

Joel Parker Whitney

The Richest Man in Placer County



By Ken Morrow – January 2013
Member of Rocklin Historical Society (RHS), Rocklin, California

Before I begin I want to acknowledge the sources on which I have relied. I owe a big debt of gratitude to Jean and Gary Day who are members of the Rocklin Historical Society. Jean has done a tremendous amount of research on the Whitney family, and Gary has published many articles about Joel Parker Whitney and his Spring Valley Ranch. The Joel Parker Whitney ranch encompassed not only the Whitney Oaks and Springfield residential area in Rocklin, but another 27 square miles as well.

The biography of Joel Parker Whitney by Richard A. Miller entitled Fortune Built By Gun published by The Mansion Publishing Co. in 1969 is an important work although possessed of a number of errors, some of which I will mention later on. Probably the most important work is the book written in 1906 by none other than Joel Parker Whitney himself, when he was 71, entitled, Reminiscences of a Sportsman, published by Forest and Stream Publishing Co., New York.

Parker (as he preferred to be called) wrote the Reminiscences of a Sportsman primarily for those who considered themselves "Sportsmen." But very early on he stated,

"In these reminiscences I shall ramble more or less in the remembrances of the past as they arise in my mind, which if I do not take up as they come, will not otherwise

appear, and though they may not be of general interest to the reader, or directly concerned with sports, will give me some satisfaction to recount."

This book is heavily loaded with fishing and hunting tales and will immediately satisfy those who read it for the sports aspects. There are 548 mentions of fish (269 trout, and 279 salmon). I predict that if you read it, even if you skip all of the sports sections, you will enjoy this book tremendously. Parker even says, *"But I must not go on with trout, or I will never end. I will give you later on, perhaps, more of trout than you will care to read. . ."* I personally find it intriguing that he could have become a multi-millionaire considering all the time he spent doing anything but attending to business.

Gary Day's articles can be found at www.rocklinhistory.org/history_series.asp. The Fortune Built by Gun book is available at the Rocklin library. The Rocklin Historical Society has a copy of the book Reminiscences of a Sportsman, but it is too fragile to permit circulation. This book is out of print and the copyright has expired. It has been converted to digital form and anyone can freely download it from <http://www.rocklinhistory.org/written.asp>.

The thing that caused me to become interested in this history was when I volunteered to help Earl Brabb, a geologist and Springfield resident (now deceased), write a Trail Guide for the trails in Whitney Oaks. I decided to include a small section about the history of the area and became intrigued by Joel Parker Whitney and his Spring Valley Ranch. The Trail Guide can be found at <http://whitneyoaks.net/files/08TrailGuide.pdf>.

Note: I have taken the liberty of underlining portions of direct quotes from Reminiscences of a Sportsman to emphasize his wealth accumulation, his humor or other items of interest.

When Joel Parker Whitney first arrived in San Francisco, California in 1852, at the age of 17, he certainly was not rich. He left Boston aboard the sailing ship *The Polynesia* with \$60 in his pocket, sailed around Cape Horn, and arrived in San Francisco 142 days later. Due to his lack of understanding of poker, the \$60 was quickly squandered. He had all of 10 cents in his pocket when he arrived in San Francisco, which must have caused him some embarrassment. He began the voyage with dreams of getting rich quick and becoming a gold miner, as did vast numbers of people residing on the East Coast of America.

Two of his brothers, George and William, met him in San Francisco and tried to convince him to join the merchandising business that they had started. They had sold their businesses in New Orleans and traveled overland to California in 1848 and 1849. They were among the first wave of would-be miners. They had tried the path that their brother wanted to pursue, but had become disillusioned about the prospect of getting rich by digging for gold. At that time, Joel Parker was not only impoverished, he was naïve and obstinate. He refused their offer to join them in business. He was determined to fulfill his dream of finding the gold nuggets that were just lying around the riverbeds, as he had been led to believe.

"Penniless though I was, my heart was most courageous. Was not the world my oyster, as with ancient Pistol, and could I not open it with my sword blade? My three elder brothers had preceded me in 1848 and 1849 to California, and two were engaged in San Francisco in profitable business, and I had pressing invitations to join them, but I had no taste for it. Had I not my gun, and could I not have more fun to my liking in the country? Besides, I had visions of those lumps of gold said to be lying about at the mines, and hearing that near Auburn, in Placer County, over one hundred

and fifty miles north of San Francisco, miners were making great pay, I went up there. How I got up to Sacramento -- which was en route, up the bay one hundred miles distant -- I cannot remember, but I do vividly remember that I walked up the distance of forty miles to the mines, and back to Sacramento again. The game I killed gave me welcome for meals and lodgings; welcome with the miners was more hearty in those days, when the professional tramp was unknown.

The country beyond Sacramento to the placer mines of Auburn was the most attractive I had ever or have since seen, comprising valleys and moderate hills grown over with groups of live and white oaks, inhabited by quantities of magpies, robins, larks, and other small birds. Beneath the trees were many quails and hares, with antelopes to be seen in the distance.

It was midwinter, yet the weather was bright and warm, and the temperature seldom fell to freezing.

How trivial are the incidents which oftentimes become important in our after lives! The casual observation of a fellow foot-traveller who walked on with me for a while, that it was an ideal sheep region, gave a color to my thoughts, which half a dozen years afterwards matured in my mind to the commencement of an industry there in which I engaged."

There is no question that Parker had a well-developed sense of his own worth by the time he was 17 years old. Where and how did he develop his drive and determination at such an early age? You have to admit that most of us, as parents and grandparents, would have serious reservations about permitting someone of that age to travel alone to what must have been known to be a wild scene in far off California.

Some answers to the question about his character can be gained by looking at the background of his parents. The Whitney family had been in America for seven generations and, up until the time that Parker's father George attended Harvard, all had been farmers of Puritan heritage. There is no record that Parker's father graduated from Harvard or that he sent any of his children to college. George Whitney became involved in the mercantile business and would take his children with him when he went on business trips. It appears that they spent a lot of time in New Orleans, where he may have had business interests. George enjoyed hunting and fishing and the outdoor life in general and instilled in many of his sons a passion for both business and the outdoor life.

Parker's father married Sophia Greenwood when he was 22 and she was 16 years old. His mother gave birth to 8 boys and 3 girls over a span of 24 years. Three of the boys died at the age of 5, 10 and 19, one before Parker was born and the other two in 1849 and 1850 before Parker left for California. The 10-year old brother died at sea, and the 19-year old brother died in California. There is no record as to what caused either death.

When Parker first arrived in San Francisco he had a double-barreled shotgun, a navy revolver, and a large double-edged knife with a 13 inch long blade made from a sword an older brother had acquired in the Mexican War of 1846. He must have been quite proficient in the use of his shotgun, because it was not long after he returned to San Francisco that Parker engaged in a hunting expedition that met with great success and produced enough money to set in motion a series of events that caused Richard Miller to entitle his book about Joel Parker Whitney Fortune Built By Gun.

Parker wrote in Reminiscences of a Sportsman that he was disappointed when he returned to San Francisco and again rejected his brothers' request that he join them in business. He discovered that game birds were bringing high prices in the restaurants at that time, and found out that they were being hunted in a place called Alviso at the southern end of San Francisco Bay.

Alviso was named after Ygnacio Alviso, the son of a respected soldier in the Mexican Army. The Mexican Governor, Juan Alvarado, granted Ygnacio's father 6,353 acres (about 10 sq. miles) in 1838. The indigenous Tamien people knew the area as an excellent hunting and fishing location. The Guadalupe River (which drains the Santa Cruz Mountains) and Coyote Creek (which drains the Diablo Range) flow into the Bay at this point. Even today the area is known for the many species of birds and fish that populate the area. The city of Alviso was founded in 1845, incorporated in 1852, and annexed into San Jose in 1968. Alviso served as the Port of San Jose, and steamboats traveled regularly to San Francisco beginning at Alviso at 7:30 pm and returning the next morning at 10:00 am. Curiously, Parker never mentioned this but on April 11, 1853 the steam boiler on the "Jenny Lind" exploded and killed 31 passengers. This vessel was very likely the one used by Parker to ship his birds to the San Francisco market.

When Parker decided to go hunting in Alviso, his brothers were incredulous. Parker by this time didn't even have 50 cents in his pocket. As the boat was leaving the dock in San Francisco, one of his brothers flipped a \$20 gold piece onto the deck. Parker picked it up and flipped it back to him. Parker labeled his brother's action as a "dernier" (French for, figuratively, a last cry). He later mentioned that this was the same brother to whom he (Parker) years later gave \$25,000 to bail him out of some difficulty. In Reminiscences of a Sportsman, Parker explained the situation this way:

"Though my finances were low, not having even the fifty cents to defray my passage down the bay, I was exultant, breathing freely of hope and oxygen. The absence of base lucre was a trifling item when expectation loomed so brilliantly before me, and I had no difficulty in gaining the consent of the captain of the boat for a free passage when I explained the object of my trip, and he seemed very much amused at my enthusiasm."

When he got to Alviso he secured room and board for \$8.00 per week, apparently to be paid sometime in the future, and set out to hunt for birds. He mentions that he easily bagged three dozen birds but then had to carry the birds to Alviso, about 8 miles round trip, for shipment to San Francisco. How long he kept this up is not clear, but it was difficult and hard work and he became emaciated and, at one time, only weighed 120 pounds. He was 5'-6-1/2" tall and a more normal weight would have been about 145 pounds. He was rescued from that difficulty one day when he encountered a man with a bloody head (he called it broken) who was leading a spirited Mustang that had thrown him. He was very willing to dispose of it for \$25, including the saddle and bridle. Parker purchased it immediately. Thus began a journey that appears to have led to Parker's growing understanding of agriculture that served him very well in later years.

With his newly acquired horse, Parker joined a party of four other mounted hunters that were providing deer and game to the San Francisco market. He accepted an arrangement whereby he received half of the amount paid to the others. A mounted hunting party could cover a lot more ground, and the group was divided into two groups that rotated over a two-day period in expeditions into the mountains adjacent to San Jose. Their three mules could carry two deer each. That arrangement lasted for three months, and by that time Parker had

saved a "small pot of money as my share, which constituted my commencement capital for the business of my life." He worked with the group until the end of the hunting season. I suspect that he was not pleased with being paid only half of the income of the others and decided to leave them behind. He returned to San Francisco after the mountain hunting expedition but still could not bring himself to join his brothers in *"the confining life of business,"* especially since he now *"was more independently situated than before."*

He briefly flirted with the idea of going to Australia, even selecting a berth on a ship, but changed his mind when he realized that the ship was *"a bad-smelling, unattractive old tub which gave me an unfavorable opinion of its capacity."* This was yet another example of the surefootedness that Parker displayed many times throughout his life. The ship was never heard from again and *"is not likely to be now, after a lapse of half a century."*

I suspect that his next few endeavors probably made more of an impression on him than anything else up to that date. I believe that he realized that he could combine business with the activity that he most enjoyed throughout his life, that of being a sportsman. He was very successful at combining the two, and I believe he found his calling by the age of 18 and rarely, if ever, deviated from it. He stated in Reminiscences of a Sportsman that he had declined going into politics *not "from possible interference with business pursuits - as I have always made such a secondary matter - but mainly from a fear that in politics I should lose largely my independence, and probably my ability to prosecute those out-of-door pursuits toward which I am so inclined."*

While in San Francisco, he prowled around the markets and shipping areas. One day he came upon a *"rotund navigator"* who was the captain of a ship that had transported, purely as a speculative venture, a large number of Canary Birds from China that had never been seen before in America. Parker saw the birds, went to several merchants, and arranged to supply them with the lovely birds in individual cages that the Captain had also acquired. He offered the Captain \$1,000 for the entire lot, birds as well as the individual cages. Parker didn't actually have the \$1,000, so he convinced the Captain to permit him to pay for them on an installment plan. He used assistants to transfer each bird to its own cage and transport them to the merchants who had agreed to buy them from him. He says that the Captain obtained a good profit. He also mentioned that *"my expectations were fully realized by rapid sales at full prices and, although I shared liberally with the shop sellers, I considerably increased my capital."*

He admits to taking on the *"air of a capitalist"* and joined in a partnership with a *"market-man"* that he had used when he was providing birds to the San Francisco restaurant market. Although his partner was a *"pretty clever businessman,"* Parker didn't completely trust him because he *"was intemperate and inclined to various dissipations."* He nevertheless proposed that his partner expand his business to include the distribution of salmon, game and birds which Parker would supply from the alluvial lands in the Bay and the estuaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers that were a *"great field for aquatic birds and salmon."* It was this collaboration that provided Parker the knowledge that he used in later years to develop parts of Robert's Island. The knowledge of agriculture Parker gained from this period was, undoubtedly, instrumental in causing him to be effective in the many agricultural enterprises in which he invested in later years. At this point in time he was 18 years old.

As Parker relates in his book,

"Although the game season was practically over, no laws existed for preservation - or at least were not regarded - and eatable birds of all kinds were freely sold. Salmon were running, and were extensively seined by Italians and other fishermen, and a miscellaneous lot of fishes were netted, and birds were plentiful. I purchased and forwarded freely, and my man seemed capable of getting away with all I sent him, and generally at large profits.

One day I met a Scotchman looking for employment who claimed he was adept at smoking salmon, and could at a moderate expense put up a smoking-plant. I engaged him and proceeded in this line, to great advantage, as it opened a market in the mines where fresh salmon could not reach; but others soon caught on, and on a more extensive scale than mine, and selling prices fell off. In fact the business of my associate began to diminish in profits, and considering his habits, as prosperity seemed to increase his extravagances, I concluded to pull out, which I succeeded in doing with my full share of profits, which augmented my capital considerably. I concluded to retire and return to Boston by the Nicaragua route, where I arrived after a stay of a little less than a year in California."

Parker described this adventure this way: *"The familiarity gained with the overflowed lands of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers led to some extensive reclamation works of mine in later years."* At this point he was still only 18 years old.

When Parker got back to Boston, he had difficulty in adapting to the *"quiet of town life"* while pursuing his businesses. Parker never actually said what those business interests consisted of, but it appears that he had found a niche in being a middle-man for other businesses in California. He said that his inclination was strongly inclined toward *"adventurous ramblings."* He noted that he was a constant reader, but he decided to quit reading books about sporting (for a period of several years) so that he would have the time to engage in *"sporting and adventurous affairs"* as well as attend to his businesses.

In his own words from Reminiscences of a Sportsman,

"In 1858 I made in the winter an excursion in Maine to the Rangeley Lakes near the Canada line, which set a color upon my sporting horizon which has never been effaced, and since that period I have never failed, amid the cares of an active business life, to visit that region annually. Those trips at times have been difficult to arrange when I have been absent in distant places, but I have not failed in some month of each year since 1858 to rendezvous at the Rangeleys for from one to four and six months."

He wrote that passage in 1906 at the age of 71. That would entail 48 trips.

Parker described the years between 1854 and 1860 in this manner:

"I established my residence in Boston for a series of years, though I made five round trips to California before 1860, and have since made those journeys over a score [20] of times, besides eighteen round trips across the Atlantic to Europe. I crossed the great plains from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains four times [two round trips] from 1865 to 1867, before the completion of a railroad there."

The Transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869.

In the last paragraph of Reminiscences of a Sportsman Parker indicates that he planned to write another book about his business experiences. He stated,

"These, having been exceedingly varied in character and extending over half a century, will frankly exhibit the perils, with good and bad fortune, which have attended my ventures, from which now I am fully retired."

It is a real shame that he never got around to writing that book because it would have been fascinating.

The records available do not provide any clues as to the type of businesses he created. He refers to multiple businesses, so he may have owned some manufacturing plants as well as a shipping business. It is known that he would put cargo on sailing vessels that went around Cape Horn to San Francisco. He would then go out to California at a later date on wooden side-wheel steam powered ships that would drop passengers off in Nicaragua where they would be transported to the west coast and board another vessel bound for San Francisco. The route from Boston to San Francisco by way of Nicaragua took about 28 days and involved riding donkeys from Lake Nicaragua to the Pacific. He would time his trips to meet the cargo vessels in San Francisco to arrange for the sale of his cargo to others. Sometimes the entire cargo was sold before the ship even left Boston. And then he repeated the whole process again and again. He mentions all kinds of experiences he encountered on these trips, including being struck by lightning in the Caribbean Sea, breaking drive shafts and being towed to port, springing a bad leak and barely making it to San Francisco with 1,400 passengers on board, and suffering near starvation when a boat was delayed in arriving in Nicaragua and 1,200 people had to be fed with inadequate provisions.

Parker implied that he changed his type of business activity in 1860 when he wrote that,

"In 1860 I engaged in a commercial business, which I followed for five years, but which grew more engrossing year by year, until I found myself so confined that I had a difficulty at times in arranging my visits to the lakes, although I laid out my sporting excursions for months ahead, which I never, despite many perplexities, failed to respond to."

In Fortune Built By Gun, Miller states that Parker was a confirmed bachelor when he married Lucy Ann Chadwick at the age of 46. This contradicts information contained in Latter Day Saints (LDS) records presented to Jean Day, a member of the Rocklin Historical Society, by the Whitney family. The LDS records show that Parker was married to a Frances Keith on June 30, 1859 at Shurtleff College in Anton, Illinois. In 1859 he was 24 and Francis Keith was 27 years old. On April 1, 1859 Parker joined a Boston-based group called the Independent Corp of Cadets. The name Cadets implies some sort of military type organization, but it was known more for its many social functions and sumptuous balls. Parker mentioned that he went to one of the nine Lincoln-Douglas debates that were all held in the state of Illinois. Curiously, the October 1858 debate was held in Anton, Illinois, the very place where his marriage to Frances took place. Why there was never any acknowledgment of this marriage by Parker is a matter for further research.

The records also indicate that there was a second marriage between him and Eliza Clapp. A family by the name of Clapp owned a farm in Rocklin, California. Given that Parker was a very determined and disciplined individual, one wonders if he may have just decided that being married was going to require more time than reading books and that this just would not

fit into his lifestyle. As of this point in time, no mention has been found in any of Parker's writings of either marriage.

There is no doubt that Parker had an eye for beautiful women. He wrote this humorous account of his fascination with Jane in Reminiscences of a Sportsman:

"I relate the following two instances indicating the push of two American girls who came within my personal observation, and although not coming within the lines of sporting reminiscences, may be of interest. These incidents being of a personal character will be considered confidential by the reader, who, I assume, will not mention it unless it may be to most intimate friends, whose reticence can be relied upon.

The commencement occurred in Boston before I had reached my majority. I had a clerk in my employ, a rather clever sort of fellow named Edwards, who occasionally referred to a flaxen beauty at the cheap boarding-house where he lived, whom he accounted to be a most extraordinary beauty of much spirit and wit, and who he predicted would yet have some prominence in the world - the lovely Miss Jane Dare (an assumed name), the daughter of the widowed landlady, who made vests for a clothing house at the munificent sum of two or three dollars a week. Her father had been at one time a well-to-do merchant, who conducted a line of sailing vessels to some foreign port, but left his wife and only child penniless. It may be assumed that the subject was one of no particular interest to me, but from frequent mention of the excellent qualities of Miss Dare my curiosity was aroused, and I finally said to Edwards, "Invite me down to supper some night, so I can view this prodigy of exaltation," little imagining that I should become a feature in the future career of this sprightly Jane Dare.

How casual and slight are the circumstances affecting the lives and destinies of mortals. Accordingly, as a lamb to the shambles, I accompanied Edwards down one evening to the dingy brick structure, on a side street, where he obtained his fried chops and lodgings for three dollars and a half a week, and where the rosy-cheeked Jane dispensed hot biscuits and doubtful jam to half a dozen embryotic merchants of Edwards's type. The butter was strong and the tea was weak, and the muffins of uncertain stability; but Jane, Jane, Jane! she was as radiant as a butterfly's wing and looked as sweet as an apple blossom; of medium stout build, fair complexion, blue eye and golden hair. She gave me a hearty welcome as the friend of Edwards, and I scarcely regarded her excepting what I could take in at a glance, as I observed the somewhat suspicious aspect of Mother Dare, who evidently viewed me with some curiosity and possible apprehensions. Quite needless in my case, and it was not until my second call, on a following evening, that I ventured to intimate the necessity of replenishing my apparel by the addition of a waistcoat - after an hour's conversation with the mother and daughter and Edwards about the needed improvements in tenement houses, and of reform in the school system, and other serious subjects - and before I left I had my measure taken for a new vest by the tapering hands of rosy Jane, who held pins in her mouth. A third visit was required to fetch the material, and my growing fondness for the mother's tea, of which I could hardly get enough, evidently manufactured from the garden shrubbery, seemed to disperse any suspiciousness which might have existed.

I ventured to express the satisfaction which might be derived from a drive about the beautiful suburbs of the city. Mother Dare seemed to understand who should

comprise the party, and expressed the difficulty of getting away on a weekday, but might be arranged on a Sunday, when a pot of beans would answer for the evening meal. It was then suggested, as we were all to go, that a streetcar excursion to the Mount Auburn cemetery would answer our purpose and give us a cheerful recreation. So we went out the following Sunday afternoon to the cemetery, and I was struck by the simple and cheerful, but yet independent, ambition of the pretty Jane by her remark, as we viewed one of the most elaborate monuments there, that she would be about willing to die if she could have over her grave so beautiful a plinth as we had before us. It was very touching, and indicated the spirit of the warrior who sought the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth. But Jane had no thought of dying, and I am quite sure she would not have expired to gain a hundred Egyptian pyramids.

A fair was to be held for charitable purposes in Music Hall a few evenings afterwards, and I had taken two tickets, and Mother Dare consented that I should take Jane there. I did, and Jane became elastic in spirit and rigged out in her best suit for the occasion. She was a lovely, charming girl, and no one could regard her costume in the glow of her beauty. When we entered the hall she was wild with delight and excitement at the brilliant costumes. "Oh, introduce me to some rich man," she said. "I must marry and travel to Rome and Paris and London. I have no time to lose. I must go." Jane was not particularly retiring or shy in disposition.

I saw approaching in the promenade an elderly, bald-headed, but well-wigged, confirmed and well-preserved old bachelor, whom we will call Ashberry, whom I knew, and who had lately retired from business with a large fortune after a wasted life at business, during which I doubt if he ever caught a trout. I mentioned the situation to Jane, who requested an introduction, and I accordingly presented Mr. Ashberry to her. Jane was a gusher of full volume, and the somewhat bewildered Ashberry, upon his quitting, asked Miss Dare if she would accept a lottery ticket he had just purchased in a probable two-hundred-dollar grand piano, put up at six hundred - six hundred tickets at one dollar each; would Miss Dare kindly accept the ticket? Would she! I had no doubt about it, and she did with a subdued, inexpressible gush which made Ashberry totter, and I felt sure he had then received an unusual wound. What fate depended upon that ticket? Pretty soon a number was hoisted over the piano, and Jane hastily looked over her ticket, and behold, it was her own! Her modest and limited sewing-room was not, perhaps, just suited for it, but she never thought of that. Where, oh, where was the precious man, the angel of light, the creator of her glorification, who had given her the ticket! He approached, without even remembering the number of his lucky ticket. But Jane quickly informed him, and showered upon him such a merry run of sweet words and tender glances that Ashberry fairly staggered in the mazy flood.

I thought it a good time to absent myself for a while and, making an excuse to see a friend, left Jane and Ashberry for a promenade together, well satisfied that Jane would improve the opportunity. When I rejoined my May and December to accompany Jane to her maternal home, I found that the autumnal season of harvest had been woven in, and that Jane had acquiesced in the proposal of Ashberry to call upon her at her home. There, beneath the vigilant eye of mamma, it would be quite appropriate.

Time flew, as well as love, with galloping steeds, and expectation wreathed the way with flowers. My visits ceased and soon I learned of the engagement of Jane with

her long-waiting, impatient Ashberry. The marriage soon followed, and Jane removed from her tearful mamma's humble abode to a mansion in a fashionable part of the city."

From this, it can be concluded that Parker appreciated beautiful women but was very astute in judging their suitability as a life partner. As is obvious from the passage above, he was willing to pawn Jane off on Ashberry immediately upon learning of her willingness to offer herself to the wealthiest suitor. Parker decided very rapidly that he was not going to be doing any bidding on Jane.

The basic principle Parker applied to all decisions he made was this: "Consider everything well and don't act hastily. Never make up your mind in anger or haste; always sleep on a decision and decide next day." Parker lived by this motto for most of his life, although he may not have had the presence of mind to apply it to his encounters with women! There is plenty of evidence in his diaries and papers that he did, in fact, make detailed calculations to determine if the payoff was assured in almost all of his business transactions.

Parker continued to build his wealth through his shipping companies and, in 1865, he decided to retire once again. In his own words:

"Disposing in the early part of 1865 of my commercial interests, and experiencing the exhilaration of a freedom I had long been denied, I resolved to take my way to the Rocky Mountains, having read so many accounts of adventurous life there from the interesting sketches of the early pioneers."

Obviously, he had begun to read again. It is not known how much money he had accumulated at the time but it must have been substantial. He never said what he did with the money he derived from the sale of his businesses. Gary Day of the Rocklin Historical Society indicates that they have found records of his purchase of a number of mining claims in Colorado, and they have determined that he was an early investor in mining companies with Colorado connections prior to his leaving Boston.

It is obvious that he thought the opportunities in Colorado might be boundless because he noted that when he left Boston for Colorado he was carrying \$5,000 in bank drafts from three of his friends giving him the right to buy any properties he chose for them, and they would split any income from such purchases with Parker. He traveled to Colorado in 1865 and, curiously, upon his return to Boston gave the \$5,000 back to each of his friends. It prompted one of them (Oakes Ames) to comment, quoting Parker, "*it was the first money, ventured upon an understanding of similar import, which he ever had returned.*" Miller, in his Fortune Built By Gun, implies that Parker wrote a booklet entitled Colorado, Schedule Of Ores as a result of his interest in some sort of intellectual pursuit. I believe that Parker had an entirely different motive, and my belief is based on statements Parker made in Reminiscences of a Sportsman. Parker saw an opportunity to substantially increase the value of his investments by publicizing them to the rest of the world. That opportunity soon presented itself.

Parker revealed that he held investments in Colorado prior to returning there the second time.

"In the summer of the following year, 1866, I again returned to Colorado, having acquired some interests there, and gave attention to the further collection of ores, of which I already had secured an extensive cabinet."

The manner in which Parker decided to return to Colorado in 1866 is a perfect example of his mindset. On the previous trip he traveled by stagecoach. This time it was to be the type of adventure upon which he absolutely thrived. Here is how he described it:

"In the autumn of the same year (1865) I made another trip across the plains to Colorado and back. This time I proposed to go through the buffalo country by the Smoky River route, a hundred miles or more south of the stage line, and, having two friends who accompanied me, we bought at the Missouri River a stout pair of mules, with a wagon and saddle-horses, calculating to join a caravan of prairie schooners for protection, and to be a month or more on the road. In the wagon we carried bedding, provisions, and necessary articles. Our object in taking this route and going in this manner was to avail ourselves of buffalo and other hunting, of which we had abundance. From the Missouri River caravans were departing daily, and we had no difficulty in connecting ourselves with one.

At this period, although the stage line was pretty well protected from the attacks of Indians, the Smoky River route was more dangerous, as the Indians were more or less about there hunting buffalo for their winter's supply of meat. This meat, cut in narrow strips and sun-dried, had good keeping quality for months if kept dry. All the teams as they came along were held up by government officials, who compelled an aggregation of at least one hundred men with each caravan before allowing a departure. Printed regulations were distributed requiring an organization among the men of each outfit, giving rules of proceedings for the election of officers and general management; how to establish picket guards in dangerous localities, and how to provide against attacks. These regulations were important and generally observed.

We had not proceeded many days before we came into the buffalo range, and struck the flank of an immense herd proceeding northward, from which several were killed for use of the caravan. The following day we were in the midst of immense numbers stretched over the plains in all directions. A marvellous sight, one which would impress an observer with the belief that it would hardly be possible to have such numbers exterminated in the brief space of a few years. The building of the Union Pacific and the Kansas Pacific railroads sealed the doom of the buffalo. With the invasion of thousands of hunters brought upon the buffalo grounds by the railroads, who sought no more than the skins of the slain as their reward, who found the buffalo defenceless, without shelter from attack, and of too slow and cumbrous action to escape, it is not surprising that they soon disappeared."

As you can imagine, Parker's wealth did not go unnoticed when he arrived in Colorado, and he moved easily within the business and political community. It was not long before he discovered that,

"An agitation was occurring on the subject of having an exhibition of Colorado ores at the great World's Exposition to be held at Paris, in 1867, and three commissioners had been appointed by the Territorial Legislature to take charge of the ores and represent them there. The funds in the Territory were scant, and, no appropriation being made, it was necessary that the amount required should be raised by public subscription. This lagged, and it seemed hopeless to expect the amount could be raised."

He found out that the people who had been selected to represent the territory of Colorado at the Paris exposition did not have the money to ship a few boxes of ore specimens or to put

up an exhibit. Parker sprang to action and volunteered to ship his own ore collection and got himself appointed as the sole commissioner to represent Colorado. What an opportunity this presented for him! He had his collection sent to Paris, undertook the printing of 5,000 copies of his booklet entitled Colorado, Schedule Of Ores in each of the languages English, French and German, and these were distributed mainly to influential or wealthy people in government and business.

Parker's accounting of the way that his exhibit became the centerpiece of the American Section is very instructive.

"The American commissioners, a large number, were already there, but the American department was entirely unoccupied. A large number of American exhibitors were there, chafing under the delay in having their various quarters assigned. N. M. Beckwith was the United States Commissioner General. Mr. Beckwith had lived with his family in Paris for many years, and primarily in India, from which he had retired with a large fortune. He was a man of singular indecision, lacking executive ability. In vain the exhibitors appealed to him to have their various places assigned. Time was rapidly passing, and the exposition was soon to be opened, while the American department was dormant and lifeless, and would apparently be behind all others. Several meetings of the exhibitors were held and special committees were appointed to confer with Mr. Beckwith. He promised to act, and, visiting the space assigned to the United States, would mull over it day after day, seemingly confused by the earnest solicitations of the exhibitors. The more he was implored the more he was confused, and finally lapsed into a most incomprehensible stupor when he was approached. Day by day passed away and no decision. In fact, he had been so long in idle life, and without cause for action, that he seemed approaching imbecility. He was, however, sensitive and irritable if the slightest reflection was intimated as to his action. The committee received no satisfaction, excepting in promises which were empty. He had failed to select officers to pass upon the assignments until the crowding applications completely overwhelmed him. I was finally appointed upon a committee to urge his action, and straightway made my appearance before him with my associates. We found him pleasant and affable, and quietly stated our mission. This seemed to throw him into a stupor of indecision, and, clasping his hands on each side of his head, with elbows on the table, he fairly groaned with perplexity. Finally he said, "I will attend to it." I pitied him, but the necessity was urgent. I then said:

"General Beckwith, if the exhibitors' positions are not assigned within twenty-four hours, I shall move for the exhibitors to act in sending a cable to the President of the United States, asking for your removal and the appointment of another in your place."

This was a stunner, and the General arose, saying: "My God! What do they want? What more can I do?"

I rejoined, "Let them go and take their places."

"Let them," said the General; "let them go and take their places. Will that satisfy them?"

"Certainly it will," I rejoined, "and that is all they can desire."

Upon this we made our adieus, thanking the General for his consideration.

As rapidly as a cab could drive us, we hurried back to the general meeting room, which was my salon at the Grand, I having freely tendered it to the exhibitors and commissioners in the absence of any other provided place of meeting at that time.

We circulated the information as rapidly as we could to all interested, and it was great news for the exhibitors. It was a life scramble for place and there was great hurrying to and fro.

I was fully prepared, having completed all my cases and shelving of more than a thousand feet with plate-glass fronts and proper adornments. I had a valuable assistant, a Parisian whom I had employed to constantly guard my collection. I soon had twenty workmen at double pay on the swing for all-night work in placing my shelving, hanging maps, and spreading my ores, and by 10 o'clock in the morning I had everything in place, and my assistants were just distributing a plentiful supply of fresh flowers over the top railings, when General Beckwith made his appearance. His attitude was belligerent and he strode toward me, saying:

"Why, what is this? You can't stay here! This is the centre reserved for pianos, paintings, and works of art. All the minerals will have to go into the annex, where the machinery and minerals are all to go, etc."

I mildly informed him of his assent that the exhibitors were to select their places, and was not the Colorado exhibit as displayed one of the first to be in place, and worthy of the position, and having brought the collection so far over a long distance, would it not be best to leave it as established. But he would have nothing of it and left with much indignation, for I had selected the very centre of the American department, with a liberal extension of some forty feet on each side of an angle, and had the front floor well held down by a few tons of mineral masses, coal, ingots of silver and copper, and other products of similar character. Suffice to say that the Colorado exhibit remained throughout the exhibition in this place."



Paris Exposition in 1867

Parker mentioned that the exhibition hall was made of iron and glass and was more than a mile in circumference.

His exhibit was displayed with near perfection and garnered Parker and the Colorado Territory a gold medal. Emperor Napoleon III bestowed the honor upon him at a grand ceremony attended by the Empress Eugenie, the American Ambassador, the Czar of Russia, the Kings of Prussia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Spain, and other monarchies, the Prince of Wales, the Shah of Persia, the Sultan of Turkey, Bismarck, and other most prominent European celebrities. Parker commented that the ceremony was so lavish that

"The gardens and conservatories of Paris and environs were denuded of flowers to grace the event."

This event, probably more than any other, catapulted Parker into great prominence. He was wined and dined all over Paris. He returned to the United States in September of 1867 accompanied by three people that he met at the Exposition. Geise and Col. Heine were closely allied with banking interests and Louis L. Simonin was a Professor of Mining in a French University. Despite the fact that this was only Parker's third visit to Colorado, the residents of Denver and the Territory of Colorado treated him as a hero. When they arrived in Denver by stage coach, they were greeted with great fanfare. As they traveled around Colorado to several cities, each would present a speech. Parker commented that he, Simonin and Heine "had to make acknowledgments of appreciation and references to some matters we knew of, and others we did not."

This trip to Colorado by Parker and Simonin ultimately resulted in the publication of a book in French by Prof. Simonin entitled The Rocky Mountain West in 1867. The book was translated into English by Dr. Wilson O. Clough in 1966 and published by the University of Nebraska Press. The book is comprised of letters written by Prof. Simonin to a friend in Paris, France and mailed almost every other day during the three months that Prof. Simonin spent on his round trip visit to Colorado that started and ended in Paris. The University of Nebraska Press has granted the Rocklin Historical Society the right to reproduce this book and it can be found at: <http://www.rocklinhistory.org/written.asp>.

I highly recommend this delightful book. It is fascinating to read.

The trip to the Paris Exposition in 1867 was Parker's first trip abroad. Thereafter he made 18 additional trips to Europe at about two-year intervals. Because of the Paris Gold Medal and the great visibility he obtained as a result of that award, whenever he visited Europe, including England, he was constantly invited to parties and celebrations attended by royalty and people of the highest echelons of society. At times, Parker was the only guest who did not have a title.

During the years 1867 to 1878, Parker annually traveled around the country between California, Colorado, Boston and the Rangeley Lakes in Maine. About every other year he would travel to Europe (mostly England). Beginning around 1869, Parker's investments in the Colorado mines began to supply him with a torrent of wealth that has been estimated at a million dollars or more each year.

Starting in 1855 Parker's father and brothers began acquiring land in the Rocklin area and building a sheep ranch that they named the Spring Valley Ranch. Years later, Parker's money was instrumental in vastly increasing the size of the ranch even though he continued

to pursue the adventures that he thoroughly enjoyed and seemed to thrive upon. Only rarely did these adventures turn out to be to his detriment.

New Mexico however was the one adventure that he might very well have skipped. It did not turn out very well at all. As he explained it in *Reminiscences of a Sportsman*,

"My first visit was during the building of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé railroad, when the conditions of the Territory were much unsettled, and when no other section of the country could have equalled it in lawlessness and rough life. In relating the experiences I had there, which were fraught with so many unpleasant incidents, which I do not look back upon with particular satisfaction, I have some doubt if my readers may not look at them with some degree of incredulity, and especially with wonderment that I should have submitted myself to such experiences. But we do not know what may befall us in our movements, and once engaged we are usually necessitated to keep on, and my recitations will be of simple facts as they occurred."

In *Reminiscences of a Sportsman*, Parker relates many incidences that are right out of the Wild West scenario and are almost unbelievable, especially when you question why a millionaire would subject himself to such situations. It's a fantastic read. What Parker does not mention is that he was in pursuit of mining interests and in the acquisition of vast acreage for grazing purposes. He and some associates had acquired three very large ranches, one of which was named the Estancia Land Grant that went back to the time that Mexico controlled the area. The Estancia Land Grant contained 415,000 acres, but Parker mentioned that he and his associates controlled over 1,000,000 acres.

His New Mexico ventures went very sour when a bloody pistol battle occurred between Parker's brother James G. and the crew that managed the ranch for Parker and members of the Otero clan over the question as to who had rights to a large spring on the Estancia property. James' brother-in-law, Alexander Fernandez, was killed, as was Manuel Ortero. James took a bullet in his chin that shattered his jaw and he was charged with the murder of Manuel Ortero.

Parker defended his brother, but the task was compounded by the fact that everyone knew that Parker was wealthy and many "witnesses" were unable to give an "accurate" account of the fight without receiving some monetary inducement. Parker's attorney even hinted that he expected to be compensated for his efforts to "compromise" some of the parties concerned.

He also had to counter a statement by a Dr. Henriques that, "James had been drinking for 2 or 3 days previous to the Estancia shooting affair and that he was quite forward in the quarrel; that James had commenced it by jumping into the middle of the room with his pistol in hand and ordering all of them out of the place."

An article published by the Western Livestock Journal by a cowboy who was present at the scene, gave the following account.

"I had been over near Torreon, a little Mexican village, cow hunting. Our ranch was north of Estancia and about 8 miles east of Chilili. I was on my way back to the ranch and rode up to the Estancia as the shooting stopped. It sure was a bloody lookin' place. We put Mr. Whitney in a light wagon with two ponies hitched to it and he was driven to Chilili, where a good span of mules and a spring wagon was secured. A rapid drive was made to Albuquerque where the wounded man was placed aboard a special train and taken to his home in San Francisco, California,

where he recovered, but though some artificial work was done on his jaw, he never looked the same again. There was an amusing incident connected with the battle at the Estancia ranch. An ex-soldier was there and when the shooting began he mounted his hoss an' lit out getting all the speed outa that old pony that was in him. He ran up in front of Dow's store 6 or 7 miles away and fell off dead. . . That Whitney survived his wounds was sho nough a surprise to me, especially as there was no doctor short of Albuquerque, and only such first aid as us cowhands could give was all that he got."

Parker became very annoyed with the whole thing and wrote to James:

"Amounts paid out since this Estancia affair of yours amount to about \$2,000.00 and I understand Frank paid some \$500.00 on railroad charges for Fernandez, and I paid \$350.00 for a casket making it \$850.00 charges for forwarding his body. Why such an expense was authorized I do not see. So far as I am personally concerned I would hardly care to have such an expense incurred in sending my body after death so far and certainly not at the expense of others."

Parker and his lawyers tried very hard to make sure that the properties he invested in were free of title challenges, but the law at the time was open to interpretation and they had a difficult and expensive time responding to all of these challenges. For 15 to 20 years he and his lawyers battled in court to clear the titles to the ranches. Some of the cases even went to the U.S. Supreme Court before they were settled.

In the early 1880s Parker seemed to become weary of all of the troubles that New Mexico caused him and began to travel more often to Europe, primarily to England. As a result of his visits to Europe, he met Lucy Ann Chadwick who was the daughter of a prominent man known as a breeder of Clydesdale horses.

Parker and Lucy were married in San Francisco on December 19, 1881. Two of their children (J Parker and Vincent) were born before the marriage. Parker and Lucy may have been married in a civil ceremony in England but no record of this has turned up at this time.

Parker's father began to remove himself from the day-to-day operation of the *Spring Valley Ranch* in 1873, and around that time Parker began to take control of the ranch from his brothers and began to invest heavily in purchasing the surrounding land. Over a 20 year period between 1868 and 1888, the Placer County Assessor's Office recorded 130 land transactions as Parker created an estate wherein no other person owned any land inside its boundary. The estate eventually reached about 18,400 acres (nearly 29 square miles).

In 1884 Parker began construction of a 20-room mansion on the property and "The Oaks" was finished in 1885. The ranch was designed to give the impression of an English estate with rolling hills, granite bridges and miles of roads surfaced with decomposed granite. It was around this time that Parker began to enjoy his wealth, and he and Lucy became socially prominent in San Francisco, Monterey, Denver, Boston and New York.

The *Spring Valley Ranch* is itself an amazing story, but that will have to wait for another time.

My intent in writing this was to describe, as best I could, the personal qualities of Joel Parker Whitney. I hope that I have been able demonstrate that he was a pretty remarkable man. Not only was he a dedicated outdoor sportsman but an accomplished businessman as well. He enjoyed social and political functions; engaged in literary pursuits, land development and

reclamation; became a celebrated sheep farmer and breeder as well as a farmer engaged in growing grapes and oranges, and producing raisins. He owned buildings in San Francisco and accumulated one of the largest estates in California.

In his later years, Parker and his family traveled by private rail car. But whenever the San Francisco Examiner interviewed him, he always asked to be described as a "simple farmer from Rocklin" despite the fact that he was "The Richest Man In Placer County."