

## President's Message

Dr. Jim Carlson

Let me introduce myself to those who may not know me. I am Jim Carlson. I arrived in Rocklin in 1985 and have been in business here for 25 years. I joined the Historical Society when it was founded by Roy Ruhkala and the late Marie Huson. I served as President of the Rocklin Friends of the Library in the early 90's and as President of the Rocklin Historical Society at the turn of the century when our Rocklin History Museum building was acquired. I have been a member of the Rocklin Chamber of Commerce for 25 years and a proud member of Rocklin Kiwanis for the last ten.

I will be taking office at a very desirable time. St. Mary's Chapel has been renovated and is operational. This herculean 4-year task was led by Roger Lokey with the cooperation of 100's. I picture the aerial photo of the crowds who gathered on Front Street to pull the 122 year old building down the street to its new home. We are grateful to our city leaders for their support of this community effort. With the Chapel and Museum smoothly running, it is my hope that we can take a breath and enjoy the fruits of our labor by bringing others into our group and increasing community use of these facilities. I have 3 goals for 2010 --increase membership, increase visitors, and participation at the museum and chapel, and then pass along leadership of this group to new faces in

*(Continued on page 4)*

## KNOW YOUR DOCENTS

*Gay Morgan*

Ruth Ruhkala Williams is a Rocklin History Museum treasure. She is the fourth daughter and the eighth child in a family of eleven children of Finnish immigrants Matt and Eva Ruhkala. Ruth grew up in Rocklin and knows a lot of the unwritten as well as the written history of the town and its quarries. She attended the Rocklin Grammar School on Pacific Street. As she recalls there was no playground equipment or basketball courts. There were a couple of swings and girls played hopscotch. Both boys and girls played baseball.



**Ruth Ruhkala Williams**

Rocklin students attended Roseville High School at that time. There were no buses and some rode the train but Ruth and her sister Betty drove to school in the family's Essex.

After graduating from High School she attended the University of California at Berkeley. However, before graduating she was offered and took a job at the Chamberlin Law Firm in Auburn.

Ruth met her husband to be when she went to investigate who owned that cute convertible. The owner was James Williams, a native of Loomis, who also owned the local Lumber Company. He was helping Ru-

ben and Marge Ruhkala plan their house.

They were married in 1939 and had four children. Now there are seven grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.

Later Ruth worked at the State capitol for twenty years.

Her hobbies include golf and bridge.

This delightful, gracious, soft-spoken lady volunteers as a docent at the Rocklin History Museum one day a month. She also tells the third graders who visit about the quarries and growing up in Rocklin. She definitely is our local treasure.

## Rocklin

David W. Rawls  
Rocklin, California

Maidu first used the rock  
grinding acorns for boiling pots.  
Next came '49er hoards  
blasting rock, killing stock  
washing gravel in a rocker box.

Finns, Irish, Spanish and Chinese too,  
Found the rock went through and  
through.  
Quarry upon quarry began going  
deep  
As Sacramento grew street by street.

Now the 'Big Four' opened the door  
With rail and tie from shore to shore.  
Granite from Rocklin began to pour,  
out of each hole in the ground, as if  
forever more!

The Irish named it for a 'spring'  
The Finnish worked and split,  
as if for God and King.

Now the new ones barely know,  
the sweat and blood of each that gave  
or even the location of  
J. Parker Whitney's pyramid grave!

### 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

## DOCENTS ARE NEEDED

Barbara Chapman  
Docent Chairperson

Our history museum seeks to assist  
visitors in understanding how things  
were in Rocklin years ago. Real people



lived here and we display and share information today that helps visitors envision their lives through photo-

graphs and objects we have on display. This history of things fills our rooms, but does it achieve the desired results – telling Rocklin's story? Each of YOU does that when you share our history with visitors. New quarterly calendars have been mailed – there are several openings to volunteer your time working with other docents to present ourselves and our history. Please consider helping out one additional day once in a while to ensure we can be open. Call the assigned docent and let him or her know you will be coming in to work with them so they won't be alone. New Opening and Closing Procedures are posted on the bulletin board. Please take the time to review them and let me know if you see areas in need of correction or further explanation. These procedures are meant to clarify the process for you as needed. I have also posted the Weekly Schedule for 2010 with phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Please review your name and information and notify me of any corrections. As always, your help is needed and appreciated

## GARDEN CHATTER

Sally Huseby  
Garden Committee Chairperson  
(916) 315-8401

In November additional contributions to the Chapel Donation garden were gladly picked up to plant. Through the fall season we have received Siberian iris, narcissus, Shasta daisies, yellow cannas, day lilies and Matilija poppy. Also a variety of bearded iris. My thanks go to Lila Sasaki, Jean Sippola, Edie Boyd and Janet Currier for their donations of a variety of beautiful plants. Keith Huseby spread bark throughout the area to prevent weeds and placed stepping stones so that you can walk through the garden to view the growing flower-bed. Come spring the efforts of our work should be very attractive. You can always call me if you have any plants to donate. I am also very grateful for the help of Ellen Griggs for her help planting the garden. We always need more worker bees.



### Dues are due

Dues for 2010 are now due. 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

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

# Ilona Osella's memories of Rocklin

Gary Day

Based on an interview by Alfred Corral

Rocklin's Granite industry flourished in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But competition from cement-based concrete and labor strife in the quarries in 1915 attenuated the production of granite products and depopulated Rocklin by 35 percent between 1910 and 1920.

However, Finnish immigrant Victor Wickman persevered in the business, operating a successful quarry in Rocklin until the early 1940s.

On November 9, 2009 Rocklin historian Alfred Corral interviewed Victor's daughter, ninety-two year old Ilona Osella about her life growing up in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Rocklin.

**My father, Victor Wickman,** emigrated from Finland in 1901, following his older brother Anders Wickman who had emigrated here in the late 1880s. Anders had Americanized the family name to "Wickman" when he saw that the immigration clerk couldn't pronounce Ylilammi, Ander's Finnish family name.

**My father bought our house** on High Street in 1906 from an Irish family. Most of Rocklin's early quarrymen were Irish. I was born in that house in 1917. I am the youngest of my parents' six children. I still live on the property.

**My mother, Margagreta Otilia Wickman,** came from Finland, unmarried, at the turn of the century intending to live in Rocklin with her sister. She was disoriented as she left the train here so a patron of one of Rocklin's many saloons escorted my mother to her sister's house.

**The early immigrant Finns** spoke Finnish at home, but their children spoke English at school and a combination language called Finniska evolved. Finnish and Finniska are seldom heard among Rocklin's Finnish descendants nowadays. I learned from my father to write in Finnish so I could communicate by mail with my grandmother in Finland. She lived to be 100.

**My father's quarry was Rocklin's deepest.** It produced granite for buildings in San Francisco and Sacramento. As construction projects dried up it produced riprap for reclamation projects and gravestones for shipment to Nevada and Sacramento. During high school I worked as a secretary for that quarry while the men made granite blocks for construction of the Main Post Office in Sacramento.



**Victor Wickman's Quarry ca. 1912. Victor is second from left in the dark vest. Victor's brother Anders is at the right rear. Multiple quarry owner Matt Ruhkala is at the far right. Anders Wickman owned the ranch at the west end of Rocklin Road that later became Johnson Springview Park**

**At Christmas our family** stacked presents around a Christmas tree lit by candles. Finn families gathered at Finn Hall during the Christmas season where Santa passed out gifts including candy and fresh oranges and apples.

**Moon's Grocery Store** was in today's granite city-hall building. My mother often sent me there for a dime's worth of bologna. Adolf Moon knew me as Ilona Bologna.

**I attended Rocklin Grade School** on Pacific Street. The Finns and the Spanish and the Japanese families associated mainly among themselves but we mixed at school and became good friends. I and twelve classmates graduated eighth grade in a ceremony at Finn hall in 1930.

**I rode the train to Roseville High School** but most kids were poor and had to bum rides. Few kids could afford school clothes during the early years of the Great Depression so we wore black and white uniforms. On Saturday nights we danced the Schottische and the Polka at Finn Hall until 11 pm, and then we headed for Allen's Dance Hall near Folsom where we danced until 3 am.

After a few hours sleep and church on Sunday morning we went to Rattlesnake Bar where we swam all day.

I don't remember any of the kids drinking alcohol during our high school years.

**I met my husband, Pete,** at Rocklin's roller skating rink on Pacific Street. He became a seven-cents per hour railroad apprentice so we were able to travel by train for free to the 1939 World's Fair in San Francisco. We married in 1941 before the war started. We have three children.

**Nick Alexson** was once my father's business partner. He fell to his death in 1927 while clearing brush from the quarry's edge.

**My father died in 1954 at age 76.** His lungs were clogged with granite dust.

**My best friend at work** in downtown Sacramento in 1941 was Japanese. She cried with me when bad news came from Hawaii on December 7th. I never

saw her again after that day.

## Here is an opportunity to volunteer

Your Rocklin History Museum needs a coordinator to work about 4 hours per week, preferably on Mondays:

- Maintaining the museum's artifact inventory
- Identifying maintenance and repair needs and
- Identifying enhancements to the museum's displays.

**Call Gay Morgan at 624-2355 for more information**



· (Continued from page 1)  
President

2011. We will want to look for younger families, working folks, and new arrivals who come to our area with impressive back-grounds, skills, energy and time. Any contribution serves our community and generations to come. I hope each of us will reach out to these prospects and invite them in.

2010 ushers in not only a new year but a new decade. It is with this in mind that several in our group have taken on the task of re-visiting our By-laws and standing rules. We have taken the long-view to have these rules hold up for the next ten years and to envision what things will be looking like in another ten years.

Happy new year and happy new decade!



**Rocklin His-**  
**torical Society**  
**Board of Directors**

**James Carlson**, President  
**Sally Huseby**, Vice President  
**Gene Johnson**, Secretary  
**Kathy Nippert**, Treasurer  
**Ronna Davis**, Events  
**Gary Noy**, Board member  
**Karen Lokey**, Board member  
**Jean Sippola**, Board member  
**Skip Gebel**, Board member  
**Carol Powell**, Board member  
**Roger Lokey**, Past President  
**Roy Ruhkala**, Past President

Newsletter proofreading by **Allan and Ma-**  
**rie Stone**

Newsletter proofreading by **Allan and Ma-**  
**rie Stone**

**In Memory of**  
**Alma Anderson,**  
**7/18/24 - 12/1/09**



Alma was a docent at the Placer Co. Museums and the Rocklin History Museum. She was a lifetime Placer County

History Docent Guild Member and the recipient of several community service awards including the 20 year Board of Supervisors Plaque. Alma was an RN and the first nurse practitioner for the Placer Co. Health Dept.

Alma loved to dance, sing, bird-watch, and tend her beautiful garden and Bonsai trees. She was known as a trusted friend, bridge player and world traveler.

***Mark Your Calendar***

**January 18, 2010**

**7 pm**

**RHS Monthly Meeting**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel**

**5251 Front Street**

*Featuring Mr. Walter Wilson with a Power-Point presentation on the 1973 Roseville rail yard bomb explosions.*

All are welcome.

Free Admission.

**January 21, 2010**

**6 pm**

**RHS Installation Dinner**

**Sunset Whitney Country Club**

**4201 Midas Avenue**

**Call Gay Morgan (624-2355)**

**\$29.50 at the door**

**All members welcome**

**February 8, 2010**

**4 pm**

**RHS Board meeting**

**JD's Coffee Shop, corner of Midas and Pacific**

**February 15, 2010**

**7 pm**

**RHS monthly meeting**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel**

**5251 Front Street**

**Transcontinental Railroad Video**

**March 8, 2010**

**4 pm**

**RHS Board meeting**

**JD's Coffee Shop, corner of Midas and Pacific**

**March 15, 2010**

**7 pm**

**RHS monthly meeting**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel**

**5251 Front Street**

*Gene Lorange, California State Parks, The Pleistocene Fossils of Hawver Cave*

**April 12, 2010**

**4 pm**

**RHS Board meeting**

**JD's Coffee Shop, corner of Midas and Pacific**

**April 19, 2010**

**7 pm**

**RHS monthly meeting**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel**

**5251 Front Street**

**Speaker to be announced**