

## President's Message

Jim Hammes



Well ... here we are just starting in to a welcome Fall season after a very long and warm summer.

When I think of Fall ... it reminds me of warm days – cool nights and crisp early fall mornings. Leaves eventually turning to ambient colors. The smell of wood fires burning and leaves blowing down the street. Halloween around the corner and Thanksgiving just a bit further down the road. (we will refrain from any Christmas references ... at least for now, the stores are taking care of that already!)

Fall reminds me of ... Home being where the Heart is. Family, Friends, Security of having that soft place to land. Home for many of us associated with our organization is the Heart of Rocklin, the Quarry District.

A recent plaque dedication at the Wickman – Ruhkala Home Quarry inspired some of my comments to the attendees ... “Home” being the operative word.

I mentioned how we have watched Rocklin spiral out from the city center like the rings on a tree trunk. I have seen this growth over my 30 plus years as a resident albeit with enthusiasm and admittedly some small reservations for the changes cause and effect.

That being said, I feel it important and incumbent that we master our responsibility of stewardship to keep the idea and discussion of Heritage – Legacy and Legend in our vernacular.

We have done so and exemplify that each time we gather our group with the community to recall and inspire the spirit of our past and its aging significance that supplants who and what Rocklin is today. Our “Home” Quarry District contains viable archives from the physical past and perhaps the most important asset to our History, Heritage and Legend, existing descendants from the key prominent families that literally carved out what Rocklin was and became to where it is today.

I referenced how lucky we as residents are to have a direct connection from days gone by from the current family members and their willingness to paint the picture of life long before Rocklin became the community it is today. I also referred to Rocklin being at a crossroads of sorts.

We have a nexus between the past

(See *PRESIDENT*, pg. 2)

# Quarry Quarterly

Our History Our Heritage Our Community

ROCKLIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

Fall, 2022

## Wickman-Ruhkala, Kannasto quarries honored

Village-by-the-Ponds, home to two picturesque quarries, was the site of the most recent plaque dedication organized by project coordinator, RHS member David Baker.

The dedication, on September 24, introduced the community to the two quarries—the Wickman-Ruhkala Home quarry, and the adjacent Kannasto quarry. According to David Baker, the Home quarry was named as such to distinguish it from the larger quarry closer to downtown.

Guest speakers at the dedication included Mayor Bill Halldin, Ruhkala family members JoAnne Ruhkala Bell and RoyceAnn Ruhkala Burk, and Anders Wickman's grandson, Bob Wickman.

After a welcome and introductions by RHS president Jim Hammes, Mayor Bill Halldin took the stage. He spoke of the contributions to the community provided by the Wickman and Ruhkala families. “Anders Wickman and the Ruhkala family, prospered in the Granite business and at various times owned and operated eight of the 61



area quarries. This quarry, developed by Anders Wickman and later sold to Matt Ruhkala, provided material for projects as far away as Hawaii.”

Granite, though, was not the only thing these families

(See *PLAQUES*, pg. 4)

## Russ McNeill closing the books

By Gloria Beverage

After serving for 15 years as treasurer for the Rocklin Historical Society, 81-year-old Russ McNeill has decided to turn over the books.

“We now see Russ taking his last lap as treasurer and his welcome and mentoring of Kathryn Ripley as his replacement,” said President Jim Hammes. “Russ has been and remains a gentleman of his word and loyal to the task of preparing Kathryn for her new role with RHS.”

Throughout his tenure as treasurer, Russ has been instrumental in keeping the non-profit agency's finances in order.

“The treasury is always in order and budgets always covered what we needed,” Gene Johnson said.

Nancy Lohse, who coordinates events at Old St. Mary's Chapel, is thankful for Russ' behind-the-scenes support.

“Without him we'd never know who paid,” said Lohse. “He's been great at putting on his detective hat whenever we



needed him to track down missing payments from couples who insisted they had paid but didn't. I will miss his calm dili-

(See *MCNEILL*, pg. 2)

*(PRESIDENT, con't from pg.1)*

core (Heart – Quarry District) and the contemporary changing landscape of new developments and increased population we are experiencing until the time when our land locked boundaries stop the migration and development.

Finally, I continue to make the observation that our Historical Society needs to continue to cultivate and grow the garden of the fertile history in the “Heart” of Rocklin, our Quarry District. Because it is from there that Rocklin grows today.

Our Quarries, Chapel, Museum and Firehouse represent the monuments that link the past to the present and future days yet to come.

They are a testament to our Historical Society commitment to honor the Heritage, Legacy and Legend that befalls our responsibility to do so.

It continues to be the enticing magnet for those who stumble on Rocklin strategically or maybe by accident for what it represents to all of us who call Rocklin home.

It's a bit like Mayberry, certainly populated I am sure with the fictional likes of, Andy, Barney, Aunt Bee, Opie, Gomer, Floyd and many others. To all of us ... it is HOME ... To those who might ask ... “is this Heaven?”

We humbly reply ... No it's ... Rocklin!

... Stay Well until we chat again.



**Kathryn Ripley joins RHS as new treasurer**

**By Gloria Beverage**

For Kathryn Ripley, it is not who you know, it is who knows you.

A resident of Rocklin for five years, Kathryn held jobs in the banking and legal fields before retiring from Placer County 15 years ago.

Retirement meant she had time to volunteer at Compassionate Planet in Rocklin and Acres of Hope in Auburn.

Rocklin Historical Society Vice Presi-

*(MCNEILL, con't from pg. 1)*

gence in keeping the weddings flowing.” Taking on the task of treasurer was an easy decision for Russ.

“I’ve worked in finance most of my life since graduate school,” he explained.

Russ attended the Bureau of Ships (what became the University of Michigan) to study Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. It wasn’t long before he realized he didn’t like engineering, preferring the math and science classes.

When he decided he didn’t want to pursue a career as an engineer, Russ switched to the University of Buffalo where he earned a degree in business administration. After that he completed studies for an MBA at Dartmouth.

Russ met his wife, Leslie, while they were both attending the University of Buffalo. They were married Jan. 2, 1965. Together they raised three sons and a daughter.

Career meant moves throughout the U.S. with the family finally settling in West Lake Village in Southern California. They were drawn to Northern California after two of their four children moved to the area.

Initially, the McNeills settled in a one-bedroom condominium in Rocklin.

“We got here, and I discovered I had no lawn to mow. I had nothing to do. I was looking around for things to do.”

Leslie discovered the Rocklin Historical Society and suggested that Russ check it out. He met then President Skip Gebel, who encouraged him to volunteer – convincing him to take on the position of treasurer.

“Rocklin Historical Society has been fun,” he continued. “I’ve met a lot of interesting people and developed some friendships. I’ve enjoyed working there and doing what needed to be done.”

During his tenure, Russ has watched support for the Historical Society grow.

“When I joined there were about 120 members. Now we have over 200,” he said. Sadly, “most of them are 50-plus. We need to attract younger members.”

Russ also volunteers with the Fix It Team and has helped with various projects at the History Museum.

For a time, Russ volunteered at the Sacramento Railroad Museum where he met Scott Inman, founder of the Southern Pacific Railroad History Center, a group of volunteers striving to preserve the heritage of the Southern Pacific Railroad and its employees.

Although he is no longer volunteering at the Railroad Museum, Russ has continued to support Inman’s efforts to build a history center in Placer County. He serves as the non-profit’s treasurer.

Five years ago, the McNeills moved to Eskaton in Roseville where he serves on the community’s landscape and budget committees.

Although he likes to stay active, Russ admits he looks forward to reading more and staying healthy.

“We all certainly appreciate and applaud Russ for all his hours of support, help and managing a very key component of RHS, which was and is no small task,” Hammes said.

“Enjoy your retirement, Russ,” Lohse added. “You earned it.”

## Kathryn Ripley taking over the books

dent George Salgado, who lives across the street, took every opportunity to pitch volunteer opportunities with the non-profit.

“In my heart I do love learning about what came before me,” she said. “I love vintage.”

So, when longtime treasurer Russ McNeill announced his plans to retire, George approached Kathryn asking if she would consider serving as the non-profit’s treasurer. She agreed and began shadowing Russ in preparation for taking over the books when his term of office ends in November.

“I have a servant’s heart,” she said. “I try to help wherever I have the opportunity.”

Raised in Pacific Grove, Kathryn first moved to Sacramento, then settled in Newcastle when she met and married her

husband of 26 years.

The couple raised their three children on his family’s property in Newcastle, relocating to Rocklin a couple of years before he died.

Kathryn now shares her home with a daughter and her daughter’s 1-1/2-year-old Jack Russell terrier mix, Molly.

An active member of Lighthouse Church, she enjoys golf, gardening and interior decorating. She also loves traveling and will soon be returning from a mission trip to France.

Patrice Cardott, RHS member and also Kathryn’s neighbor, is thrilled to have her on board. “Kathryn’s energy and attention to detail is beyond amazing. She’s always happy, and excited to be a part of our little community.”

Welcome, Kathryn!



## Echoes of a full life in Rocklin



**Note:** Twiana Armstrong was born and raised in Texas where she graduated from The University of Texas at Austin. She transplanted to California in 1993; raising her daughter, Alix, in the Rocklin community since 2004. Semi-retired, she is a small business owner and nonprofit owner who works tirelessly in many organizations to give back to the community.

### By Twiana Armstrong

Husband, father, WWI vet, percussionist, and quarry crane operator all describe the full life of Rafael Ponce, Sr. Born in 1845 in Mexico, Mr. Ponce migrated to California, fancied a wife once in California, and married Maximina Ponce on June 26, 1875. The two made their way to Placer County, settling in Rocklin where they raised their 8 children.

The Ponces featured prominently in society life, he as a

drummer in the local community band; she as a vocalist, often singing at parties and dances. Their children would also grow up to be active members of society where they too displayed their talents. Their daughters Nettie and Lupy were noted vocalists. Son, Rafael Jr. worked as an interpreter.

Photos of Mr. Ponce picture a well-dressed, dark complexion man of somewhat slight build. He gazes directly at the camera insinuating a man of forthright confidence. Rocklin's historical society records indicate that one of Mr. Ponce's great grandparents was of Black ethnicity.

Indeed, the 1910 Census depicts Mr. Ponce's race as Octoroon, a description for one identified of mixed-race ancestry. The Ponce's lived in Rocklin for over 30 years as productive members of society. Rafael Ponce provided for his family as a wage earner, establishing a life and home that contributed to the foundational fabric of the town of Rocklin. His contributions are noted until his death from bronchitis at the age of 70 in 1915. Maximina Ponce succumbed to the same ailment in 1917, dying at the age of 67.



## Heritage Trail Day is a fun summer activity

### By Charlene Rhodes

On Saturday, July 16th, the Rocklin History Museum participated in the 13th Annual Heritage Trail Museums Tour, one of 27 museums in the summer-long event. A fun time was enjoyed by adults and children.

The students were invited to take part in a scavenger hunt. All received a stamp on their Heritage Trail cards and at the end of the event, if they filled their card they were entered into a contest for prizes, including laptops. On what was a very hot day, 86 people came out to visit the museum. Inside the cool museum, our visitors were able to see our permanent displays as well as the temporary Spanish Heritage Exhibit.

RHS president Jim Hammes welcomed the visitors and introduced Paul Ruhkala. The granite splitting demonstration is always a crowd pleaser. Paul is carrying on the tradition started by his father, Roy. Paul, Susan Brookings and Alfred Corral shared stories of Rocklin's past during the



**Paul Ruhkala demonstrates splitting granite, carrying on his father's tradition**

granite splitting.

We also had on display the lighted star from the Stardust Skating Rink and it was very popular. Many residents of Rocklin and the surrounding area remember the skating rink. I have many fond memories of spending hours there, along with my friends. Special thanks to David Baker and Gene Johnson who were able to get the star working again, after so many years in storage. It takes many dedicated volunteers to have a large event like this one.



**Trail organizer Charlene Rhodes, left, and Shirley Espley enjoy seeing the star from the Stardust Skating Rink light up again**

Thanks to everyone who helped make it a success, including all our visitors. We will have another Heritage Trail special day next year.



*(PLAQUES, Cont. from page 1)*

provided. “Members of the two families, for well over 100 years, have contributed to the Rocklin community,” he stated.

“Anders Wickman was elected as Mayor in 1909 in the aftermath of the closure of the Rocklin railroad roundhouse in 1908. Anders’s daughter Florence,” he continued, “served on the school board; her husband Ray Johnson served on the council and as mayor circa 1950 when sewers, natural gas were brought to the city and a fledgling police force was established. Matt Ruhkala served on the council and one of his sons, Roy, served on the council and as Mayor. Roy’s contributions are a matter of record and too numerous to list but they include serving on commissions and city and area boards, preservation of Finn Hall, establishment of the Rocklin Historical Society, and creation of the Rocklin History Museum.”

“Members of the third generation continue to extend the legacy of service, for example: Jim Williams, county supervisor and president of Placer Community Foundation; Diane Bell, Artist and member of the Rocklin Art Task Force; Royce Anne Burks, JoAnn Lawson and Bonnie Newman, museum docents, keeping our history alive; Gene Johnson, aided in expansion of Johnson Springview Park and creation of Peter Hill Heritage Park; Paul Ruhkala, as a longtime member of the Parks and Recreation Commission oversaw creation of many of Rocklin’s 30 plus parks. Last, and most importantly, the tradition of service on the city council was continued by Paul Ruhkala when Paul was appointed to complete the term vacated by Joe Patter-



son on the Rocklin City Council.”

The dedication then included speeches by the Bob Wickman and Ruhkala family representatives. See excerpts from their speeches below.

The plaque is a unique style, compared to other plaques throughout the city. It lays flat on granite pedestals, table style. An additional plaque at the nearby Kannasto quarry, is dedicated to the remains of a circular shed. According to David Baker, “The pair of granite posts, located by the children’s playground, are the only remains of a circa 1904 cutting shed used by the nearby Kannasto quarry. This small building was circular in shape to allow large stone blocks to be brought in for processing following the curved path of the derrick boom.”

The plaques are located at the Village-by-the-Ponds housing development on Wickman Loop.

## Old St. Mary’s News—join the fun!

By Nancy Lohse

I am so proud of Old St. Mary’s Chapel and the wonderful Church Ladies that run it! Since 1884 it has been the center for so many wonderful and sometimes sad events. I’m positive that even way back then there were church ladies keeping the church clean and beautiful.

Just like ringing the bell after a wedding, the church ladies have become a Rocklin tradition. With 557 weddings since 2005, the team has it dialed in. Although, there are some questions clients ask that leave us wondering. My favorites are: Can you move the fountain off the patio for our reception? Would it be possible to take the turquoise upholstery off the pews? Can the pews be moved out weekly for a yoga class? When you are dealing with the general public, you never know.

The OSM Church Ladies are so good dealing with whatever comes their way. Thank you to Patrice Cardot, Patsy Pattison, Peggy Russi, Sally Huseby, Ronna Davis, Linda Wampler, Nancy Ustaszewski, Linda Hammes, and Holly Clark. If you happen to run into one of them, give them a high-five. They deserve it!

Want to become part of this great, fun team?

Contact me, Nancy Lohse: 916-624-1135

## Comments at the dedication

### Bob Wickman on A.O. Wickman

Anders Wickman was born in 1867 in the small farming community of Hokajoki, Finland. His birth name was Anders Oscar Ylilammi. Anders was told in Finland that the streets of America and particularly California were paved with gold and in 1887 he left Finland to seek his fortune. When he arrived in the US he was advised that he would not succeed in America with the last name Ylilammi. Shortly thereafter he changed his last name to Wickman. Nobody seems to know why he picked that name but those of you who live in this lovely community can be thankful you do not live on Ylilammi Loop.

When he arrived in California however, he found no gold in the streets – but the street curbs were made of granite – a stone common in Finland.

He entered the granite mining business in Rocklin as a laborer but quickly ended up leasing and then owning his own quarry and, later, purchased the adjacent Kannasto quarry.

Anders, however was more than just a quarryman, he was an astute and influential leader of early Rocklin. At the time Rocklin was a wild and undisciplined community. There was lawlessness, drunkenness and labor problems in the railroad and granite industries. Anders was elected mayor in 1909, the year after the town was decimated by the move of the railroad roundhouse operations to Roseville. In the drive to regulate the saloons he survived two assassination attempts.

Anders served 18 years on the City Council, five of them as Mayor. He was on the School Board, Boy Scout Council and shared the Ministry of the Finnish

*(See COMMENTS, pg. 5)*



The “Church Ladies” enjoy an RHS-sponsored “thank you” lunch at La Provence. In the words of the original Church Lady, “Well, isn’t that special?” Join in on the fun while helping RHS!

## Comments at the dedication

(Cont. from page 4)

Apostolic Lutheran Church with Matt Ruhkala.

The granite business had been busy providing curbing and building materials following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Thereafter, Anders received large lucrative contracts for breakwater material and for dry dock construction at Mare Island and Pearl Harbor Hawaii Naval shipyards. He entered the investment world - he invested in a hotel in San Francisco and, later, raised enough capital to purchase and incorporate the Delores Mining and Development Company - a gold and silver mine in Chihuahua Mexico. His foresight was unerring. The Delores Mine is still an active and profitable open pit mine with one of the largest silver reserves in the world. However, his timing failed him. Shortly after beginning operations, he and his son Oscar nearly lost their lives when Pancho Villa (see note below) also saw value in the mine. They barely escaped. As Pancho was entering the front gate of the mine, they escaped out the back and to Rocklin.

The demand for granite had always been subject to feast and famine variations, labor unrest became common, concrete was replacing granite as a material for buildings, curbs and gutters. In 1919 Anders sold his home and quarries to Matt Ruhkala, and purchased and operated a 128 acre dairy, SpringView Dairy, on the west edge of Rocklin. In 1936 he retired, sold the farm to his daughter and moved to Berkeley. Most of the farm was later to become Johnson-Springview Park.

When I was 10 years old my brother Boyd and I would be crammed in the back of our 1937 Ford with our dog Jeep going to Cisco Grove for skiing. Pacific street was then Highway 40 and when we passed by a vacant field my father would point to a non-descript grey house in the distance and proclaim - "that's the house where I was born."

I would like to express my appreciation to the Rocklin community, The Rocklin City Council and Riverland Homes for transforming a dusty field, a non-descript grey house and a hole in the ground into this beautiful living development to be enjoyed by families for generations to come.

### Who was Pancho Villa and why was Anders concerned about him entering his property?

Pancho Villa was a leader of the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s. At the height of his power and popularity in late 1914 and early 1915, the U.S. considered recognizing him as Mexico's legitimate authority. However, trouble between the United States and Pancho Villa began growing in October 1915, when the United States government officially recognized Villa's rival and former ally Venustiano Carranza as head of the government of Mexico. The U.S. also provided rail transportation for the movement of more than 5,000 Carrancista forces to fight Villa at the Battle of Agua Prieta. Feeling betrayed, Villa began attacking U.S. nationals and their property in northern Mexico. And on January 11, 1916, sixteen American employees of the American Smelting and Refining Company were removed from a train near Santa Isabel, Chihuahua, and executed.



## RoyceAnn Burks on the Kannastos

John Kannasto was born in Finland in 1869. Arriving in Rocklin in 1894, he immediately entered the granite business on lands from the estate of John N. Taylor. He married Emma Lefbakka and they had four children, 3 daughters and 1 son.

Their beautiful home on South Grove Street was destroyed by fire in 1915. A new home was built in the same location. Their home property bordered Kannasto Street, South Grove, and Lost Avenue.

One of their daughters, Elna Kannasto, married Verner Kokila and their home was nearby on South Grove Street on Kokila Court. The house is still there. Their children were Calvin and



Victor Wickman, third from left, Anders Wickman, third from right, and Matt Ruhkala, far right, working at the circular shed

Melba. Great times were had by many of their friend on picnics at their ranch bordering Sierra College Blvd.

In later years, John Kannasto turned away from the granite business in favor of operating Rocklin's first and only movie theater which was destroyed in the terrible fire of 1914. They later opened an ice cream parlor on Railroad Avenue across from the train depot.

## JoAnne Lawson on the Ruhkalas

Our grandfather Matt bought this quarry, surrounding property and home from A.O Wickman in 1919. This was this third quarry purchase named the Union Granite Company, previously owning one near Rustic Hill which is now covered by the freeway and the quarry on Granite Drive by the library.

As the children grew, the girls helped their mother with household duties and occasional office duties at the quarry while the boys helped their father in the operation of the quarry which continued until about 1937 when it was abandoned.

Our grandfather retired in 1932 and his sons took over the operation. In 1935, four of this sons, Abner [my father], Michael, Ben and Ruben purchased the California Granite Company, the former Pernu quarry, on Pacific street and it became The Ruhkala Brothers Union Granite Company. That quarry is now Adventure Park.

I remember the quarry being very active with quarrymen working about. As we walked by the

blacksmith shop before crossing the track, you could hear you could hear hammering noises hitting the anvil. The railroad tracks ran right through here. The derrick was also nearby.

All activity was on this side. There was a large tin building which housed the giant compressor and on the other side towards the other quarry was an open shed where the granite was chiseled and cut to size.

There was not water in the quarry as it was pumped out and it was very deep. We never went close to the edge. Which reminds me.... This is the quarry my uncle Ben fell in and miraculously survived. He was an athlete, in good shape and somehow did a flip as he fell, landed on his heels and slid in the gravel with no broken bones!

The Kannasto quarry, was our swimming hole as it was for our relatives before us. We had many great times with friends and family here. It had a lot of water in it then. The big granite boulder on the other side was where we would sit in the sun. A diving board and a raft were also there for us.



## The Mayor of Front Street



**Michael Clark**  
June 1962—Sept 2022

By Holly Clark

Mike Clark was son to Charles Clark and Janet Driskell. He was one of five brothers, Carl, Craig, Mark and Kevin. He started roofing back when he was fifteen. At age sixteen he was doing roofs in Palm Springs and fell in love with the art of clay tile. Inspired by a trade few people can handle, Mike decided to make roofing his living.

In 1983 Mike met Dawn in Clearlake where they had both grown up, becoming each other's best friends. Soon they were roofing together as an unstoppable team. They had their

first born Holly, followed by Brandi two years later. Wanting to escape Southern California, they moved to a small city called Rocklin in 1989. Mike and Dawn established M.S. Clark Roofing in 1990. For the next thirty years they would spend their lives working hard while always giving back to their community. If you take a drive down Front Street or Rocklin Road you are sure to see the many roofs they installed. Mike and Dawn also owned Buck's Traeger BBQs that operated on Front Street for over a decade.

One of Mike's favorite organizations was the Rocklin Historical Society. They are actually the reason Old St. Mary's Chapel was renovated and still exists today. Mike loved his community dearly and was very active in it. The community building we celebrated his memorial in is a true testament to this. And that orchard you see down the way on Front Street was actually one of his "crazy" ideas. Before any of this beautiful park was here, Mike would regularly mow the weeds saying to his family "if I mow it they will come." Some have fondly and rightfully referred to him as the unofficial Mayor of Front Street.

In April 2019, Mike Clark suffered a severe stroke and never fully recovered. After over thirty years in business, the family made the tough deci-

sion to dissolve their roofing company as Mike was the head, heart and soul behind it. For the next three years the family made a conscious effort to enjoy the time they had knowing it was so very precious. Mike should have died the day he had his stroke but the love he has for Dawn was so strong he didn't ever want to let her go.

Mike was able to know and spend time with his granddaughter, Brooklyn who was born in 2020. Spending time with her gave him so much joy. He looked forward to their daily Facetimes where he repeated oh so loudly "Big Papa, Big Papa!!"

Before his stroke, Mike was always on the go, always out and about, working hard to network and build his empire. One thing he missed the most was riding around on his Harley. He also loved going out on their boat, camping and fished yearly at the Bass derbies.

He always tried to help his family as much as he helped his community. So many were so lucky to have known him, if only briefly. He was a one-of-a-kind guy that always made a lasting impression. People die everyday but Mike was special. His absence has left a noticeable void in this world. He is already dearly missed but he will always be present and live on in our hearts.

1) Mike was always so generous at the Tree Lightings. He would always offer his barbequed chicken to whoever would come over to his property. He was the spirit of the event. It was all about community sharing, and Mike was always out there, giving his time and barbeque chicken to whoever would ask.



2) Mike was a dedicated roofer. On the day we had the crane in place to lift the steeple on to St. Mary's Church, Mike was still pounding on shingles even as the crane was lifting up the steeple. Not sure how he got off the steeple when I look back. Mike was always there, lending a hand to the project, or smoking a cigar and cracking a joke.

-Kent Dazey

### Remembering "Buck"...

Mike Clark, "Mr. Front Street" passed away September 2 and the Historical Society lost one of its finest members. Fortright, gregarious, and enthusiastic, Mike eagerly supported Historical Society endeavors. In the restoration of Old St. Mary's church Mike, a roofer, seemed always on top of that project!

Generous to a fault, Mike was well known for his BBQ at Society events often provided at no charge. Our Mike Clark was a man of action and ready commitment. The Historical Society lost not just a member, but a unique and inimitable "Historical" treasure.

-Roger Lokey



Back in the early days, when we had a garden crew, Mike would stop by with BBQ treats. I think he also 'donated' large rocks for our chapel garden. Always cheerful and loved riding his Harley around. I would wave to him as he drove by.

-Sally Huseby



More memories on pg. 7



Mike (Buck) Clark, was bigger than life and the most generous person you can imagine. In my estimation, Mike contributed more to the beauty and character of Rocklin's Front Street than any other person. For the St. Mary's restoration he used all his abilities including his personal skills to obtain donations of materials for the structure and roofing. And, as a roofer, he literally raised the roofs of both Old St Mary's and the Fire House. And, one must note that Buck's eclectic accumulation of relics added interest to the street for passersby — and tweaked the city fathers.

Mike was there for anyone, for my part he was there when our dog strayed, when burial was in order and he was there with his backhoe and conducted a modest ceremony). Our huge oak tree fell, scraping the house and downing our power lines - Mike was there, three times I damaged

roofs with large equipment - Mike was there for friendly repairs and no admonishment.

There are more stories:

The time he used his huge fork lift to raise children high in the sky as a benefit for RHS - city quickly stopped the fun to the dismay of the line of children waiting.

Hanging banners we needed reach a tether high in the outer branches of a tree - a straight ladder was available but nothing to lean it against. Mike stood the ladder up straight, said "hold this", I did, he scrambled to the top, did what needed to be done, and returned safely to terra firma.

M. S. Clark Roofing: We gained a greater appreciation for the value of professional tractor and forklift work Mike Clark has voluntarily provided for RHS over the years. Time was short as artifacts were needed for the Quarry Park Adventures dedication. Rather than bearing on Mike another time, equipment was rented



by RHS members to move the artifacts. We found that cost of the equipment rental alone was far more than Mike's usual compensation that has ranged from a "Thank You" to a case of Corona.

-Gene Johnson

It was about 4 pm, the day before our first wedding in the restored chapel. The shingles could not be painted fast enough to go on the roof. Mike could see we needed the crane for more hours than it was scheduled for in Rocklin.

"I'll pay for a round of golf if you'll come back at six," Mike shouted.

"I've got to be in Citrus Heights at six," the crane operator hollered back.

So, the painters kept painting and Mike & Dawn kept putting shingles on the steeple as it slowly rose above their reach to its rooftop position, high above the flurry below.

Mike and Dawn didn't stop working even then. They wanted Amy & James, the bride and groom, to be able to have the photos of the chapel with the steeple looking fully shingled, not half shingled.

Unbeknown to the rest of us, Dawn & Mike returned to the chapel that night. They finished placing the shingles on the front of the steeple after dark. Look at the photos of that first wedding in the restored chapel. Not a shingle is missing from the front view.

Even the subtle design that the original shingles formed on the front of the steeple is perfect!



-Ronna Davis

## The Annual Potluck— finally on again!

RHS's annual potluck, on September 19th, was once again back on after two years of postponements. The first gathering since the outdoor Spring Fling in April, about 60 members dined on fine dishes, including a Spanish tortilla, following the recipe on display during the museum's Spanish Heritage exhibit, prepared by Ed Corral. Organized by Susan Brooking and Gay Morgan, the evening was enjoyed by all. Click on the link below to see more photos of the event (along with bonus photos of Old St. Mary's and the firehouse). Photos are provided by photographer Holly Clark of Clark's Corner. Link: [Potluck Photos](#)

Whatever Mike was involved in, he was focused with every cell in his body! From running over to the chapel when the alarm went off, in sock feet, cigar in one hand and beer bottle in the other, to choosing a perfect granite stone from his collection for the plaque at the library, he was totally involved.

I remember meeting with him to pick out that stone for the library thinking it would be an involved project to get it over to the Ruhkala's for engraving.

Mike pointed out the best one and the next thing I knew he was attaching chains, lifting it over a fence onto a truck and took off to haul it to the business for completing.

My favorite picture of him is one where he's setting in a suit on a stool at the back of the chapel with a rifle casually cradled in his arms. I've had couples ask if he was available for hire! Mike's spirit will always be part of Old St. Mary's Chapel.

-Nancy Lohse



# On Third and Emerson, the Heart of the Church was its Pastors

**Note: This is Part Three of a four-part history of the Community Covenant Church. Once finished, the entire story will be available on our website.**

By Doug Osella

## On Third and Emerson, The Heart of the Church Was Its Pastors

Rev. William Mays	1941-1945
Rev. Worth Hodgkin	1945-1950
Rev. Francis Foss	1950-1954
Rev. Richard Cornelius	1955-1958
Rev. J. Edward Peterson	1959-1963

### Rev. Hodgkin, A Man of the Moment

Rev. Worth Hodgkin followed Bill Mays as a pastor of the Pilgrim Church on Third and Emerson in 1945, as an ordained pastor in the Pilgrim Holiness Church. Pastor Hodgkin proved to be a guiding star for the church moving forward. Under his leadership, the church incorporated in 1946 with a name change from Rocklin Pilgrim Church to Rocklin Community Church. The primary responsibility of the church was worship.

Along with that responsibility, the church on Third and Emerson had always had a special love and concern for the children of Rocklin. Rev Hodgkin encouraged this emphasis. In the 40s and 50s, Sunday school preceded church worship on Sunday mornings and had a vitality of its own with singing, classroom lessons, and contests.

Gene Johnson, a long time member of the Rocklin Historical Society, remembers studying hard, learning memory verses for a Sunday School contest to win a "much needed basketball." He also remembers his Sunday School classes meeting in an old bus.

### In Need of Sunday School Rooms

Averaging between 90 and 100 students per month and up to 200 on special Sundays such as Easter, more Sunday school space was needed. In 1947 it was decided to dig out by hand a basement under the church. A large volume of dirt had to be extracted, and Gene Johnson remembers his father loaning their 1947 John Deere, Model H tractor (a Johnny Popper) to help with the job. When pulling a skiff of dirt from under the church, the driver tipped the tractor over, breaking the throttle arm and bending the steer-

ing mechanism. The amazing outcome of this story, over the decades, is that the tractor not only survived the accident but is running great today and looking brand new with its new paint job.

In 1950 Pastor Hodgkin presented the congregation with a proposition. He spoke at a church business meeting about the advantages of joining into fellowship with the Mission Covenant Church denomination (known today as The Evangelical Covenant Church of America). The congregation responded with a "yes" vote, 31-1, and a new era began. The church's name changed to Rocklin Community Covenant Church.

### Rocklin In the 1940s and 50s

The 40s and 50s found Rocklin drifting along like a ship without a rudder. Like sedges, the town still had edges. On Highway 40 through town, the north and south ends were marked by city limit signs: ROCKLIN CITY LIMIT...POP 1300...ELEV 250 feet. Going east on Granite Street (Rocklin Rd.) toward the rising sun, the Ernie Willard place was on the "in-skirts" of town. The city dump (old Delano Quarry) was on the "outskirts"; both landmarks were on the right side of the road.

The west edge of town was Fifth Street. Granite Street, Nevada Street, B and C Streets all ended at Fifth Street, a fairly straight line as an edge. Kids on bikes knew how to continue westward beyond Fifth Street at the end of Granite Street by unlatching the gate and trespassing onto the Johnson property. Only it wasn't trespassing because Ray and Florence Johnson, the kind owners of the property, didn't mind kids on their land as long as they shut the gate behind them. "Please shut the gate" was all they asked.



Johnson's tractor today

In summer, the gate opened to a sunbaked field of tarweed, turkey mullein, and other dry weeds and grasses with oak trees grouped in the distance along the creek. In the heat of the sun, the bikers rode fast, passing through ground squirrel villages to reach the swimming hole on Antelope Creek, which they called "Johnson's Creek."



Stopping by for a swim at Johnson's Creek on their way up Topaz Hill

After a cool dip, the swimmers could very well put back on their Keds, ditch their bikes, and cross the creek to climb a hill. The hill straight ahead and to the left (which I call Topaz Hill) seemed to be the hill of choice for climbing rather than the taller one to the right (Nob Hill).

Crossing the creek, the hikers trudged through the woods, veering left. At the top of "Topaz Hill," the climbers got an eyeful of a big brown world all around with thousands of roundish, brown rocks strewn across the landscape. Someone said the rocks arrived in a mud flow from an ancient volcano high in the Sierras.

Clumps of oaks here and there looked inviting for shade. No one imagined that one day streets, homes, a school, and a church would exist at this unbearably hot place. Descending the hill back to the bikes, not one kid thought that one day soon the city limits would be that far out.

### A Town Needing a Boost

Rocklin stood like a rock for 100 years. In the 1940s and 50s, however, the SP train no longer stopped in town, but rumbled through as if there was no town. Disheartened citizens recalled the glory days of the Southern Pacific Roundhouse. The old passenger depot had been torn down sometime in the 1930s. Only one quarry remained in operation from a once

(See CHURCH, pg. 9)



(CHURCH, con't from pg. 8)

flourishing granite industry, and the city still generated most of its revenue from writing traffic tickets.

In 1959 the Woodside development had been approved, and there were rumors that Sierra College would be moving to Rocklin, but that wasn't enough encouragement for many citizens. It is said that it's better to wear out than rust out. Rocklin was rusting out like old quarry cables.

### A Beautiful Place to Live

Then one day in May, 1960, Rocklin read momentous headlines in the Roseville-Press Tribune:



A 12,000 acre site had been purchased by the Sunset International Petroleum Corporation for a future city to include industrial parks, shopping centers, schools, and even a proposed lake.

The new city, located west of town on the old Whitney Estate, would be called Sunset City. Here at Rocklin's doorstep landed instant growth and a future. But many citizens were wary. Would their town be swallowed up by a megalopolis?

Sales brochures promised a modern community: large lots in tranquil surroundings with winding streets. Distinctive, architecturally designed homes would provide year-round comfort with refrigerated air-conditioning. Unsightly "forests of utility poles and roof-top antennas" would be nonexistent; all electric wires would come into the homes underground. The heart of community recrea-

tion would be a championship, 18-hole golf course with its spacious country club, offering an olympic-size swimming pool and tournament courts for tennis. The old railroad and quarry town with its long-lasting utility poles, roof-top antennas, electric fans, and swamp coolers started to develop a complex.

### Meanwhile Back on Third and Emerson

In 1960, Rocklin Community Covenant Church installed J. Edward Peterson as pastor. He proved to be a leader of transition for the church. The 1895 church building, once called "An ornament to Rocklin", was now 70 years old and in need of expensive repairs. Leland Peterson, chairman of the church at the time, recalls that the church building had been condemned by the city because it was considered unsafe. One issue: Sunday school kids in the basement had to exit by the heater, and the door opened inward. There were other issues as well. In March, 1960, the church voted to look into available property in town that would be suitable for a new church.

Over the next several months, two properties were seriously considered for purchase: a site at the corner of Lost Avenue and Ruhkala Road, belonging to the Ruhkala family, and a 4.8 acre site located in the area of 5th Street and Faron Street belonging to the Ray Johnson family.

Then in November, 1960, a meeting with the California Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, resulted in the decision to pursue property in the new Sunset City development on the hill (Topaz Hill). The decision would prove to be a leap of faith for the congregation.

*To be continued...*



## Historic Front Street

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 10 a.m. each 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 WITH JIM CARLSON AT 916-624-0682 BY THE WEDNESDAY PRIOR TO THE EVENT.**

**GOLFERS, HACKERS  
AND DUFFERS**

**Lend Me Your Ears:**

We have homes and lots on the fairways at Sunset City. Trade up from your present home.

**COUNTRY CLUB HOMES**

Cor. Whitney & Argonaut  
Sunset City

Phone 112 - 624-2932

## A view from Dutch Brothers Coffee Shop

Gene Johnson

It could have been just another rectangular box, but it is an architectural gem, located at the corner of Sunset Blvd. and 3rd Street. Recently the building was occupied by an insurance company, however, its heritage dates to circa 1960 when it was built as the Information Center and Post Office for Sunset/Whitney Ranch California.

Sunset, California, a residential community, was a project of Sunset Oil Company built on 12 thousand of acres of Whitney Ranch lands with the golf course as the central feature. The course Clubhouse and

the Welcome Center share similar architecture and, until recently, the main entries of both buildings was through doors saved from the historic, but demolished, Whitney mansion. Sunset California was ultimately annexed by the City of Rocklin. Sunset golf course went thru a number of trials and name changes, finally, no longer viable as a course, it has gained a new life as Rocklin's Sunset Whitney Recreation Area. Meanwhile (8/2022) the welcome center invites a new tenant and the clubhouse stands in hopeful disrepair as a comprehensive master plan is developed for the area.

## rip/ rap

By Gay Morgan

### BACK TO SCHOOL

It happens every year about this time. The kids go back to Elementary School, it used to be on the day after Labor Day, but it was earlier this year. Summer isn't gone yet (it is still hot) but some of the students want to wear their new jackets anyway. They are glad to see their friends, and they wonder what the new teacher will be like.

Teachers wonder what the new year will be like, will the class be fun to teach? Will the other teachers like me? Will I like teaching?

It was my very first day of teaching at this brand new "state of the art" school in Rocklin. It was September 1952, seventy years ago! I put on my blue dress for good luck, took a deep breath and marched in.

There was a teacher shortage at the time, so The Rocklin School Board and Principal Glenn D. Smith allowed me to start teaching on a Provisional Credential as long as I continued my college education on nights and summers. I did as they asked and 11 years and one daughter and one son later, I graduated.

That first class was a combination first and second grade—it wasn't easy, but we all made it. There were 37 more years of teaching, and I loved them all. Rocklin kids were the best!

### THE NEW SCHOOL ON MYERS STREET

For many years, the elementary school in Rocklin was located between the railroad tracks and Highway 40. As you can imagine there was somewhat of a noise problem there. Lessons sometimes had to pause until the train went by; some of you may remember, I do. The



**The new, state of the art Rocklin Elementary School, opened in 1952**

town was excited to have a new elementary school with all the current new innovations.

The new building was in a residential area far from traffic sounds. It opened in September of 1952. The plan was to have one room for each grade. But on the opening day they found there were more students than they had planned for. There were too many first and second graders. They solved the problem by creating a new class, a combination first and second grade.

Everything was brand new, bright, colorful chairs and desks, a sink, and a drinking fountain, lots of built-in storage and closets, a heating unit and oops! --No air conditioning!!! Nevertheless, all the staff and students were proud to be a part of this.

Mr. Basque, the first custodian, kept everything spotless. Each classroom had an outdoor area, sort of a patio which could be used for various projects and there was space to plant growing things. Mr. Basque saw to it that each room had lovely flowers which everyone appreciated

until Mr. B. spread turkey manure on the plants. As a result, the windows and doors were closed for quite a while each year. But the flowers were beautiful.

There was a big multi-purpose room which at times was a basketball court, band practice room, rainy day p.e. place, community room, cafeteria etc. Minnie Frkovich was the head cook in the kitchen staffed by other local ladies. Minnie took her responsibilities very seriously. She cruised through the lunch tables asking if you liked the food, why didn't you eat it all, would you like some more? Great food prepared with loving care, a unique experience.

Grandfatherly Mr. Sprague was Rocklin's first school bus driver. He drove a funny little bus and he treated the kids as if they were his grand kids. He loved to chat with whichever teacher was on bus duty so we knew local news before it ever got in the paper.

I've said it before, Rocklin was a lot like Mayberry. Can you understand why I think so?

By Gloria Beverage

*"This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave."*

Throughout this nation's history, men and women have fought for our freedom, risking their lives in the process. Without the service of our veterans, we would not have the freedoms we have today.

The Rocklin Historical Society is proud to present this exhibit in honor of the veterans of the armed forces and those killed in the country's wars.

Featured in the display cases are photos and memorabilia from the museum archives as well as items provided by residents who served and, in some cases, by their families.



### Honoring our Veterans

A new exhibit that highlights the bravery of local residents who served in conflicts spanning more than 60 years from the First World War to Vietnam.

Open now through December 18

The exhibit focuses primarily on the role of Rocklin men and women in four wars: World War I (The Great War); World War II and the role of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team; Korea (The Forgotten War); and Vietnam.

We're also honoring the next generation with a photo of a Loomis resident who is currently deployed in Jordan.

To enhance your exploration of this exhibit, a summary of each of the global conflicts (dates, what countries were involved, impact on world) is featured on top of each display case.

Thank you for visiting our museum and

checking out our tribute to veterans.

And the next time you meet a veteran, be sure to thank them for their service to our country.



## Bringing Whitney chairs back to life

By Gloria Beverage

A fundraising campaign has been launched to cover the cost of restoring seven chairs believed to have graced the dining room at J. Parker Whitney's Spring Valley Ranch.

The goal is to raise \$5,000, which will cover the cost of gently cleaning, regluing and refurbishing the seven chairs as well as reupholstering the seats. Fabric that closely resembles the original chair seats has been selected.

To date, more than \$1,500 has been raised. Donations can be made through a GoFundMe account titled [Whitney Chair Restoration Project](#), via PayPal on the Rocklin History Society website, or mailed to the Rocklin History Museum, P.O. Box 1, Rocklin, CA 95677.

When finished, the chairs will replace the ones currently used in the parlor at the Rocklin History Museum.

In April of 2020, Sean Morales, a Rocklin History Society supporter, alerted David Baker about an ad on Craigslist for an antique table and seven dining room chairs.

Baker compared photos of the furniture with the pieces pictured in an 1889 photo of the Oak's dining room and concluded the chairs were authentic. While the table offered for sale did not match the one pictured in the historic photos, Baker said, the decision was made to purchase it along with the chairs.

The acquisition was made possible through the generosity of Gary and Jean Day, he added.

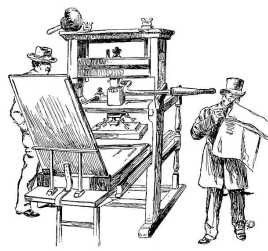
In early May, Baker, Gene Johnson and Hank Lohse picked up the furniture from Tara Atkinson of Newcastle, whose said her family had used them for many years. She added that her mother had purchased the furniture from an individual who had acquired them at estate auction at Spring Valley Ranch.

The dining room table is currently being used with other antique chairs in the Old Firehouse Hose Company replica building on Front Street.



The seven chairs were badly in need of some TLC, but the rich fabric chosen and professional refurbishing will restore them back to their golden days of the 1880s.

By Charlene Rhodes



Rocklin would have read in the Placer Herald, January 14, 1893, a very early version of social media.

Before telephones, radio, television and the internet, everyone received their news from daily newspapers. To the right is what the citizens of



## Mass Media ....1890s style

**ROCKLIN.**

Representative.

Ira P. Allen has been placing in about fifteen hundred feet of track to connect his quarry with the main switch leading to Copp & Water's.

Oscar Wickman and Miss Hilda Isaacson were united in marriage at Sacramento last Saturday. On their return a reception was given by their many friends in this city.

L. L. Delano has furnished a fine specimen of polished granite for the Placer County exhibit at the Mechanic's Fair in San Francisco. It was shipped there last Friday.

There is a strong probability of a half-mile race track being built in Rocklin at a very early date. At any rate, it is now being earnestly considered by a few enterprising citizens.

Granite Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons installed the newly elected officers on Saturday evening last. Past Master Kinkade, of Auburn, took charge of the formal ceremonies and installed the following officers: I. L. Delano, Master; Wm. Huff, Senior Warden; T. Coleman, Junior Warden; John Sweeney Secretary; Lewis Curl, Treasurer; James P. Burchard, Senior Deacon; A. C. Thyle, Junior Deacon; S. N. Whalon and J. W. Armsden, Stewards; Paul Vivaldo, Tyler.

Mr. and Mrs. Isador Levison returned from the Santa Cruz mountains on Sunday last, where Mr. Levison has been spending several months for his health. His health had been greatly impaired for a long time, finally resulting in a very severe case of nervous prostration, from which, at one time, it was expected that he would not recover. Mr. Levison now says that he has not felt better in over twenty-five years.

Charles and Miss Amelia Robles met with a very serious accident while driving on Front street late Saturday afternoon, from the effects of which they have been confined in bed in a very serious condition.



## Celebrating library history

By Gloria Beverage

Friends of the Rocklin Library will celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Tuesday, Nov. 1 from 3 to 5 p.m. in the Community Room of the Library, 4890 Granite Dr.

Residents are invited to participate in the festivities, which include desserts and a display of historic photos. Guests will also be encouraged to search for Golden Tickets that will be hidden throughout the library. Ticket holders can claim a free book from the bookstore.

The celebration marks the efforts of the charter members of the Friends to raise money and awareness of the need for a home for the Rocklin branch of the Placer County Library.

Rocklin has had a library since the Women's Improvement Club established a small lending library in a home on Second Street in the 1930s.

In 1943, the Rocklin branch of the Placer County Library was set up on the first floor of the granite building (now City Hall annex) on Rocklin Road. The facility was later moved across the street to a former church building.

When that location began bursting at the seams, an energetic group of residents established a California 501c(3) non-profit corpora-



**The founding members of the Friends of the Rocklin Library**

tion on Nov. 8, 1982 to raise funds and lobby for the creation of a larger home for the library. The Original 13 Friends included: Kay Baugh, Pat Binley, Stasia Carr, Louise Cullen, Mickey Davies, Sandra Davies, Jean Greene, Patty Mattfeld, Irene Rohde, Peggy Ruhkala, Mary Emily Smith, Pat Steinhauer, and Lin Sultzer.

Three years later, their efforts paid off with the opening of a new library building on Fifth Street (now the Rocklin Parks and Rec office) in Johnson-Springview Park.

In 2011, the library was relocated to the two story building at the corner of Rocklin Road and Granite Drive.

Since its inception, members of the Friends have focused on raising funds to bolster the library's collection as well as support local programs.

## New little free library has Whitney theme

The new Little Free Library in Night Ridge Park pays homage to J. Parker Whitney's dream of developing a citrus colony in Placer County.

The library was built by members of the Penguin Patrol of Rocklin Boy Scout Troop 435. The tribute to Placer County's agricultural history was painted by Rocklin High School graduate Gia Fosson.

Night Ridge Park's LFL is one of eight curated by members of the Rocklin Friends of the Library in cooperation with local residents.



## Hot Chili, Cool Cars a success due to volunteers



**David Baker, Shirley Espley, and RoyceAnn Burks welcome visitors at Hot Chili, Cool Cars**

Historic Front Street served as the perfect backdrop for the new Hot Chili, Cool Cars cruise, held Friday evening prior to the main event. Started as a way to celebrate during the pandemic, the event is so popular it has become a new tradition for the city.

Hot Chili and Cool Cars was a success once again. The booth was informative and interesting. Ronna Davis did a great job setting up the table showcasing Old St. Mary's Chapel, and garnered a lot of interest from future wedding couples.

Thanks to Royce Ann Burks and Shirley Espley for organizing the activity. "Just wanted to thank everyone who participated in the event," they said. "There was a great turnout and we got several new members in the process. Thanks again for volunteering your time."



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