

## Skip Gebel is President of RHS

Gene Johnson

Skip Gebel was elected President of the Rocklin Historical Society for 2011. Outgoing president Dr. James Carlson handed the gavel over at an installation dinner held at the Springfield Community Center in Whitney Oaks on Jan 19. Skip and his wife Carol moved to Rocklin in 1996 from Raleigh, NC where he was employed by IBM. When asked why they



**Chris "Skip" Gebel**

chose Rocklin, he said "Rocklin fit all of our requirements; a small, quiet yet progressive city. Shortly after arriving in Rocklin, Skip and Carol found an active historical society and joined. They say "we found the people here as friendly as the ones we left in Raleigh." Skip has had a lifelong interest in history. As a member of a military family he moved often and saw much of the United

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## Know your docents

Gay Morgan

So much has already been written about Roy and the Ruhkala family. The Rocklin History Museum even has a pamphlet titled "What is a Ruhkala?" "If you have lived in Rocklin for any length of time you already know that Roy and his Father and brothers were involved in the granite quarrying business for many years.

Roy grew up in Rocklin and his interest in Rocklin History began at an early age. Some of the older men used to gather at a bench by the Rocklin Post Office and reminisce about the old days in Rocklin and a very young Roy used to hang around and listen intently.

Early on Roy worked at the Quarry after school, sharpening tools and helping as needed.

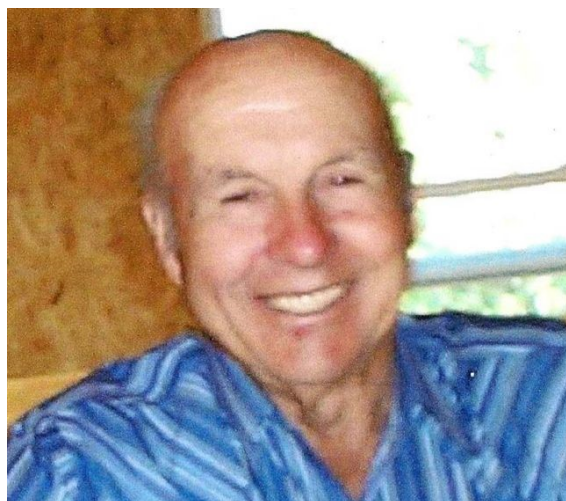
Sometimes on Saturday his Father would give him his wages, a nickel to buy an ice cream

cone. Of course he progressed to more difficult jobs as time went on. Now he is the "go-to" person for those with questions about quarrying and granite. He can tell you where the granite came from just by looking.

After graduating from Roseville Joint Union High School, he went off to Oregon State to study Forestry and met his future wife Peggy there. They were married in August of 1942.

When World War II came along Roy joined the service. He was very much a part of Tom Brokaw's Greatest Generation. He was a Captain in The United States Army Artillery and served as an instructor at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and in Arkansas and Texas for 2 ½ years.

After the war ended he was sent to Japan with the Army of Occupation. He



**Roy Ruhkala**

was stationed at Nara, the first Capital of that country.

After the war, he and Peggy came back to Rocklin. Eventually they had five children, Michael, Margaret, Royce Ann, Bonnie and Paul. He built his own house and became very involved in civic affairs serving on the City Council and as Mayor many times. He was Head of the PCWA Advisory Board for two years and also served on the Rocklin Cemetery Board. He started the first Boy Scout Troop in Rocklin, Troop 29, and was a charter member of the Rocklin Lions Club. Peggy was also very involved with The Friends of the Library, the Parents Club and volunteered for many city events. Rocklin has named an annual Award for outstanding citizens of the community after Roy and Peggy.

He and Peggy traveled to Europe and Finland. They toured the United States in their travel trailer. Sometime they visited cemeteries on these trips to see the monuments and to learn more about history. Roy also hunts Moose, Elk and Deer—sometimes with a bow and arrow.

George Lovejoy, who was in charge of the dump, saw that some people were throwing old family photos away, he gave them to Roy for safe keeping knowing Roy's interest in history. Roy did indeed keep them and brought them to the traditional Old Timers Lunch on Memorial Day encouraging "old timers" to contribute some of their photos too. (That Old Timers Lunch is now The Rocklin Reunion and will be held this year at Finn Hall on May 29<sup>th</sup>, from 11-2.)

In 1988, he and Marie Huson started the Rocklin History Society with the hope of some day

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(Continued from page 1)  
Ruhkala

having a History Museum. That was finally accomplished in 2002 largely due to Roy's friendship with Frank Moon whose family had owned the house.

So if you are lucky when you visit the Museum you might meet Docent Roy Ruhkala who started it all and has many stories to tell.

**In memory of Keith  
Huseby  
January 20, 1975  
March 7, 2011**



**Keith was a friend of the  
Rocklin Historical Society  
who helped restore and  
maintain the Old Saint  
Mary's Chapel**

(Continued from page 1)  
Gebel

States. He has visited American Revolution and Civil War battlefields and is fascinated with California Gold Rush history. Gebel's family records show that a relative worked in the gold fields.

Carol is employed at the CSUS library in Sacramento.

Skip and Carol both enjoy a hobby of antique quilt collecting.

Rocklin's Historical Society has been an active part of the fabric of our community since 1988. Members are eager to share their stories, actively contributing to the success of civic endeavors and proud to be residents of Rocklin.

Gebel says "Take a tour of our Museum, on the corner of Rocklin Road and San Francisco Street, and learn more about our city. Last year a nationally known magazine listed Rocklin as one of the top 100 cities to live in. I'm confident that the work done by the historical society had a positive effect upon their recommendation. I'm both honored and humbled to be the president of this organization."

**Help fill the scrapbook!**

Mary Etta Holland is keeping a scrapbook of published information about Rocklin's history and activities of The Rocklin Historical Society. If you have taken pictures related to Rocklin's history or events of the society or if you spot an item in your reading please clip it with the publication date showing and drop it off at the Rocklin History Museum tagged for Mary Etta or call Mary Etta at 435-9043.

**From recent facebook history snippets**

In 1863, during construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, Theodore Judah's plan was to build a roundhouse at Junction, now Roseville, to service the extra engines that would be needed to help trains surmount the Sierra. But Judah died that year and new Central Pacific managers decided to build the roundhouse at Rocklin instead, closer to the point where the rail bed steepens as it heads toward Auburn. With construction of the roundhouse in 1867 Rocklin became the western terminus of the trans-Sierra run.

I think I am, therefore, I am. I think.  
George Carlin

## RHS Publicity Report

Dani Loebis

With increases to our web presence and online following, technological innovations are pumping up the Rocklin Historical Society's exposure for 2011. These innovations include a rejuvenated Facebook page, a new blog page and a partnership with an online charity network called "Causes."

With the addition of Rocklin Historian Gary Day to the RHS Facebook Page, fans (or in facebook lingo, people who have subscribed to the page by clicking the button labeled "like") are now able to receive daily historical trivia about important people, places and events from Rocklin's past. New technology on facebook allows administrators to view trends in site traffic and participation. The reports have shown huge increases in page views since Gary started his daily updates: we currently average 1000 facebook page views each week.

Followers of the facebook page are able to post their own content, ask questions about Rocklin History and learn about our upcoming events. Right now we are approaching 200 followers and you can join by visiting [www.facebook.com/rocklinhistory](http://www.facebook.com/rocklinhistory).

Added to the RHS main website is a tab labeled "Dani's Blogs" which will take you to my blog posts about the Rocklin Historical Society's current events. The motto of the blog is "Bringing the Past into the Present and on into the Future," meaning that posts will allow stories about Rocklin residents making history as well as remembering it. Any member is invited to contribute to the blog, and it would be a wonderful place to share your personal stories about Rocklin. Please contact me if you would like to participate: [Danielle.Loebis@gmail.com](mailto:Danielle.Loebis@gmail.com). The address for the blogging website is [www.rocklinhistory.blogspot.com](http://www.rocklinhistory.blogspot.com).

Finally, RHS has partnered with a website called "Causes" so that people can give directly to the Rocklin Historical Society from the comfort of their own computers. The link to our cause page is accessible through the blog site right now, and templates are in place to set up online fund raising for specific projects when we have the need. The cause page also enables members to start online petitions and notify the public about volunteer opportunities; there is a great amount of potential use for this online platform that I'm certain will be valuable in the future.

With these tech tools in place, the goal is for RHS to reach more people on a daily basis. Why not be one of them?



## President's message

Communications and teamwork are the hallmarks for good, solid and lasting relationships. Since the beginning of our organization, our leaders and the membership at large have accomplished many community projects because of those principles; Finn Hall, our Historical Society Museum and Old St. Mary's Chapel to name a few. And I'm confident that as we take on new projects we'll be utilizing those same hallmarks to deliver another successful endeavor for our community to enjoy.

In January we added a new member, Dani Loebs. Dani is a talented person who has mastered on-line skills; think Facebook, Twitter and blogging. She continues to work with other members to enhance our web site to improve our on-line presence.

There's even a way to use our website to donate money from the comfort of your home or from your cell phone. Gary Day puts Rocklin History snippets there too.

In February I went to the how-to-be-a docent meeting at our Museum. Gay Morgan went through her entire speech while walking throughout the house. She easily shared her knowledge at a pace that everyone would be

able to follow. "Sometimes the children's voices are so filled with excitement that it can be overwhelming. On the other hand, senior adults appreciate the easy pace so they'll enjoy it more" she said. Gay has been a docent for quite a few years and her skill and expertise along with a warm smile have satisfied many visitors.



*The Rocklin History Museum is one of several successful Rocklin Historical Society projects*

Last Friday I went to the Chamber of Commerce's "State of the City" to hear what our new City Manager, Rick Horst, had to say. He indicated that, in spite of all the econom-

ic changes during the last couple of years, people will succeed when they are part of a team, communication is open and everyone has a part. He believes that every citizen of Rocklin is a member of TEAM ROCKLIN and we're going to do good things together. And, in another example of communication and teamwork strengthening a relationship yesterday Roger Lokey accepted a position on the Board of Directors for the Sierra College Press. Congratulations!

So now that you're enthused and excited and ready to help us do more good things, you're wondering, What's available? Well, we have an immediate need for more Docents. And we need someone to fill the open Membership position on our Board of Directors. And we always need people to help us pull weeds at Old St. Mary's and at the museum.

There's a short membership survey below. I'm interested to hear what your opinions are so please take some time to fill it out and send it back to me.

Thanks.

Skip Gebel

## President's Survey

**Please participate in the Rocklin Historical Society's effort to improve our relevance in the Rocklin community by answering the following three questions:**

In your opinion and within the past 5 years, what two things has the Rocklin Historical Society done that have had a positive impact upon our community?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion and during the past 5 years, what two areas need to be improved within the RHS?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Looking into the next 2 to 3 years, what tasks or projects should the RHS focus upon?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail your responses to me at:  
Chris Gebel, President  
Rocklin Historical Society  
P. O. box 1  
Rocklin California, 95677**

**Or email me at: [gebel@earthlink.net](mailto:gebel@earthlink.net)  
Or call me at: 320-5195**

## Dani's Journal

Danielle Loebis



### The Value of Local History in a Global World

Like many people my age, I spend a lot of my time in front of a computer screen. For example: if I've finished a boring task I reward myself by checking facebook, earning instant access to news and photo updates from my friends and "friends" all over the world. Following one link after another, I discover a news post that piques my interest and repost the link on Twitter where I find additional links from friends leading me to a youtube video where twin toddlers appear to be having a conversation, or to a trailer for a movie that stars some of my favorite actors, or a to a review about a play I've never heard of but soldier on through six Wikipedia entries to learn about... Suddenly, I realize that I've lost an hour of the day.

This is not to say that this technology isn't useful---one need only read my publicity report

to learn how RHS is putting many of these tools to use in order to raise awareness about our causes--- however something vital is missing from the joys of recreational web surfing. Though we are connected to the world through every form of digital media imaginable, are we truly connecting at a personal level?

The once-impossible concept of instant, global human interaction has swiftly become a reality in unapologetic abundance. Within the abundance of content on the web, rarely do we come across the stories with which we can directly identify: stories about the people with whom we've lived and the places and monuments we've driven past every day for years. These stories make up the grand narrative in which we all have a role because it belongs to us, is part of our unique cultural identity and is rooted in the place we call home. It is our local history.

In terms of connecting, when I think back on my week I won't remember the sixty times I looked at facebook's website as deep events in my life, even if they add up to an embarrassing amount of hours. What I will remember is the short time I stood in front of Parker Whitney's tomb. In those moments I was flooded with childhood memories of mountain biking to that spot, back when I played at being both Robin Hood and Indiana Jones amidst the oaks and boulders. I then reflected on the history I'd learned about the place: that it was once a miniature fort where the Whitney children played their own games. Even with a century between my childhood and theirs, I realized, our experiences weren't so different.

Despite living in a globally connected world, the deep connections in our lives remain local. When we preserve historical landmarks, we are preserving the connections we share as a community, both past and present. These connections help us to form a cultural identity amidst the abundance of content we face on-line every day. Against the backdrop of our global world, local history is becoming increasingly precious and vital to our sense of who we are and what defines us. The work of the Rocklin Historical Society is therefore one of great value to us all.



## Rocklin Reunion is scheduled for May 29

Jean Sippola

Each year sixty to seventy-five people who spent their formative years in Rocklin gather for lunch at Finn Hall to meet up with old friends and reminisce the old times. The event originated in the early 1950's as the Old Timers Reunion when several Rocklin old timers returned to Rocklin on Memorial Day weekend to decorate graves and visit at the Willard family home. Growing numbers forced the group to Finn hall in the mid 1950's.

In recent years some in the group have visited the Rocklin History Museum after lunch to view and discuss digitized pictures of old Rocklin and its citizens. Former Rocklin mayor Roy Ruhkala, who has organized the event each year since the mid 1950s, built up a trove of these pictures over several decades.

Rocklin History Museum coordinator Gay Morgan will be organizing the event in future years.

The City of Rocklin recently became a sponsor of the event, naming it the "Rocklin Reunion".

The city donates the use of Finn Hall and pays some of the bills.

This year's version of the event will start at noon on May 29. All are welcome.

### More from the Rocklin Historical Society's Facebook snippets

In the United States Census of 1860 the Rocklin area was known as Secret Ravine. Life centered on the gold mining operations east of what later would become downtown Rocklin.. That census shows that Irishmen were the most numerous ethnic group of our area's first Euro-American settlers. Some Irishmen owned local businesses, but most washed gravel for gold in Secret Ravine's creeks.

As gold fever waned in Secret Ravine, many of Rocklin's Irish abandoned their sluice boxes to take railroad jobs, especially after the Central Pacific built Rocklin's roundhouse in 1867.

Irish farmer John Bolton filed Rocklin's original town plot map in 1866 and donated property for Rocklin's first Catholic Church in 1882.

This is the first in an ongoing series of articles about the history of Sunset Whitney Country Club. The articles are published regularly in the club's newsletter.

## Part One The beginning

Gary Day

In the 1950s and early 1960s Sunset International Petroleum Corporation bought up several land parcels which, in the nineteenth century, made up the southern 12,000 acres of Joel Parker Whitney's 20,000 plus acre Spring Valley Ranch near Rocklin. Their objective was to develop Sunset City, an upscale residential and recreational community for the Sacramento region. The city was to be self contained, with homes, apartments, office and industrial parks, medical services, utilities, recreation, shopping and public services. Sunset estimated the city's built out population at about 100,000. A planning map from the time shows a nine-hole executive golf course in Clover Valley and an airport on the site of today's Thunder Valley Casino.



**This is a 1962 Ansel Adams photo of the bridge over the Placer County Citrus Colony Ditch, often called Clover Valley Creek, near the seventh green of the Sunset Oaks Country Club.**

Slow real estate sales put the project into financial trouble in the mid 1960's forcing Sunset to abandon their plans and dispose of their property. But through a series of new owners most of the area eventually developed into the neighborhoods that we know now as West Rocklin. Rocklin's annexations of Sunset's former properties over the years helped bring Rocklin's population from 1,600 in 1960 to at least 53,000 today.

According to Sunset Assistant Vice President Dale Stringfellow, Sunset was flush with cash at the outset of the Sunset City project; they had just sold a Southern California oil refinery. Their first priority was to establish a first-rate image for their new city and that included a topnotch Country Club as the city's centerpiece. They commissioned Torrey Pines Golf Course designer William F. Bell to build a championship golf course and ordered him to build the highest quality bunkered greens because they intended to conduct a PGA tour event each year. They built an Olympic style pool near the clubhouse and two championship-quality tennis courts. Carlos Travares, the project's designer, was an avid tennis player; he wanted to eventually conduct professional tournaments.

To promote real estate sales Sunset hired Ansel Adams in 1962 to photograph the complex and the surrounding countryside. The photos went on display at downtown Sacramento retail locations that drew affluent traffic. Later that year Sunset donated the photos to the Crocker Art Museum where today they are in storage.

Sunset named the complex Sunset Oaks Country Club and opened the golf course for play on June 27, 1963. Their next step was to start planning for their first PGA tour event.

**Next time: Part two: Porky Oliver Fund Raiser**

## Rocklin Library update

Gay Morgan

The Rocklin Friends of the Library sponsored a celebration of the opening of the new Rocklin branch of the Placer County Library on Saturday, January 22, 2011,

Special Invitations with original artwork by Ken Maddex were sent. Many accepted and celebrate they did. The weather cooperated and was sunny and mild. Mayor George Magnuson presided at the official ribbon cutting ceremony. James Trimble, Principal of the Rocklin Elementary School, presented Librarian Eve Nyren with a check for \$1,000 dollars. Music was provided by the Fred Morgan Combo who had played for two previous library openings. The Magic Family of Clowns entertained the younger patrons with balloon animals and face painting. The William Jessup singers serenaded the crowd. Wonderful appetizers and more than 2,000 cups of lemonade were served by Lincoln Oaks Catering. The Fire Department displayed their equipment in the parking lot. Library Staff signed up 70 new accounts that day and 1700 items were checked out. They are averaging 1000 items per day.

The location at 4980 Granite Drive is spectacular. The two-story building with beautifully landscaped grounds stands above one of Rocklin's original quarries, now filled with water and sporting a fountain in the center. The Library offers three self-check machines, WiFi throughout the building and 14 computers for public use. An elevator is available for those unable to use the stairs. There is a community room and many unique and colorful reading spaces. An ongoing Used Book Sale is located near the front entrance. A railroad theme was incorporated, in keeping with Rocklin's history. As the festivities were winding down two young people were heard to say, "Wouldn't it be great if they had food and music every Saturday?" The Friends of the Library hope to sponsor many more special activities at the wonderful new library.

## Rocklin History Museum

The Rocklin History Museum is located at 3895 Rocklin Road at the corner of San Francisco Street. The museum is open from 1 to 4 pm on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Docents are available to escort you and answer questions.

Group tours are available for 10 or more people by calling Gay Morgan on 624-2355.



## Docent Update

Barbara Chapman

Docent coverage for our open days on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday continues to grow slowly. Thanks to new volunteers (Allan Stone and Patrice Cardott) and particularly docents volunteering to do double duty (Kathie, Marg, Mary and Sally), we are regaining our numbers. New docents will be training with experienced docents in the coming months for as many days as they can comfortably be with us. AND, I especially welcome back our returning docents Charlene Rhodes and Karen Lokey...you have been missed.

Our re-training sessions were well attended earlier this year. Many, many thanks to our trainers who reignited our interest while providing new information – Gay Morgan, Susan Brooking, Roy Ruhkala, Gene Johnson and Ken Morrow for his Joel Parker Whitney presentations. Much of our strength and knowledge here in Rocklin lies in the citizens who have lived here and now provide the backbone of our historical society. Many docents/citizens who have made Rocklin their home now give back to help us all gain an insight into what was our past and what we have now become.

Coming again this year will be The Heritage Trail Days on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> when many Placer County Museums will be open for tours on both Saturday and Sunday. Admission is free and all locations are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days. More information will be forthcoming.



### Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors

**Skip Gebel, 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**  
**Dr. James Carlson, Im. Past President**  
**Carol Powell, Board member**  
**Roger Lokey, Board Member**  
**Roy Ruhkala, President Emeritus**

Newsletter proofreading by **Allan and Marie Stone**

## Mark your calendar

**April 18**

**Monthly RHS general meeting**

**7 pm**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel,**

Scott Lankford will do a Presentation on Lake Tahoe's History called "Tahoe Beneath the Surface".

**May 16**

**Monthly RHS general meeting**

**7 pm**

**Old Saint Mary's Chapel,**

Gene Johnson will discuss plans for the big Gun Quarry. Bring your ideas & dreams

Tentatively the Rocklin Historical Society has scheduled a Front Street gala party for October 8, 2011. The plan is to close Front Street between Rocklin Road and B street and feature a variety of music, with vendor booths and dancing. If you would like to participate in the planning for this event please call Skip Gebel on 320-5195

## Please submit your 2011 dues

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please look at the address label on the envelop. If the number after your name is not an 11 you can now pay your dues for 2011.

Please send your \$20.00 renewal dues to:

**Rocklin Historical Society**

**P. O. box 1**

**Rocklin California, 95677**

While recent rains abated, Dr. James Carlson caught a rainbow framing the bridal patio of Rocklin's Old Saint Mary's Chapel on Front Street.

Rocklin Catholics built Saint Mary's in 1882-83 on an oak-framed lot donated by pioneer Irish land developer James Bolton. Gold Rush era Archbishop Joseph Alemany of the San Francisco Archdiocese dedicated the church on August 13, 1883. It is Rocklin's oldest public building

Saint Mary's survived the fires that obliterated downtown Rocklin in the early 20th century but the Catholic parish outgrew the building in 1983 and moved to new facilities on Granite Drive.

The Rocklin Historical Society saved the church from demolition in 2005 and restored it to impeccable condition. RHS now leases it as a non-denominational chapel for weddings, memorials and other social functions. For more information contact :

Roger Lokey

Phone: (916)- 415-1150

E-mail: [info@oldstmaryschapel.com](mailto:info@oldstmaryschapel.com)

