

**Guide to the  
Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency  
Downtown Development Collection - Delta King  
(bulk 1990-1994, n.d.)**

**Collection Number: 2000/019**

**Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center  
Sacramento, California**

## **Descriptive Summary**

**Collection Name:**

Downtown Development Collection – Delta King

**Collection Number:**

2000/019

**Collector:**

City of Sacramento

Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency

**Extent:**

1 cubic foot

**Repository:**

Sacramento Archives & Museum Collection Center

551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd.

Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (916) 264-7072

**Abstract:**

Created in 1973, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) is the lead public agency and public developer regarding affordable housing, housing issues, and redevelopment projects for the city and the county. SHRA oversees residential and commercial revitalization activities in redevelopment areas throughout the city. The Agency offers a variety of financial assistance programs for first-time homebuyers, and provides several loan programs and other assistance to the business community.

This collection contains in-depth information from the City of Sacramento and the Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency and their concurrence to establish the best master plan to demonstrate opportunities and constraints for the riverfront project area of Old Sacramento with emphasis on how the Delta King as a riverfront attraction could contribute to the economy of the area and become solvent. These plans also include recommendations for land use, building areas, layout of open space, opportunities for public, art culture, recreation, and services (shops, hotel, eateries), parking, marine access, and pedestrian access.

**Administration Information****Access:**

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**Preferred Citation:**

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**Processing History:**

Processed by Victoria E. Dye, 2006. Finding aid prepared by Victoria E. Dye, 2006.

## History of the Delta King and Its Significance to the Waterfront in Old Sacramento

On June 1, 1927, both the Delta King and Delta Queen entered service on the Sacramento River and ran alternate nightly schedules between Sacramento and San Francisco. Both steamboats included fine imported tapestries, stain glass skylights, and ornate woodwork including a grand staircase. Fare one way was \$1.80, round trip was \$3.00, and accommodations for the night was an additional \$4.00.

The twin boats were built to replace the Fort Sutter and Capital City boats. They were built in Stockton, California between 1924 and 1927 in the California Navigation and Improvement Company, which was controlled by the California Transportation Company.

The Delta King ran through fog and at times heavy rains for thirteen years without cancelling a trip. Other risks included difficulties associated with navigating safely in the dark.

By the 1930 automobile could be stored and ferried for on city to the next for a fair on \$3.30 one way and \$5.00 round trip.

With the fallout of the depression and competition from automobiles, the owners of the boats became financially stressed. By 1932 three companies invested in River Front Lines (RFL), a company who would manage the boats. In 1934 the RFL became plagued by labor unrest and in 1936 the Delta King ran aground on Alcatraz Island. On the last day of the California State Fair, the steamboat pair would make their final voyage between Sacramento and San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>

In 1941, both boats became commissioned with the U.S. Navy. In 1949, after sitting in the mothball fleet in Benicia for over two years, the Delta King faced the possibilities of being sold or scrapped.<sup>2</sup> In 1948 the Delta King was bought by L.G. Wingard of Seattle, Washington to use as a floating cannery, but it sat in the mothball fleet for an additional four years. Sold again in 1952, for crew boarding facilities for the Alcan Aluminum Company of Victoria, British Columbia, the boat was painted and readied for sea voyage. The Delta King became landlocked on solid ground and was used as a dormitory at Kitimat, Canada. During this time the boat suffered fire damage. In 1959, the Delta King was made seaworthy and returned to Stockton. In the fall of that year the boat made its debut in the MGM production of *Huckleberry Finn*.

In 1966, Melvin Belli and Max Mortensen bought the Delta King for \$247,683 plus interest with plans to turn it into a floating entertainment center with hotel, restaurants, and shops.<sup>3</sup> This venture never materialized due to unpaid bills. Finally, the US Government seized the boat. In the spring of 1969 a counsel called the Riverboats' Committee began legislation and plans to bring the Delta King back to Sacramento from where it was being neglected in Stockton. The U.S. Marshal soon took possession of the boat due to a claim files by one of the co-owners of the Delta King, Gene

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<sup>1</sup> Stan Garvey, King and Queen of the River (Menlo Park, CA: River Heritage Press, 1995), 90.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 144-145.

Detgen.<sup>4</sup> During the course of litigation, the boat was tugged down river and left to sit on a muddy shallow bar near Richmond. Subsequently, the freight and passenger decks slowly began to take on water and later started to sink.

In 1982, a number of preservationists and steamboat enthusiasts urged the city advisory committee to accept a plan by Robert Taylor for the Delta King as a historic addition to Hyde Park Street Pier. The boat was patched up, re-floated, and moved to Oakland. The plan moved slowly while Taylor looked for other investors. In 1984 Walter Merrill Harvey from Sacramento moved the boat to Alameda and began renovations. Soon, Harvey, Chant Sun, and Edmond Coyne began a joint venture in continuing to restore the Delta King and moved it to dry dock in Oakland. The boat was later moved to Sacramento due to lower restoration and labor costs.

In 1985, the Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) proposed a plan for a relationship between the Old Sacramento waterfront and the Delta King. Later that year, Coyne and Harvey bought out Sun's interests in the boat and formed Riverboat Delta King, Inc. The boat moved to its new riverfront home in 1987 and had its grand opening on May 20, 1989 after a frantic cleanup due to a fire that broke out on the third deck States Room. The Delta King Collection continues the story in December 1991 starting with a feasibility study for the Delta King and the SHRA. Beginning in 1989, the corporation has encountered operation losses and has asked financial assistance from SHRA. Two proposals were submitted to the Riverboat Delta King, Inc. The first was to provide a series of loans totaling \$10.6 million and the second was to purchase the boat outright for the same amount, including past operation losses and construction cost.

The boat contains a 130-seat theatre, a 160-seat banquet area on the Cargo Deck, 7 banquet/meeting rooms, a 125 seat saloon, another saloon on deck 2, a 140-seat Pilot House restaurant, 44 hotel rooms, a 76-seat cocktail lounge, and a special suite called the "Captain's Quarter." Currently the Delta King is a permanent fixture on the waterfront in Old Sacramento and is still owned by Mike Coyne, but managed by Coastal Hotel Properties.

This collection concentrates on the economic impact the Delta King would have on Old Sacramento as a tourist attraction and as a unique historical point of interest. Having an attraction such as this historic steamboat, floating on the Old Sacramento waterfront, would lure visitors to the area and in turn generate revenue for the city. The boat would offer excellent accommodations including a hotel, fine dining, and shops to those who planned to visit Old Sacramento.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 161.

**Scope and Content:**

The Downtown Development collection pertaining to the Delta King is with reference to finding the best master plan to demonstrate opportunities and constraints for the riverfront project area of Old Sacramento with emphasis on the Delta King. These include recommendations for land use, building areas, layout of open space, opportunities for public, art, culture, recreation, and services (shops, hotel, eateries), parking, marine access, and pedestrian access. The last part of the collection pertains to the financial situation of the Delta King at the time between 1990 and 1994, with emphasis on profit and loss of the boat and possibilities to sell or refinance the property. Financial documents range from 1990-1994 and include correspondence, long-term feasibility, and financial analysis for Delta King. Most of the information is in chronological order by series in five series.

Series I includes financial documents from 12/1990 to 2/1991 regarding waterfront development on the Sacramento River along Old Sacramento pertaining to the Delta King. These include a long-term feasibility study, financial analysis for Delta King, market analysis (to increase revenue), and a Delta King Packet, which was sent to the SHRA members on 11/10/1994.

Series II include bids and proposals submitted in 1993. The series begins with the "Proposal to Prepare a Downtown Merchandising Plan." Bids for planners include Roma Design Group from San Francisco, CA; Engeo Inc. from San Ramon, CA; EDAW Inc., from San Francisco, CA; Sasaki & Assoc. from San Francisco, CA; Brady & Assoc. from Berkeley, CA; PBR from San Francisco, CA; Sorensen from Kensington, CA. The last two files contain a Contract for Services and a corporate resume from Hyett Palm in Virginia.

Series III contains responses to the "Riverfront Proposals & Consultation" dating from 1993 to 1997. These three files include a Request for Proposal (RFP), Riverfront Consultation Selection, and the winning proposal submitted by Sasaki & Associates.

Series IV includes financial files on the Delta King ranging from 1985 -1996. These include the Delta King lease, a copy of title, proof of insurance, correspondence on financial problems regarding delinquent taxes and correspondence, and a scenario for re-financing & proposed funding.

The final series, Series V, contains general files on the Delta King, including Delta King brochures, the *h/mt Newsletter*, and Sacramento River Parkway Trail Project.

**Downtown Development Collection**

**Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency  
Delta King  
(Regarding Waterfront Re-development)  
Location: 5:46**

**Box 1**

**Series I      Financial Documents Regarding Waterfront Re-development      3ff  
1990-1994**

**Folder**

1	Correspondence Re: Delta King long-term feasibility Financial Analysis for Delta King & Copy	12/1990 to 2/1991
2	Market Analysis (to increase revenue)	11/01/1994
3	Delta King Packet to SHRA members	11/10/1994

**Series II      Bids/Proposals, June to November 1993      12 ff**

4	Proposal to Prepare a Downtown Merchandising Plan ( <i>Proposals DEL 400</i> )	08/1992
5	Roma Design Group, San Francisco, CA	06/14/1993
6	RRM Design	06/28/1993
7	Engeo Inc., San Ramon, CA	07/27/1993
8	Cambridge Systematics Inc. , Berkeley, CA	08/03/1993
9	EDAW Inc., San Francisco, CA	11/10/1993
10	Sasaki Assoc., San Francisco, CA	11/10/1993
11	Brady & Assoc., Berkeley, CA	n.d.
12	PBR, San Francisco, CA	n.d.
13	Sorensen, Kensington, CA	n.d.
14	Contract for Services	12/31/1994
15	Hyett Palm - Corporate Resume, VA	n.d.

<b>Series III</b>	<b>Responses to Riverfront Proposals &amp; Consultation 1993-1997</b>	<b>3 ff</b>
16	Request for Qualifications ( <i>RFP 400</i> )	n.d.
17	Riverfront Consultation Selection ( <i>RFE 402</i> )	n.d.
18	Proposal granted to Sasaki & Assoc.	n.d.
<b>Series IV</b>	<b>Delta King Financial Files, 1985-1996</b>	<b>3 ff</b>
19	Delta King Lease, Title, Proof of Insurance ( <i>Legal Documents DEL 200</i> )	1985-1991
20	Financial problems/Delinquent taxes ( <i>Correspondence DEL 300</i> )	11/1990 to 5/1996
21	Scenario for financing & proposed funding	
<b>Series V</b>	<b>General Files</b>	<b>3 ff</b>
22	Delta King Brochure ( <i>Ephemera DEL 100</i> )	n.d.
23	<i>h/mt Newsletter</i>	Spring 1993
24	Sacramento River Parkway Trail Project	1994