

Introduction to Rocklin History Series

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The Rocklin History Museum is the restored home of physician Henry Fletcher, Rocklin's town doctor in the early 20th century

Recent archeological evidence indicates earliest human habitation of the Rocklin area at about 7,000 years ago. About 3000 year ago, perhaps as late as 1500 years ago, the Nisenan, sometimes called Southern Maidu, occupied the area. Although Euro-Americans severely disrupted their culture in the 19th century, descendents of these people still reside in South Placer County.

Euro-Americans were probably fishing and

harvesting game in the Rocklin area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Major Euro-American settlement started in the early 1850's as fortune hunters, among them a large number of Irish, sluiced for gold in Secret Ravine, that area of oaks and dredger tailings that we see today southeast of interstate 80 between Roseville and Loomis.

The area's industrial development started in the mid to late 1850's as the Argonauts abandoned their sluice boxes to quarry granite for public buildings in Sacramento and San Francisco. Boom times for Rocklin started in the mid-1860's as Rocklin's quarries supplied stone for construction of the transcontinental railroad between 1864 and 1869. Also, the Central Pacific located a roundhouse in Rocklin in 1867 to service the extra engines needed for the trans-sierra run.

Rocklin's granite industry survived lean times in the 1870s and early 1880s but began to flourish in the late 1880's and 1890's as the quarries employed pneumatic technology and Finnish Immigrants came to control quarry ownership and dominate Rocklin's social life. Labor strife and competition from cement-based concrete permanently decimated the industry in the early 20th century although one quarry continued to operate until 2005. Rocklin's round house operations moved to Roseville in 1908 displacing 300 workers. This event coupled with a declining granite industry attenuated Rocklin's growth until high tech industries began to locate here and Highway 80 brought Rocklin within easy commute distance of Sacramento in the early 1960's.

Most of today's Rocklin occupies the southern 12,000 acres of the former Spring Valley Ranch. George Whitney founded this ranch in 1855 and transferred ownership to his son Joel Parker Whitney, called Parker then, in 1873. Buoyed by easy access to rail shipping, and employing cheap Chinese labor formerly employed in railroad construction, Parker built the ranch to 27,000 acres by the time of his death in 1913.

The articles in this series detail interesting aspects of Rocklin's development. The information is from a variety of sources, most of which are mentioned within the text.

Please contact me at garyday@starstream.net if you have questions.

Gary Day, July 8, 2010