

President's Message

Jim Hammes



This edition of the QQ is my first opportunity to provide my President's message for 2022.

I am keeping this submission a bit more brief as my initial overview is intentionally to focus on some key retrospectives, primarily our engine, our wonderful people ...

I wish to formally recognize our new Executive Board members serving along side of me: Vice President, George Salgado along with our incumbent Secretary, Allegra Hakim and incumbent Treasurer, Russ McNeill, all of whom are valuable assets in providing their time and commitment in their roles to the greater good of the Rocklin Historical Society.

I would also like to recognize and thank Hank Lohse for his great leadership and service to our group over the last several years serving as our President. Hank's direction and leadership paved the way for our group's smooth transition to the new officers elected and placed at the start of 2022.

We are also very lucky to have an impressive list of members at large who continually provide quality participation and ideas that ensure the mission and credibility of our sub committees and the overall goals of our society.

I would like to single out Linda Wampler and the outstanding work she does each quarterly in the role of our "Editor at Large" for this very impressive publication and our small but much appreciated ... "Pillar of Journalism" to the enhancement of adding to our group's community outreach. Along with Linda we have several contributing writers each quarter that provide a variety of articles of interest.

We have recently gathered once again in person for our General Board meeting and it was a refreshing opportunity to see everyone together in a safe and social setting ... So much better than ZOOM for a number of reasons ... !

We have all become so much more appreciative and thankful for the extended friendships we have all cultivated as a benefit of the time and efforts we all unselfishly provide to each other and the community especially after the exhaustive strain the pandemic caused over what was nearly two years in duration.

Finally ... it will be our shared goal to Create – Develop and Realize projects that mirror the mission of our Historical Society ... being the trusted advocates of...

Our History – Our Heritage – Our Community.

Quarry Quarterly

Our History Our Heritage Our Community

ROCKLIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Spring, 2022

Rocklin's History Museum turns 20

Roy Ruhkala believed in preserving city's history

By Gloria Beverage

For 60 years, Roy Ruhkala refused to give up on his dream of opening a history museum in Rocklin. That dream was finally realized in 2002 when the Rocklin History Museum, located in the historic Moon House on the corner of San Francisco Street and Rocklin Road, opened its doors.

Born to Finn immigrants in 1919, Ruhkala's childhood was spent around the granite quarries owned and operated by his family.

He and his wife, Peggy, were at the forefront of efforts to ensure the city's present was protected and its future was carefully planned while preserving its history.

In addition to operating the Ruhkala Monument Co. in Sacramento, Ruhkala served on the Rocklin City Council, the Rocklin School Board, the Placer County Water Agency and the American River Authority. He was a charter member of the Rocklin Lions Club and served as a leader with Boy Scout Troop 29.

Throughout his career, however, Ruhkala quietly campaigned for the creation of a history museum. His mission to preserve Rocklin's history gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s when he began soliciting historic photographs for display during the annual "Old Timers" picnics/reunions.

The campaign got another boost when city council member Marie Huson joined Ruhkala in urging the city in 1987 to conduct a survey of Rocklin's historic buildings and resources.

"I think we need the historical survey so we can make some sound planning in regard to (Rocklin's) redevelopment," Huson explained in a 1987 Sac Bee article.

The survey could be used to protect historic buildings and granite quarries, formations and fence posts from future development, she noted.



In June, 2001 Roy Ruhkala presented the first check to then Mayor George Magnuson for the museum's lease. The society leases the building from the city for \$1.00 a year.

With the historic survey on the city's radar, Huson and Ruhkala hosted an organizational meeting to form the Rocklin Historical Society, obtaining non-profit status in August 1989.

Joining Ruhkala and Huson as founding members were Carol and John Peterson, Dr. Jim Carlson, Gay Morgan, Alfred Corral, Charles Meskimen, Howard Scribner and La Verne Splan as well as Gene Johnson.

"I got hooked partly because of Roy (Ruhkala). He wanted a museum. We worked together to make that happen," Johnson recalled in a previous interview.

For the next 13 years, members of the Historical Society tackled several projects. In 1990 they received recognition from the Governor's Office for the preservation of Finn Hall. They also developed a historic points map for bicyclists.

And members continued to seek help from the city in acquiring a permanent home to highlight the city's heritage, eventually forming the non-profit Museum Project in 1998 as a vehicle to raise funds to acquire a permanent home for the museum.

Initially, the historical society relied on pledges from Rocklin residents, hosted "fun bus" trips to Reno and raffled quilts and other goods donated by local

(See MUSEUM, pg. 3)

Remembering Jean

Jean Day: driving force behind museum archives

Editor's Note: Jean Day lost her battle with Alzheimer's disease on March 26, 2022. This profile appeared in the Quarry Quarterly in 2018.

By Gloria Beverage

Many hands have contributed to the preservation of Rocklin's history, including the creation of the Rocklin History Museum and the renovation of Old St. Mary's Chapel. One of the driving forces – perhaps the heart – of those efforts is long-time volunteer Jean Day.

After retiring from her job as a medical assistant with Kaiser in 2001, Jean joined her husband, Gary, who was assisting Rocklin Historical Society co-founder Gene Johnson in establishing a history museum.

During the transformation of the historic Moon House into the Rocklin History Museum, Jean became one of the most enthu-

siastic demolitionists with numerous cuts and bleeding arms as proof of her efforts, recalled Johnson.

Once the museum was created, the need for an archivist – someone willing to organize documents and photos stored and displayed at the History Museum – became Jean's mission. She started out scanning photos and documents into the computer and creating binders documenting various topics, including pioneer family histories.

"I spent several hours a day for five or six years," she said. "It was worth it. (The archives) didn't exist before."

Johnson praises Jean's efforts in setting up the museum office and archives. She kept the office tidy and organized, he explained, adding he also learned "NEVER



leave anything on top of those filing cabinets."

In the process of developing the archives, Jean became an expert on the Joel Parker Whitney family history and was "adopted" by the family – attending the Whitney families' annual picnic at the iconic pyramid/mausoleum. "I probably know more about Whitney than anybody," she said. "I'm the only person living who has a complete copy of the Whitney family tree."

Her research skills didn't stop with the Whitney family, however. Jean often helped descendants of Rocklin pioneers trace their family history.

"I would characterize Jean as at the ready – ready with a smile – to help the community members research their family histories," recalled former Rocklin

(See JEAN, pg. 3)

Fun-spirited with an easy smile, Jean was dedicated to the Rocklin History Museum and to serving the public, especially family histories. I've known her to rush from her home to the museum to answer a patron's question. The perfect partner to Gary, they traveled the breadth of the country for research on Rocklin history. I knew well enough not to touch the museum computer she was working on. She made killer cookies for our meetings at their comfortable home on Northstar and the golf course they treasured.

-Dr. Jim Carlson

Lighthearted memory of Jean's "just do it" attitude - Much care had been exerted in bringing the museum's interior back to a representation of its original condition - including the interior doors & hardware. You'll note today the museum has interior doors only on the Jack-n-Jill bathroom. Gay Morgan and I were trying to find wall space to hang recently acquired Old Rocklin watercolor artwork. Jean Day was busy entering data on the museum computer - she joined our search for more wall space. Jean offered that if the interior doors were removed we'd have plenty of space - let's do it right now! Hammer in hand, the doors were removed and stored, paintings hung, and we waited for the backlash. Turns out no one noticed, or if they did, it wasn't mentioned. Loved Jean's ready laugh, no nonsense attitude, big heart and friendship.

- Susan Brooking

Jean, as RHS archivist, made possible my documentary about Rocklin's quarries. I'd had never done it without her intellect, humor and patience. Gary and Jean were dear friends. We loved them both.

-Dan DeFoe

Jean was an enthusiastic volunteer and made an outstanding contribution to the society by creating the initial version of the RHS archives. However, my most vivid memory of Jean's volunteering is: When we renovated the museum building, Jean was pulling down ceiling sheet rock with a garden hoe, large pieces of ceiling were falling on and around her - she was bleeding - but happy as a lark!

-Gene Johnson

I met Jean Day shortly after my husband and I moved to Rocklin. Neil and I rented that first year in the Springfield Adult Community while our house was being built. We quickly joined their walking group. Jean knew some people in the Springfield walking group and even though she did not live there, she soon became our leader! I walked with the group for years, even after moving out of Springfield into our new home nearby. She and Gary were also in the group for a long time. I never once heard Jean talk about all the work and research she did for the Historical Society. She never called attention to herself and remained a very humble person as long as I knew her.

-Ronna Davis

I am amazed when I look around the museum and see all of the contributions Jean made over the years. The information and pictures that she compiled into binders are priceless. Certainly a lady who will go down in RHS history!

—Shirley Espley

When I became a volunteer at the museum, Jean taught me what resources were available and how to use them to share Rocklin's history with our visitors. She and Gary shared their knowledge of Rocklin's beginnings and showed me how to be a researcher. Jean was my mentor and I will miss her dearly.

-Charlene Rhodes

Jean was the first to say "But I'm not a docent" when I wrote about her in the Quarterly's "Know Your Docent" column, but there weren't many things Jean couldn't do – painting, minor carpentry, cleaning, video-taping, researching genealogy, hanging pictures, working with volunteers, and of course, keeping the computer up-to-date with historical information and pictures. Kind, thoughtful, helpful, funny, good neighbor, great friend, wife, mother, and grandmother are all accurate descriptors of Jean.

She may not have had an official title, but perhaps we could give a title, "Jean of All Things Museum." What would we have done without her?

-Gay Morgan



ROCKLIN RUHKALA Community Service Awards

Hank Lohse's commitment to keeping Old St. Mary's Chapel a shining (and odor free) jewel in our community, as well as serving as president of the Rocklin Historical Society are two of the many reasons Hank has won the Ruhkala Community Service Award in the Pioneer category. Come share the joy at the Council Chambers, City Hall, on April 26 at 6:00 pm.

New field trip format is a hit with everyone



Nancy Lohse (aka Mrs. Moore) tells students about her friend Mrs. Quinn, and the quarry life she led.

(JEAN, con't from pg. 3)

Historical Society President Dr. James Carlson. "Often she would make a quick trip from her home and come to the museum for an inquiry. She is dedicated."

Also an enthusiastic volunteer during the restoration of Old St. Mary's Chapel, Jean still recalls the horror she felt as she watched Gene Johnson nearly slide off the roof.

"Luckily he didn't fall off. I didn't know how I was going to catch him," she said.

Johnson chuckles at the memory, adding: "It was certain peril in her mind. It was fun in my mind."

The fourth oldest of nine brothers and sisters, Jean moved with Gary from Detroit to Sacramento in 1968, then settled in Rocklin in 1973. The couple, who met at a party and married two months later, will celebrate

their 59th wedding anniversary this year. In explaining their whirlwind courtship and long life together, Jean said, "He was nice. And he's still nice."

Jean, who celebrated her 80th birthday in December [2018], is now focused on keeping Alzheimer's disease at bay. Since she started walking 5 to 6 miles each day, Jean has noticed an improvement in her cognitive skills. And she continues to play golf, one of her favorite pastimes.

Nor has she stopped baking cookies for Gary – keeping a seemingly endless supply in the freezer to give to the gardeners, neighbors, friends and family.

"I've had a good life," Jean concluded.



(MUSEUM, Cont. from page 1)

businesses and residents.

Several local businesses, including Pulte Homes, the Rocklin Chamber of Commerce and Club Español made large donations in support of the building fund. By the time a home for the museum was identified, the group had raised \$23,000.

In 2000, the Victorian-era house at the corner of San Francisco Street and Rocklin Road was offered to the Historical Society by the C.A. Moon family. In 1905, Dr. Henry D. Fletcher, a physician employed by Southern Pacific Railroad, built the 1,300 square-foot home. In 1936, the Moon family acquired the property.

After the city used state-funded redevelopment money to purchase the former residence, Ruhkala enlisted the support of the Rocklin Lions Club, who worked side by side with Historical Society members to paint, repair and refurbish the house and garden. A team of volunteers spent two years refurbishing and filling the museum with furniture, artifacts and memorabilia donated by longtime residents.

As work on the building progressed, memorabilia donated by

Earlier in the school year, when the Omicron variant was so prevalent, the third grade field trip docents were not too thrilled to be closed in an old house with a gathering of 8-year-olds. But teachers were asking—will we have field trips in the spring? We were hesitant to say yes, though we were missing out on the fun of leading those trips.

Then Nancy Lohse had a brilliant idea—perhaps inspired by Jim Carlson and his walking tours—what if we had a walking field trip and placed docents at various stops instead of going inside? Everyone would be outside and spread out, and the trips could still happen!

Along with Nancy, docents, Diane Wade, Nancy Ustaszewski, Patsy Pattison, Susan Brooking, Linda Wampler, Kathy Reid and Pat Woessner shared Rocklin's history at Huff Spring, the roundhouse, Old St. Mary's, the firehouse, the Barudoni building, the outside of the museum, and at Quarry Park, ending with a picnic.

It is great for the students to get outside to see Rocklin's history, and now they can bring their parents back for a visit inside the museum! Win-win for everyone.

Longtime residents, or their families began filling the main floor and a smaller detached building on the grounds. Ruhkala's personal collection of granite quarry mining tools and equipment filled the basement, while some of the larger pieces were placed in the garden.

Twenty years later, the museum is filled with a treasure trove of memorabilia, photographs and tools. The museum envisioned by Ruhkala for 60 years pays tribute to the industries that drew people to the area: granite quarries, the Transcontinental Railroad and ranches.

The Rocklin History Museum is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission is free; donations are welcome.

Volunteers willing to serve as docents in the museum are needed. To become a docent at the museum, contact Susan Brooking via email at susanbrooking@att.net. Training is provided. A commitment of three hours a month (one shift) is requested.

The Congregational...Pilgrim...Covenant Church of Rocklin, Pt 1

Corinthians 1:11 There is no remembrance of former things...

By Doug Osella

When it was suggested I write the history of Rocklin's first Protestant church and longest lasting congregation, I thought of the Beatles' song, "Help!" Rooted as I am since the 1950s in Community Covenant Church of Rocklin (I started in the Sunday School), I knew only two facts: (1) that my church congregation could trace its beginning to Congregationalism and (2) it all started in the home of a schoolteacher named Silas Sweet. A third detail came to mind: this happened a long time ago. With those three clues, I set out on a quest.

Silas Sweet is somewhat of an enigma. The 1870 Federal Census lists him at age 52, as the head of the household with two other residents in Rocklin: his spouse Anna Sweet, age 51 (she listed her occupation as housekeeper), and F. A. Woodruff, a schoolteacher. From Sweet's obituary, it is surprising to learn that he passed away in 1870. At his death his lodge, I.O.O.F. (International Order of Good Templars) resolved that his loss was a loss for temperance, Christianity, and the community. He is buried in the Rocklin Cemetery.

Sweet's wife's first name was Rhoda. Rhoda Sweet later married a church member, George W. Mills. Later references mention her as Anna Sweet, Mrs. R. A. Sweet, R. A. Mills or Mrs. R. A. Mills. Throughout her life she remained a leader in the Congregational Church. She is also buried in the Rocklin Cemetery. Her sister, F. A. Woodruff passed away in 1871 from an unknown illness at the age of 37. She was teaching school in Placer County and was active on the county's teacher examination board when she died. She is also buried in the Rocklin cemetery.

Much gratitude goes to the May 8, 1895 edition of the Newcastle News that published a detailed history of the old First Congregational Church of Rocklin, covering the years 1867 to 1895. The author who contributed the story was a member of the church at that time but remains anonymous with no identification other than "By One of the Members" attached to the article. For purposes of this article, the anonymous author will be referred to as Mrs. C (the C standing for "Congregational").

Mrs. C begins the story by relating the beginnings of the church (comments in parentheses are for clarification)

...there came to the little town of Rocklin a gentleman (Silas Sweet) and two ladies (Mrs. R. A. Sweet) and a sister (F. A. Woodruff). (The year was 1867) The gentleman had been driven from his eastern home to try the mild climate of Califor-



nia, on account of poor health. They were all earnest, consecrated Christian workers, and were sadly disappointed to find that there were no religious privileges whatever in their new home. (Rocklin was at that time a flourishing new town of about 40 families). They set about at once to do something about the situation.

...after thoroughly canvassing the field, they invited all who were interested to meet at their home, on a certain Sunday afternoon. (Early church minutes report 5 teachers and 20 scholars in attendance) The result was that they organized a Sunday School which was the the beginning of the First Congregational Church of Rocklin. (The group called themselves the "Congregational Society of Christ")

The next step was to procure a place of worship. Lumber was very high at that time, and to think of building a church was entirely out of the question, but there was a building in town that had been used as a saloon and after due consideration this building was purchased and consecrated to the service of God. About the year 1870, through the direct effort of Mrs. Sweet, a lot was secured from the railroad company and the building was moved to the new lot.

Christ officially organized on January 12, 1871 with a statement of faith and purpose and the election of officers.

The location of the first lot and building remains foggy. The fog may lift with further research. The study of old deeds and maps as well as other factors lead to the tentative conclusion that the original and subsequent buildings were located on the same plot of ground (Third and Emerson Streets) from 1870 until 1965.

Mrs. C expresses the harsh realities of the times...as the fortunes of the church paralleled the fortunes of the city:

Rocklin is a typical R. R. town. Sometimes there would be quite a number of families there to help in church work, but in a short time they would be sent somewhere else, and the faithful few would be left alone again. Sometimes they had no Pastor, and then again they would have no religious worship but the Sunday School.

The foundation of this early church appears to have been the Sunday School. Along with genuine concern for young people, it was a universal view among church leaders of the times that the Sunday School was the primary outreach tool for church growth. Mrs. C confirms these precepts:

The church that year (1879) had succeeded in building a parsonage, but they were badly in debt for it. This had been a season when several

The First Congregational Church of

(See CHURCH, pg. 5)

Old St. Mary's News

By Nancy Lohse

Spring is here and that means more weddings at the chapel. You may not know it but the weddings and memorials that are held here are the major fundraiser for the Rocklin Historical Society. A dedicated group of wonderful women run this venue for the society. If you are looking for a fun way to volunteer for your community, please visit us on Wednesdays from 5-7 and a friendly 'Church Lady' can tell you about our team. Whether it's working with clients, cleaning the chapel or answering phones, extra help is always needed and much appreciated. Plus you'll get to be part of a friendly group of women!

After weddings couples seem to always be leaving things behind. In our lost box we have family bibles, flower girl baskets, drapes for the arbor, extra lengths of runners for the aisle and even odd bits of cables for who knows what. The last wedding left something behind that won't be going in this box. A dove!

After the couple released their doves, one decided that OSM was a great place to call home. The church ladies have been checking in on Freddy and making sure he has food and water. He's made good friends with our squirrel and seems OK sharing his seeds. Stop by and say a quiet "Hi" to our newest member of the Rocklin Historical Society!



"Fred" enjoying the cuisine we provide for him, and taking a refreshing bath in our fountain!



Rip Rap

By gay morgan

When RHS plans an event guests either call or email me. Recently there were calls that made me proud of my long-time hometown.

Sara Roumbanis called to say they would love to attend but that it was impossible due to the fact they had recently moved to Arkansas. She added that they have happy memories of their time in Rocklin. They really like what RHS has done to Front Street.

Later on, the same day I got another call from a former resident who now lives in Arizona. Linda Counts Chastain grew up in Rocklin and she has a lot of fond memories of our town. We had great fun reminiscing because I had been her teacher at Rocklin Elementary on Myers Street. She keeps in touch with "old" friends and visits when she can.

Sadly, I must report the deaths of two special members who have been members since we began RHS. They are Jean Day and Jean Sippola. They most certainly will be missed.

(CHURCH, Cont. from page 4)

families had removed and there were only three resident members. But the Sunday School numbered about fifty, and this was kept up, rain or shine, through the hot weather and all.

The nagging issue of whether Rocklin

Delegates and speakers came from far and wide. How would this all end? In 1913 the City held a hotly contested election to solve the problem once and for all. The next day's sad headlines for the town's devout: THE GRANITE CITY IS STILL WET.

In 1885, citizens began noticing a new sound in town, the rolling peals on Sunday mornings of the newly purchased bell at the Congregational Church. Mrs. C states that through the efforts of Rev. Mr. Cummings and his wife: "a fine bell was purchased and rung for the first time on 'Children's Day' 1885". The bell, cast in 1885 by the same foundry in San Francisco that cast the famous "golden spike" of 1869, has always held special significance for the town. That bell now hangs in the belfry of St. Mary's Chapel Museum on Front Street and is rung on wedding days.

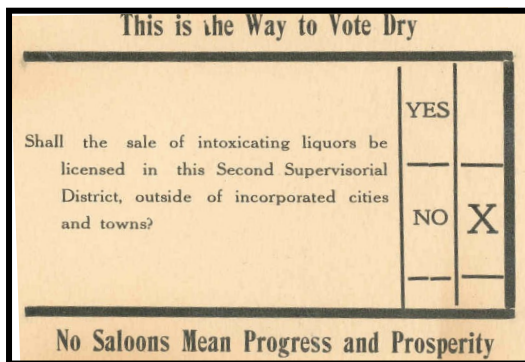
The church has a story to tell (much of it lost in time) that involves its ministry, decisions, and facilities. The laity have their personal stories as well, ordinary human stories, which help form a more complete picture of the community. As an example, in the year 1877, when the Congregational Church incorporated, the church trustees involved were J. A. Muir, who was an agent for both the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph

and the Central Pacific Railroad, both located in town; L. G. Smith, who ran a merchandising business, also served as postmaster and Wells Fargo agent in Rocklin; Mrs. E. A. Whitney was president of Rocklin's Library Association and wife of Joel Parker Whitney; Mrs. R. A. Sweet was a housekeeper; and Geo. W. Mills was a railroad engineer.

A weathered granite monument stands in the Rocklin Cemetery proclaiming last words in memory of three church pioneers. On the north side of the structure lies Silas Sweet (1816-1870) with the chiseled words: "At Rest". On the east side rests Mrs. R. A. Mills (1818-1890) and the engraved words: "Home at Last". On the south side rests F. A. Woodruff (1833-1871) with the inspiring words: "Faithful Tender True".



to be continued...



should be "wet or dry" continued from the late eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century, and the church entered into the fray. There were too many saloons. Leonard Davis reports in his book *ROCKLIN* that in the late 1870s there were nine saloons dominating the business scene (Page 37). Mrs. C states: "In 1879 the town had about six hundred inhabitants, and there thirteen saloons in full blast". By 1883 three congregations had been established: Congregationalists, Catholics, and Methodist-Episcopal (Davis, p. 40). Throughout those years, sessions and conventions of anti-saloon people convened at the First Congregational Church.

Rocklin woman marks 100th birthday

La Verne Splan, member of pioneer family

By Gloria Beverage

If life is a story, then (Abra) La Verne Willard McGrath Splan has lived a great one.

Born on Lincoln's birthday (thus, her first name) in 1922, La Verne is a descendant of one of Rocklin's pioneer families. Her grandfather, George C. Willard, was 17 when he left Maine in the late 1880s seeking his fortune. According to family lore, it took George six years to travel on horseback across the U.S., finally arriving in Truckee with a broken leg. He never explained how he broke his leg nor shared any of his adventures during that journey. He got a job in a Truckee grocery store and in 1886 married "Bertie" Millet, whose father settled in Dutch Flat during the Gold Rush.

Around 1890, the couple settled on five acres of land on Rocklin Road where they raised four children (Hazel, Alfred, Ernest and Laura), grew fruit and vegetables and kept dairy cows and hogs. George was part-owner of a quarry and worked for Southern Pacific Railroad. He eventually was named the town's first Marshall.

The second of four children born to Alfred and Rose Elizabeth (Morys) Willard, La Verne grew up in Rocklin surrounded by aunts, uncles and numerous cousins and attending local schools. "She was 8 years older than me," recalled her cousin and lifelong Rocklin resident, Gay



Abra LaVerne Willard McGrath Splan

Morgan. "She was like my big sister. She wore make up, had a boyfriend. I thought she was so glamorous. I wanted to be just like her when I grew up."

Graduation ceremonies for the 10 students in her class were held at Finn Hall. La Verne joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1943. "I thought she was very brave," said Morgan. "I was 15 or 16 and pictured explosions and guns."

The reality was very different. Though La Verne joined the Marines with the vision of serving as a clerk, she was sent to North Carolina where she trained as a cook/baker.

Cooking quality meals for the service men was hard work. "We didn't have mixers. Everything had to be done by hand," she said. "We didn't have recipes. And we had to be ready for inspection – 'white glove' inspection -- at all times."

During this time, she met and married a fellow Marine, Dean McGrath.

When the war ended in 1945, McGrath started a successful career with a U.S. government agency – one that took the family to the Republic of China (Taiwan), Indonesia, Bali, Pakistan, Greece, and San Francisco as well as several years in Washington, D.C.

While they were stationed in the Republic of China, La Verne gave birth to their first son. Patrick, who arrived during a typhoon that broke out the windows of the hospital.

Although overseas assignments typically lasted three years, their stay in Pakistan only lasted for a year. "We lived in a special area on a mountain top. The backyard dropped 600 feet," she said, adding that their food and supplies were dropped from an airplane every three months. The only food she bought from the locals was cabbage.

She described life in Indonesia and Bali as fascinating. "Women would go topless, and the men never stopped looking," she said.

The animals – exotic fish, Komodo dragons, lots of creepy crawlers – were equally intriguing and sometimes came too close for comfort. In fact, son Joe, then 5, once found three baby Cobras.

During their years in Washington, D.C. the couple attended several receptions and awards ceremonies at the White House. "This one time La Verne was seated near the wall enjoying the people watching when a blonde lady came over to her and said, 'Look at all those little black cocktail



LaVerne Splan, 100 and Fabulous!

dresses. You and I are wearing the same shade of blue," Morgan said. "They chatted for a while and then Mrs. Nixon said she had enjoyed the visit, adding they should have lunch sometime."

Mrs. Nixon never followed up on that suggestion, Morgan added.

La Verne also met Eleanor Roosevelt during an event honoring volunteers. She describes the First Lady as an impressive speaker, gracious, sincere and kind. While Patrick and Joe were born in Taiwan, La Verne returned to the U.S. so the couple's daughter could be born in Auburn.

Reflecting on those years overseas, Eileen Barone, marvels at her mother's bravery and adaptability. "My mom was a survivalist," said Eileen. "She would often tell me 'You come from hardy stock. Don't you forget it.'"

Eileen also describes her mother as a fashionista. "She always plans her outfits. She's very fashion conscious," Eileen said. "Needless to say, I was the best dressed girl in school."

Her cousin heartily agrees. "She's always dressed beautifully," Morgan added.

La Verne's husband of 43 years died in San Francisco in 1981 following a lengthy battle with lung cancer. She remained in San Francisco for a few years after his death working as assistant to the CEO of the Treasury before deciding to retire and return to her hometown.

Back in Rocklin, she connected with her childhood friend, Roy Ruhkala, and joined him in founding the Rocklin Historical Society – becoming the non-profit's first Treasurer.

(See SPLAN, pg. 7)

(SPLAN, con't from pg.6)

Starting a historical society and later establishing the museum, she recalled, was "something that had to be done." She also met and married James Splan. "He was a very nice man," she recalled. "We were only married for three years. He died of a heart attack."

In 2019 she made the decision to move into The Pines. "They're wonderful here," she said.

Her advice for a long life is simple. "Everything in moderation," she advocates.

La Verne was guest of honor at a birthday celebration at The Pines as well as a large family gathering in El Dorado Hills.

"The parties were wonderful," said her daughter. "Mom kept saying she felt like a celebrity. Everyone at the retirement home came by her table and said something to her. It was very endearing and touching. She adored the family party – a very special day."

When you're 100 years old, the birthday celebration isn't limited to just one day. Birthday cards can be mailed to 500 W. Ranch View Dr., #209, Rocklin, CA 95765.

Fixit Team Nuts and Bolts

By George Salgado

The Fix-it crew is up and running strong...and so is the Rocklin Historical Society Train!

We finally got our weekly meetings back on track at the beginning of March, and we are busy planning and working on several projects in the coming months. Thanks to all of our Fix-it Crew volunteers who worked hard getting The Rocklin Historical Society train up and running!

We are now starting the process of getting it completely refurbished. Also on our list is repairing the misters we installed in the courtyard at the Old Saint Mary's chapel, installing an 1890's fire hydrant in front of the Old Firehouse building next to the chapel, and completing some touch up painting at the Rocklin Historical Museum.

We are always in need of volunteers! No experience necessary! If you or someone you know would like to join our crew or have any questions, please contact me at George@kkanproduction.com. You are welcome to join us for our weekly breakfast on Tuesdays at 7:30AM at William Jessup University cafeteria. Hope to see you there!



Intern adds value to the museum

One of the things the historical society is interested in is getting young people involved with the museum. One way this is being addressed is by having a student internship program. Archivist Sharalee Falzerano is currently mentoring Rocklin High School junior Delia Kitzmann.

Delia started at the museum in early March, and will be working until the end of the school year. She hopes to possibly continue working next year as well.

"It's been interesting to learn more about the inner workings of the museum," she says. "I'm also starting to learn how to use PastPerfect, a museum cataloging software as part of my project, documenting and cataloging the many historical maps and plans stored at the Rocklin History Museum." Delia is particularly interested in historical fashion and textiles. "I found the small collection of clothing and textiles that the museum has really cool."

Delia, a native of Rocklin, is enjoying her experience at the museum. "So far the experience has been great," she says. "Everyone I've talked to is very nice and supportive. I hope to become a museum conservator so working under an archivist is a dream come true."

We look forward to her continuing work here!

Student intern Delia Kitzmann, left, learns the museum ropes from archivist Sharalee Falzerano.



Placer Community
FOUNDATION

Local giving. Lasting value.

Now it is possible to make tax-deductible gifts and perpetual endowments that will support Rocklin Historical Society programs including both visual and performing arts related to Rocklin's heritage. Please contact Veronica Blake at 530-885-4920 to learn how you can contribute, or go to www.placercf.org.



By Shirley Espley

Sadly, Rocklin has recently lost a life-long resident, at 102 years of age. Isabel Morales Basque was born in Rocklin on November 7, 1919 to Gaspar and Isabel Morales. Her parents were among the first Spanish immigrants to settle in Placer County. Their journey began in Granada, Spain on the ship named the Willesden. Their first stop was Hawaii, where they worked on a sugar cane plantation. They left Hawaii and came to Placer County in

1911. Shortly after their arrival, they bought property and began ranching in Rocklin. Isabel's mother was a sought after midwife for many Spanish women in the area. Isabel had seven siblings, and is survived by her younger sister Rose.

Isabel married Fred Basque, a fellow Spaniard, in 1949. They were married 51 years at the time of his passing. Isabel and Fred were very proud of their shared Spanish heritage. They were able to travel to Spain in 1984.

She is survived by her daughter Loretta (Jack), son David(Joan), three grandchil-



Isabel Morales Basque

dren and their families, including six great grandchildren. She loved her family dearly. Her obituary stated "Isabel's strong will, independent spirit, wisdom and wit will forever be cherished and remembered." She was a wonderful person who will be missed by all who knew her.

Isabel was interviewed by the Rocklin Historical Society at her home in 2003. It is interesting she mentioned that a Dr. Henry Fletcher was a frequent visitor at their ranch. She referred to him as "the doctor who lived in a house in town." That house happens to be the Fletcher-Moon house...home of our museum! It truly is a small world!



Isabel in 1949, age 30



Jean Sippola
May 4, 1932-March 20, 2022

Taken from a 2010 feature by Gay Morgan

Jean Sippola was born in Auburn and spent her early years in Georgetown on a dairy ranch. She attended school in a two-room schoolhouse. It was heated by a potbelly stove that the teacher had to get going each morning. There was no indoor plumbing. When it was hot the teacher would lead the students to a nearby ditch for a drink. The downstairs classroom was for the first through fourth grades and the fifth through eighth grades met in the second story.

Jean was excited about entering the fifth grade because when there was a fire drill the students would climb out a window and down the fire escape. But about that time the family moved to Auburn and Jean still regrets not getting to go down the fire escape.

Jean and her late husband Tom Sippola were married on a large granite rock on the Sippola Ranch in 1977. The ranch has been in the Sippola family for over one hundred years. They live in a solar house that Tom designed. It is on the site of the original farmhouse. They raise beef cattle.

Besides working with Tom on the ranch, they both volunteered as ushers for the Sacramento Music Circus and the Sacramento Theater Company for over thirty years. Jean was a volunteer at the Granite Bay Sheriff Center for ten years, edited the Finlandia Club newsletter, and worked tirelessly during the restoration of St. Mary's Chapel. She was also Vice President of the Rocklin

(See SIPPOLA pg. 9)



Jerry Messner

We are sad to report that master stonemason, Jerry Messner passed away in December. The family will be holding a memorial service on May 12, 10:30 a.m., at the 1st Assembly of God, 4200 Grass Valley Highway, Auburn.

"Jerry was a man with a strong Christian faith," says David Baker. "He was a master stonemason who did a whole lot of good for the Rocklin Historical Society."

Projects he worked on included the museum landscape, Old St. Mary's foundation and steps, the restrooms at Heritage Park, and the Barudoni building ramp and new facing. He also did work at Gene Johnson's historic home, including the house foundation, steps, back porch, and terrace walls.

"When you hired Jerry," Gene says, "you would get

an excellent stone mason, architect/landscape designer, and preacher. And, an honest, loyal friend!"

Both Gene and David commented on Jerry's adage, "Rocks are free!" David explains: "He told me one time that 'rocks are free,' which apparently meant one could collect field rocks regardless of the owner's feelings on the subject. It turns out that he had a point under both traditional English and French law that influenced the early American legal system. Apparently rocks for building materials were at one time considered an essential community property.

Today, there are common-use areas identified in certain US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management properties where "decorative rock" can be collected, BUT you do need a permit." But, as Gene points out, while he

(See MESSNER pg. 9)



The fine workmanship on the foundation of Old St. Mary's Chapel



Editor:

I enjoyed past-President Roger Lok-ey's remembrance in the last QQ of Jerry Messner's contribution to make the restoration of Old St. Mary's possible. Jerry deserves this recognition. There are many others --Bob Habian with his visionary ideas that captivated us at Tuesday morning meetings, Mike Clark whose matter of fact attitude brought us back to earth, Chuck Simms, Don Schuman, their spouses, and numerous others who like myself contributed simpler tasks such as refilling the huge dumpster with remains of the day's work each evening, sometimes till sunset.

Jim Carlson

(SIPPOLA, Cont. from page 8)

Historical Society, served on the Board of Directors and volunteered as a docent at the Museum at least one day a month. She and her husband Tom were also members of the Loomis Historical Society (Tom is 100% Finnish).

Jean did all these things in spite of suffering from severe arthritis, being hospitalized after being bitten by rattlesnakes, having heart problems, and again after a bad fall that resulted in various broken bones.

The Finnish have a word to describe people with character traits of loyalty, perseverance and determination. That word is "sisu." She wasn't even Finnish, but it is a quality Jean Sippola definitely had.

(MESSNER, Cont. from page 8)

believed rocks may be free for the taking, they were not for the dumping, citing an incident, where "dumping rocks etc. at the side of road near the Newcastle police headquarters had unwanted consequences including a 'slap on the hand'."

Jerry Messner will be missed as a skilled stonemason, a fair businessman, and a truly honorable person.

New exhibit celebrates Finnish heritage

By Gloria Beverage

"Honoring Our Neighbors: Celebrating the Finns who settled Rocklin," an exhibit telling the history of the Finns who settled in Rocklin in the 1880s, opened April 2 and will remain open through the end of June at the Rocklin History Museum.

Rocklin's first Finnish residents were among millions of Europeans who immigrated to New York and other East Coast ports in the late 19th century.

Harsh political conditions, made worse by a famine in the late 1860s, pushed at least 350,000 Finns across the Atlantic between 1864 and 1920. Most settled in the Great Lakes states, but others headed west on the railroad.

A large group settled in the San Francisco Bay area. Many migrated to Rocklin in 1880 when John Mantyla acquired a granite quarry and offered jobs as quarrymen to other Finns.

By 1887, nine Finn families and dozens of single Finn men settled in Rocklin as the granite industry boomed. High demand for Rocklin's granite and machine-powered quarrying technology brought the quarries to their peak of activity by 1895. Finns continued to migrate here in the 1890s, many directly from Finland with the sponsorship of Rocklin relatives.

As the granite industry flourished so did Rocklin's saloons. Concerned about family members who developed drinking problems, residents established the Finnish



Temperance Society in 1889 and one year later built Finn Hall as a focal point for Finnish recreation and social life. The granite blocks for the steps and foundation were donated by Finnish quarry owners. The city acquired the building in 1962. It has since been designated a historic landmark.

By the early 20th century Finns and their immediate descendants made up almost half of Rocklin's population and were prominent in Rocklin's politics, retail enterprises and social life.

On display is memorabilia from the Ruhkala and Sippola families dating back to the 1890s, including a Finnish/English grammar book, crocheted doilies, placemats and a loom used by Eva Ruhkala to make rag rugs as well as photographs of the first settlers.

"Honoring Our Neighbors" is the second in a series of exhibits that will pay tribute to our Rocklin neighbors. Upcoming exhibits will honor the Spanish residents.

The Rocklin History Museum, located at the corner of Rocklin Road and San Francisco Street, is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Admission is free; however, donations are welcome.

What's Growing?

By Sally Huseby

While driving around town lately I see the various pear and plum trees dressed out in beautiful white and pink blooms to start the spring season. While walking my dog around our neighborhood I can get a more personal view of the landscapes, showing off the various colors, making our surroundings a pleasure to enjoy, and feel thankful to live in such a vibrant area.

You can get more spring color by walking through Heritage Park and see St. Mary's gardens which are also decked out in their seasonal beauty for all visitors to see. There are bright pink camellias, tall purple irises, the lovely white Lily of the Valleys, and colorful lantana to name just a few. There is always something in bloom. Soon the roses will be blooming, along with colorful verbenas. Take a stroll or sit and admire the beautiful spring season.



Nectar for the bees—Lily of the Valley

Spring Fling celebrates 20th anniversary of museum

By Susan Brooking

The first weekend in April offered the perfect time to have Rocklin Historical Society's first social gathering in over two years! Over 65 members and friends attended Spring Fling on the beautiful patio at Old St. Mary's Chapel.

Finally the opportunity we had longed for - to enjoy greeting friends, great conversations, tasty appetizers catered by museum member, Randy Peters, celebrate and honor members, who twenty years ago facilitated the opening of the Rocklin History Museum.

Many of Rocklin's early settler's descendants present were part of the historical society before there was a Rocklin Museum and were the moving force in establishing the museum. These include the Willard family represented by centenarian Laverne Willard Splan and her cousins Gay Morgan and Robert Aiken; the Ruhkala family represented by Diane Ruhkala Bell, Royce Ann Ruhkala Burks and Bonnie Ruhkala Neumann; Gene Johnson and Doug Osella representing the Wickman family; and the Corral family represented by Ed Corral and Shirley Espley.

Present also were newer members of the community instrumental in the museum's beginning twenty years ago: Susan Brooking, Dr. Jim Carlson, Louise Cullen, Ronna & Neill David, Jim Holmes, Nancy & Hank Lohse, Karen Lokey, Carol & John Peterson, and Joan & Don Schuman. Apologies to anyone not recognized as being along for this ride in the beginning. A debt of gratitude is extended to those who have chosen to join and contribute in continuing to tell the story of Rocklin's history through the historical society and the museum.

What a perfect way to celebrate spring and Rocklin's history!



Organizer Susan Brooking and Gloria Beverage welcome guests

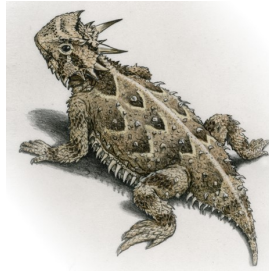


Photos by
Ronna Davis
and
Holly Clark



Mysterious disappearance of the horned toad...solved?

Editor's Note: In the last two issues of the Quarry Quarterly, Doug Osella wrote about the various flora and fauna in the Rocklin area, among them being the horned toad. Curious, David Baker did some research and found some interesting information that you can read below. Doug's adventures with the horned (or horny) toad can be found here: [Part 1](#) (page 6), and [Part 2](#) (page 8)



By David Baker

A review of past news stories documents a once thriving horned toad (horned lizard) industry in California. As early as 1869, Chinese began shipping horned toads from the central part of the state to China where they were used in the treatment of lung disease. Over the decades the populations of this species suffered enormously from human assault. They were hunted and captured by the thousands each year and their bodies processed in various ways: dried, pickled, powdered, boiled, strained, or made into a syrup to be added to medicines for the treatment of such illnesses as colic, lung disease, "the itch," rheumatism, asthma, and more.

In 1884, a Chinese man near Rocklin sent 2000 horned toads to San Francisco, and from there they were destined for China. Horned toad exporters prospered. From 1899 to 1906, the San Bernardino County Horned Toad Medicine Manufac-

turing Company made regular freight shipments from Needles to San Francisco. There was a high demand for the processed reptiles from Chinese doctors, who were willing to pay a good price. The brisk business slumped when the 1906 earthquake destroyed Chinatown. In 1903 it is reported the reptiles were captured and mounted on cards to be sold as souvenirs. In 1909, an Illinois enterprise began gilding horned toads to be used as hat pins for lady's hats. In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, untold numbers of horned toads gave up their natural right to exist in order to meet the needs and desires of dominant humans. Lacking a formidable defense and relying only on camouflage and bluff, the powerless creatures had no choice.

Sources: [Sacramento Bee](#), 11-1-1869, pg. 1; [San Francisco Examiner](#), 12-22-1884, pg. 3; [San Francisco Chronicle](#), 3-29-1903, pg. 2; [Los Angeles Times](#), 8-5-1906, pg. 11; [Stockton Daily](#), 8-10-1906, pg. 6; [San Francisco Call](#), 6-28-1909, pg. 4

HOMECOMING IN ROCKLIN

Will we see a revival?

By Susan Brooking

Memorial Day weekend in Rocklin. This story is about the event originally called "The Old Timers Reunion". It happened each year on Sunday of Memorial Day weekend.

This version of the story begins sometime in the 1950's. Everyone came back to Rocklin to visit family, attend Memorial Services in local churches and at Rocklin Cemetery. On Sunday, Mame and Ern Willard hosted a picnic at their place on Rocklin Road. Soon the event was an expected annual gathering, and in the early 1960's "The Old Timers Reunion" moved to the Ruhkala back yard.

Roy Ruhkala and family hosted the event each year until it became a Rocklin Historical Society annual event - still called "The Old Timers Reunion", but now at Finn Hall. Early in the 21st century the name changed to "Rocklin Homecoming" - continuing to be hosted by the historical society at Finn Hall in the middle of Memorial Day weekend.

About five years prior to the pandemic "Rocklin Homecoming" moved to Springview Hall. The hope was to rekindle the event this year as everything seems to be experiencing a rebirth. Instead look for Rocklin's Homecoming revival next year - 2023 - just as in the beginning - Sunday of Memorial Day weekend.

Should you wish to share memories of either the "Old Timers Reunion" or "Rocklin Homecoming", please send an email to rocklinhistorical@gmail.com.



SAVE THE DATE
Saturday July 16, 2022

PLEASE JOIN US ON SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2022, 10AM-4PM,
FOR THE ROCKLIN HISTORY MUSEUM'S PARTICIPATION IN
THIS YEAR'S HERITAGE TRAIL

**GRANITE DEMONSTRATION BY PAUL RUHKALA AT
11:00 AM**

Details will be shared on our website and social media when
they become available.

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.



Community connections to our past

On March 20, Old St. Mary's Chapel and No. 1 Firehouse Company building were open to the public in conjunction with Cante Ao Vinho's Open House (in the Barudoni Building across the street). Many community members came by to learn a little history, and relate stories of when they went to St. Mary's as a child, or other remembrances, including this one.

By Patsy Pattison

The history of Rocklin finds its way to us in so many inspiring stories. Here is one such story.

In 2006, Katharine Belle Schaefer was just 6 months old when she had her hand



and foot print painted on a tile. This tile was to be placed on the future wall planned for Old St. Mary's Chapel. Now, almost 16 years later, and almost sixteen years old, Katharine has returned to find her mark in history!

Painting for the future

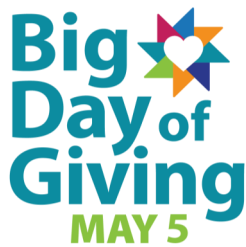


COURTESY
The Rocklin Historical Society booth at the Hot Chili-Cool Cars event featured tile-painting as fundraiser for St. Mary's restoration project. This little girl is having her foot painted for a tile. She also had a handprint on the same tile, which will be part of a tile wall as part of the St. Mary's church for many years.

Answer to last issue's Mystery Place



Did you know where these etched roses could be found? Visit Old St. Mary's Chapel and you will see these roses lining the patio!



News for Golden One account holders!

Planning to donate on the Big Day of Giving? Give with a Golden 1

Credit Union debit or credit card to boost your impact. Golden 1 Credit Union is proportionately matching its members' gifts — up to \$100,000!"

To qualify for the match, donations must be made using Golden 1 Credit Union debit or credit cards during the giving window, from April 21 through May 5.

The match funds will be distributed proportionately according to the distribution of gifts made using Golden 1 Credit Union debit or credit cards.

If RHS receives funds from the match, they will be included in the eCheck they receive from the Foundation after Big Day of Giving.

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