

## President's Message LEAVE IT BE

Roger Lokey

as presented to Rocklin City Council, August 8, 2006

Finn Hall is not just a run-of-the-mill building in Rocklin.

It is an historic icon that identifies and focuses much of the history and spirit of Rocklin in the minds and hearts of its citizens.

Finn Hall's location may seem an impediment to development programs you are considering. However, consider the obverse concept that implementation of these programs at the expense of Finn Hall may destroy the beauty, clarity and advantage of the very history we claim as a core value in our community.

Seniority earns certain rights; and respect for seniority implies a duty to honor it appropriately. A very old book advises us to honor those who created us and made us what we are. At times that responsibility may require some degree of sacrifice; a term not much understood or appreciated in these times for the core of character it builds in those who understand its value and use.

Rocklin has no need of more characters, but it does have a need for character and courage in its community planning.

This is not an issue with monetary or political advantage at its core. The Rocklin Historical Society has only altruistic motives that we trust serve the long-term best interests of Rocklin; our home.

Rocklin has endured the unfortunate circumstance of having no downtown for some hundred years. Oddly enough, those same hundred years ago Finn Hall with its unique location, by default became the focal point and the most recognizable landmark in Rocklin; the very heart of the Rocklin community.

The historic legacy of Finn Hall is its Rocklin identity....mention Finn Hall and folks think of Rocklin....mention Rocklin and folks think of Finn Hall.

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## Saint Mary's Restoration Status

You Can Help

Gene Johnson

The race is on to beat the winter rains. We recently installed the truss sheeting. Roofing is next. John Peterson installed the wiring system. We ordered insulation and Leon Vicencio

and his team are prepping the church's 123 year old redwood siding boards to cover the exterior walls.

Bill Merkel designed an annex and we intend to build it over the winter.

Dave Ruhkala is building a steeple and bell tower. Woodpeckers and foul weather toppled the original Saint Mary's steeple in the 1930's and Saint Joseph's Novitiate in Loomis eventually acquired the bell. Saint Joseph's stored the Saint Mary's bell until the early 1980's when thieves ran off with it. So The Community Covenant church on Topaz is replacing the Saint Mary's bell with one which hung in their bell tower when they were located on Third Street in the



**Volunteer Leon Vicencio removes 123 year old siding to reveal honeycombs, birds nests and thousands of woodpecker-stored acorns**

early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Thanks go to Christy Barros who raised more than \$600 for Saint Mary's restoration by operating the tile painting booth at Hot Chile and Cool Cars.

Thanks also to Best Buy Stores who recently donated \$1,000. But funds to complete the restoration are still about \$125,000 short. Volunteers, especially people with building trades skills, would help defray some of our upcoming costs. If you want to help with the restoration or donate materials or funds, please call me at 624-2378



**Racing to beat the winter rains**

## Channel 10 Award for Nancy Lohse

Gary Day

Channel 10 News has awarded their September 2006 Teacher of the Month Award to Valley View School Third Grade teacher Nancy Lohse for her work with the Rocklin Historical Society and other community projects.

Lohse shepherded development of Rocklin schools' third grade history curriculum and encourages her students each year to support a unique Rocklin history-related project. "I'm proudest of my students' participation in the 2005 rope pull which moved Rocklin's oldest building, the Saint Mary's Church, to its new home on Front Street" she said.

Lohse's students have raised funds to restore the church and to place a plaque on the Whitney tomb in Monument Park.

Lohse is a three-time winner of Placer County School Administrator's "Teacher Who Make a Difference" award for her new teacher mentoring program.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars recently awarded her their Citizenship award for her contributions to Rocklin's community causes.

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## President (Cont)

This building and its grounds are one and the same. A historic land-mark! Moving it from its original location will denigrate the intrinsic historic value and impact of this veteran Rocklin citizen.

So, will planning a future downtown for Rocklin - leaving Finn Hall untouched - present a challenge and a sacrifice for City planners and leaders? Probably so.

However, history will admire you, and we know who you are; for recognizing a noble responsibility and doing the right thing, for demonstrating you have the right stuff, and for demonstrating that leadership is an admirable virtue that is not diminished by time. History will always honor wisdom.

We are not your adversaries in any way; we are your neighbors and your friends; just as you are our friends and our neighbors.

I appeal to you individually and collectively to honor this old building and the history represented both in its presence and location. It is such a beautiful Rocklin symbol. Finn Hall has been the heart of Rocklin....at the heart of Rocklin Proper....for a hundred years.

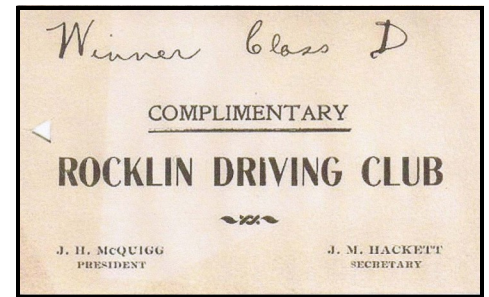
Leave it be.

## Rocklin Goes to the Races

Gary Day

In 1895 horse doctor Mansfield Delano and his wealthy brother Ira, owner of Rocklin's most successful granite quarry, led a group of nine investors to form the Rocklin Driving Park Association and build Rocklin's first and only race track. (note 1.)

Early Rocklin maps don't show the track, but some of Rocklin's old timers remember that it was located immediately north-



Collection of Cliff and Jessica Kennedy

**Free pass to races at the Rocklin Race Track about 1906. Admission was normally twenty-five cents The back of this pass says that Mrs. B.N. Scribner's Lady S won a Class D race that day.**

east of today's Rocklin Grade School on Meyers Street. Rocklin historian Uno He-buck said that it was a one half mile oval. Penryn historian Cliff Kennedy has shown from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century photo that the grandstands probably faced toward the northeast. The street now on the northern border of grade school grounds led to the track's vehicle entrance. That street is still named Racetrack Road.

Rocklin's track was home to the Rocklin Driving Club which held buggy races, horse races and bike races there, mainly on weekends and holidays. Placer Herald reports of late 1890's horse race results show that a typical purse was \$30 with \$18 for the winner, \$9.00 for second and \$3.00 for third.

At a Fourth of July celebration in 1898 cash prizes went to the winner of a "free-for-all" horse race and winners of both men's and ladies bike races. Cash also went to winners of several foot races that day.

A lady bike race winner typically would receive \$3.00, with \$1.50 for second and fifty cents for third. Prizes for male bike racers were double those amounts.

In May 1898, members of Rocklin's baseball team constructed a ball field directly in

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### Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors

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In Memory of

**Cleone Glee Jacobson  
April 24, 1938  
August 17, 2006**

**Native of Rocklin and Lifetime  
Friend of the Rocklin Historical  
Society**



(Continued from page 2)

front of the grandstand. In June, in their first game on the new field, they beat Lincoln's team 14-11. Hebuck documents several ball games at the track from 1898 through 1911 including two games that Rocklin's team won during the 1907 Placer County Fair which was held on track facilities. Hebuck says that the ball field closed after the 1911 season.



Rocklin History Museum archives  
**Golden State, with driver Harvey Blackwell, preparing for a 1912 race at the Rocklin Race Track.**

to ride in the Kentucky Derby from 1917 through 1919 but finished out of the money all three years.

Hebuck says that the last horse race at Rocklin's track occurred in 1914 (note 2), but activity at the track had probably slowed several years earlier. Rocklin's economy was in decline after Rocklin's railroad roundhouse operations moved to Roseville in 1908. Also, Rocklin's granite industry felt increasing competition from cement-based concrete throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The end of state-sanctioned betting operations came in 1909 when California outlawed horse race wagering, however one photograph in the Rocklin History Museum archives shows a packed grandstand as late as 1914. Perhaps the crowd was watching horseracing and buggy racing while friends bet secretly with each other. One document from the period indicates that Rocklin's postmaster booked race bets.

The final blow to track owners' hopes for financial success probably came in 1915 when granite quarrymen struck the quarry owners for a raise from \$3.25 to \$3.75 per

Grove Street is still aligned to front that road.

#### Notes

(1) According to *Rocklin*, by Leonard Davis, p.115, race track property was once part of Dana Perkins's 200 acre ranch. Perkins was a 1850s Rocklin pioneer. According to Rocklin's



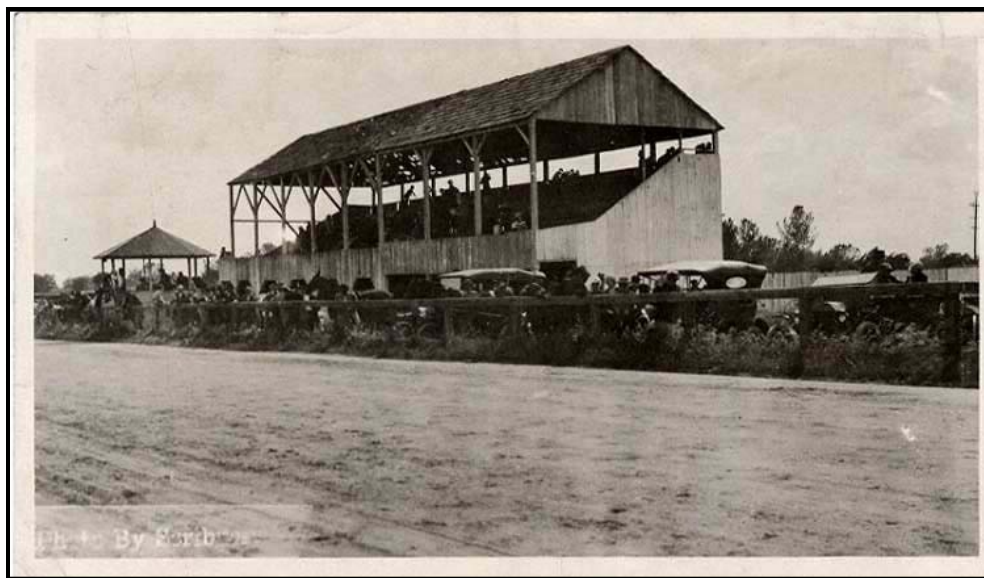
Rocklin History Museum Archives  
**Bicycle Racing at the Rocklin Race Track about 1913**

City website, Perkins donated property for the track in 1893. A Placer Herald Article of April 8, 1893 indicates that construction of the track would be completed by May 1 of that year. Curiously, the Rocklin Driving Park Association filed their papers of incorporation, including a detailed statement of intention to build the track, in 1895, two years later. A search of Placer Herald files indicates that significant activity at the track probably didn't start before 1897. One possible reason for the conflicting information about the track's opening date is the severe depression that hit the country in 1893. That depression started the decline of the Placer Citrus Colony and might have adversely affected Rocklin's granite and railroad operations also. Track construction might have stopped in 1893 waiting for a recovering economy and new investors.

(2) Hebuck, *My Memories of Rocklin*, Racetrack Section. Hebuck says that May 3, 1914 was the last day of horse racing, however Placer Herald articles of June 27, 1914 and July 11, 1914 indicate that at least two large horse race meets occurred after that date. The last horse race might have been held on July 4, 1914.

(3) Stonecutters struck at the same time for a raise from \$5.00 to \$5.60 per day

Next Time: **The sun sets on Sunset**



Collection of Cliff and Jessica Kennedy  
**Rocklin's Race Track about 1915. Notice the deteriorated condition of the grandstand and the vintage of the automobiles**

Some horse races limited entries to breeders from the Placer Citrus Colony. Joel Parker Whitney organized the Colony in the late 1880's, and he and his son J. Parker Whitney were avid horse breeders and posted Whitney family horses for races. Joel Parker's cousin John T. Whitney was one of the track's original investors.

In March 1914, sixteen-year-old Johnny Morys, son of Morys' saloon owner and former Rocklin City Councilman John Morys, won a race on a Whitney family horse named "Joy". Young Johnny went on

day. Most of Rocklin's quarries closed that year and never reopened. (Note 3) Rocklin historian Ruben Ruhkala remembers that track facilities burned down before 1920 and were never rebuilt.

State records show that the Rocklin Driving Club disbanded in 1922 after several years of inactivity.

Today, in 2006, urban development covers Rocklin Race Track grounds. The county road that bordered the track's western edge has disappeared from the landscape, although the barn for one of the houses on

## Help Wanted

The Rocklin History Museum needs volunteer docents. Chose Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday afternoons from 1 pm until 4 pm. Call Barbara Chapman (415-0153) for details.

## Rocklin's Spanish Pioneers Came via Hawaii

Anne Aguilar Santucci

In 1906, Hawaiian sugar cane and pineapple companies began recruiting immigrants from Spain to harvest crops. They offered jobs for all able-bodied persons over 16 years old, with free housing and free one-way passage to Hawaii. From 1907 to 1913 more than 8,000 Spanish immigrants came to Hawaii.

Most planned to work hard, save money and then return home when their contracts expired. But they were drawn to California by rumors of fertile farm land, rolling hills, plenty of water, and moderate climate. Over 90% of the immigrants decided to relocate in California instead of returning to Spain.

In 1912 several Spanish families began to arrive in Rocklin. Soon after arriving some bought property, cleared land, and planted the same products that grew in Spain: almonds, berries, cherries, figs, grapes, lemons melons, oranges, pears peaches, pomegranates, and plums.

Ten families owned and operated fruit orchards. Aguilar, Alva, Boisa, Corral, Entizne, deFuentes, Hernandez, Lozano, Morales and Triano. Today the Sierra College Campus is located on the Boisa property. Within a few years the 10 orchards were in full production providing seasonal jobs planting, plowing, irrigating cultivating, pruning, thinning, spraying, and picking.

The fruit was packed in wooden crates and taken to one of the many fruit shipping sheds in Loomis. There the shed operators inspected the fruit and loaded it into refrigerated railroad boxcars for shipment back east.

There were five Spanish retail businesses in the Rocklin area in those early years.

1. Ramon Moon, his wife Ana Diaz Rodriguez and family owned and operated a general grocery store in the two-story granite building on Rocklin Road that now houses Rocklin's City hall. The Moon family lived at the corner of San Francisco and Rocklin Road in the house now occupied by the Rocklin History Museum

2. The Fred Basque family owned and op-

erated Fred's Place which was made up of a general store, gasoline station and auto shop.

3. The White Spot Café was operated by Hank and Connie Gayaldo

4. The Basque Market was a general store and gasoline station owned by the Nicolas Basque family.

5. The White Front was owned by the Joe deFuentes family. It included a bar, café, dance area and motel.

From the 1920s through the 1940s the population of Rocklin was about 500. Much of the population was Finnish and Spanish. Many of the Finns earned their living in the granite industry; the Spanish in the retail and farm industries.

After the construction of Freeway #80, people began purchasing choice farm land for home building. The productive Rocklin area orchards were replaced with home subdivisions. Family retail businesses closed in favor of shopping centers and



Courtesy of Connie Gayaldo

**Spanish immigrant Fred Basque sells gasoline for 15 cents per gallon on Pacific Street in 1936.**

super stores.

The population in Rocklin is now over 50,000. The descendants of the pioneer Finnish and Spanish families have extended to 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> generations that link the town of Rocklin to its quarry, grocery and farm industries of the past.

## Rocklin's First Residents

Gary Day

(Update of an article recently published in the Placer Herald)

The Rocklin area's earliest recorded history begins when Euro-Americans first contacted the native Nisenan in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Nisenan lived near area waterways for 1500-3000 years, hunting game and processing food, especially acorns, in the bedrock mortars that we now see on golf courses and along the banks of area streams. By the mid 1830's Euro-American diseases had decimated the Nisenan population. In 1833, 75% died of malaria brought here from Hawaii by Hudson's Bay Company traders. Later the Argonauts and other mid 19<sup>th</sup> century fortune hunters drove them from the land and permanently disrupted their culture. Descendants of the Nisenan still reside in South Placer County but the traditional life ways have not been seen in Rocklin since 1904.

## Mark Your Calendar

**RHS General Meetings, 7 pm at the Rocklin Library:**

**October 16, 2006** - Featuring Nancy Kelsey from the Folsom History Museum

**November 20, 2006** - Featuring Professor Dan DeFoe on his new film, "*Gold, Granite and Grit*"

**December 18, 2006** - Featuring the Annual Christmas Dinner

**January 15, 2007**—Speaker to be announced

**Heritage Park Committee** - Meets every Wednesday at 7 am in Oracle's cafeteria.

**Rocklin History Museum**—Open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, 1 to 4