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## ANDERS WICKMAN

### EMIL WICKMAN'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS FATHER AND EARLY ROCKLIN

This oral history is based on an interview by Boyd Wickman with his father reminiscing about Anders Wickman and early life in Rocklin. It was taped in 1974 and transcribed by his brother Robert with very little editing. Some of the responses were sequenced to make it more readable.

## EARLY DAYS IN AMERICA

Anders came (to America) in 1885 (actually 1887). His first job was milking cows in Massachusetts. When he landed he had no place to go. –Couldn't find a room so they went to the police department to find a place where they could go. So he spent his first night in jail – not as a criminal but as an immigrant. Just wasn't enough lodging so the police department said they could sleep in the jail that night. There were two of them that came over together. Then they got a job milking cows. They knew how to do that in the old country (Finland) because they lived on a farm. (Later worked in a machine shop in Fitchburg, MA) He earned enough money to make his way across the country to Eureka California and went to work in the logging business. Cutting logs. He went looking for a homestead. They opened some land for homesteading in the Susanville area and he went out with another man with a horse and wagon to homestead. I think they went all the way up to Lakeview. That country was all open for a subdivision. He looked it all over but somehow, I don't know why; he just didn't like it too much. Maybe it was too far from civilization or something. It was pretty rugged. They lived off the land while they were up there. They shot rabbit and deer and stuff to eat and some fishing. It was beautiful country I remember him saying. In those days too there were still Indians roaming around, but they were not very wild anymore. --- they weren't on the warpath. They didn't give them any trouble. Then he heard that there was a quarry business starting in Rocklin. They needed men down there and it was better pay, so he packed up and went down and worked in the quarry for a while and then bought half interest in the quarry. Rocklin at that time was mostly Irish and a lot of old railroad workers, the Chinese. When he went there he was one of the first Finnish settlers in Rocklin – he and this other young man, I can't recall his name.

## QUARRY BUSINESS

After working in a quarry he bought out an interest and went into the quarry business in a big way. Built a lot of buildings in San Francisco. He made most of the curbing for the streets. Quite a few of them are still downtown that have not been dug up yet. There was a big boom after the fire and earthquake. But just about that time concrete and steel came in for more usage. You could almost see the end of the quarry industry because granite couldn't compete with concrete and steel. But before that he contracted for the whole Pearl Harbor in Honolulu for the Navy. All granite was shipped from his quarry to Pearl Harbor to build that dry dock for the big ships to go into. And that was all his work. He also did some bank buildings in San Francisco. Uncle Victor was the one who did all that carving on the Bank of America, that beautiful work on that building. You should go and see it. That was my father and his brother. My father didn't do too much (physical) work – he ran the business end of it. After a few years of manual work he did all the business. He was kept busy. But after concrete and steel the quarry business just went to pot. There wasn't enough (business), people could hardly make a living out of it. Then also the second labor movement came in and they unionized all the stone workers and raised their salaries to such a point they couldn't compete at all. The IWW came in there and had a big battle there in fact. They had a big battle and about four of them were killed. They are



buried in one of the cemeteries there. One of the big movements. In fact they brought troops into Rocklin during that big riot. They didn't organize the quarry workers but they tried to organize the rail workers and tried to stop the trains from going over the mountains. The governor – I forget who he was, sent troops in. I can remember some of this stuff. They sent troops in there to open the roads. So they arrested a bunch of them. In fact they had a battle on the streets for a while, in one of their parades.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE**

He was Mayor of Rocklin maybe from 1910 to 1925, somewhere in there. And there was a very interesting election. He ran on a ticket to close the saloons that were wide open – like some places in Nevada. So he ran on a ticket to clean up the town --- and he won by one vote. That is how close the election was. But then he didn't close up all the saloons; he just wanted to regulate them – so there wouldn't be so many for the population of the place. So they cut down from eleven saloons down to three. I can remember all this detail because then they also regulated their hours because Finns are heavy drinkers you know. They like their liquor and some became alcoholics. They would spend all their paychecks in the saloons - so big complaints from the people in the neighborhood. They wanted to clean up the place so they did put a lot of regulations on the saloons. The town was cleaned up and everybody was happy. In fact the last two times he didn't even put his name on a ballot and he was elected – just kind of a write in vote because they liked the way the city was being run. But in the meantime there had been quite a few gun battles – it went through quite a process before they got to it. The city Marshall was shot and killed and they had a gun fight right out in the street like in old westerns. One of the fellows from the bars there shot at the Marshall because he refused to follow the ordinance of the city. The Marshall told him to close up and he refused to do it and the Marshall went in to arrest him. He took a shot at him (the Marshall) and he backed out onto the street and they shot it out on the street. They both got killed. That makes believers out of everybody then. That kind of quieted the town down. I think it was a thing just like a lynching. You have to have law and order and that proved that law and order had to be one of the things in the community. If you're going to have law, it has to be observed. So that was a result. He was pretty popular there for standing for the principle for having the town cleaned up. And he also served on a lot of other things. He was minister of the Finnish Lutheran Church. He also served on the board of school trustees and he served in the Boy Scouts – he was Boy Scout commissioner. Boy Scouts first started in 1912. He was one of the first commissioners for the area. That was right at the beginning when Baden Powell started the thing. And of course I was a scout at 16 or 17 during World War I.

## **ASSASINATION ATTEMPTS**

During the transition they also tried to assassinate him – two or three different occasions. One night he was coming home from town hall – they use to call them town meetings or board meeting – well two fellows attacked him and from each side. As they came toward him he put both his hands in his back pocket like he was reaching for a gun and they took



off. But the next time they actually shot at him. He was coming back home and they shot at him on horseback –but they missed him. The sheriff went down they found empty bullets on the side of the road where they had tried. Not a very good shot apparently – fortunately.

## **RAILROADS**

Of course the railroad was a big thing in Rocklin. The railroad yard use to be in Roseville – and that was the division point. That was where a helper was put on. That is where they loaded all their wood on for the wood burning locomotive for the mountains. They cut down a lot of oak trees. That is why the country is so denuded. All the way to Colfax – especially around Colfax. And every division point for a ten-mile radius. Colfax was a division point and Blue Canyon was a division point and also Truckee. So for almost 100 miles they cut all the trees. Norden was near the summit so they would take the helper off at the summit you see and then they would deadhead back. Yeah the only place they had to turn around was Norden. It was on the hump you see.

## **MEXICAN MINING VENTURE**

Dad saw the handwriting on the wall (decline in quarrying). The next thing they were in Mexico. They saw possibilities of mining down there. And so they formed a mining company called Dolores Mining and Development Company. He was president of the company and had stock. Anyway it was promising. He brought home nuggets of gold, silver and copper and all this stuff. So they went to the mines located in the mountains near Chihuahua and things were going pretty good. They went down there with a crew of men and were going to start working the mines. Just about the time things were going well they started having a big revolution. Pancho Villa was trying to get control of the government. The State Department sent a message out to all Americans to get out of there to give them just so many hours – I think 24 hours to get out of the country. Everybody had to clear out. Beyond that they were out there at their own risk. So dad packed up with the rest of them. I remember them saying that when they came out they were afraid of the Mexicans they had working for them. They made them ride out ahead of them. They were afraid they would shoot them in the back. So the Americans rode behind the column and the Mexicans rode out in front. They got out of there as fast as they could and they got out of there luckily – and he said they were lucky when they did get out because that's where the big battle was going on in the Sierra Madre mountains near Nogales. They (Pancho Villa) hid in a cave there. In fact there still is a place there, an old cave – that's where his headquarters were. That is where he made raids across the border. The raids were against Americans and stealing cattle. Finally they sent Pershing to clean it up. This thing went on for a long time and finally the Mexican government that got into power confiscated all the American property. He tried to get reparation from the Mexican government but they said they didn't owe them anything because everything that was owed was offset by back taxes to the Mexican government. It was all in their back taxes – so they lost everything down there – the whole works. It was quite a fortune that I think they lost down in that area. They got nothing out of that down there. Then they had to liquidate the company, and that's where Oscar (Anders first son) got the typewriter. They



we hauled in with railroad cars. We would go with the wagon downtown and load the wagons up and then haul it away into the barns. It came from Nevada around Lovelock and Fallon because there seem to be better hay there than California hay. That's what my father used to say that the hay was always much better. So he would buy hay from Nevada and wouldn't buy any of that California hay - too many weeds in it he would say. And he always insisted on a second or third cutting too because the first cuttings always have weeds in it.

## RETIREMENT

In the 1940s my sister Florence and husband Ray Johnson decided they wanted to get out into the country instead of living in Los Angeles so they bought the farm from my dad. He retired and went to live in Berkeley. At one time he had a chance to buy a house in Berkeley. He owned it for years. He rented it out. A nice two story, one of those shingle houses you know down around 8<sup>th</sup> street. It used to be a beautiful area. The trains ran right by there so he bought that house as an investment. So he held on to it. That's one thing he never gave up and I think he always liked Berkeley. You know a lot of Finnish people were there - a large Finnish colony. And there was this old sea captain there who was a very good friend of his. Mr. Fardig had been a captain on steam ships for years and years - I mean on sailing vessels not steamships. He was really a very good friend and he probably was hoping that when he retired he could live near these people, these friends. You probably remember Christmas Eves we had there. We had lutefisk. They stuck pretty much to their old country customs. (Anders died in Berkeley in 1949)

## FINAL THOUGHTS

I think it took a lot of energy and everything else to come here and learn the language. I mean can you imagine not knowing anything about the language and customs and no money. Just come in and then to have a successful life. He wasn't afraid to take chances and not only that but I tell your one thing that he did that I'll never forget -- He had a terrific love for America, all the Finns did, - a terrific love for this country and he said he always tried to teach his kids that our country comes first always, always above anything else, even Finland. I mean this is your country, your land and mine.

Note: Emil Wickman was born in Rocklin March 19, 1905 to Anders Wickman and his second wife, Anna (Pohjanen) North. He graduated from Roseville High School and worked for Shell Oil Co. in San Francisco supervising Shell's West Coast railway cars and equipment. He was also Chairman of the American Petroleum Institute's Railway Equipment Committee. After retirement he lived in La Quinta, Ojai, Sacramento and Covington, Louisiana before returning to Rocklin in 1981 for the last 10 years of his life. He is buried in the family plot in the Rocklin Cemetery.