

The Crowd in the Pyramid

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Whitney Historian Jean Day (left) and Mary Whitney, wife of Allan Whitney, J Parker Whitney's grand-son, stand inside the tomb, near the white marble cases holding the cremated remains of seventeen Whitney family members.

The pyramid-shaped Whitney family tomb is an often photographed curiosity near the 11th green of the Whitney Oaks Golf Course.

History doesn't record the tomb's construction date but one family member theorizes that Lucy Chadwick Whitney prepared it for her husband, Joel Parker Whitney a few months before he died of kidney disease in 1913.

The family opens and reseals the tomb periodically and in 2006 it contained the cremated remains of 17 family members and close friends. Nine of these people had little, if any, impact on Rocklin's history or operations of the Whitney Ranch.

But the following eight tomb residents were known in Rocklin and, because of Parker's wealth, generosity and influence, were celebrities of their times.

George Whitney, (1801 – 1885) and his wife Sophia Whitney, (1807 – 1888) were Parker's

parents. George ran a special breed of sheep on open Placer County rangeland in the mid 1850's and established the Whitney Ranch, later known as the Spring Valley Ranch, in 1857 with the purchase of 320 acres near Rocklin. George ceded control of the ranch to Parker in the early 1870's. The presence of

George and Sophia in the tomb indicates that the family might have constructed the tomb as early as the mid 1880's shortly after construction of Joel Parker Whitney's Oaks mansion.

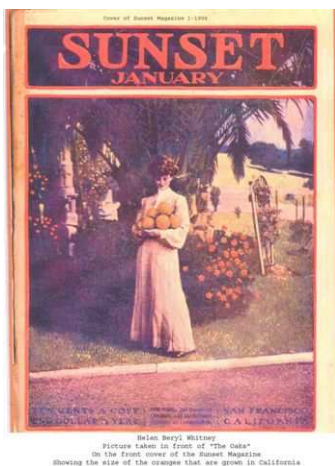


Joel Parker Whitney, (1834 – 1913) was wealthy by his mid 30's, mainly from investments in Colorado mines and real estate. He acquired control of the Whitney Ranch from his father George in the early 1870's and expanded it to 27,000 acres by bringing water from the Bear River watershed and diversifying ranch activities. He befriended the native Nisenan and documented their life ways, built the Oaks mansion and the ranch's Twelve Bridges in the mid 1880's and founded the Placer County Citrus Colony in the late 1880's. Rocklin's northern and western development since the early 1960's has been mostly on the southern 12,000 acres of Joel Parker Whitney's Spring Valley Ranch.

J Parker Whitney (1878 - 1924) was oldest of Joel Parker Whitney's three children. The J in J Parker Whitney's name stood for nothing, a la the S in Harry S Truman. J Parker Whitney was a bon vivant and a scoundrel, known in Rocklin prominently for his frequent forays at Porter's saloon. While married to the first of his three wives, socialite Daisy Parrot, he paid a girl friend \$2,500 to drop white slavery charges that she had brought against him after he had jilted her for another girlfriend. J. Parker managed the Spring Valley Ranch at the turn of the century but, because of his irresponsible lifestyle, eventually lost control to his brother Vincent. One family member credits J. Parker's poor management skills and irresponsible lifestyle with the start of the decline of the Whitney Empire.

Katherine (Kate) Gorby Whitney (1886 – 1939) was J. Parker Whitney's third wife. J. Parker died four months after the marriage in 1924, but by court order his estate supported Kate and her children from a previous marriage until 1939. Kate and J. Parker once occupied the Gorby family home, later famously the Hebuck home, next to the original site of the Saint Mary's of the Assumption Catholic Church on Front Street.

Lucy Ann Chadwick Whitney (1847 – 1926) was Joel Parker Whitney's third wife and the mother of his only three children, J. Parker, Vincent, and Helen Beryl. She married Joel Parker Whitney in 1881 at Saint Paul's Church across the street from Capital Park in Sacramento after the birth of her first two children. Lucy fought her children bitterly over Joel Parker Whitney's will, losing out to her son Vincent and eventually winning only a small increase in her monthly allotment. Lucy's sister Margaret was in Lucy's wedding party and she is also in the tomb, however her importance in family and ranch affairs is unclear.



Helen Beryl Whitney (1884 – 1935) was the youngest of Joel Parker Whitney's three children. She grew up during the halcyon days of Joel Parker Whitney's Placer Citrus Colony and twice appeared promoting the colony in Sunset Magazine, once on the cover. She eloped from college with Harvard football star Thomas Graydon in 1904 and graced newspaper scandal sheets through three marriages. She apparently was never a factor in Spring Valley Ranch affairs and finances. She was childless and the last of Parker's descendents to occupy the Oaks mansion. After Helen Beryl's death the Whitney Estate Trust leased the Oaks and the surrounding 40 acres to Boreal Ski Resort Owner Oscar Jones for a dude ranch. The dude ranch operation was short lived but, during the time he occupied the Oaks, Jones destroyed truck loads of Whitney ranch records and removed expensive artifacts from the mansion. The Whitney family tried unsuccessfully to recover the artifacts in the ensuing years.

Vincent Whitney (1880 – 1966) was Joel Parker Whitney's second son, a San Francisco Insurance Broker who wrested control of the Whitney Estate from his mother and siblings after his father's death in 1913 and sold off ranch assets during the early and mid 20th century. The wealth of the Whitney Empire passed through Vincent's descendants to the dismay of J Parker Whitney's descendants. Today remnants of the Whitney Empire of the late 19th and early 20th centuries have largely dissipated, although some family members retain valuable artifacts which they removed from the Oaks after Vincent's sister Beryl Whitney died there in 1935.

Sam Edwards was a family gardener, and evidently a favored servant because a tiny plaque inside the tomb indicates that Sam's remains are buried in an unmarked grave outside the tomb. So step carefully when you visit.