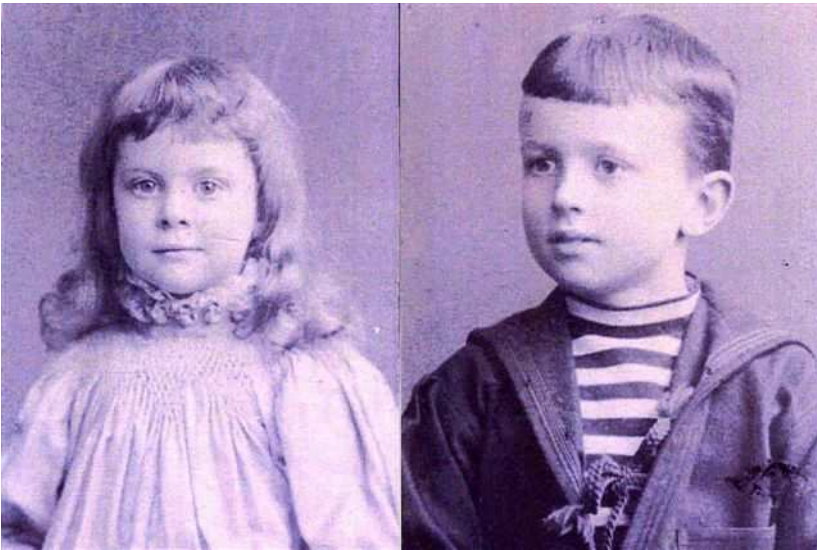


Who was Parker Whitney?

Gary Day



Helen Beryl Whitney (1884-1935) and J Parker Whitney (1878-1924) in 1889
Both grew up in affluence and married first into East Coast High Society. Both married three times and died in middle age leaving their brother Vincent in control of the Whitney Estate which he sold off to the benefit of himself and his heirs during the mid 20th century.

Western Rocklin covers the southern 12,000 acres of Joel Parker Whitney's 20,000+ acre Spring Valley Ranch of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This is property which Rocklin annexed while the city's population has been growing since the mid 1960s.

Joel Parker Whitney arrived in San Francisco from Massachusetts in 1852 at age 17 and identified the beauty and agricultural potential of the Rocklin area as he

walked to Auburn to find work mining gold. In 1857 his father, George Whitney, started the ranch to raise sheep with the purchase of 320 acres in today's Stanford Ranch area. Joel Parker Whitney left his hunt for Auburn area gold early and prospered as a merchant, often importing mining equipment from the East Coast to San Francisco for sale to Northern California miners. In the 1860's and throughout the last part of the 19th century he made his financial fortune dealing in Colorado gold and silver mines, California real estate and New Mexico ranches. In the early 1870's he took control of the Spring Valley ranch from his father, diverted mining ditches for water and diversified into a wide variety of agricultural production. He founded the Placer County Citrus Colony in 1888. Joel Parker Whitney was a prolific writer whose books and newsprint bylines show "J. P. Whitney" or "J. Parker Whitney". Apparently he eschewed his given name "Joel". His biographer, Richard A. Miller, called him "Parker Whitney." although there is scant evidence that he actually went by that name.

Joel Parker Whitney traveled to and from Europe often, once famously to the 1867 Paris Universal Worlds Fair and Exhibition as an ambassador from the Colorado territory promoting investments in Colorado mines. He developed a close relationship with Lucy Chadwick in England in the late 1870's and fathered a son by her in London in 1878. The boy's name was J Parker Whitney. The J stands for nothing a la the S in Harry S Truman. During his lifetime J Parker Whitney went by "Parker Whitney".

A second son, Vincent Whitney, arrived while Joel Parker Whitney and Lucy were in New York in 1880. Joel Parker Whitney and Lucy Chadwick married in Sacramento in 1882, two years before the birth of their third child Helen Beryl in 1884. According to a

Whitney family genealogist, it was Joel Parker Whitney's third marriage. His first two marriages were childless.

In the early 1880s, with three small children, Joel Parker Whitney curtailed his travels and centered his family's life at the Spring Valley Ranch. He converted parts of the ranch into a baronial estate, resurfacing roads, adding twelve granite bridges and building his mansion, called The Oaks, on a knoll in middle of the ranch about three miles west of Downtown Rocklin.

Joel Parker Whitney's son, J Parker Whitney, grew up in the opulence of his father's estate and assumed ranch management in his early twenties.

But according to Rocklin old timers and San Francisco Chronicle scandal sheets of the early 20th century, J Parker Whitney, was an irresponsible bon vivant and a scoundrel. While still married to the first of his three wives, eastern 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.

Ranch records show that he was a regular at Porter's Saloon in downtown Rocklin, charging large bar bills to the ranch. His father's business partner, W. J. Downing, sometimes scolded him for poor ranch management and inaccurate record keeping. Before her death in 2004, Catherine Whitney, the wife of one of J Parker Whitney's sons, credited J Parker Whitney's poor management skills and irresponsible lifestyle with the start of the decline of the Whitney empire.

Joel Parker Whitney died in 1913, leaving control of the Whitney Estate to Vincent and curtailing J Parker Whitney's extravagant lifestyle with a bequest of only \$300 per month. A court invalidated parts of the will in 1917 yielding J Parker Whitney one sixth of the estate which then was variously reported in the press to be worth between \$800,000 and \$10 million. .

J Parker Whitney died at the Front Street home of his third wife, Katherine Gorby, in 1924, at age 46.

Vincent Whitney continued to control Whitney Estate assets throughout the mid 20th century, selling them off to benefit himself and his heirs. Vincent died in 1966. The cremated remains of the two men known as Parker Whitney, Joel Parker Whitney and his son J Parker Whitney are sealed in the Whitney family's pyramid-shaped mausoleum near the eleventh green of the Whitney Oaks Golf Course.