

PORTER'S SALOON TOKEN BRINGS \$325

Gary Day



This Porter's Saloon token brought \$325 at auction in December, 2005

On December 19, 2005 an unidentified collector paid \$325.00 for a Porter's Saloon trade token at a Western Americana auction in Reno.

Dewitt Porter's Saloon was a popular downtown Rocklin watering hole in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

According to "Rocklin" by Leonard Davis, Porter's Saloon burned down twice in the late 19th century. Its third and last construction in 1893, near the granite Barudoni Meat Market on Front Street, included a livery stable and a 2,900 square foot meeting hall in addition to the saloon. That complex burned down in 1914 and Porter never rebuilt. He concentrated instead on his "Porter House" in Roseville which he had established in 1908 when the railroad moved Rocklin's roundhouse operations there.

Davis says that Porter's meeting hall was "the social center of Rocklin" before it burned. Joel Parker Whitney's son, Parker Whitney, ran up large tabs at Porter's saloon while he was managing the Whitney Ranch for his ailing father at the turn of the century. Recently deceased Catherine Whitney, wife of Parker's son Vincent, felt that Parker's forays at Porter's were symptomatic of his affinity for party life and contributed to the demise of the Whitney Ranch.

Dewitt Porter was a member of our City Council when Rocklin incorporated in 1893. Rocklin Museum Curator Ron Petersen collects western memorabilia, including trade tokens, and says that the Porter token was from the trove of recently deceased collector Noel LaDue.

"Normally we expect such a token to fetch about \$30.00" said Petersen. "It must have been in outstanding condition. But even that wouldn't explain the high price".

Trade tokens once substituted for small denomination currency in the days before widespread circulation of pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and halves. For example, they precluded the need to physically chop up silver dollars into "bits" in a system where two bits made 25 cents.