

The changing of the guard

As you may recall from the last issue's President's Message, Hank Lohse has retired from his post as President of the Rocklin Historical Society. Having served five years as president, Hank will continue as a board member at large.

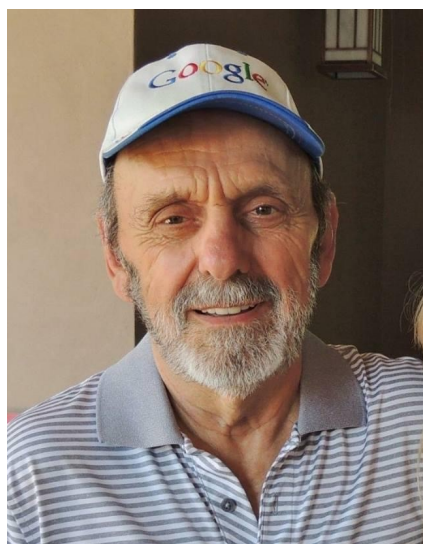
The President's Message will resume in the next issue with our new president, Jim Hammes. A 30 year resident of Rocklin, Jim joined RHS in 2018, immediately becoming the lead for our Fix it Team. We look forward to his tenure as our president.



Outgoing president Hank Lohse



Incoming president Jim Hammes



Gary Day

May 3, 1939—January 1, 2022

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Gary Day on January 1, 2022.

See page 6 and 7 for a few memories from a few of our members.

Quarry Quarterly

Our History Our Heritage Our Community

ROCKLIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Winter, 2021

Honoring the legacy of the Johnson family



Florence and Ray Johnson

By Gloria Beverage

The Johnson family, active in Rocklin for more than 100 years, was honored during a Wall of Recognition ceremony at Old St Mary's Chapel on Nov. 1.

"The Wall of Recognition reflects the stories of those who made Rocklin," said Mayor Jill Gayaldo. "We wouldn't have the community we have today without the Johnson family."



Marg and Gene Johnson

Family Patriarch Ray Johnson served on the city council, including serving four years as mayor, for 12 years (1944-1956).

During Johnson's tenure on the council, the city established the Rocklin-Loomis Municipal Utility District, installed sewers, introduced natural gas and implemented the numbering of houses.

"He was adamant that the police car had electric windshield wipers for rainy seasons and was influential in a public garbage service being provided for residential and business areas during a time where people had to burn or dispose of trash themselves," noted Warren Jorgensen, community recognition commission chairman.

While Johnson's son, Gene, finds it difficult to believe his father was "adamant" about the need for windshield wipers, he understands the rationale for the request.

(See JOHNSON, pg. 2)

Officers elected to RHS board



Photo by Charlene Rhodes

New officers for the Rocklin Historical Society's Board of Directors were elected at the December 7 board meeting. Allegra Hakim and Russ McNeill will continue for another term as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, while Jim Hammes will serve as President, and George Salgado will be Vice President. We are honored and appreciative of their service to our organization!

(JOHNSON, *Cont. from page 1*)

“Standard windshield wipers at the time (1947) were powered by engine intake vacuum,” Gene said. “Under great acceleration, engine vacuum would be severely diminished, and the wipers would stop working. For example, when police accelerated after lying in wait to apprehend a speeder. Electric wipers eliminated the problem.”

Matriarch Florence Johnson served on the Rocklin school board for many years.

Ray Johnson and Florence, the daughter of Rocklin quarryman A. O. Wickman, were married in 1926 and bought out Wickman’s spring and dairy operation, a six-block walk from the train station, in 1936. Johnson ran the dairy and was Rocklin’s home delivery milkman until about 1960.

According to historian Gary Day, Ray Johnson provided free access to the spring for Rocklin residents with the proviso that they close the gate on their way in and out to ensure that his dairy cows didn’t escape into town. At times Johnson bottled the water and delivered it on his milk route for 5 cents a gallon.

In the last half of the 20th century modern plumbing and water systems gradually lessened Rocklin’s dependence on the spring water, while large dairy operations and chain store milk sales lessened the viability of local milk operations like Johnson’s.

The City of Rocklin gradually acquired most of Johnson’s property to develop Johnson Springview Park. Florence Johnson donated the spring and the midden to the city in 1998.

Bulrush hid the spring and its tributary until 2007 when outdoor sports company R.E.I. donated funds to the city to clean up and beautify the area creating a point of interest for visitors to the park.

Both Wickman and Ray Johnson uncovered Nisenan artifacts as they plowed the midden for their dairy operations. Their finds include three 30-pound portable bedrock mortars, 50 rock pestles and tools for grinding nuts and seeds. Many of these items are on display at the Rocklin History Museum.

My parents “lived on the farm until 1996 when they moved to Oakwood (assisted living facility),” recalled their son, Gene. The couple was honored with the Ruhkala Community Service Couple of the Year Award in 1999.

Gene and his wife, Marg, were also recognized for their volunteer efforts on behalf of the Rocklin community.

Born and raised in Rocklin, Johnson

spent 30 years pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer, working on the East Coast and the Bay Area for Aerojet, IBM, United Aircraft and Varian. He and Marg returned to Rocklin after his parents settled in Auburn, moving into Gene’s childhood home, an aging two-story farmhouse on Fifth Street, which they slowly renovated.

Johnson acknowledges his interest in preserving the city’s history may have been fostered by his grandparents and parents, who were active in the city’s leadership, but his passion was sparked by a gift from his parents – membership in the Rocklin Historical Society.

He has been the force in the development of the Rocklin History Museum and the history-making move of Old St. Mary’s Chapel from its original site at the end of Front Street to its current location and loving restoration in Heritage Park. And he is proud to have been part of the committee that organized the annual Holiday Tree Lighting Festival on Front Street.

A man of seemingly never-ending energy, Johnson joined volunteers in the building and furnishing of a replica of the city’s first firehouse in Heritage Park.

He points with pride at the number of parks the city has created over the years. The crown jewel is Johnson-Springview Park, more than 90 acres of open space featuring heritage oak trees and Antelope Creek as well as several Indian grinding rocks, that the Johnson family was instrumental in developing.

“The Johnsons are the epitome of people unselfishly serving their community,” Jorgensen noted. “I walk through Johnson-Springview Park five times a week. If Gene did not work to see it was turned into a recreation area, it would likely have been developed. Instead, we have an area that holds the dog park, beautiful walking trails, and the Little League fields I get to see nearly every day.”

During the ceremonies, Johnson acknowledged “the love of my life for 57 years. Marg serves as my companion and supporter – my best memory.

“We are the end of the Ray Johnson family,” he continued. “I hope our legacy will live on.”

Indeed it will. The legacy of the Johnson family can be seen throughout Rocklin.

Japanese internment camp artifacts on display



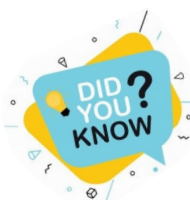
By Gloria Beverage

“Honoring Our Heritage: The Impact of Executive Order 9066 on the Japanese Americans” will open this month at the Rocklin History Museum. The collection of artifacts on loan from two Japanese families who were forced to live in internment camps during World War II will remain through the end of March.

The collection, which includes art and craft items, including the traditional Japanese footwear known as Geta, jewelry made from seashells and driftwood as well as collection of Haiku written in calligraphy, is on loan from the Sasaki and Takemoto families.

Also on display will be the Standing Guard book, which was written and photographed by Sierra College Photography instructor Rebecca Gregg and her students in 2002. The book features 39 Placer County narrators, who shared their stories about internment and its attendant humiliations, which was important in establishing the historical record that was sparse, at best, regarding internment.

“Honoring Our Heritage” is the second in a series of exhibits that will pay tribute to our Rocklin neighbors. Upcoming exhibits will honor the Finnish and Spanish residents.



2022

2022 is the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Rocklin History Museum! Watch for special activities this year!

A Celebration of Lives

By Gay Morgan

Our beautiful St. Mary's Chapel was the site of a Celebration of Life for John W. 'Bill' and Laura Woods. It was the perfect place to do so as the couple had contributed to its restoration in many ways, as members of the Rocklin Historical Society.

Laura was born in Rocklin to Rose and Alfred Willard, joining a brother George, and sisters Laverne and Alberta. She attended schools in Nevada City, Rocklin, and Roseville. When she was nineteen and working in the Placer County Library, she met a handsome World War II veteran named Bill Woods. After dating a short while they wanted to get married. Parents, relatives, and friends all told them that the thirteen-year age difference was too much. "It would never last" they said. Of course, they did marry—about seventy years ago and produced three sons, Bruce, Brad, and Billy. They moved frequently, living in many places, (three times in Rocklin) and had a successful business career.

Laura died on her 89th birthday and Bill lived to be



Friends and family join to celebrate the lives of Bill and Laura Woods.

102. I think age is just a number and that thirteen is *not* unlucky.

And so that is why the Woods/Willard friends and family gathered on a glorious sunny warm Sunday in October to celebrate this wonderful couple.

The Rock of St. Mary's

Ambitious community-based volunteer projects in small towns are accomplished through the shared efforts of many talented and dedicated citizens. Such endeavors invariably bring out the best people and the best in people.

Volunteer project needs are always diverse, complex, chaotic, and shifting. Inevitably, and unexpectedly in such melees, exceptionally talented and giving individuals living quietly in the community rise to the occasion. Regrettably, the impact of such contributions is often overlooked, unnoticed, or simply taken for granted in the general tumult inherent in high profile projects. Such is the case for one of the quietist and least recognized individuals in the myriad of high profile volunteers and contributors. Please meet Mr. Jerry Messner.

Jerry Messner is a native and life-long resident of Newcastle. He is a stonemason. To say he is an excellent stonemason is to leave true comprehension and appreciation for his artistic craftsmanship on the table. He is a gifted artisan in the tough craft of stonemasonry.

To gain a true perspective, stop at Old St. Mary's Chapel and consider the beautiful granite facade architecture of the foundation upon which St. Mary's rests. (Note: granite weighs about 150-180 lbs. per cubic foot.) The granite recovered for use in the St. Mary's restoration did not come in convenient shapes and sizes. Much of it was resourced elsewhere in



Jerry surveys the progress of his work on Old St. Mary's foundation.

Rocklin and moved to the restoration site with backhoe equipment. Unformed granite chunks were sculpted by Jerry for fit, function, and form with each adjacent stone in the foundation wall. Look closely and note how the shapes complement each other along the face of the wall.... the signature of a true artisan.

Other Jerry Messner granite projects include the Heritage Park Restrooms/Jail exterior façade, the Barudoni Building ramp and granite facing, Rocklin History Museum landscape granite, Huff House (Johnson) foundation, steps, and landscape granite.

We live now in a digital age where fragile, intangible realities are created at keyboards. A tenuous and diaphanous existence that can be deleted at the slight-

est whim. But Jerry Messner's reality is overwhelmingly tangible both visually and in creation. Granite. Granite sculpted by muscle, sweat, and sheer human determination. Deletion is not an option.

Jerry Messner; stonemason, craftsman, sculptor, and artist has quietly given the Rocklin community perpetual legacies of beauty and permanence in granite with a personal legacy of skill, strength, and determination in performance. Jerry Messner is...the rock of St. Mary's.



Gary Day checks out the hard work Jerry is putting in on the foundation

Roger F. Lokey
Past President
Rocklin Historical Society

Miracle on Front Street

The saving of Old St. Mary's Chapel

By Kent Dazey

*As the second part of a series of articles on the development of Rocklin's historical downtown, this two-part article focuses on St. Mary's. This project involved so many organizations, including Rocklin Historical Society (the sponsoring organization), the City of Rocklin, the Chamber of Commerce, multiple service organizations and countless volunteers and community sponsors. What was once a blighted Historic District, which included its old, dilapidated, 1883 Saint Mary's of the Catholic Assumption Church, has been renewed into a new, vibrant, Front Street Heritage Park, home of the restored Old St. Mary's Church. This is the story of Rocklin's **Miracle on Front Street**.*

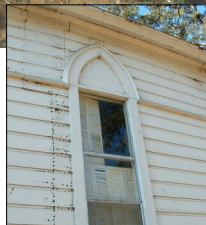
This article takes the story from the inspiration to save St. Mary's church to the 9/25/2005 move of St. Mary's to its new location on the corner of Front Street and Rocklin Road. Subsequent articles will tell the story of restoring St. Mary's and its current use as a beloved marriage chapel.

The story began at a luncheon organized by Gary Day, local historian, author and valued member of Rocklin Historical Society (RHS), recently deceased. Gary, who I had never met, called me in late 2002, saying he recognized me as a community activist with the recent Power Line victory, and he invited me to lunch with Gene Johnson, Allan Stone and himself to discuss the idea of "Saving St. Mary's" church. That meeting was, to me, the beginning of the campaign to restore St. Mary's Church. What I did not know was that this effort would lead to the transformation of Rocklin's Historic District into something worthy of its history, and would further lead to Rocklin seeing the broader value of its own downtown and what it could become as we see it today.

After this meeting, a group of us formed a committee under RHS to explore this plan to save St. Mary's church, called the Front Street Heritage Park Committee, chaired by Gene Johnson. Faced with a daunting task with essentially no funds, the group started brainstorming. St.



Cable supported, woodpecker riddled, and weed-choked, St. Mary's church barely stands in 2002.



Mary's was falling into serious disrepair, being held up by cables, with a hole in the roof, and most difficult of all, St. Mary's was privately owned and the then current owner was not certain he wanted it "saved". How could St. Mary's be acquired? If acquired, could it be restored in its original location or did we need to find a new location? Where would we get the money to pay for the restoration?

Those early meetings were both rough and inspiring. What we knew was that Rocklin's Front Street Historic District was a blank canvas, left barren by its history of devastating fires and abandonment

when the Railroad Roundhouse operations left town in 1908. The land was blighted.

Something needed to be done, and we realized that we needed to be ones to start doing something. One of our first actions was documented in the Placer Herald, in its April 30, 2003 article Committee meets after 15 years: "None of the Front Street Historic Committee's five members could recall that the committee had met since 1988. But when it met on April 24 (2003) members heard a plan from the of the Rocklin Historical Society to memorialize Rocklin's early history with a park adjoining the proposed Union Pacific (UP) passenger station near Rocklin Road and Front Street in downtown Rocklin."

This meeting was historic in bringing attention to the historic district, but it did not move any dials. While our group was excited about all the history in the district, wanting to see it revitalized, there was a general resignation that the land was blighted. It had been that way for over a hundred years. Why change it now. What we needed was a miracle, and that miracle came to us by way of John Chase, local graphic illustrator. After some brainstorming, John designed the graphic: *Miracle on Front Street*, which captured our vision for Front Street. Given that a

picture can say more than a thousand words, this illustration captured the hearts of Rocklin. Popularity for the project grew, despite our growing concerns about the estimated \$300,000 - \$500,000 was needed to complete the project. The team was at a difficult point in time, wondering if it could go forward, then came the Third Graders!

The Placer Herald's 11/19/ 2003 article: Class collects coins to save St. Mary's, "It's not difficult to imagine what the historical St. Mary's Church on Front Street is supposed to look like. Just ask a

(See ST. MARY'S, pg. 5)



(ST. MARY'S, *con't from pg. 4*)

class of Valley View Elementary third-graders. Nancy Lohse said: "So we've taken the class on field trips to museums and other historical places in Rocklin. On our way we went through Old Rocklin and saw St. Mary's Church. We thought that doing something would allow kids to shape Rocklin's future by looking to its past."



Third grade teacher, Nancy Lohse (standing, right) with her class who helped save St. Mary's

The Valley View Third Graders donated jars full of coins to our Committee. Their donation, more than any other donation, cemented our commitment to restoring St. Mary's Church. We had to succeed, no matter what. We couldn't let the kids down.

Support for the project grew and grew, getting to the point where the City of Rocklin formed a collaborative committee with RHS, called the Joint Front Street Heritage Park Advisory Committee, chaired by City Councilman Ken Yorde. Now the serious planning began.

It took two more years of planning and fundraising before the big event when St. Mary's would be moved to its new location at the corner of Front Street and Rocklin Road. In this two years, promotion was invaluable. At the 2004 Jubilee, RHS had a replica float of St. Mary's



RHS's Rocklin Jubilee float

which held a wedding on the float while traveling along the parade route. Run Rocklin was also created by Kate Hay to focus attention on downtown Rocklin. Dan DeFoe completed his film documentary "Gold, Granite and Grit: A quarry, a town and the building of California" Finally, the City of Rocklin modified its design for its new railroad station, featuring an historic styling in keeping with the Heritage Park theme. History and downtown were making strides.

RHS and Union Pacific RR developed a lease for a new St. Mary's location at Heritage Park, and the City of Rocklin stepped forward in assuming responsibility for the lease.

While the excitement of St. Mary's was growing, the Advisory Committee was faced with another hurdle. Having just finalized the lease for the property along Rocklin Road and Front Street, we had the land, but not the church. Electrical Maintenance Consultants were reluctant at the time to donate the church. At this point, another hero in the St. Mary project rose to the surface. Her name was Holly Clark, daughter of Mike Clark and neighbor to Electrical Maintenance Contractor's owners, Mr. Randolph ("Randy") Keller. Holly took it on herself to knock on Mr. Keller's door and talk it through. Holly achieved what the Committee could not do at the time. She got Mr. Keller to agree to donate the church, and to allow movers on to his property to make the move possible. Once this agreement was made, we started to plan the move.



Being tasked with being the Chairman of the St. Mary's move, we needed a concept that would capture the enthusiasm of the event. John Chase came up with the theme "Rocklin Pulls Together" which was a great marketing slogan, but John shocked us all with his idea that we should get people from all ages to actually "pull" the church to its new home along Rocklin Road. We were terrified at the idea!!!

There were a thousand reasons why we should not have done the pull, but only one reason why we should. It was a great idea.



Carlos Alcala, in his September 25, 2005 Sacramento Bee article wrote: Rocklinites pull themselves together to move historic church "Rocklin residents who turned out last weekend to watch St. Mary's Church roll down the street got to do more than watch. What looked like it was going to be a photo op of people pretending to pull the church turned out to be a real pull. Using a fat inch and a half thick rope from the Port of Sacramento, as many as 100 people tugged on St. Mary's, easing it about a hundred feet down the road. Pullers ranged in age from 2 1/2 to 93. "It had the feeling of community," said Gene Johnson, "Everybody pulling together."



The Pull was televised on local TV that Saturday night, but what is widely not known, was that the film footage went across the nation as a special interest story. We received calls from friends in New York City, Chicago, Reno and other cities around the nation. What started at a small luncheon had become national news. Truly this was a *Miracle on Front Street*.



Remembering Gary...

Note: The following is reprinted from the Quarry Quarterly, Winter, 2020. Author Gloria Beverage says, "Gary was such a treasure. I'm honored to have known him. He was such fun...and generous...a gift."

The entire article can be seen on page 4, [here](#)

By Gloria Beverage

When it comes to experts on Rocklin's history, it is best not to challenge Gary Day.

Or, at least, that is the opinion of Gene Johnson, one of the founders of the Rocklin Historical Society and a well-known expert on local history.

"We took opposite sides regarding the origin of the name Rocklin," Gene explained. "It was a polite fight that lasted for years."

Gary argued the name had Celtic roots, while Gene offered the theory the town was named after a rogue Finn named Rocklin.

"He won when he discovered that another town by the name of Rocklin had roots the same as he had postulated," Gene continued. "Congratulations! Celtic origin won!"

The two men met at a meeting of the Rocklin Historical Society in the 1970s. It wasn't long before Gary and his wife, Jean, found themselves knee deep in renovations transforming the Moon House into a history museum.

"It's hard to say no to Gene," Gary recalled.

The friendship, which has spanned nearly 45 years, took root as the two men focused on refurbishing and furnishing the museum.

"Perhaps, other than the friendship, I appreciate most his intellect and his rigorous attention to detail in whatever he undertook," Gene said.

At the museum, Gary volunteered to recondition a cook stove, even arranging to have the rusty nickel-plated parts replated.

He joined his wife in creating labels for the artifacts on display in the museum.

While Jean took on the role of archivist -- scanning photos and documents into the computer and creating binders documenting various topics, Gary dived into researching the city's history and its pioneer families.

The couple then enthusiastically threw themselves into the restoration of Old St. Mary's Chapel.

As editor of the Quarry Quarterly for more than 10 years, Gary demonstrated his eye for detail -- producing a series of meticulously documented articles on the history of Rocklin. Many were published in the Placer Herald.

Born and raised in Michigan, Gary was stationed at Travis during his years of service with the U.S. Air Force. Years later, when he became tired of the harsh Michigan winters, Gary answered the call of California's warmer temperatures.

"My dad left my mom in Michigan with three kids and drove to California in 1968," Cathy said.

He went to the Denny's at I-80 and Madison, opened up the newspaper and applied for a job with the state.

Gary landed the job as a computer programmer, a position he held for 38 years, and sent for his family.

As the story goes, her father also asked an employee at Denny's for suggestions on the best place to live. Based on the recommendation, Gary purchased a house in Carmichael and went to Breuner's to purchase enough furniture to fill the house, Anderson said.

An avid golfer, Gary said he opted to move the family to Rocklin in 1973 because he wanted to be close to the golf course.

At that time, Sunset Whitney Golf Course was one of the best (and most affordable) courses in the area, Gary said, adding "It was \$35 to join and \$45 to play the course."

While her parents loved the sport, Gary played an exceptional game. "I think he had a 3 handicap," Cathy said.

His favorite story, she continued, involved their neighbor Bob Coker, who was showing off a new set of golf clubs. Gary bet him that he could win a round of golf playing with just his putters.

"Well, Dad did the entire 18 holes with just a putter and, yes, he won," she said. When it came to history, however, Gary does not stretch the truth. He meticulously researches it until he is convinced that he had the true tale -- going the extra mile to ensure his information is accurate.

A thoughtful, generous family man, Gary's best piece of advice was given to a grandson, Cathy said.

"The person you marry will be the most important decision you ever make in your life," Gary told him. "Unfortunately, you will not have the skills to make a good decision. It is all luck."

Is this sound, researched advice or another tall tale? Who knows? The fact remains that Gary and Jean marked their 60th wedding anniversary in November.

As far as Gary is concerned, it's all in the details.



Refurbishing Aunt Tillie's stove

Gary Day was a great friend of mine. His wife Jean, to large extent, made possible my documentary about the Rocklin quarries while she served as archivist at the Rocklin History Museum. Gary and I shared a common interest in the past and I really feel he deserves a commemoration as one of Rocklin's finest historians. His contributions to the understanding of the city's past in a myriad of commentaries and articles to the local press and the RHS newsletter have enriched our knowledge of the region's history and heritage. Gary will be greatly missed but his work will live on and enlighten future generations.

Dan DeFoe

Gary was a key volunteer for the OSM restoration project and when we went to Australia I asked Gary to lead the effort. And he did a marvelous job, providing daily telephone updates of progress and challenges. The team was scraping paint from boards removed from St. Mary's; it was midsummer in Rocklin with 100 degree weather. Gary's reports always included reminders of the disparity between the suffering in Rocklin heat and the comfort Marg and I enjoyed in the mild winter days of Australia.

Gene Johnson



Making sure everything is a GO at the pull

Gary never stepped forward for recognition but never stepped back from hard work and challenging assignments during the RHS growth years. He was there with a spade during the construction of the museum. He was there measuring the clearance of the church building before it was moved down Front Street.

He was behind the scene in ensuring we had officers. He was at meetings early in the morning, hosting meetings at his home on Northstar where his wife, Jean, made the best cookies. He knew the Sunset Whitney Country Club and it's historical origins like the back of his hand. The same would be true of the Whitney 12 bridges.

He was often a back-bencher at Board meetings where he spoke briefly when he felt it was necessary. He edited and professionalized our newsletter. He was meticulous with grammar and literary style. He thought adjectives were an abomination in writing. He was a board member of the Sierra College Press. He was a researcher and a true historian in our club.

Jim Carlson



Gary was so excited that he found this pink suit! He called and told me he would like to participate as a survivor in the Breast Cancer fashion show! Gary was the hit of the show! He was so proud that he was bringing awareness to this disease which can indeed strike anyone. We loved Gary's enthusiasm and willingness to support such an important cause! Love u Gary!

Nancy Ustaszewski



Gary so enjoyed Halloween. Living across the street from him, Hank and I would watch him pace up and down the street in front of his house, full sized candy bars in hand, ready to hand them out to all the princesses and goblins going by. Such a kind, sincere neighbor.

Nancy Lohse

The special thing I remember about Gary is that he was the first person I ever talked to in RHS. He invited me to a critical luncheon that became the kick-off to St. Mary's. He introduced me as a community activist, and I had never heard that designation before. He appreciated what we had done with the Power Line victory, and he believed that I could help RHS to renovate St. Mary's. He brought me into one of the most rewarding challenges of my life. I owe a lot to Gary Day.

Kent Dazey

Gary and Jean Day both loved Rocklin and especially hiking around the former Whitney Ranch property. When my husband and I moved here in 1999, I met Jean and Gary through the historical society, and we shared so many wonderful hikes all through the areas that were formerly the Joel Parker Whitney ranch. In one of the pastures, he showed us a sheep dip, the long trough dug into the ground, lined with rock, that the sheep had to walk through. The troughs were filled with a pesticide bath that would keep pests off of the sheep on the ranch. He also led us to the terraced areas where Whitney had orange groves. He picked an orange from one of the trees and ate part of it. He said it tasted pretty good. Now the terracing is for new homes covering the area. We really examined every granite bridge we found and speculated whether or not it was one of the 12 original bridges.

Gary and Jean made me feel like I was a native of Rocklin, experiencing all these beautiful things before they were gone. I am forever indebted to both of them for that.

Ronna Davis



Bell-ringing lessons

When Horny Toads Still in the Alley Scrambled...

Note: This is Part 2 of a two part series on the flora and fauna of our region. See Part 1 on pg 6 of The Quarry Quarterly, Fall, 2021, [here](#)

By Doug Osella

Girls still played jacks in the corridors at good Ol'Rocklin Elementary School on Meyers Street, and the boys played marbles on the playground. The boys brought their baseball mitts to school strapped on their belts like gun holsters, ready for action on the ball field. The girls kept their favorite charms in their desks for hop scotch. With their mitts, bat and ball, the boys played "Three Flies Up". The girls jumped rope at recess.

Simpler times and simpler joys: plus, no one worried about droughts in those days. Droughts were theoretical, occurring in the far off lands of Northern Africa. One could view the photos in *Life Magazine*, but that wasn't enough to keep the citizens of Rocklin from taking water for granted. They might even let the hose run all night in their gardens. The tasty tomatoes were worth the extravagance.

Fall, winter, and spring rains drenched the brown, rolling hills, east and west of town to re-carpet them in spring with green grass and wildflowers. Once each year, nature liked to dress up these hills in elegant finery with accessories added, just for the fun of it. In those days you had to do some hiking to get the best views, but once viewed, who could ever forget the amazing swaths of yellow spreading across the green landscape, created by California poppies, buttercups, Johnny Tuck (butter and eggs), tidy-tips, valley goldfields, and accented by the brilliant blue of valley sky lupine?

When it came to nature, I developed the conviction as I got older that it's important to know the place where I lived. The bleak, "weed-choked" lots so prevalent throughout our town would have been a good place to start my botany lessons. Fascinating grasses were plentiful to study: Wild oat, rip gut, soft chess, foxtails, hare barley, rattlesnake grass, Italian rye grass, and Shepherd's Purse. All I needed was a key to local plants and maybe a botanist to help, which were not readily available in Rocklin in those days. Even so, I wish I had started studying earlier.

An unexpected encounter with the horny toad might

happen when I was riding my bike up the alley looking for something to do. Or I might be walking across the yard. I remember there was a moment of quickening with my heart thumping extra beats when such a meeting took place.

This reptile creature when looked at from above had the body texture of a rasp with a horned crown on its head. It had a flat, oval body and short tail which added to its fierce, primitive look. I didn't like picking one up although later I found it was perfectly safe to do so. I had heard that when threatened, the horny toad could puff up and squirt blood from the corner of its eye, and I didn't like that prospect either. I didn't try catching one and penning it up in a shoebox with sand for a floor. Somehow I knew that its survival in captivity was a long shot. I liked to think of the little warrior running free and using its scaly armor in a defensive stance against the faster blue belly lizard. Later I discovered the creature wasn't a warrior at all.

When I came upon one, it would scramble ahead of me to a patch of dry weeds, freeze, and blend into the tan weeds as best it could. Camouflage seemed to be its main strategy for warfare. It blended well with its surroundings, but I wasn't fooled. I peered closer, putting my finger on its rough back, which felt surprisingly smooth when I stroked back toward the tail. The baby dinosaur from his frozen position with his head held erect and eyes cocked upward, seemed to notice



me too. I held steady, and it didn't pull back when I touched its back. It was a gentle creature after all.

The little "monsters" and I had several eye to eye encounters over the years, usually in some dry, desolate place. Sometime in the 1960s, no one saw the little creatures anymore, not even dried and flattened on the roadways, which had been a common sight in years

past. One day I made a purposeful search of our yard, the alleyways, and the nearby lots, and the fields around the abandoned quarries, parting the grasses with a stick and looking between the rocks. Family and neighbors came up with theories as to their disappearance. Some thought dogs or cats had killed them off. Others blamed car and truck tires or kids on bikes. My mother thought it was the gas-powered lawn mowers that chewed them up for good. No one as yet came up with the idea of global warming. I heard from a friend that a biology teacher at Sierra College believed pesticides were the main reason they disappeared. He thought the increased number of home owners spraying for ants caused the demise of the horny toads since ants were their main diet. He was on the right track.

Horny Toads (also commonly called horned toads) are not really toads at all but lizards, horned lizards (genus Phrynosoma). There are seven species of horned lizards found in the U.S., most in the Southwest. The Coast Horned Lizard (now called Blainville's Horned Lizard) is the only species found in the Central Valley (at one time in Rocklin). It also inhabits southern coast regions of California. It is a docile animal and never bites even when handled by humans. Research on the internet indicates the horned lizard populations have dropped in recent decades. The rare lizards have many enemies, but scientists believe their decline is due mainly to the loss of habitat and disruption of the lizards' favorite food supply—red harvester ants.

For another take on the disappearance of Horned toads, read David Baker's findings in the next issue of the Quarry Quarterly



The grassy hillside (with one of Whitney's rock wall)

Historic mural on display at Jessup University

By Gloria Beverage

A seven-panel mural depicting the Rocklin and Roseville communities in the 1920s is currently on display in the library at William Jessup University, 2121 University Avenue (off Stanford Ranch Road).

A grand opening for the Hugh & Hazel Darling Foundation Center, which includes a variety of student services as well as the Paul Nystrom Library, will be held in February, announced Belinda Silva, director of Library Services at Jessup.

“When approached by the Rocklin Historical Society, I felt Conard’s seven-panel mural highlights local history that may have been forgotten and ties nicely with the University Archive we are establishing,” Silva stated. “I, therefore, wanted to time the temporary loan with the grand opening here in our library.”

The mural is located downstairs next to the library circulation desk in the library, she continued. The public is welcome to visit the library but must follow current health protocols. For

hours, which vary depending on the school schedule, visit the library home page at <https://jessup.edu/library/>

Longtime Roseville resident Donald Deane Conard, who studied at the Chicago Art Institute, was commissioned to paint the mural in 1981.

Although he was employed with Southern Pacific Railroad employee for 33 years, Conard had an active career as an artist, sculptor and woodcarver. He maintained an art studio in his home and became well-known for his paintings of



Detail of the mural installed at William Jessup University. The 7 panels are 4' x 4' each. A smaller reproduction of the mural can also be seen in the basement of the RHS museum.

(See MURAL, pg. 12)

New home for the Southern Pacific Railroad History Center

By Gloria Beverage

A new home for the proposed Southern Pacific Railroad History Center is on the drawing table.

“We have identified a 7.6-acre property near Highway 65 and Sunset Boulevard that has premium access, is free of any environmental issues, has no existing development, and is properly zoned for our use,” noted Scott Inman, president and chief executive officer of the nonprofit proposing to build the history center.

While many of the country’s first railroads have museums dedicated to their preservation, Southern Pacific Railroad (and predecessor Central Pacific) does not have a dedicated facility celebrating its 158 years as an economic and political power, Inman explained in a 2019 interview.

In an effort to fill that gap, a group of committed railroad enthusiasts formed a committee in 2016 to build a world-class history center on two-parcels of land leased from Union Pacific and drawing on support from the city of Rocklin, the Union Pacific Railroad, the Rocklin Historical Society and other sponsoring organizations.

Plans for the downtown Rocklin, located at the historic roundhouse site, called for construction of a 35,000-square-foot pre-engineered and steel fabricated building. Featured attractions included a model railroad diorama, exhibits featuring artifacts from Southern Pacific as well as collections currently owned by the sponsoring organizations, a restored passenger car, archives for historic documents and artifacts as well as a gift shop.

As the group began surveying the site, Inman continued, they discovered that the soil had been contaminated by oil spillages over the years, rendering the roundhouse site unusable.

Unwilling to give up on their dream for a history center, the

Southern Pacific Railroad History Center

Rocklin, California

Vision Rendering - Fall 2021 - J. Craig Thorpe



group began the search for a new site – settling their sights on the new location last summer.

While the new site is twice the size of the original location as well as more expensive, it is well worth the extra effort and fundraising, Inman explained.

“We plan to make an offer on this property in 2022 once our capital campaign has secured enough funds to acquire it,” he said.

The property, located in unincorporated Rocklin near Highway 65, faces the former Southern Pacific Valley Mainline that ran between Los Angeles and Portland and is close to the Donner Route and Roseville Yard.

Plans for the site are bold and ambitious, Inman acknowledges. The new vision includes plans for a 200-foot by 400-foot auditorium, a museum, displays of rolling stock (including the first and the last of Southern Pacific’s passenger cars), exhibits and interpretive displays as well as ample parking for visitors.

For more information or to join, visit www.splives.org. Anyone who joins before April 30, 2022, will be recognized as a founding member.

The importance of Clover Valley

By Julia Shohbozian

The year is 1894. It's a cool spring day, but the sun is warming as you step into your carriage. Your family will be having luncheon soon and you need to get back with the fresh fruits you've brought from the market. The carriage picks up pace as it glides over rolling hills and dirt paths. The only way home is over the bridges and through the woods. You admire the open landscape and the twisting branches of the oak trees. It's hard to tell that anyone had ever lived here before, with the local Nisenan leaving such a light footprint. Even so, their grinding rocks dot the shady spots of the valley and they remain where your father allots the land. You're glad that your family has chosen this place to establish another home. The city was growing busy and everything in it was moving so fast. Here, it was still the Old West. It was still a cradle of potential waiting to be seen. You feel a creeping sense of nostalgia. In less than 100 years, the grand estate that your father built will be abandoned and destroyed. Only the shadow of the carriage house and the family crypt will remain. The Nisenan will leave, everyone will leave, and be replaced by neighborhoods and new inhabitants from further than you could imagine. But for this moment, amongst the beauty of the oaks and wildflowers, it feels like time stands still.

If you are a resident of Rocklin or its surrounding areas, you may be familiar with Clover Valley. This is the 622 acre stretch of land off of Sierra College Boulevard, cradled in Rocklin between Loomis and Lincoln. It is a rare ecological site, as it is the last remaining untouched lower



Historically and ecologically significant Clover Valley

foothills region in Rocklin. Clover Valley boasts examples of the trees, plants, and wildlife native to the area. In addition, it has 33 sites of archaeological significance due to its past as a settlement for the Nisenan tribe. It is the land that Joel Parker Whitney and his family would have known and where they chose to establish their countryside home, The Oaks.

Being in Clover Valley now is the only way to step into the past of Rocklin completely. The open space, untouched by development, allows for one to imagine what was. Maybe you could even believe that you are back in 1894. Sure, you can't see the Nisenan there anymore or one of the Whitneys riding past in a horse-drawn carriage, but you can go and find one of those 33 ancient grinding rocks and you can walk on dirt paths that may have been the way to The Oaks. Why is this important? Because while Rocklin has done an outstanding job preserving its history in a local museum and restored historic buildings, it has but a sliver left of what it was. We enjoy it as a comfortable suburbia, and it's hard to see what it looked like before we covered it with houses and shopping centers. But while exploring Clover Valley, you can see this. The ability to see an untouched Rocklin is how we can appreciate why people came and wanted to settle here. It also helps us to appreciate why we live here today.

Chapel News

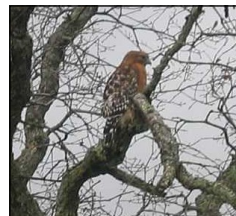
By Nancy Lohse



These are the wonderful "Church Ladies" who, even during the craziness of 2021, helped make 52 couples very happy. They were also there to open the chapel for 21 families saying good-bye to loved ones at memorials. Without them and their hard work, the historical society would be hard pressed to fund their projects. Thank you, amazing ladies!



Front Row: Peggy Russi, Sally Huseby, Julia Shohbozian. Back Row: Patsy Pattison, Linda Wampler, Ronna Davis, Nancy Ustaszewski, Nancy Lohse, Patrice Cardott



The Clover Valley Foundation is a well-established group that is working hard to protect this area from being developed. They are facing strong opposition from local government and private investors who know that this is a special place. Nonetheless, members of the Clover Valley Foundation continue to lobby at City Council meetings to gain support for their cause. Many members are also educators and volunteers in our community. You can reach the Clover Valley Foundation by sending a note to email@clovervalleyfoundation.org, or by phoning (916) 652-7005. If you wish to donate, you can via their website clovervalleyfoundation.org. Donations go to supporting their initiatives to make progress in preserving Clover Valley.



The busy Fixit Team not only refurbished the Jubilee Train but also constructed this shelter to keep it safe!



Fixit Team Nuts and Bolts

By Jim Hammes

Well, we have made through 2021 ... Finally!

The past quarter found the Fix It Team quite busy with several projects that we were able to plan and execute collectively.

While things are certainly not back to pre-pandemic levels ... we managed to safely work together while staying careful and considerate of one another when gathering for our weekly meetings and activities.

The one major project we completed was the construction of the Train Shelter for the Jubilee Train. The new shelter now provides a Quality area to protect the Train from the weather and elements which has always been a concern. The shelter also allows us to be able to conduct maintenance and refurbishing while under the well-designed canopy.

The shelter design was primarily developed and visualized by Gene Johnson and became necessary when the team collectively agreed to keep the train as a symbol of the history the railroad represents to Rocklin. The project itself was completed with minimal cost as far as materials that included the Historical corrugated metal panels that make up the roof system ... that date back to around 1905 ... per David Baker's research. It represents a great example of incorporating the

past to the present and keeping with the theme of what our group is all about ... preserving the past to enrich the present and future.

The team was tireless and productive in their contributions for the man-hours required to take on the project ... a BIG Thanks to all!

The team was also involved in many more activities that included supporting the needs of the other Historical Society committees.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge that this will be my final QQ submission, at least for now, as I embark on my new role as President of the Historical Society. I have truly enjoyed the role as Team Lead over these last few years with a Great Group of volunteers.

It is my pleasure to recognize that George Salgado, our new Vice President will be taking over as the Fix It Team committee lead going forward in the New Year. George has many ideas and thoughts for plans and projects and will be a great motivator in carrying on the success that our group has enjoyed and looks to complete in 2022 and beyond.

Thanks to everyone that has been so willing and cooperative in making our efforts a Success ... after all ... our most valuable tool we have in our tool box is ... our Great Team Members. We could not and cannot do it without EACH and EVERY ONE who participates and shares the vision to treasure our past ... and oh yeah ... have some Fun along the way ...



By Susan Brooking

The new year is underway at the Rocklin History Museum! Holiday decor has been stored and the museum's first curated exhibit is history - hope you were able to enjoy both. The next curated exhibit - Honoring Our Heritage - will open this month with viewing until the end of March. The museum doors are open to guests each Saturday and Sunday from 1-4:00 p.m. Also special tours may be arranged. Mask protocols while indoors are in place.

Mark April 2nd on your calendars to finally celebrate both September's cancelled Potluck and December's "postponed" Holiday Gathering! Did you know that this is the Twentieth Anniversary of the museum's opening?! Yes, since 2002! Believe that's reason enough to celebrate! April 2nd's celebration will be *outside* on the beautiful patio at Old Saint Mary's Chapel. Planning is underway to include a modified potluck with appetizers and sweets and finally an opportunity to actually see one another in person!

Prior to this datted ongoing pandemic the museum was open three days a week - Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. The goal is to return to that schedule, but we need your help to make this a reality. Do you have three hours a month you could donate to the Rocklin History Museum as a docent? The working conditions are ideal - you'll be paired with an experienced docent in a charming turn-of-the-century home with all modern conveniences while learning about the Rocks, Rails, and Ranches of our community. Come join us!

Questions, comments, schedule a tour, or docent interest - Contact: Gay Morgan - (916) 624-2355 - gfmorgan@att.net or Susan Brooking - susanbrooking@att.net

(MURAL, Cont. from page 9)

steam-spewing locomotives.

One of his sculptures is in the Crocker Art Museum's permanent collection. Another mural, on display for several years at the Roseville Department of Motor Vehicles, depicted scenes of the railroad's "Iron Horse" era.

After he received the commission for the seven-panel mural, Conard studied photographs from local historians and materials in the Roseville Library collection.

His goal was to portray the changes in each community following Southern Pacific's decision to move its roundhouse from Rocklin to Roseville in 1906.

Several of the panels show the process of transplanting Rocklin's abandoned railroad shanties to Roseville.

In a newspaper article published in the Sacramento Bee in 1988, Conard explained that a vacant house could be purchased for \$150 and moved for \$50.

The houses, he said, were lifted onto wooden, laminated wheels joined by steel axles and pulled by 10-horse wagon teams. Many of those shanties remained in use until the late 1980s.

Other scenes depicted on the panels show cowboys gathered around chuck wagons, the abandoned railroad steam plant in Rocklin, bicycle races, and downtown Roseville structures, like G.W. Lohse's grocery store, Union Ice Co. as well as the J.T. Beasmore Notions shop.

He also portrayed the gardens created by the Chinese, who used Miner's Ravine to water their crops.

After Conard's death at the age of 78 in 1995, the mural was acquired by the Rocklin Historical Society.

Historical Front Street tours continue



Get some fresh air and enjoy learning some Rocklin history on our one-hour guided tours of historic Front Street. Dr. James Carlson leads the tours of our "outdoor museum" every second Saturday of the month.

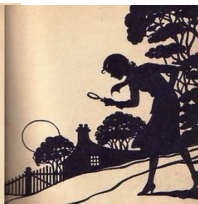
We invite you to meet at 12noon any second Saturday at Old St.Mary's Chapel, 5251 Front St, Rocklin. Invite others. It's fun! It's free!

PLEASE NOTE: PLEASE RESERVE YOUR PLACE IN LINE WITH JIM CARLSON AT 916-624-0682 BY THE WEDNESDAY PRIOR TO THE EVENT.

The seven 4' x 4' mural panels span an entire wall in the William Jessup library. The library is open to the public, but health protocols must be followed. Check with the library by calling (916) 577-2288 or visiting <https://jessup.edu/library/>



MYSTERY PLACE



Do you know where these etched roses can be found? Hint: You might see them on April 2!

Find out in the next issue of the Quarry Quarterly!

RANDY PETERS
CATERING & EVENTS
PLAN. PARTY. REPEAT

Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors

Jim Hammes, President
George Salgado, Vice President
Allegra Hakim, Secretary
Russ McNeill, Treasurer
Ronna Davis, Board member
Sally Huseby, Board member
Nancy Lohse, Board member
David Baker, Board member
Patsy Pattison, Board member
Hank Lohse, Board member
Charlene Rhodes, Board member
Linda Wampler, Board member
Dan DeFoe, Board member
Kent Dazey, Board member
Susan Brooking, Board member

Quarry Quarterly contact:
quarryquarterly@gmail.com
Editor: Linda Wampler