

## Rocklin's Irish Pioneers

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The United States Census of 1860 shows that Irishmen were the most numerous ethnic group of our area's first Euro-American settlers. Some Irishmen owned local businesses, but most washed gravel for gold in Secret Ravine's creeks. As gold fever waned they abandoned their sluice boxes to take railroad jobs, especially after the Central Pacific built Rocklin's roundhouse in 1867.

Irish farmer James Bolton filed Rocklin's original town plot map in 1866 and donated property for Rocklin's first Catholic Church in 1882.

According to the Irish Genealogical Foundation, in 1860 many Irishmen in California had probably survived the Irish Potato Famine and the "coffin ships" that brought them to Boston and New York in the 1840's. Many were impoverished in America and they would have been skeptical when news of Marshall's gold discovery filtered eastward in early 1848. But late that summer Kit Carson delivered a bag of nuggets to President Polk.

In December, Eastern newspapers announced that Polk had reported the bonanza to congress. Hoards of Irishmen headed overland, or around the Horn, or over the Isthmus to the gold fields. Arrival of the Irish in Rocklin is unrecorded, but by their numbers they might have had enough influence among Rocklin's settlers to have given Rocklin its name, "rock" for the granite and the Gaelic "lin" for the wintertime quarry pools.

But Rocklin's early Irish culture left few traces. Memories of that culture faded as Finnish and Spanish immigrants came to dominate Rocklin's business and social life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.