

President's Message The Decent Docent

The challenge for volunteer organizations tends to be the need for participants. Although a warm fuzzy feeling can be had by claiming you are part of an organization, that organization exists only at the pleasure and through the participatory efforts of its volunteer members.

Do you remember the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland? It is usually pictured as a rotund striped feline with a very large, toothy and engaging smile. But the Cheshire cat had an unfortunate tendency to slowly fade away during a conversation and all that remained of him was the smile.

Well, participatory service in the Rocklin Historical Society and consequently to our community, is much like that cat. Volunteers begin with a pleasant, engaging and unmistakable presence; but some have a propensity over time to slowly fade away leaving only a promise of interest for the future because of lack of participation.

By definition volunteers are very special people. They give their time, talent and treasure to offer something significant to others at no charge. This is indeed a rare type of individual who gives so unselfishly. The return on a volunteer's investment of time, talent and effort is the knowledge that their endeavor uplifts and enhances the community.

So this begs the question..."Why join a volunteer organization and not participate?"

RHS volunteers sometimes meet the public but they always meet other volunteers! The depth and breadth of interesting people in the RHS is fascinating.

(Continued on page 2)

Mark the date—May 2, 2009 The Rocklin Historical Society's Legacy Dinner, An old fashioned Firemen's Ball

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 roundhouse 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 formed, 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. By the early 1930s Rocklin's volunteer fire fighters had acquired



1936 Dodge Vanpelt
COURTESY OF: ROCKLIN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Rocklin Fire Chief Bill Mikesell will pilot Rocklin's first fire engine at the Annual Legacy Dinner on May 2. Rides are free

a four-wheeled fire cart that they sometimes pulled with an automobile. They acquired their first motorized fire engine, a converted Dodge truck, in 1936. That unit will be on display and available for rides at The Rocklin Historical Society's Fourth Annual Legacy dinner on Saturday May 2, 2009, at the Sunset Center. Byrne's most recent successor Rocklin Fire Chief Bill Mikesell will drive the fire engine and emcee the festivities. Dinner, catered by Randy Peters, starts at 7:00 pm. Dance to the strains of the Driving Blind Band. Admission is \$40.00. Call Gay Morgan at 624-2355 for tickets. Fire engine rides start at 6 pm and are free.

Proceeds of the Legacy Dinner will benefit the society's project to build a replica of the original firehouse next to the Old Saint Mary's Chapel near the corner of Rocklin Road and Front Street in historic Downtown Rocklin.

ing. All volunteers share the same basic interests of the organization, so immediately they have common ground. Working with others and getting to know them on a volunteer level draws an organization and a community together in a myriad of ways.

RHS's purpose is to inform and educate both neighbor and visitor about the history of Rocklin. So docents (guides and teachers) are necessary at the Rocklin History Museum to inform the public when they visit. As we members know, Rocklin is a very interesting town and we have a remarkable history to share. But finding decent docents to man the museum is sometimes a challenge. By decent I mean dedicated and trained people to share their knowledge of Rocklin's history with any who come to see and learn.

To become a decent docent just show up at the museum! Any current decent docent would be very happy to start you on the road to learning for the sake of sharing! It is enjoyable adult entertainment that can be offered to mixed company and truly appreciated by all. The museum is not as busy as Wal-Mart so during quiet times you can visit with other decent docents and find out for yourself what interesting people belong to our society.

Volunteering is like going swimming. A high dive into untested waters is not required.

If the water looks cold, stick your toe in first. Check it out. Then get involved at your own pace, but get involved and stay involved! You will find new interests, friends and perspectives that make life in Rocklin a richer and more satisfying experience.

Don't allow the RHS become an organization of Cheshire cats! We need more substance than a smile to keep our volunteer organization vibrant and exciting.

Roger Lokey

Green thumbs needed

Sally Huseby

The landscape committee needs people to help out occasionally to prune, weed and feed the museum landscape. Keith Huseby is helping this month before he leaves town for his real job. But we will need help soon.

The landscaping plantings are low maintenance so the work is usually easy. We get lots of compliments on our work so please call me at 315-8401 to sign up to have fun as part of our landscape maintenance team.

Are your dues due?

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please look at the address label on the envelope. If the number after your name is not a 9 your dues are due.

Please send your \$25.00 renewal dues to:

**Rocklin Historical Society
P. O. Box 1
Rocklin California, 95677**

We are here to help

Do you have questions about Rocklin's history? Stop by the Rocklin History Museum on Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday afternoon between 1:00 and 4:00 and talk to a docent.

RHS garage sale scheduled for May 30

The Rocklin Historical Society will be holding a garage sale at Gene Johnson's home at 5200 Fifth Street on May 30, 2009. Bring your unwanted stuff and look for bargains there.

Call Gene at 624-2378 for more information.

Please send us your Email address

Christy Barros
Publicity Chairman

If you have access to Email, please send me an Email message and I will add your Email address to the roster.

**Christy Barros
christy@inetinc.net**

GUIDED MUSEUM GROUP TOURS AVAILABLE

**BY APPOINTMENT
CALL GAY MORGAN
624-2355**

Donations are appreciated

Docent / member news

Your historical society membership offers you the opportunity to welcome visitors to our history museum where we share displays and tell the story of Rocklin.

We are in desperate need of your help. Give three hours of your time to allow us to keep our doors open to visitors on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons between 1PM and 4PM. If you can give your time once in a while to be at our museum with assigned docent staff, please consider doing so by contacting me by phone at 415-0153 as soon as possible. . We need additional staffing to remain open....WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

Looking ahead to summer, we once again



will have the opportunity to become a "destination" in Placer County for one week-end on August 8th & 9th. The 2nd Heritage Trail weekend event will be held on that weekend and Rocklin will be one of 20 Placer County museums open to the public. The hours are between 10am and 4pm. Please keep those dates open to visit other museums and, more importantly, to help host visitors in our museum. We will again use 3 hour shifts and would like a minimum of six volunteers available each three hour period – a total of four shifts. Every member of our Rocklin Historical Society is encouraged to participate these two days to support this event. The opportunity to visit with your own museum members while sharing the history of Rocklin can be a good time for us all. Please let me know if you are available to volunteer for one shift either of these two days so we can be open to participate in this county wide event.

Barbara Chapman 415-0153

Rocklin and the magical seventeen

Gary Day

Was there something special about their years training in Rocklin that brought the San Francisco 49ers from obscurity to greatness, and then back to obscurity when they left? Is there something special about Rocklin?

The Niners trained at Sierra College here during the summers of 1981 through 1997. They won 73% of their games during that seventeen year period including sixteen National Football League playoff games and five Super Bowls. While training in Rocklin they had a winning record in every year except the 1982 cancelled season.

The Niners entered the NFL in 1950. In the 31 years before training in Rocklin they were a frequent disappointment, winning only 182 of 405 games. During their four best years of that period they played for the NFL championship but lost every year on their way to the title. The Dallas Cowboys beat them in championship games three straight years, in 1970 through 1972.

Since moving their summertime training from Rocklin in 1998 the Niners have appeared in only five playoff games while reverting to their pre-Rocklin losing pattern with only 78 wins in 181 games.

The contrast between the Niners' Rocklin years, and years when they summured elsewhere, is striking. No other team has won five Super Bowl titles during a seventeen year period. No other team has a higher decade-long winning percentage than the Niners did for the decade of the 80s.

Was there something about conditions in Rocklin that led to the Niners successes? "It's impossible to say why the Niners had their best years while training in Rocklin" said former 49er linebacker Keena Turner who owns four Super bowl rings. "The training camp's location shouldn't have anything to do with it".

Some fans attribute the Niners' success here to a lucky combination of superior coaching and great players.

But was it the coaching and players that made difference or was it something else? The Niners had three head coaches during their years here and all three had losing records in their head coaching years with teams not trained in Rocklin.

Bill Walsh and his West Coast Offence powered the Niners in their first eight years here. Walsh compiled a 94 - 39 record with the Niners then and led them to three Super Bowl wins. Walsh had been head coach at Stanford and led the Cardinal to three bowl

games in the 1970s. But away from Rocklin Walsh also had off years, coaching the Niners during two disastrous years in 1979 and 1980, the two years before coming here, and going 17 - 17 with the Cardinal after he retired from Niners coaching in 1989. Walsh was 42-48 as head coach of college and pro teams not summering in Rocklin.

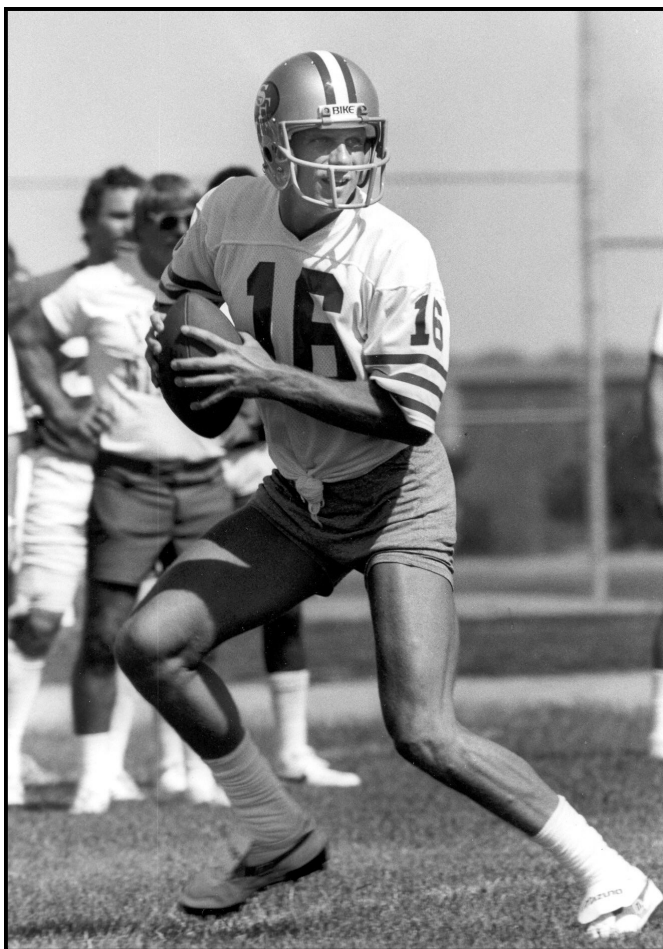
George Seifert's pro head coaching career started with the Niners in 1989. He led the Niners to eight winning seasons, including

So was it superior players that made the difference during the magical seventeen? The problem with this theory is that the Niners' player personnel turned over several times in those years while the team was a steady winner. Superstars Joe Montana, Keena Turner, Ronnie Lott and rest of the Niners 1982 Super Bowl winning team were all elsewhere for the Niners fifth and final Super Bowl victory in 1995. Only four 1982 Super Bowl players survived until the Niners fourth Super Bowl victory in 1989.

Who can deny the dominance of superstar quarterbacks Montana and Steve Young? Montana was a standout at Notre Dame, but after the Niners drafted him third in 1979, he struggled through two losing seasons in pre-Rocklin 1979 and 1980. He wasn't a standout until his first year training in Rocklin when he led the team to a win in the 1982 Super Bowl. Young was a standout at Brigham Young, but he was a professional bust after struggling with Tampa Bay where they went 4-28 in 1985 and 1986. He joined the Niners in Rocklin in 1987 and finished his career with the Niners as the highest rated passer in pro football history.

The 49ers' great performances in their Rocklin years seem to be inexplicable. Could it have been the Spartan living conditions in Sierra College's housing units and Rocklin's intense summer heat that toughened the Niners for victories in those years? Sierra College History Professor Gary Noy credits the College's hospitality. "As someone who was around during that time, I would like to think it was the smiling faces and welcoming attitude of the Sierra College staff that helped make the Niners success possible." he said.

Whatever the reason, Rocklin fans still root for the Niners and hope that some day they will return to Rocklin and get back to their winning ways.



Joe Montana fades to pass in the summer heat of Sierra College's athletic field. Montana's pro successes started in 1981, the Niners' first year practicing in Rocklin.

two Super Bowl victories, in the eight years through 1996. But Seifert had only losing seasons as a head coach after his Rocklin years. His career ended with a three-year 16-32 record coaching the Carolina Panthers. Steve Mariucci coached the Niners in 1997, their last year here. He led the Niners to a NFC West title that year. But Mariucci's record after his Rocklin days is spotty, spoiled mostly by his 30 month stint as head coach of the perennially hapless Detroit Lions.

Mark Your Calendar

April 20, 2009, 7pm General meeting at Old Saint Mary's Chapel 5251 Front Street

Tales of Saint Mary's
Father Michael Dillon of Saints Peter and
Paul Catholic Community
Father Dillon assumed leadership of
the aging St Mary's of the Assumption
Catholic Church on Front Street in 1981.
He will speak of his memories
of that deteriorating building.

May 2, 2009, 6pm Sunset Center Rocklin Historical Society's An- nual Legacy Dinner

Themed on an old-time Fireman's Ball and
honoring the history of Rocklin's Fire De-
partment, and feting the Ruhkala family for
their contributions to Rocklin's develop-
ment

May 18, 7 pm General meeting at Old Saint Mary's Chapel

A guest speaker from (PCWA) Placer
County Water Agency will show photos
and speak on the subject: "Where Does
Rocklin Water Come From". Let's find
out where the water came from that Rock-
lin Hose Company number one used to
fight those 1894 fires.

An ice cream social will wind up our meet-
ings until next fall.

May 30, 2009 all day Rocklin Historical Society's Gar- age Sale 5200 Fifth Street

Bring your unwanted stuff for sale and be
ready to shop.
Call Gene Johnson at 624-2378 for more
information

*"It ain't what you don't
know that gets you into
trouble.*

*It's what you know for sure
that just ain't so".*

Anon. from the internet



Rocklin

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Newsletter proofreading by **Allan and
Marie Stone**

2009 Membership

Jackie Bartolucci
Membership Chairman

We are excited to announce that your
2009 membership will include more so-
cial functions, activities, projects and
volunteer opportunities than ever before.
With a full calendar of events this year,
our goal is to improve and grow our
membership, while continuing to pre-
serve and honor Rocklin's history.
Don't forget to renew your membership
for 2009 and if you know of someone
who loves history and loves Rocklin, ask
them to join today. The 2009 annual
membership is \$25.00 and is tax deducti-
ble. Membership applications can be
found on our website at
www.rocklinhistory.org or can be re-
quested by calling me at 782-8302.
Mail renewals and applications to :

**Rocklin Historical Society,
P.O. Box 1,
Rocklin CA 95677.**

Placer County Museum De- partment News

Melanie Barton

Spring is here and for some, romance is in the
air and recollections of weddings past or an-
ticipated are on the mind and close to the
heart. We are very excited about our new
exhibit, Unveiled, that will feature the wed-
ding dresses and accessories from our collec-
tion. The exhibit will span all three Placer
County museums in Auburn and will official-
ly open at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 30th.
I hope you put this date on your calendar and
join us at the historic Courthouse for the
opening reception.

At the Placer County Museum, three or four
gowns from the 1920s to 1940s will be fea-
tured. They are exquisite. Six dresses along
with accessories from the Victorian period
will be exhibited at the Bernhard Museum
Complex. The wedding theme will also be
represented at the Gold Country Museum.
You must visit to discover how the theme is
interpreted in this gold rush setting. I think
you will be surprised!

We are very interested in adding to our arti-
fact and photo collection. If you or a relative
were married in Placer County and you have
photos or wedding attire, we would love to
hear from you. A photo album of Placer
County weddings will be a part of the exhibit
and your photos could be a part of it. The
photos will be scanned and the originals re-
turned to you. To make an appointment,
please call the Curator of Collections at 530-
889-7705

Rocklin's first businessmen

Gary Day

They built their villages on low rises along
Rocklin's streams, hunted game in Rocklin's
hills and meadows and gathered fruits, nuts,
seeds and roots here for 2000 years before
European explorers made contact with them
in the early 1800's. They were the Nisenan,
the southernmost of three linguistic groups of
California's Maidu culture. Archeologists
have identified 33 sites in the middle of Clo-
ver Valley containing hundreds of bedrock
mortars and dozens of depressions in the
earth indicating home and dance house loca-
tions. Excavations have revealed artifacts of
obsidian, seashell and other materials not
native to this area, suggesting that Rocklin's
Nisenan played a central role in trade among
Northern California's tribes.