

## President's Message Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Being the last message from this president, perhaps it is appropriate to spend a few moments reflecting, assessing, and projecting the status of our Historical Society.

Taking the gavel from Roy Rukkala in 2006 was both a privilege and a daunting responsibility. The challenges of this new duty were the looming demands of maintaining both the status quo of Museum operation and simultaneously restoring to an undefined usefulness a 122 year-old building. And, of course we had no funds to support the latter effort.

At the January 2006 General Meeting in my first "State of the Historical Society" speech, the issues of fund-raising and membership were given as the immediate challenges to the Rocklin Historical Society. Raising the profile and influence of the Historical Society in the Rocklin community was also suggested as a necessary aspect of RHS growth. In that January meeting some 2000 years of collective membership experience was available to resolve the challenges under consideration. My hopes were very high.

So where are we today? Over the last four years we struggled to finance the restoration of St Mary's and put it into operation as a functioning business entity. Thanks to the financial generosity and faith of several of our members, the contributions and donations of many, many others, and the tenacity of the Historical Society to finish what we started in the restoration of St Mary's, the RHS now proudly displays the most beautifully restored historic building in the south Placer county region. Each member of RHS should be personally proud of their contribution to this effort. The goal of a higher profile and greater impact in the community has been met and exceeded!

With the first wedding at St Mary's in September of 2007, RHS has created a fund-raising resource that will only increase in revenue generation over time. The addition of the Bridal Patio enhanced the curb ap-

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## KNOW YOUR DOCENTS

*Gay Morgan*

When Susan Brooking and her husband Alan moved to Rocklin ten years ago, she thought it would be a good idea to learn about the history of their new hometown. She felt that knowledge of the history would make them feel more connected to the community. She says she found wonderful stories about fascinating people.



***Susan Brooking***

Susan does very thorough research and now has a great understanding of Rocklin's history. She helps with the group tours of the Rocklin History Museum and communicates confidently with the young third graders as well as the adults interested in history.

She is a proud fourth generation native Californian. Her hobbies are cooking, sewing, genealogy and gardening. Cooking is really more than a hobby; she teaches it and gives cooking demonstrations for an appliance company. If you "Google" her you will find out she is "the fabulous bread baker".

Alan is from Oklahoma. His hobby is a collection of antique fountain pens. They often travel in connection with this hobby. There are actually conventions for antique pen collectors.

Another interest is cars, especially Porsche and Corvettes. They both have been active in car clubs, rallying, auto-crossing, concourse preparation and various fund raising activities.

The Brookings have been married for 46 years. They met in Chicago while Susan was based there as a "stewardess" for United Airlines. In those days you had to resign when you married.

Of course she volunteers as a docent at the Rocklin History Museum one day a month, and helps

with The Legacy Dinner, The Rocklin Homecoming and other social functions. When you ask Susan Brooking to do something you get the "Energizer Bunny" in a little yellow Mini Cooper. The historical society is so fortunate to have her.

### **A Rocklin granite industry documentary will air on KVIE Viewfinder on November 11, 12 and 14.**

**Please attend a prescreening.**

**All Rocklin Historical Society members are cordially invited to a free screening for *Gold, Granite, and Grit* on Monday, November 9, 2009 at 5:30 PM at the Sierra College**

Library/Learning Resource Center, Boardroom – LR133A on the first floor.

For more information, call the Center for Sierra Nevada Studies at 916-660-8250 or Dan DeFoe at 916-660-8048.

## Springfield History Club visits historic Downtown Rocklin

Gene Johnson

On Monday, Sept 21, Rocklin's Springfield History Club did a "staycation" in lieu of their annual trip to a far-away historic site. The Rocklin Historical Society hosted the group on a tour of Downtown Rocklin.

Gaynor Morgan welcomed the group to the Rocklin History Museum, the former home of Dr. Henry Fletcher. Gay has led thousands of Rocklin third graders on tours of the museum and challenged the Springfield people to think how the children might be inspired by the museum's displays. Susan Brooking described granite quarrying techniques, demonstrating tools on display in the exhibit dedicated to Rocklin's most important 19th century industry. Susan understudied recently deceased former quarry operator Ruben Ruhkala who had led tours of the exhibit since the museum opened in 2002.

The Springfield people then visited the spectacular quarry pit next to Rocklin's city office building. That pit possibly produced granite for building of the transcontinental railroad as early as the 1860s. Known now, by signs on the property, as the Big Gun Quarry, it was the last of Rocklin's 61 quarries to produce granite. Its operations ceased in 2002.

The group then visited the water-filled Quinn Quarry on Winding Lane. Mary Quinn and her children operated this quarry until the mid

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President

peal and functionality of the wedding venue now offered at Old St Mary's Chapel. The challenge of fund-raising has been accomplished. However, the challenge of membership and member participation remains an on-going issue for our deliberation. Although membership numbers overall have remained stable, active participation has not kept pace with the growing requirements of the successful non-profit organization we have become. The RHS of 2005 is not the RHS of 2010. Greater success requires a greater effort to sustain.

In member numbers RHS is the largest non-profit, volunteer organization in south Placer County. That is, in itself, a great compliment to the mission of our historical society. But overall numbers do not always translate into effective member participation. We still need consistently active participating members to operate the Historical Society in an effective and efficient way. No volunteer organization can remain healthy without the contribution of a significant number of its members. Membership and member participation is the single most important issue for the RHS in the immediate future.

The acquisition, restoration, and operation of St Mary's denote a tipping point for the RHS. With revenue generated from St Mary's, future goals of the Historical Society can be addressed. Planning for the re-creation of the original Fire House-Sheriff's Office has already been discussed. The build-out of Heritage Park is a medium-range priority. And the possible restoration of some portion of the Rocklin Railroad Roundhouse now seems possible somewhere in the future. Other worthy projects will undoubtedly surface. The Historical Socie-

ty is here to stay and Rocklin residents reap the rewards of your dedication and efforts.

1890s after Mary's husband fell from a hoist to his death in 1874. The group then toured Front street and saw the newly landscaped bridal patio at Saint Mary's Chapel. Ronna Davis led a tour of the chapel and described how the historical society had recently saved the building from demolition and restored it.

Next stop was the pavilion at Johnson-Springview Park where non-touring members of the Springfield group had prepared a picnic lunch.

The tour ended with a dusty caravan to Huff Spring and the nearby Native American village site at the north end of Springview Park. Curiously Huff Spring does not flow mid-day, presumably because of competition from trees that draw moisture from the soil while the sun shines. Rocklin City staff recently unearthed 27 bedrock mortars at the site increasing the number of identifiable mortars there from 61 to 88.

We are thankful to members of the Springfield community who have contributed time and funds to Rocklin Historical Society projects, especially the St. Mary's restoration project. We look forward to working with the Springfield History Club on future projects and welcome the participation of members of the club as members of the historical society.

The membership owes a great debt to the officers and Board of the RHS who have performed faithfully and tirelessly in guiding the Historical Society through some very challenging waters over the last four years. All have given selflessly to deliver flawless operation to a growing volunteer organization. We are fortunate and blessed.

In the course of the last four years as president it has been my great pleasure to meet and work with many of you personally. The depth and breadth of personalities and experience in our group is amazing! The RHS has attracted so many fascinating and charming members. You made it easy to become very, very fond of so many of you; more than you can know. Your time and association in the Rocklin Historical Society is time well spent in a selfless and enduring cause that will be enjoyed and appreciated by many people for years to come.

Finally, it is time to remember you for your support and patience with me over the last four years. Working with you and for you has been both a learning and humbling experience and your mercy is so greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Roger Lokey  
President



*Roger Lokey's four-year tenure as president of the society saw the restoration of Old Saint Mary's Chapel and early planning for reconstruction next door of Rocklin's original city Hall.*

# A place to hide

Gary Day

Updated and expanded from a previous article

The Central Pacific Railroad completed major construction on the eastbound leg of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and U.S. Census records show that by 1879 twenty-one of the railroad's 14,000 Chinese construction workers had settled in Rocklin.

By 1876 Rocklin's Chinatown consisted of twenty-five housing units located northwest of Rocklin's railroad roundhouse at the corner of Granite Street, now Rocklin road, and Front Street.

Some Chinese grew for-sale vegetables in the area southeast of town known, then and now, as "China Garden". Some worked at the roundhouse and some worked as domestics in the homes of Rocklin's Euro-Americans.

According to the California Historical Society, Chinese immigration to California had accelerated in the early 1850s as the Gold Rush attracted Chinese people escaping political corruption and economic decline, mainly in southern China.

But for almost 100 years, and especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese immigrants faced government sanctioned isolation and harassment. An 1850 foreign Miners' Tax discouraged the Chinese from gold mine ownership and in 1854 the California State Supreme Court denied the Chinese certain rights, including the right to testify against Euro-Americans in court.

During the 1870s, a post Civil War downturn in the national economy resulted in serious unemployment problems. Rocklin's granite industry felt the effects gradually until all but one of Rocklin's quarries had shut down by early 1880.

Jobs for Rocklin's Euro-Americans were scarce and across the state the willingness of the Chinese to work hard for low wages ignited the ire of Euro-American workers and by 1876 South Placer County was a flashpoint for retribution against Chinese residents.

The upheaval came suddenly in Rocklin on September 15, 1876. The Placer County sheriff investigated a homicide near Loomis and accused a Chinese cook, named Ah Sam, of murdering three Euro-Americans as he tried to recover \$120.00

that he had paid for a mining claim. The accusation was enough to incite Rocklin's citizens to action. On the following Monday morning they met and voted to notify all Chinese to leave town by 6:00 that evening. By 4:00 every Chinese resident had left, even the Chinese roundhouse employees. Shortly after 6:00 several Rocklin men marched into the deserted Chinatown and destroyed all 25 dwellings. Citizens in Roseville, Loomis and Penryn also evicted their Chinese residents. About 100 armed men from Rocklin and about 20 from Roseville scoured the countryside, driving out the occupants of various Chinese encampments.

Ah Sam killed himself as pursuers closed in.

The events of 1876 severely disrupted

Rocklin's census records for 1880 through 1910 show not one Chinese resident in Rocklin or at the Whitney Ranch.

But there is evidence that, in spite of Rocklin laborers' antipathy toward the Chinese, local businessmen schemed to hide Chinese workers from census takers and continued to exploit Chinese willingness to work hard at menial jobs for low wages. Joel Parker Whitney biographer Richard Miller claimed that, in spite of census evidence to the contrary, 1,000 Chinese worked at the Whitney Ranch, building water courses and stone fences at least through 1880. Correspondence in Whitney Ranch records dated October 1887 shows that five Chinese domestics arrived at the ranch by train via the animal loading gate on the western side of the ranch, far from

Rocklin's passenger terminal and the angry Rocklin citizens who had evicted Rocklin's Chinese residents eleven years earlier. Whitney's diary of 1899 describes his assignment of seven Chinese men to work in the vineyards of his neighbor, Otis Brown. And Whitney family tradition is that nineteenth century Chinese domestics are interred in the grounds near the Whitney family's mausoleum on the Whitney Oaks Golf Course.

In 1879 the California Legislature attempted to allow municipalities to remove their Chinese residents to outlying areas, thus giving legal sanction to Rocklin's expulsions of 1876. The California Supreme Court voided the law in 1880.

But the Federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 severely limited Chinese immigration and access to citizenship. Congress repealed

the act in 1943 to cement the U.S. alliance with China against the Japanese in World War II



*According to Joel Parker Whitney biographer Richard Miller, Chinese laborers built "miles and miles" of 5-6 foot high stone walls on the Whitney Ranch between 1875 and 1880. Almost all of the walls have yielded to bulldozers during Rocklin's expansion of the past 50 years. Some of the remaining walls, like the one shown here, show vandalism*

Chinese culture in South Placer County. The July 26, 1879 issue of the Placer Herald reported that "six widows in Rocklin support themselves and their children by doing washing for townspeople, formerly done by Chinese. No Chinaman can rent a house .or obtain employment in Rocklin." Other Rocklin newspaper stories of the time recounted the Chinese expulsions in gleeful detail that doesn't deserve reprinting.

## Mark Your Calendar October 19

7 pm  
RHS Monthly Meeting  
Old Saint Mary's Chapel  
Sierra College History Professor Gary  
Noy will speak

**November 9, 11, 12, 14**  
Gold, Granite and Grit  
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**November 16**  
7 pm  
RHS Monthly Meeting  
Old Saint Mary's Chapel  
Elections to 2010 RHS Board  
President Roger Lokey will give a  
Farewell Address

**December 21**  
7 pm  
RHS Monthly Meeting  
Old Saint Mary's Chapel  
Watch for Christmas program plans

**January 18, 2010**  
7 pm  
RHS Monthly Meeting  
Old Saint Mary's Chapel

### We need you

Barbara Chapman

Take a trip to the Rocklin History Museum and focus on what you can do to keep us on the path into the future. We have a new board coming up to provide leadership for advancing our membership and planning our programs. We need your commitment to this planning and we hope you will volunteer to support these goals by participating as a docent once a month or coming to a committee meeting to share ideas and information. The Heritage Trail Days in August brought approximately 80 visitors a day to our museum. Many indicated "we didn't know you were here" and many more commented on how much they enjoyed their visit. We need to simply and effectively tell our story every day we are open ...we need staff to be open. Please consider this coming year as an opportunity to GIVE BACK !!



### Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors

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Bill Woods, Board Member

Newsletter proofreading by Allan and Marie Stone

### 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 TOURS AVAILABLE for groups of ten or more**

BY APPOINTMENT  
CALL GAY MORGAN  
624-2355

**To Join the Rocklin  
Historical Society call  
Gay Morgan at  
624-2355**

## GARDEN TALK

Sally Huseby  
Garden Chairperson

Hello fellow gardeners. At long last, we are approaching the final chapter of the St. Mary's Chapel, planting of the gardens. We have an 'extra' plot of ground at the rear of the chapel that we are going to call CHAPEL DONATION GARDEN. For those of you who are going to be redoing flowerbeds and need to do some cleaning out, we will be the willing recipients of your cast-offs or purchased plants.

With the existing shade trees and the ones being added to this area, it will be the perfect backdrop for donated plants. Take a walk around your yard and give me a call at 315-8401 if you have something you wish to donate.

We already have a donation of an abundance of irises

### Dues will soon be due

Dues for 2010 will be due on January 1, 2010. Your dues support the Rocklin History Museum and projects that promote the preservation of Rocklin's history

Please send your \$25.00 renewal dues to:

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

### RHS is recruiting for officers for 2010

At its November general meeting the Rocklin Historical Society will be electing several new board members to serve during 2010. In December the board will elect the following five officers from among the its members.

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary

Corresponding Secretary

If you would like to serve in one of these offices, or want to recommend someone who might consider serving, please call Gay Morgan at 624-2355 or send an Email to gfmorgan@jps.net.

Your historical society needs leadership as we continue to improve the Rocklin History Museum and complete Front Street Historic District projects.