfully grow one? Tyler Albrecht, a Loomis resident and student judge for the California Sierra Nevada Orchid Judging Center, will show us how at our next meeting. With over 30 years of experience, Tyler will show us how to raise the famously beautiful but infamously difficult orchid.

The program will start at 6:30 PM on Thursday, February 19, at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park. Bring your own supper. Beverages and desserts will be provided.

Donate your unused garden-related items for the upcoming River Park Garden Club spring sale on March 14 and 15. Multiple clubs will be selling gardening and art items at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 10 AM to 4 PM. This is the Garden Club's main fundraiser. Please call Lynn McCormack 916-455-4159 to make a donation and support your Garden Club's beautification efforts in River Park.

River Park Mothers' Club

by Rosemary Colgrove

The River Park Mothers' Club closed out 2025 with a fun ornament-exchange party, bringing members together to celebrate the holiday season.

We are looking forward to our annual installation party at Roosters, where new and returning members can come together, connect, and plan activities for the year. We're excited that our 2025 board members are staying on for 2026!

- Sarah Haynes – President
- Marie Westover – Vice President
- Rachel Haines – Treasurer
- Morgan Chow – Events Coordinator
- Jaime Pappas – Co-events Coordinator
- Kathleen Rooney – Meal Train Coordinator
- Rocco Portman – Postpartum Support Group Coordinator

- Bridget Fisher – Librarian
- Rosemary Colgrove – Newsletter Coordinator
- Katie Cahn – Playgroup Coordinator
- Tammy Cates-Palmerlee – Playgroup Coordinator
- Elise Brown – Board Advisor

The club's 2026 focuses will be expanding our library of resources to support mothers at every stage and growing our postpartum support group to connect with new mothers.

If you are interested in joining the River Park Mothers' Club, please visit <https://riverparkmothersclub.com/>.



RPNA New & Outgoing Board Members

by Karla J. Mendoza

RPNA is pleased to welcome David Byrnes as our newest Board Member. David brings valuable expertise in public relations and communications, including social media and print media. He will support RPNA's PR and communications efforts, serving alongside Marcella Jean (MJ) Aiello on the Public Relations Committee.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to long-standing Board Member Brian Haines, who has served RPNA as Treasurer for many years. Brian is stepping down to spend more time with his family and focus on his career. We are deeply grateful for his dedication and wish him all the best. He will be greatly missed!

Stepping into the role of RPNA Treasurer is Colin Jones. Colin previously served as Block Captain Chair, which now creates a vacancy. If any neighbor is interested in assisting in this role, in helping distribute the RPNA Review to Block Captains, please reach out to Colin.

Continuing in their current Board roles are Karla as President, Fatima as Vice President, Elise as Secretary, Joe as Membership Chair, Rex leading Neighborhood Watch, and Stephanie.

RPNA currently has an open Board position. If you love River Park, and are interested in serving your community, please contact Joe at RPNAMembership@gmail.com for more information on how to get involved.

Advertise in the Review

The River Park Review is published by the RPNA, which is responsible for its content. RPNA reserves the right to edit and/or reject submissions. For advertising, go to www.riverparksacramento.org/advertising
Questions? contact Janet Mason at janet@ideasbydesign-graphics.com

Articles for the Review...

To contribute, contact: Richard Vincent at 916-228-4714 or rcvincent01@gmail.com
Please put "letter to the editor" in the subject line of your email



THE SCOTTISH RITE OF FREEMASONRY
SUPREME COUNCIL, 33° SOUTHERN JURISDICTION, U.S.A.

by Inna Tysoe

Scottish Rite Center February-March-April Events

The River Park Review would like to extend our thanks to Jim Gray and Tabitha Sabido at the Scottish Rite Center for compiling this list of events in February, March and April. Our neighborhood appreciates knowing all the events we have going on in our own back yard, as it were.

SacJobs Winter Career Fair	2/5
Pioneer Mutual	
Hook and Ladder Society Crab Feed	2/6
Gem Faire	2/13-2/15
Scottish Rite Center Crab Feed	2/28
Camellia Society of Sacramento	
102nd Camellia Show	3/7-3/8
Goddess Festival	3/21-3/22
Building Owners & Management Assoc.	
Taste of the Town	3/26
California Writers Club Book Festival	4/19

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2025-26 Historic River Park Calendar

TO REQUEST YOUR FREE COPY, email: Scott.t.hackney@gmail.com

September 4, 1946, Sacramento Union advertisement by Owner/Developers Spilman-Callister Co. "River Park lots go on sale today"

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(This is a re-print of an article from April 2017)

In the 1850's, northeastern River Park was a botanical oasis known as "Smith's Pomological Garden."

Anthony Preston Smith and 29 co-investors purchased a bark in New York, loaded it with supplies for the gold fields, and sailed around the Horn to California, arriving in San Francisco in July, 1849. In December, A.P. came to Sacramento, purchased 50 acres of land from John Sutter, and formed the partnership of Smith, Baker & Barber, nurserymen and gardeners. The fifty acres were comprised of what is now River Park down to about Bevil Street (as far as I can make out) plus the ground now covered by the rail road levee and a bit of East Sac. Eventually, he increased the property to 90 acres. (I have not learned the boundaries of the larger plot.)

Smith immediately set to creating a nursery, orchard, and lush garden that served Sacramento as a resort. He built his home upon a hill overlooking the river at the north end of the plot, amid four acres of lawns and flower gardens. His house and the show gardens were connected to production gardens by roads lined with a variety of shade trees. Smith built two miles of walkways for visitors to stroll and enjoy the gardens. The paths were paved with crushed shells brought from San Francisco by schooner.

Within a year of arriving, Smith was producing vegetable seeds. Within two years, he was propagating and selling flowers, shrubs, fruit trees, and decorative trees for transplanting. By 1856, his "Descriptive Catalogue Offering an Unusually Fine Stock of Choice Roses" listed 80 varieties of hybrid perennials, among an overall stock of 15,000 plants. The original stock came by wagon across the country and by ship around the Horn.

The California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences reported in December 1859 that Smith's Pomological Gardens "may now justly be called the most extensive Fruit Gardens on the Pacific Coast....The crops of Peaches and Pears from these Gardens, for several years, have been enormous; the sales in the gross have been, for several years, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, and even

seventy thousand dollars a year!" (The latter amount equals about \$2.5 million today.) The article also hails Smith for "diffusing very large sums annually among the working classes; thus doing a vast amount of public good."

A.P. Smith experimented to find wine grapes suitable for the region. Zinfandel. A History of a Grape and Its Wine (Charles L. Sullivan, 2003) credits Smith with bringing the first Zinfandel nursery stock to the west in 1853. The descendants of this vine stock, then called Black St. Peter, are the ancestors of what is now planted throughout the Sierra foothills.

His nursery propagated the first camellias successfully grown in California—over 1500 plants.

In 1855 Smith was offered \$75,000 for the Gardens (\$2,794,500 today). He declined because he thought the property was worth at least \$100,000. He was no doubt right, given that he was netting \$40,000 per year by 1857. But, had he known what the future would hold for his home and Gardens, he would have accepted the offer.

The winter of 1861/1862 brought mammoth flooding to the central valley, including Sacramento. It was the impetus for raising the streets and commercial buildings of Sacramento in the 1860's and building the levee that is along Elvas Avenue today.

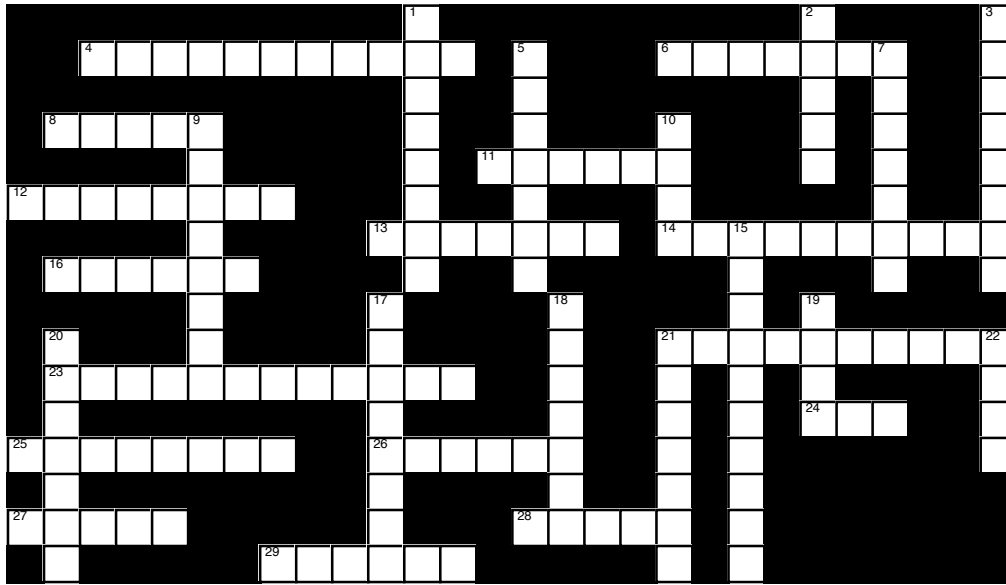
A.P. Smith's home was swept away along with many work sheds as the deluge undercut and washed away 500 feet of land along the riverbank. One to six feet of silt covered the gardens. Nearly all fruit trees were killed.

Smith and his neighbors fought unsuccessfully to have their lands included within the new levee, but the battle was lost. Nevertheless, he set to restoring his gardens, only to be flooded out again in 1871. When he passed away in 1877, his once-glorious gardens had diminished to a small, run-down fruit farm.

A.P. Smith is buried in plot #547, now part of the East Bed of the Historic Rose Garden in Sacramento's City Cemetery, a fitting location for a man whose enterprise supplied Sacramento with

(cont'd on page 12)

River Park Crossword



Across

4. The River Park Neighborhood ____ publishes the River Park Review.
6. Wild ____ or Meleagris gallopavo live in River Park and occasionally block the road to cars.
8. A federal judge issued an injunction blocking the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from cutting down more than 700 ____ along the Lower American River.
11. Every Fourth of July, River Park has a ____.
12. Winter is a good time to see Passer birds also known as ____ along the American River.
13. Be careful walking your dogs. Canis latrans or ____ have been seen by many neighbors—day and night. They are getting quite bold.
14. In 1850, ____ endured a major flood, a fatal riot and a deadly epidemic.
16. ocal Boy ____, Troop 8 does their part in helping those in need.
21. River Park's street names recall our neighborhood's ____ and their families.
23. ____ Watch is a great program built by neighbors to keep River Park safe.
24. California's Gold Rush was uniquely democratic because most of our gold is placer gold and scattered over such a vast area that no-one can ____ it all. [Buy]
13. ____ Hescoock lives on in the hearts of the River Park community.
25. River Park is near the Lower ____ River.
26. River Park ____ Club partners with Sacramento Republic FC.
27. ____ Captains deliver the Review and foster a greater sense of community in River Park.
28. During the Great Recession, ____ Hall Pool was the only City Pool that remained open.
29. In the 1850s, northeastern River Park was a botanical oasis called "Smith's Pomological ____."

Down

1. ____ Avenue is named for one of River Park's founders whose name should not be confused with that of James Madison, the fourth President.
2. ____ Way is named after Louis Carlson's sister, not the Golden Girls star. Louis Carlson was one of River Park's developers.
3. The River Park Review is grateful to all our ____ volunteers who deliver the Review.
5. Kevin ____ is Sacramento's Mayor.
7. ____ Hescoock lives on in the hearts of the River Park community.
9. The ____ Rite Center has various events throughout the year. Check them out.
10. Park ____ features all manner of non-humans who are part of our families. Send us their pictures!
15. ____ Field is home to River Park Youth Baseball.
17. There are over one ____ eight hundred homes in River Park.
18. RPNA Fall ____ Meeting took place on October 18, 2025 at Caleb Greenwood Elementary.
19. River Park Mothers' ____ helps mothers connect.
20. Our neighbors often post about seeing wild _____. Everything from coyotes to bobcats and more.
21. Trees are ____ when the weather cools, making it a good time to prune them.
22. The River Park Neighborhood Association sells ____ such as t-shirts and tote bags.

Crossword Key will be posted on the website

Follow RPNA on Facebook and Instagram!



Smith's Gardens *(con't)*

its first camellias, the orchards of California with pear, apple, and other fruit stock, and the foothill vineyards with Zinfandel vines.

Sources: *Golden Notes of the Sac Co. Hist. Soc.*, October 1958

Peper, Paula Jan; *Historical Environmental Research*, October 23, 2011

http://sutterparkneighborhood.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Peper_Sutter_History_08-23-12.pdf ■

“Thank you” to Roosters *by Richard Vincent*

On December 19, Martin and Teresa Gonzalez hosted a buffet dinner and bar for their regular customers at Roosters Breakfast and Mimosas. A convivial crowd of River Parkers and others enjoyed excellent food and muchos postres (desserts) deliciosos. RP residents Andy Alexis and Richard Vincent, along with Brian Thompsom of West Sac, provided live music.

A high point of the event was the unveiling of a large River Park mural. Be sure to visit the restaurant to see the mural.

Muchas gracias a Martin y Teresa!

River Park Recommends Appliance Repair

The recommendations below, collated from the Sacramento River Park Group on Facebook, do not represent River Park Review's endorsement of any company or individual. They are simply the businesses and individuals our neighbors have mentioned on Facebook.

If you would like to see a deserving business or individual mentioned in “River Park Recommends,” please respond to a Facebook post thread and share your positive experiences.

If appliances break down, you want to know whom to call to get them fixed. That happened to one of our neighbors not terribly long ago. These are the businesses our neighbors recommended:

- **A & J Appliance Repair Service**

(916) 452-3020

- **Prestige Appliances: Appliances and Repair** (916) 577-1927

- **Zajic Appliance Service and Sales** (916) 452-6748

Gold Rush Women

by Inna Tysoe

California's Gold Rush was male. Men outnumbered women thirty to one. It would not be until 1950 that the number of women would equal the number of men in California. That was more than 100 years after Sam Brennan shouted “Gold! Gold!” while waiving a vial of the metal. Such a disparity made women precious.

Or, as Luzena Wilson (one of the first women in California) later recalled, “One morning an official of the town stopped at my fire and said in his pompous way, ‘Madame, I want a good substantial breakfast, cooked by a woman.’ I asked him what he would have, and he gave his order: ‘Two onions, two eggs, a beefsteak and a cup of coffee.’ He ate it, thanked me, and gave me five dollars. The sum seems large now for such a meal, but then it was not much above cost; and if I had

asked ten dollars, he would have paid it.”

Not surprisingly, Luzena Wilson went on to run several successful boarding houses in Sacramento. Her daughter helped her compile her Gold Rush memories in a book she called *Argonaut: A Woman's Reminiscences of Early Days*. You can still buy that book although now it is called *Luzena Stanley Wilson '49er: Her Memoirs as Taken Down by Her Daughter in 1881*. It is, to this day, a classic testament of what life was like for an emigrant woman in Gold Rush California.

It tells of a time when women withstood incredible hardship to come to gold-rush California. It tells too that if those women survived the trip and the hardships California threw at them, California men treasured them as the rarities they were.