

## President's Message



Gloria Beverage

What a celebration! Thank you, one and all, for participating in our second annual Heritage Street Faire on May 2 on Front Street.

We owe a huge round of applause to the volunteers who devoted the last nine months to planning this event. They spent countless hours making phone calls, attending meetings and sending emails as well as soliciting sponsors and media support. On the morning of the event, this "tireless" group of volunteers descended on Front Street to set up booths and displays, then worked non-stop throughout the day to ensure our "guests" enjoyed the day.

Kudos to the dancers and musicians who performed on the main stage and inside Old St. Mary's. What a delight to be exposed to the music (and dances) of cultures from throughout the world.

And thanks to the many non-profit organizations that participated, sharing information on their services.

In keeping with our vision of creating a free, family-friendly event, some of the most popular booths offered demonstrations of blacksmithing, stone sculpting and granite splitting. Others encouraged visitors to try hands-on activities,

[\(See PRESIDENT, pg. 2\)](#)

## Susan Brooking: 2026 Ruhkala Pioneer Award Recipient

Since joining the Rocklin Historical Society in 2021, Susan Brooking has become an essential part of preserving and sharing the city's rich history. What began as simple curiosity quickly grew into a deep commitment to storytelling, education, and community engagement. This year, that dedication is recognized with the

Ruhkala Pioneer Award.

RHS president Gloria Beverage recalls that Susan often joked she was "dragged, kicking and screaming" to Rocklin in 2001. But everything changed once she joined the volunteer crew transforming a historic

[\(See RUHKALA, pg. 2\)](#)

# Quarry Quarterly

ROCKLIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

Visit our website:



Our History Our Heritage Our Community

May, 2026

## Rocklin Heritage Street Faire Brings History and Global Culture to Front Street



Photo: Lynnda Fair

Children from many of the cultures that helped shape Rocklin gathered at the DAR booth to "stuff a bear for a child in need," a hands-on activity that blended cultural pride with a simple act of kindness. [See story and more pictures on pages 6-8.](#)



Rocklin's famous historical figure, Joel Parker Whitney, paid a visit to congratulate Susan Brooking for her Pioneer Award at the Rocklin City Council meeting on April 27. Here, Joel Parker Whitney is also known as Smokey Bassett



# A legacy of giving via a handcrafted quilt

By Susan Brooking

Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Jim Carlson, the Rocklin Historical Society is proud to present a unique “Double Irish Chain” quilt for raffle. This red, white and blue masterpiece not only showcases exquisite craftsmanship, but also perfectly captures the spirit of America 250 anniversary celebrations. Proceeds from this raffle continue our mission to preserve history, directly funding updated display cases for the museum’s ever-growing collection.

This special quilt carries a rich history that spans a quarter-century. Its journey began in 2000 in Paradise, California, where the beautifully pieced quilt top was created by Rosalie Squibb. Following Rosalie’s passing, her dear friend Pat Wallila spent years completing the intricate hand-quilting, finishing the work in 2005.

The quilt was originally donated in Rosalie’s name to a church raffle in Paradise long before the devastating Camp Fire. The lucky winner at that time was Eva Gebel, the mother-in-law of society member Carol Gebel. In 2012 when the Rocklin Historical Society was raising funds to build a replica of the 1893 Fire House, Eva donated the quilt to Skip and Carol Gebel for the cause. Dr. Jim Carlson won the raffle that year and has cared for the quilt ever since.

Now the story has come full circle. Dr. Carlson has donated this heirloom back to the Society to once again support the preservation of local history. It stands as a testament to the community’s enduring commitment to the Rocklin Historical Society and its museum.



## Raffle Details & Viewing

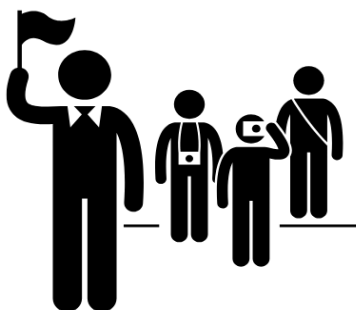
The quilt will make its official debut at the Rocklin Heritage Street Faire on May 2nd.

Following the Faire visitors can view the quilt at the Rocklin History Museum, open Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$1 each — 6 for \$5 — 13 for \$10

The drawing will take place during the RHS Holiday Party on Monday evening, December 14th. The winner does not need to be present to win.

# Walk through Rocklin’s History



The Rocklin Historical Society is pleased to announce the return of our **Historic Front Street Walking Tours**, led by docent **John Taylor**.

The schedule is still in the works, so look for dates and details in a future Historical Society Update!

## In Loving Memory

By Gloria Beverage

Longtime Rocklin Historical Society member and local business owner Karen Lokey died Feb. 3, 2026, leaving behind a legacy defined by hard work, generosity, and a deep commitment to her community.

Karen's professional life began shortly after her 1963 graduation from high school, when she became the bookkeeper for Hall's Clothing Store in Gilroy—a position she held for 16 years. After marrying Roger Lokey in 1964, she joined Wells Fargo Bank while Roger pursued a business administration degree at San Jose State University.

Roger's dream of becoming an airline pilot led him to join the U.S. Air Force, and the couple relocated to Texas, where he trained to fly B52s. Throughout Roger's Air Force career—including his combat missions in Vietnam—Karen worked full time, earned a degree in accounting, and later completed a master's degree in business administration from Abilene Christian University in 1976. During those demanding years, she was also the primary caregiver for their three children.

After returning to California, Karen briefly worked for a global timeshare company before launching what would become her life's professional centerpiece: Lokey and Associates, which she owned and operated in

Rocklin from 1983 to 2024. "Karen had a natural ability to understand accounting," Roger recalled. "It was easy for her."

Her talents, however, extended far beyond numbers. Karen poured her energy into the Rocklin Historical Society, where she became a beloved and dependable presence.

Susan Brooking remembers meeting Karen during the earliest days of the Rocklin History Museum. "As two of the first to venture from the 'other side of the hill' to the historic part of town, we spent many shifts together uncovering a trail of coincidences," Susan said. "We realized we had both moved from the South Bay Area—living only a mile apart there, just as we did here. Whether we were discussing family history or local landmarks, our shared love for our town's stories was the heart of our friendship. She was a lovely person—loyal, generous, thoughtful—and her kind spirit will be missed."

Ronna Davis shared similar memories of Karen's willingness to help wherever needed. "Thinking of Karen is to remember her working in so many ways to make life better for others," she said. "She was our treasurer for several years, and I had the pleasure of working with her in more kinds of jobs than I could list."

Together, they cleaned hand tools in the Capitol Quarry when RHS first gained access, decorated the museum and later the Johnson-Springview Community Room for



**Karen Lokey**  
June 24, 1945 – Feb. 3, 2026

Christmas, and worked more than 20 bridal shows—loading displays before dawn and returning late in the evening. They set up refreshments for countless history lectures and, most recently, served as greeters for RHS dinners. "To remember Karen," Ronna said, "is to remember a woman who always pitched in and helped get the job done. She lived her faith daily in a giving, unselfish way."

Karen will be remembered for her kindness, generosity of spirit, and the countless ways she strengthened the Rocklin community.



**Ken E. Yorde**  
May 3, 1939 – March 21, 2026

Ken Yorde, a longtime Rocklin Historical Society member and former mayor of Rocklin, died March 21 following a short illness in Roseville.

Born in Wisconsin, Ken lived on the family farm until he joined the U.S. Air Force in 1957. Shortly after leaving the

service in 1962, he married his longtime sweetheart, Francine, and went to work for Raytheon supporting radar sites through the world, including six years in Italy and a year in Japan.

The Yordes settled in Rocklin around 1975 when Ken accepted a job at McClellan Air Force Base. During those years, they traveled extensively throughout Europe and the U.S.

He served on the Rocklin City Council from 1993 to 2006, including two terms as mayor. While on the city council, he was instrumental in bringing economic development to the city while carefully preserving a balance between land uses, including commercial and residential development and open space conservation. He supported the creation of an urban forest and oak tree preservation ordinance.

According to the resolution presented by the Placer County Board of Supervisors at the time of his retirement in 2007, "Ken's knowledge about regional flood control, infrastructure, environmental issues and

technology proved invaluable to the development of the City of Rocklin and the general regional area surrounding Rocklin."

Ken was an active member of the South Placer Rotary Club and the American Legion as well as a strong supporter of the Rocklin Historical Society. He helped save Old St. Mary's Chapel and supported the conversion of the Moon House into a Rocklin History Museum.

He and Francine, a retired librarian, were also active supporters of the Rocklin Friends of the Library – often helping move books for the non-profit's surplus book sales. In 2008, Ken was presented with the Ruhkala Pioneer Award for his years of service to the community. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Francine; a son and daughter-in-law, Phil and Christine Yorde; grandchildren Brittany and John Mayard and Cameron and Carly Yorde; and great-grandson "Will" Maynard.

# Exciting Presentation Coming in June!

The Rocklin Historical Society's Speaker Series is excited to announce historian **Phil Sexton** will present *Return to Gold Mountain*, an engaging look at the Chinese workers who helped build the Transcontinental Railroad and shaped the history of our region, **Monday, June 8 at 6:30 p.m.** at **Old St. Mary's Chapel**.

Sexton has lived in the Sierra foothills since 1985, and his long familiarity with Placer County and Donner Pass gives his presentations a grounded, local perspective. His talk will explore the construction of the railroad with a particular focus on the thousands of Chinese laborers whose skill, endurance, and cultural traditions left a lasting imprint on the American West.

Although the subject is serious, Sexton describes his approach as "generally positive and light-hearted," aiming to make complex history accessible without diminishing its weight. He is careful to acknowledge his own position as a non-Chinese historian. "I'm very upfront about not speaking on behalf of the Chinese people," he says. "What I can do is speak to the documented history—what we know from contemporary accounts, photographs, and the work of scholars who have dedicated their lives to this subject." Many of those scholars, he notes, are Chinese colleagues and friends who have shaped his understanding of the cultural and historical context.

The presentation will highlight not only the monumental labor of building the railroad—tunneling through granite, carving ledges into cliffs, and surviving brutal Sierra winters—but also the everyday lives of Chinese workers. Sexton plans to touch on cultural practices, foodways, community structures, and the resilience that allowed these immigrants to build new lives despite widespread discrimination. He will also address the forced removal of Chinese communities from towns across Placer County in the early 1870s, grounding his discussion in documented evidence and contemporary accounts.

Sexton brings in elements of popular culture as well, contrasting Hollywood portrayals of the railroad with the historical record. He notes that Chinese workers were often erased from early film and television depictions, and he highlights the growing movement—especially leading up to the 150th anniversary of the railroad's completion in 2019—to restore their rightful place in the national narrative.

Mythology surrounding the railroad also finds its way



## About the Presenter

Phil Sexton is an historian and consultant for the 1882 Foundation in Washington DC. He is the former Deputy Director and Director of Programs for the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. Prior to that, he was the Interpretive Services Program Manager for Tahoe National Forest. Phil has explored and studied the



A north-northwest view at Donner Pass from Alfred Hart's 1860s photo, looking toward Mt. King—now part of Donner Ski Ranch. The road centered in the image is the Dutch Flat–Donner Lake Wagon Road, built by Charles Crocker's company in 1862 as a toll road and early access route for railroad construction. The buildings at left are work-camp structures that today form part of the National Historic Landmark on Tahoe National Forest.

into the program. "There's a lot of mythology connected with these events," Sexton says. "Some of it is charming, some of it is frustrating, and all of it is worth talking about." He welcomes questions and encourages audiences to think critically about how stories evolve and how historical memory is shaped.

*Return to Gold Mountain* promises to be both informative and engaging—a chance to revisit a familiar chapter of Western history with fresh insight and a deeper appreciation for the people who built it.

### What is the 1882 Foundation?

The **1882 Foundation** is a Washington, D.C.–based nonprofit that promotes public understanding of the Chinese Exclusion Laws of 1882 and their lasting impact on Chinese and Asian American communities. Its work includes preserving oral histories, protecting historic sites, developing teacher resources, and supporting collaboration among museums, scholars, and community groups. The foundation also leads cultural and public-history programs, hosts a national symposium, and advances initiatives that highlight the contributions and experiences of Chinese and Asian Americans in shaping the United States.

history of Placer County and Donner Pass since he moved to this area more than 40 years ago. These days Phil spends a lot of his time exploring the history and stories of the thousands of Chinese who first came here during the Gold Rush and left a lasting legacy that deserves to be better known and understood.

# Rocklin Heritage Street Faire Brings History and Global Culture to Front Street

Historic Front Street came alive on Saturday, May 2, as the Rocklin Heritage Street Faire welcomed families for a day celebrating the city's past and its vibrant cultural present. The free, community-centered event—hosted by the Rocklin Historical Society and the International Dance Arts Collective—ran from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and drew visitors with hands-on history, international dance, music, and activities for all ages.

The faire highlighted the industries that built early Rocklin—granite quarries, railroads, farms, and ranches—with live demonstrations by stone carver Steve Bouska of Old World Stone Design, blacksmith Troy Simester of Foresthill, and granite-splitting by Ken Clark of Ruhkala Monument. Caricature artist Kii added to the day's creative energy.

Cultural booths representing both pre-

sent and past honored the immigrant communities who helped build those pillars of Rocklin's history—Finnish quarrymen and their families, Chinese railroad workers, and Japanese and Spanish agricultural families—each offering a glimpse into the people whose labor and traditions shaped Rocklin's growth. A vintage Rocklin Police cruiser, the Fire Department's 1936 Van Pelt engine, and the Jubilee Train, a steam-engine replica, added to the fun.

A major centerpiece of the day was the lineup of international folk dances and musical performances representing cultures from around the world and those that help weave Rocklin's cultural fabric. Performances featured Japanese, Chinese, Peruvian/Spanish-influenced, and Scandinavian/Finnish traditions. Additional groups showcased Irish, Aztec/Indigenous, Southern Indian, Polynesian, African, and

American styles, with many inviting audience participation and adding to the festive atmosphere.

Families also enjoyed children's activities, nonprofit booths, and food trucks, creating a relaxed, welcoming environment that blended Rocklin's heritage with its modern community. Among the nonprofits were the Tuskegee Airmen, Friends of the Placer County Library, the Placer County bookmobile, and Placer County Sikhs. Volunteers and local sponsors helped bring the event to life, keeping everything running smoothly through the quiet, essential behind-the-scenes work that makes a community event possible.

Now in its second year, the Rocklin Heritage Street Faire continues to grow, inviting residents to honor Rocklin's history and to share in the dancing and music that unite people across generations and cultures.



Kimberly Olker



Kimberly Olker



Ronna Davis

Three photos above: The opening ceremony began with a land dedication by Sierra Elementary student Sedona Gardea, a member of the Yaqui tribe, who shared a thoughtful acknowledgment of place. Standing with Pramil Shankar of the Rocklin Arts Commission, she reminded the audience: *"We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional homelands of the Nisenan, also known as the Southern Maidu people, in the Rocklin and Secret Ravine area. We recognize their deep and lasting connection to this land and offer our respect and gratitude as we gather here today."*

The Whitney High School Color Guard presented the colors, followed by Aubrie Johnson of the ADAC Band, whose performance of the national anthem set a warm and respectful tone for the celebration.



Ronna Davis



Charles Perrigo



Kimberly Olker



Kimberly Olker



Charles Perrigo



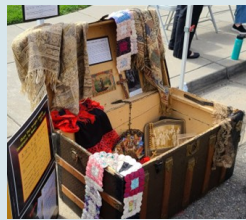
Scotlan Marroquin



Scotlan Marroquin



Daryl Stinchfield



Ronna Davis



Ronna Davis



Ronna Davis



Ronna Davis



Jeff Armstrong



Daryl Stinchfield



Daryl Stinchfield



Kimberly Olker



Daryl Stinchfield



Charles Perrigo



Charles Perrigo



Kimberly Olker

# My Date with AI

By James Carlson, D.C.

John H. Benson was a transcontinental traveler of the mid-1800s, an immigrant to the California territory. He kept a journal while traveling from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento. His entries—written during a journey by horseback and wagon train—end with his arrival at the Johnson Ranch near Wheatland. I had always wondered whether it was possible that he traveled near or through modern-day Rocklin.

While doing graduate studies at the University of Utah, my professor handed me a sheepskin diary of John H. Benson and asked me to transcribe it. It was overwhelming to hold this diary

in my hands. The task was arduous: spelling had not yet been standardized, and many of Benson's expressions were quaint or obscure.

What I would like to focus on is his likely route from Wheatland to the Sacramento Valley floor. Using Microsoft Copilot as my AI assistant, I learned that the routes out of Wheatland were no longer called "trails" but rather "roads." There were four principal roads. AI provided a history-based, modern-day route most often taken by travelers from the Johnson Ranch into Sacramento.

The modern landmarks and roads it identified included



## The Future Meets the 1800s

Highway 65 south from Wheatland, passing Lincoln, Thunder Valley Casino, and the Galleria Mall.

Following is the verbatim statement from Microsoft Copilot: "This is the street that passes closest to where you live in Rocklin, James."

# 700 Third Graders, One Historic Trip: Rocklin's Past in Action

By Nancy Lohse

Best known as the site of weddings and memorials, Old St. Mary's Chapel also hosts field trips for around 700 third graders every year. Our dedicated field trip volunteers guide them through the history of their hometown. They start their day climbing off the bus at Heritage Park, where Patsy Patison meets them at the firehouse to share stories of the way downtown Rocklin looked in the 1800s, including the one about the young boys who burned down the town in 1914.

From there, they go into the chapel to hear me tell them how third graders played a huge part in rescuing the building from demolition. Down the stairs and across the street, Diane Wade greets them to tell about Rocklin's railroad history and the importance of the roundhouse.

Back on the bus, they head to the museum where, after an introduction to the Moon-Fletcher House, Pat Woessner sends them on a treasure hunt for important Rocklin artifacts. She assists by giving hints and telling stories. Linda Wampler shows them the laundry room and introduces them to how hard it was to wash clothes back in the day, along with showing them the outside quarry equipment. Susan Brooking leads them into the



basement and shares the history of the quarries. Gayle Goldsmith is our "Jill of all trades," who can lead students at the roundhouse or at the museum, helping out wherever needed.

After lunch at Quarry Park, students are back on the bus to head to Huff Springs, the Whitney Pyramid, or back to school.

But the learning doesn't stop there. Back in the classroom, they write essays about their adventure. Our volunteers visit each class and hand out blue ribbons to a winner in each class. They also hand out "cootie catchers" to all the students to take

home and quiz their families on Rocklin's impressive history.

Included in all of this is the traditional third-grade coin drive. The first one was in 2004 to help save Old St. Mary's. Twenty-two years later, the one this year is to help restore the original Capitol Quarry office building and move it to Heritage Park next to the firehouse.

It's a wonderful cycle—students learning from the past while helping preserve it for the next generation. Old St. Mary's Chapel continues to shine as a place where Rocklin's history is not only remembered, but lived.

## Rocklin's Granite Legacy: A Story of Stone, Community, and the Ruhkala Family

By Bonnie Ruhkala Neumann  
And RoyceAnn Ruhkala Burk

For more than 150 years, the granite beneath Rocklin has shaped the city's identity, economy, and culture. The story begins not with gold, but with the men who came seeking it. Many fortune seekers of the 1850s—especially from Ireland and Italy—found no riches in the rivers but recognized the value of the massive granite outcroppings across Rocklin, Loomis, and Penryn. To those familiar with European quarries, the stone's quality was unmistakable.

Rocklin sits atop a granite pluton nearly 100 miles square. Its hard, fine-grained stone, flecked with black crystals, soon drew builders across Northern California. Transporting the heavy blocks was initially slow, relying on horse or ox-drawn carts to reach Sacramento or San Francisco.

The arrival of the Central Pacific Railroad in the mid-1860s transformed the industry. Quarries paid to install spur tracks directly into their pits, allowing efficient loading and shipment. The railroad expanded Rocklin's reach and cemented its reputation as a premier source of building stone. Remnants of those spur lines still run through backyards, quiet reminders of the city's industrial past.

As the industry grew, so did Rocklin's population. In the 1880s, a Finnish quarry owner wrote home describing opportunity and better living conditions. Finland faced political and economic hardship, and the letters sparked a wave of immigration so strong that Rocklin eventually became nearly 50

percent Finnish, a community that left a lasting cultural and economic imprint. Quarries multiplied across Rocklin. Some were small family operations; others supplied stone for major structures statewide. The Brigham & Hawes Quarry provided granite for the California State Capitol. The Delano Quarry, once 150 feet deep, later became the city dump. The Meyers Quarry near today's library served as a popular swimming hole in the 1930s and '40s, and the Quinn Quarry—now a pond with paddleboats—was another favorite spot for generations of children.



By the 1890s, many quarries used steam-powered derricks to lift 20- to 30-ton blocks. Some derricks were built from the masts of abandoned ships in San Francisco Bay; others still relied on horsepower. Quarrying was grueling and dangerous. Men worked long days drilling, blasting, and hauling stone. Accidents were common. One owner, Mr. Alexson, died after slipping from

his pit. Matt Ruhkala once fell into his quarry and remained unconscious for three days before returning to work.

Labor tensions also shaped the industry. In 1890, workers struck to reduce their day from ten hours to nine. A statewide strike in 1915 sought an eight-hour day and higher wages—\$3.75 for laborers and \$5.60 for stonemasons. The strike lasted nearly a year, and many workers left the trade.



When it ended in 1916, only three quarries reopened. Combined with the rise of concrete and terra cotta, the strike marked the beginning of the industry's decline.

Amid this history, the Ruhkala family stands out for perseverance and craftsmanship. Matt Ruhkala arrived from Finland in 1890 and learned the granite trade from the ground up. His first quarry operated near what is now the I-80 freeway by the Rocklin Cemetery. In 1905, he opened a second quarry at today's library

site, naming it the Union Granite Company. In 1919, he purchased another quarry and home on Ruhkala Road, operating it until his retirement in 1935.

Four of Matt's six sons later purchased the original Capital Quarry—now the Adventure Park site—and continued under the name Union Granite Company (Ruhkala Brothers). Their quarry became Rocklin's last operating quarry, remaining active until 2005. For nearly 60 years, it served as the final working link to an industry that had shaped the city's landscape and livelihood.

By the mid-20th century, most quarries had closed, filled with water, or been built over. Yet the legacy of the granite era endures—in the buildings constructed from Rocklin stone, in the families whose labor built the community, and in the stories passed down through generations. The quarries may be quiet now, but the history they carved into Rocklin remains unmistakably alive.



# The 1919 McGhee Nursery Scandal:

## *A Story of Love, Success, and Ultimate Betrayal (but who betrayed whom?)*

By Sharalee Cartier

The quiet stretch of highway between Rocklin and Loomis seemed an unlikely stage for scandal, yet in the autumn of 1919, the prosperous McGhee Nursery became the center of a drama that would grip Placer County. Behind the rows of young trees and the promise of a thriving business, a marriage was unraveling—one marked by secrets, accusations, and a breaking point no one saw coming.

### A Nursery Takes Root



Mae & Chauncey McGhee opened the McGhee Wholesale Nursery in 1916 between Rocklin and Loomis off the Lincoln Highway. The nursery grew trees for other nurseries and by 1919, was one of the largest nurseries in the state.

### The October Morning That Changed Everything

That same year in October 1919, Mae murdered her husband while he sat in his chair reading the newspaper with two gunshots to the back of the neck. She ran two miles to the nearest Justice of the Peace where she confessed to her crime. Two doctors along with the Justice arrived at the McGhee home to find Chauncey still alive. He told them that his wife shot him after they had a fight. She was held on murder charges in the Auburn women's cell under the courthouse stairs awaiting trial for a total of two months.

### Under the Courthouse Stairs

Matron Tillie Armstrong was assigned to care for Mae during her two months and suggested she obtain an attorney and recommended George W. Hamilton and K.D. Robinson who acted as

special prosecutor during the trial.

The trial began on December 8, 1919, with Mr. Hamilton presenting to the jury how Mrs. McGhee was a victim of “cruel and nauseating treatment at the hands of her husband.” He asserted that the couple were married in 1912 as the result of a matrimonial advertisement in a newspaper placed by Chauncey McGhee under the alias of C.W. Bronck/Brown in Lincoln in order to evade paying alimony to his first wife (Minnie Pierce McGhee) from whom was divorced and who bore him two children.

### Hard Years, Harder Accusations

Attorney Hamilton pictured the early life of the couple to the jurors living in a cabin, which they occupied with Japanese and Hindu workers during the days of adversity and asserted that the wife had struggled with her husband against poverty. When prosperity had been reached through the hard work of the couple, McGhee had turned on his wife and deliberately tried to rid himself of her when she became pregnant and accused the child of not being his.

Due to her physical weakness and Chauncey's refusal to pay for a surgery, Mae lost the child.

### Divorce, Reconciliation, and Renewed Turmoil

After the loss of her child, Mae filed for divorce in June 1919, on the grounds of cruelty. While awaiting for the divorce to become final, she went to live in a hotel in Sacramento where Chauncey would visit and beg her to return home. Mae agreed, with the understanding that they would adopt a child to raise. An application for a child was filled out in September but Chauncey refused to sign it. Mae finally realized he would never sign it and the arguments resumed.

Three nights before the tragedy, Chauncey denied Mae a bed to sleep in leaving Mae, according to her attorney,

“not in the right frame of mind due to lack of sleep.” On the day of his murder Mr. McGhee ordered his wife from their residence and “to never return and if she was not off the place by night, he would drag her off by her hair.” It was at this time that Mae went to a dresser drawer and retrieved a gun and shot her husband.

### Mae Takes the Stand

While on the witness stand Mae in her fight for liberty, told the jury she had been driven to murder when denied “the right of every woman to love and to motherhood” and a continual round of brutalities and denials had brought about insanity that led her to shoot her husband.

In her attorney's opening statement after the prosecution rested, Hamilton told the jury, “He [Chauncey] was her master and she followed him like a dog. He treated her like a dog.”

### The Verdict

After 20 minutes of deliberations, a jury of 12 men acquitted Mae Henrietta McGhee of not guilty. Mae exhausted and confused and expecting to be sentenced to life of imprisonment, shook hands with all the jurors and asked to be returned to her cell in order to rest. Her lawyer Hamilton and his wife, brought her home with them.

### Aftermath

Almost two years after the verdict, on October 4, 1921, Mae was awarded three quarters of the estate equaling approximately \$14,000 after expenses. Mae went on to live a quiet life out of the public eye marrying two more times. In 1968, she died in Roseville at the age of 71. Mae never gave birth to or adopted children.

After Chauncey's death, McGhee Nursery was taken over by George P. Roeding of Fresno, who was a silent partner at the time and renamed it California Nurseries (with its own rich California history) and remained until the mid-seventies.



**ABOUT THE TIME BOOK** When JoAnn Takemoto asked our archivist, Sharalee Cartier, to look for artifacts for her Japanese display at the Rocklin Heritage Street Faire, Sharalee found this time book from the McGhee Wholesale Nursery. It offered an unexpected look at early-20th-century employment and sparked the curiosity that led to the darker story described above.

Created by foreman Peter F. Hischer, the booklet covers the two months following the murder and documents worker salaries for the estate. It spans November 1919 to February 1920 and lists employees and the number of days worked. Names are grouped as Spaniards, Japanese, women, and children, with daily wages ranging from \$3.00 to \$5.00—likely for a 12-hour day. Many names remain familiar locally, including Basques, DeFuentes, Corral, Takemoto, and Yashikawa. The 1920 census shows fifty people living at the nursery, thirty-seven of them Japanese-born, not including additional workers who lived elsewhere. Peek inside the ledger on page 2.

## Rock Breaking Ceremony Launches Pacific Street Apartments Project

On May 13th, community leaders and partners gathered in downtown Rocklin for a rock-breaking ceremony launching the Pacific Street Apartments, a 110-unit affordable housing community on the historic former schoolhouse site. City leaders, development partners, and financing representatives spoke at the event, including Vice Mayor Bill Halldin, Councilmember Jill Gayaldo, and leaders from Community Housing Works, National Equity Fund, Capital One, and Placer County's Office of Economic Development & Housing. Their remarks highlighted collaboration, long-term investment, and the need for affordable homes for families earning 30–60% of the area median income.

The ceremony also emphasized the project's sustainability commitments—fully electric design, energy-efficient systems, water conservation, improved indoor air quality, and EV-charging infrastructure—supporting Rocklin's climate goals and healthier, more resilient housing.

Overall, the event celebrated both the start of a major affordable housing initiative and the renewal of a historically significant property, reinforcing the city's vision for an inclusive, connected downtown community.



Community Housing Works hosted a rock breaking ceremony on May 13 for the affordable housing complex being built on the site of Rocklin's first schoolhouse on Pacific Street. The ceremony was dubbed a rock breaking (rather than ground-breaking) because of the amount of granite that construction workers have had to move to prepare the site for building. Construction of the 110-unit apartment com-

## Our Secret Garden is the perfect place!



Have you visited the Secret Garden at the library yet? Our local firefighters spent some time there celebrating Firefighter Storytime on May 6.

The newly completed garden is the perfect place on a nice sunny day to share a story or two!

The Rocklin Historical Society, with support from the Friends of the Library, built the garden to honor the first Placer County librarian Jennie Minkkinen. Stop by often and watch the garden grow!



**Mark your calendars—June 20th!** The Rocklin History Museum is one of 30 museums participating in the 2026 Heritage Trail Museums Tour, now in its 17th year. The museum invites visitors to experience Rocks, Rails, and Ranches—a showcase of Rocklin's pioneer families who built the granite quarrying industry, worked on the Transcontinental Railroad, and shaped the city's farming and ranching heritage. The current temporary exhibit, Rocklin at Play: Sports and Recreation Through the Years, highlights local athletic traditions, including the 17 years the San Francisco 49ers held summer training camp at Sierra College. A special granite-splitting demonstration at 11:00 offers a hands-on look at the craft that helped define Rocklin's early economy.

The Heritage Trail, organized by the Placer County Museums Division, runs June 6 through September 12, connecting 30 museums from Roseville to Tahoe and one guided hike to Donner Summit. Each Saturday, a different cluster of museums opens free of charge with tours, demonstrations, and family activities. Visitors can collect Get-Up-And-Go card stamps at each stop—four stamps earn entry into a drawing for gift baskets filled with local history, while

students entering grades K–12 can join scavenger hunts to win tablets, e-readers, and backpacks of school supplies. Those who complete all museum stamps (excluding the hike) qualify for an additional prize drawing.

A highlight of the season will be the guided hike to the historic Summit Tunnel on August 15, hosted by the 1882 Foundation, honoring the Chinese laborers who built the First Transcontinental Railroad over Donner Summit.

Whether you start your journey in Rocklin or explore farther along the trail, the Heritage Trail offers a memorable way to celebrate Placer County's rich and colorful past. For a full schedule and museum guide, visit [placer.ca.gov/museums](http://placer.ca.gov/museums)

### Rocklin Historical Society

#### 2026 Board of Directors

President: Gloria Beverage  
Vice President: Bonnie Ruhkala Neumann  
Secretary: Natalie Bickford  
Treasurer: Kathryn Ripley  
Immediate Past President: Jim Hammes  
Founding Member: Roy Ruhkala

#### Members at Large:

David Baker	Sally Huseby
Susan Brooking	Hank Lohse
RoyceAnn Ruhkala Burks	Nancy Lohse
George Salgado	Patsy Pattison
Ronna Davis	Linda Wampler

Quarry Quarterly contact:  
[quarryquarterly@gmail.com](mailto:quarryquarterly@gmail.com)  
Editor: Linda Wampler