

President's Message New Life for a Rocklin Landmark

Two years and five days after moving down Front Street to a new location and a new lease on life, St Mary's of the Assumption Church became Old St Mary's Chapel and hosted its first wedding in decades! And once again, the Rocklin Historical Society made history by saving history.

This outstanding accomplishment started with Gene Johnson, chairman of the Heritage Park Committee and his little band of Wednesday morning volunteers. Gene's leadership and persistence over two years produced the beautiful results you see today. So when the St Mary's project comes to mind, please remember that flesh and blood dedication raised this Phoenix from its ashes. I will have further comments about this group in the future.

Suffice it to say that St Mary's began its new service to our community with tremendous activity. The wedding of Amy Callahan and Jaymes Sorenson took place on time Saturday, September 22, 2007. However, few if any passing the building site on September 19th or 20th or 21st, believed it would be complete for the Saturday wedding; the bride included! Workers, building materials, heavy equipment, storage containers, and debris was everywhere in last minute efforts to complete the project. But once more, Gene Johnson rose to the occasion and managed to complete the building and cleanup of the grounds in time for the 3:00 PM nuptials. You should know though that Saturday afternoon as the bride was making her grand entrance at the front door, Gene was quietly exiting the back door after deftly installing a door knob. Exquisite timing!

The RHS extends our truly heartfelt thanks, appreciation and admiration to the Rocklin Elementary third-graders, Rocklin residents, businesses and city personnel who participated in large or small part to the St Mary's project. Without your time, energy and input this project would not have been successful. Those efforts will be

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Saint Mary's through the Years

From the Rocklin History Series at rocklintoday.com/
Gary Day

In 1882 John Bolton, the Irish land developer who plotted Rocklin's original town site, donated an oak-framed lot to Rocklin's Catholics for our City's first Catholic Church. Construction started shortly after the Bolton donation and Gold Rush era Archbishop Joseph Alemany of the San Francisco Archdiocese dedicated the newly constructed church as Saint Mary's of the Assumption Catholic Church on August 13, 1883.

The church was at 5420 Front Street, on a knoll overlooking the transcontinental railroad tracks about 100 yards to the east.



Old Saint Mary's Chapel glistens in the heart of Rocklin's Front Street Historic District. The chapel hosts weddings and other events.

Saint Mary's served Rocklin Catholics throughout the remainder of the 19th century and it survived the fires that obliterated downtown Rocklin in the early 20th century. But a declining granite industry and adverse economic effects of the Great Depression depopulated Rocklin and closed the church in 1933. Woodpeckers and foul weather toppled Saint Mary's steeple in 1937.

In 1946 Saint Mary's reopened for 9:30am Sunday masses, but in the ensuing years it

often operated only as a satellite of parishes in Roseville and Lincoln.

In 1978, Parishioners gave Saint Mary's a facelift and performed extensive repairs but the church continued to fray with age.

In 1981 Fr. Michael Dillon assumed leadership at Saint Mary's, renamed the parish Saints Peter and Paul and moved the congregation to a new church on Granite Drive. Dillon held the last mass at Saint Mary's on December 23, 1983. "Saint Mary's seated 80 people" said Dillon. "It was not nearly large enough for fast growing Rocklin". Dillon also remembers the inconveniences of an obsolete building. "The windows had to be open to circulate air in the warm months," he said "and I spent a lot of time swatting horseflies trespassing at mass from the neighbor's corral".

In 1986 the Diocese of Sacramento sold the church to The Church of Religious Science, which conducted services there until 1996. That year the mortgage holder, Lois Caprile of Washington, foreclosed and offered the church, including the oak-framed lot, to the City of Rocklin as a gift. But the city refused her offer because of the building's poor condition.

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President's Message

admired for generations to come.

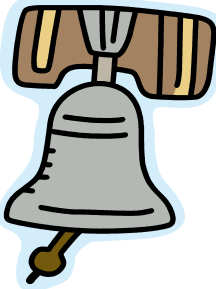
St Mary's has been an integral part of Rocklin for 124 years. Thanks to Gene and the RHS, it can now reclaim its rightful place among other Rocklin landmarks such as the Barudoni building, Trott's Hotel (Crossroads Church), City Hall, Finn Hall and the Rocklin History Museum. If you haven't already, drive by Old St Mary's and take a good long look at 1883!

Roger Lokey
President

A Real Bell Ringer

Carol Peterson

Thank you for your generous bell ringing donations to St. Mary's restoration. Some donations were memorials, others honored weddings, 90th birthdays and an Anniversary. The bells are on display in the museum and you may continue to make bell ringing donations including honors and memorials. Donations in any amount are welcome. Send checks to Rocklin Historical Society, P.O. Box 752, Rocklin CA 9567.



If you wish a card to be sent to the person being honored or a family notified of a memorial donation, please include the name of the honoree and the name and address for us to send the notification card.

Did you Know?

Gary Day

Western Rocklin covers the southern 12,000 acres of the former Spring Valley Ranch. George Whitney established the ranch on 320 acres in the mid 1850s to raise a special breed of sheep. George's son, Joel Parker Whitney, acquired control of the ranch in the early 1870's and, by the time of his death in 1913, had diversified its activities and expanded it to 27,000 acres, most of it bordered roughly by Roseville, Lincoln, Downtown Rocklin and Penryn.

Docent Doings - Hello and Good Bye

Barbara Chapman

The last quarter of the year is here and we are welcoming four people who have expressed an interest in becoming docents. ... Hooray!!

These new friends will be "shadowing" you to learn all about Rocklin's history. I know you will welcome them and share your knowledge and stories so they in turn can greet our visitors being well informed. Several of our members are not able to be active with us and they are already missed. Those of you who see them regularly,



please share with us how they are doing.

There are some gaps in our fourth quarter calendars. Please review and call me if you can fill in where there are still open dates. The Holiday Boutique days on Saturday and Sunday the first weekend in November will need coverage by volunteers. Let's hope you can join us.

Time to Schedule School

Tours

Gay Morgan

Third Grade students in the Rocklin Unified School District study their home community. As part of that study many third graders tour the Rocklin History Museum. During the 2006-2007 school year 786 students, their parents and teachers visited the museum.

As the new school year begins Roy and Ruben Ruhkala, Ruth Williams, Susan Brooking and Gay Morgan are looking forward to showing classes through the museum. Three schools have already made reservations. Contact me at 624-2355 to make tour arrangements, or email me at gfmorgan@jps.net.

Mystery Solved?

Gary Day

The spring was a widely known Rocklin curiosity and source of clean drinking water in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A nearby cluster of 88 bedrock mortars and about 4 acres of gently sloping terrain, partly covered by Springview School's soccer field, tell that the area was formerly home to a large community of native Nisenan. The slope, called a "midden" by archeologists, covers the refuse of more than 1500 years of Nisenan seasonal encampments. Rocklin's creeks ran dry in the summers before European settlers dammed the Sierra watershed. The spring was possibly the best source of the water that the Nisenan needed in the fall to wash tannin from their acorn mush.

In the 1940's one Rocklin old-timer could remember seeing Nisenan at the spring as late as the 1880's.

It's called Huff's Mineral Spring, named after William Huff who lined it with granite blocks in 1887 and sold the water - 25 cents for all a person could carry.

Huff's spring gurgles 120 gallons per minute of chilly water over its granite lining into a tributary of Antelope Creek. The mystery is that the flow slows noticeably at midday but is strong again by early evening. Rocklin Hydrologist Christian Carleton, who lives nearby, thinks that he knows why. He attributes the varying flow to deep-rooted oaks which take up water from the underlying aquifer while the sun is high. Carleton explains the phenomenon this way.

"Assuming that there is no significant local groundwater pumping, the diurnal change in flow is likely caused by water uptake from oak trees. The roots of oaks go deep and probably tap into the same source of water as Huff spring. This is a phenomenon that is also observed in local creeks where tree uptake of water during the day causes the creek level to temporarily drop."

It seems like a credible answer to a long time Rocklin mystery.

"Into every life a little rain must fall...but this is ridiculous"

Noah

Rocklin Hose Company Number 1

Gary Day

In the early 1890s, demand for Rocklin's light-gray granite building stone grew steadily and Rocklin's quarries were at peak activity. Rocklin's railroad round-house employed 300 people and businesses flourished along Granite Avenue (now Rocklin Road), Front Street and Railroad Avenue.

But periodic fires continued to plague Rocklin's downtown business district as they had since the late 1860's. In 1893, as a nationwide economic depression was forming, fire consumed 25 business places from the Trott Hotel (now the Crossroads Church) southward along Front Street. An equally disastrous fire a year later flattened the business block on the opposite side of the tracks along Railroad Avenue.

It was in this context that Rocklin Judge John H. Gregory convened a series of meetings in the upstairs room at Porter's Saloon in the spring of 1894 for the purpose of forming a Rocklin Fire Company. At the third meeting, on June 4, 1894, each of seventeen men paid a \$2.00 initiation fee, elected officers and founded Rocklin Hose Company Number One, Rocklin's first fire department. The group elected Irishman William J. Byrne as company foreman, Rocklin's first fire chief. Every man was an unpaid volunteer.

The company's fire rig was a two-wheeled hose cart stored in a barn-like garage in the south side of Rocklin's first City Hall on Front Street, on the exact spot of today's Old Saint Mary's Chapel. The cart carried a 100- 150 foot reeled fire hose.

In some American cities in the 1890's and early twentieth century, neighborhood fire alarm boxes were linked via telegraph-like circuits to firehouses. A person spotting a fire rushed to an alarm box and pulled down a handle sending a location-coded alert summoning the fire company. But Rocklin employed a fire bell located near city hall for this purpose. A person spotting a fire would walk, run or travel on horseback, possibly as far as a mile, to pull the fire bell rope to summon the fire company. A person from the east side of town might have to wait for a train to pass before crossing the tracks to pull the rope.

On hearing the bell, fire fighters rushed to city hall, rolled the hose cart from its garage and moved it quickly to the fire. Sometimes they ran with it on foot. Sometimes they paid as much as \$1.00 to the owner of any nearby team of horses that they could

recruit to pull it.

The firefighters elected each other to pre-assigned duties. At the fire site the hydro man connected the hose to the closest hydrant. The cart men pulled the cart ahead to unreel the hose. The nozzle man connected the nozzle to the hose and signaled the hydro man to open the hydrant. The nozzle man was especially important in the process. He sometimes ran to the fire alongside the hose cart cradling the nozzle to ensure its safe transit. His special skill was in attaching that nozzle quickly and squarely to the hose end. Wealthy nineteenth century quarry owner and land broker John Mantyla was a nozzle man. The fire company practiced twice each month to minimize time needed to "show water" at the nozzle.

historian Ruben Ruhkala doesn't remember that Rocklin ever used a neighborhood alarm box system. He noted that, because of Rocklin's cumbersome alarm system, houses northeast of downtown would sometimes burn to the ground before the hose company could respond.

Rocklin's early twentieth century fire fighters addressed each other as "comrade". They met for business meetings at least once a month, mainly in the city hall's hose company facilities. Meeting minutes show that discussions of fire suppression experiences and other fire-related topics occurred only twice in the 21 year period from 1894 to 1914. The men were probably heroes in the community. Newspaper accounts show that they fought many fires in those early years. But their

main concern, discussed at length at most business meetings, was the maintenance of a dance platform and the conduct of July 4th Firemen's Balls and other dances. Sometimes they scheduled dances as often as weekly, on Saturday nights.

The meeting minutes show that the hose company paid to have the dance platform stored away in the winter months and that they probably located it at different downtown sites each year. In 1910 the hose company formed a separate corporation to profit from

renting out the platform for dances and other uses, including roller skating. Ruhkala remembers a 1920s era platform for both dancing and roller skating on the Railroad Avenue hill across Rocklin Road from today's Rocklin rail station.

By the early 1930s Rocklin's volunteer fire fighters had acquired a four-wheeled fire cart that they sometimes pulled with an automobile. They acquired their first motorized fire unit in 1936.



Rocklin's first fire rig was a two-wheeled hose cart like this one. Firefighters pulled it by the protruding bar (barely visible at upper right).

In 1910 quarry owner Adolf Pernu offered his quarry whistle as an alarm bell substitute for east side residents, and later the hose company installed a fire siren east of the tracks and across the street from today's Rocklin rail station. But Rocklin

The four daughters of former Rocklin Volunteer Fire Chief Frank De-Fuentes recently donated Rocklin Hose Company meeting minutes for the years 1894 through 1914 to the Rocklin History Museum. The Rocklin Firefighters Association is restoring the minutes for the museum's archives. Digital copies are available at the museum. A typed transcript is coming soon.

(Continued from page 1) through the years

Caprile then gave the church, including the lot, to a Baptist congregation instead.

Neighbors in the Front Street area can't remember that the Baptists ever held services in the church but in 2001 the Baptists sold the church to Electrical Maintenance Consultants who applied to the city to demolish it. EMC needed room to expand their business.

The Rocklin Historical Society heard of the church's plight from the city staff who



Saint Mary's of the Assumption Catholic Church before the steeple toppled in 1937

processed the demolition application. Recognizing the church's historical significance, RHS immediately started negotiations with EMC to try to save it. In 2005 EMC offered the church to RHS as a gift with the proviso that it be moved quickly out of EMC's intended expansion area.

RHS accepted and on September 17, 2005 RHS moved the church 1000 feet north to be restored and to become the centerpiece of Heritage Park at Front Street and Rocklin Road. The park is a joint City of Rocklin and RHS project to beautify Rocklin's railroad corridor with building restorations and new landscaping.

RHS completed the restoration in September 2007 and renamed the building "Old Saint Mary's Chapel"

RHS has saved Saint Mary's to become a key landmark in the restoration of downtown Rocklin.



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Newsletter proofreading by **Allan and Marie Stone**

**Gift Shop Manager
Needed**

Bill and Laura Woods
Museum Curators

Your Rocklin History Museum needs a Gift Shop Manager. If you are interested in volunteering for this position, please call Roger Lokey at 435-1632 or Laura Woods at 625-0800.

**Please Send Us Your Email
Address-
Second Request**

Christy Barros
Publicity Chairman

Sometimes it is convenient for us to communicate with Rocklin Historical Society members via Email. For example we sometimes want to remind you of upcoming events and we sometimes want to send you event pictures. But we have only a few Email addresses on our roster. If you have access to Email, please send us an Email message with your name and address and we will add your Email address to the roster.

Christy Barros
cbarros@finsvcs.com

Mark Your Calendar

October 15:

RHS General Meeting:

7 pm at Old Saint Mary's Chapel—
Speaker to be announced

November 3 and 4.

Holiday Boutique

10 am to 5 pm at the Rocklin History Museum

November 19:

RHS General Meeting:

7 pm at Old Saint Mary's Chapel—
Speaker to be announced

December 17

Holiday Party at the Rocklin History Museum

January 21

RHS General Meeting:

7 pm at Old Saint Mary's Chapel—
Speaker to be announced

Holiday Boutique

Laura Woods

Mark your calendar for the Holiday Boutique, Sat., Nov. 3 and Sun., Nov. 4 from 10am to 5pm.

Please donate your craft items for sale by Nov. 2. If you have questions, call Laura Woods at 625-0800.

Year-end giving

Carol Peterson

This is a reminder that donations to The Rocklin Historical Society are tax deductible. Please include RHS in your plans for year-end giving.

RHS renewal dues are due by January 1. Please send your year-end gifts and renewal dues to

Rocklin Historical Society
P. O. box 752
Rocklin California, 95677

To join the Rocklin Historical Society go to rocklinhistory.org. or call Gay Morgan on 624-2355