

Joel Parker Whitney Heritage Hike

HISTORY and WHAT WE WILL SEE: This will be a leisurely hike through an interesting part of the heritage of our community.

The Spring Valley Ranch, also called Whitney Ranch, was founded in the 1850's by the Whitney family. It started with the purchase of a 320 acre ranch west of what is now downtown Rocklin by George Whitney in 1854. George and three of his six sons prospered in the sheep business and expanded the ranch to nearly 30,000 acres throughout the 1860's and into the 1870s. Joel Parker Whitney, 5th of George's six sons, took control of the ranch after George's death in 1873. Over the years, 25 miles of crushed stone roads, 12 granite bridges, stables, barns and housing for 200 ranch hands and their families were constructed on the ranch. Spring Valley Ranch was about seven miles long at its widest part and spanned between Rocklin and Lincoln and also included large areas of Roseville. The areas that are now Sun City Lincoln Hills and Catta Verdera Golf Course were within its boundaries.

Joel Parker Whitney set aside 40 acres to represent his classic English estate in the mid-1880s. He built his mansion called "The Oaks" as the headquarters for the Spring Valley Ranch. The mansion was the centerpiece of the 40 acre plot. It looked southeast with a view of the far off State Capital on a knoll overlooking what is now known as the Mansion Oaks neighborhood of Rocklin. His "Pyramid Tomb" is located a short distance away near the 11th green of the Whitney Oaks Golf Course. We will visit the former site of "The Oaks" mansion and his "Pyramid Tomb" on this hike. "The Oaks" mansion fell into disuse and was demolished in the early 1950's by a subsequent owner, Horseshoe Cattle Company, to save on property taxes.

Below the knoll where the former Whitney mansion used to stand is an area that is now know as Mansion Oaks Park. One of the Spring Valley Ranch's 12 granite bridges was disassembled and moved to Mansion Oaks Park during the development of the neighborhood. We will walk through Mansion Oaks Park on our return from Whitney's "Pyramid Tomb".

Where are the Twelve Bridges? - - If you are curious, we have a handout with pictures of where the twelve bridges are. There are three bridges on or near the former Rocklin Golf Club (formerly Sunset Whitney Golf Course). The bridge near the Rocklin Golf Club is the often photographed centerpiece of Clover Valley Park at the corner of Midas and Clover Valley Road. This bridge is an easy drive from Sun City Lincoln Hills. There are also three bridges on the Whitney Oaks Golf Course. Three more bridges are in Rocklin's Mansion Oaks neighborhood including the bridge in Mansion Oaks Park. The last three bridges are located on the Catta Verdera Golf Course (formerly known as the Twelve Bridges Golf Course).