UPDATE —

In the March issue of the Empire Star, I wrote about the possibility of “the beginning of something new” and suggested that you stay tuned for the latest on what’s happening with the Hardrock Mining Interpretative Center “idea” (the old Underground Tour Center). It’s now five months later and things have been happening! So, here’s update #1-- not very exciting at this point, but, hopefully, interesting to you readers:

- EMPA and the Department of Parks and Recreation signed a Memo of Understanding outlining the responsibilities of each party on this project.
- EMPA asked for, and received, permission from our grantor, CCHE, to use the balance of funds in the Grant (approximately $50,000) to fund some of the initial costs in this “re-directed” effort.
- In early June, an 18-page Request for Proposal was sent out to interested parties. An abbreviated version of the purpose of the project is to:

  Produce a plan that will guide the interpretative and educational development of key areas of the park, including 1) the Hard Rock Interpretive Center, 2) the Osborn Hill and Penn Gate legacy mining sites, 3) the Sand Dam, and 4) the interconnectivity of the Hard Rock Loop Trail that will unite these outlying areas with the existing visitor services in the Mine Yard and Cottage Grounds.

- In late June, a contract was signed with a local firm, Tallac Applied Ecology & Design, to perform the identified work.
- The project is divided into 17 segments; November 30, 2014 is the deadline for submitting the plan guidelines.

Please note: This is a vital step, but it is only providing a guide for what can be done and how it can be done. With this information, Parks will then be able to formulate their plans, do the necessary budgeting, and send their requests up through the chain of command for ultimate approval and funding from Sacramento.

As stated above, this first step is scheduled for completion late this year. By early next year we'll hopefully be able to share, in update #2, some of their findings!

Don't forget the Event of the Summer -- Miners Picnic!

Larry Skinner
Though we usually think of January as the time for “new beginnings” – in this instance, the change is taking place in mid-summer ... in fact, right now. After serving close to four years in a leadership capacity (yes ... I started in January, 2011) with the Cottage Living History Program, I'm stepping down. Although I know I've made the right decision (there’s no doubt in my mind!), it's not without some mixed emotions that I'm retiring. Yes, I've spent a ton of time on it, but it’s been so rewarding! I’ve told many people that it’s been my very favorite “job” – paid or volunteer – that I’ve ever had – and I'll miss many things about it. Most especially, I’ll miss working directly with the dozens of dedicated, fun-to-work-with Cottage docents! However, I'm only resigning from my Coordinator responsibilities – I still plan to participate in the CLH program as well as volunteering in other activities at the Park.

In my place, three of our Cottage VIPs have volunteered to step up and take over the leadership role: Jane Bland, my CoCoordinator for more than a year, plus Nancy Koring and Cheryl Balmain, who have served as our “assistants” during this past year. The three of them haven’t entirely worked out just who is going to be responsible for what, but I believe that Cheryl and Nancy are going to serve as Co Coordinators while Jane is going to lead several activities and chair most of the events at the Cottage. As their plans gel, I’m sure they’ll communicate with everyone what their plan is going to be. I know it'll be a smooth transition.

However – you’re still going to see my name right here on the Cottage page in the Empire Star as I’ve agreed to still be responsible for that each month. It’s an activity that I’ve always enjoyed anyway so it works for all of us.

Now – on a completely different topic, I want our readers to know that I’ve recently purchased a book to add to our Cottage Library. It’s one I’ve been curious about for some time as it’s been referenced in our Cottage Manual for years. I’ve thought that it could be of real interest to our Cottage “players” who assume the role of Willis Polk for living history, but after a quick scan of the book, I think it could be of interest to those players who play the roles of the Bourns as well – and, in fact, anyone who wants an insight into California architecture, and specifically that of San Francisco, and what influenced it during the 1890’s and the early part of the 20th century. This includes, of course, the time period when the Webster St. home, several buildings at Empire, and Filoli were all designed for the Bourns by Willis Polk. The book is called On the Edge of the World, Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century, and was written in 1983 by Richard Longstreth, and the four architects are Polk, Coxhead, Schweinfurth, and Maybeck. It not only contains photos of the Webster Street home and the Empire Cottage (interior as well as exterior), it also has reproductions of many of Polk’s original drawings of many of his projects in and around San Francisco. It will soon be available in our little Cottage library located in Katie’s former bedroom.
THE CAKE WALK AT MINERS PICNIC!
HELP! I know you wouldn’t want to have this very popular activity cancelled – would you?!?!? But, that’s what could happen if YOU, among many others, don’t step forward and call or email me to let me know that you’ll be delivering something sweet that morning! Your donation does not have to be an actual “cake” --- it can be cookies, a pie, even cinnamon rolls … anything that our dozens of young visitors that day would consider “sweet to eat”! It doesn’t have to come from your kitchen even. Remember that the Cake Walk generates pure profit for EMPA projects for the Park!

Please help me save the Cake Walk for this year’s Miners Picnic on August 23. Call or e-mail me, Lise Hinman at 273.8266 or lhinman0@gmail.com (that is a zero after hinman), soon … very, very soon! Thanks!

Cake boxes will be available at the Visitors' Center the week before the Picnic. Cakes (cookies, cupcakes, etc.) can be dropped off on the day of the event, August 23, between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m. You should bring your cakes to the Clubhouse kitchen. If there is a problem with any of these arrangements, please give me a call and we can work something out.

Lise

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Dates to Remember

August 14
Coordinator Meeting
10:00 a.m. in the Docent Building
(note that this is a week earlier than usual)

August 19
EMPA Board of Directors Meeting
9:30 a.m. in the Docent Building

August 23
119th Miners Picnic
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

September 17
Picture & Popcorn Night
(comes and see selected photos from Billy Vincent’s photo albums)
In the Clubhouse - tentative time is 5:30 p.m. - details next month.
News From Your Blacksmith Shop
By Bill Blount, Co-Coordinator

Early in June the Blacksmith Shop held one of its monthly “Hammer-In's.” Each month (usually) we try to further our knowledge of smithing by having a guest speaker/demonstrator give us a presentation on a segment of our craft. We use outside speakers when available or existing smiths when willing. Some of the presentations cover a particular item such as a tool or an item to offer in the Gift Shop while other presentations cover techniques and skills that might be used to produce a variety of items. We have been blessed with demonstrations by some of the professional smiths in the area who one might see at the Draft Horse Classic or the County Fair and who also function at Sutter's Fort and other venues. Sometimes these presentations leave us a bit in awe because they make the difficult seem so easy. I guess that’s what 25 years of experience does. On the other hand, some of the best demonstrations have been carried out by our own smiths. They know us and our abilities and are willing to work at that level and take the time to explain just what they are doing.

The Hammer-In held in June was a perfect example of one of our own showing off some skills that he had acquired recently at a California Blacksmith Association meeting in Vista, CA. Dan Perkins went through several demonstrations of items that might well fit into our group of items we offer in the Smith. There were some skills involved that will challenge our members, but with a little practice, they should be able to produce most of what we saw. This kind of growth potential and skill growth is what makes smithing an exciting art to work in. Being able to share the skills we each gain, helps each of us grow. It’s not just the new members who gain from our demonstrations, but each of us is challenged to step beyond our skill level and push ourselves to grow.

A couple of asides here. The Gold Rush Days were a seeming success at least for the Blacksmiths. We got to talk to a bunch of folks from all over the country and world and moved a fair amount of material for a donation back into the Shop. It did get a bit "warm" late on the second day, but we all survived and had a pretty good time.

We didn’t schedule a Hammer-In for July for several reasons. One, our regular date fell on July 3 – not a good day plus we also needed a break from Gold Rush Days and time to work on plans for the Miners Picnic and the rest of the summer. Come out and see us and find out what we are all about!
From the Grass Valley Union, Tues., 10 Jan 1876, Pg. 2, Col. 1

We see it stated that the farmers will not, just yet, have the legislature to make a law which will prevent gold mining in these mountains. They only propose to get up a bill which will be referred to the next Legislature, two years from now, and which will do the work of salvation for valley farmers. The law, which will then be enacted, will prevent destruction if the farmers’ law can be made in such a way that it is practical in its working. There is no use of any State law on the subject.

The miners came first, located their claims, started into work and made the streams of the State muddy. The mud that went down has to stop somewhere, we suppose. Much of it goes out through the Golden Gate and may be filling up the great depths of the Pacific Ocean. The decisions of the Supreme Court of the State, in any number of instances, have passed upon the rights of the miners as to the use of water diverted from the natural streams and also as to the right of “dumpage” in canyons and streams below them. Congress has passed laws which enable miners to get patents for their mining grounds, together with rights of drainage. We do not see how any difficulties, suggested as existing in the valleys, can be overcome, unless the United States can invent and put up a flexible flume which will distribute tailings equally along the banks of the streams, causing the tailings to make embankments instead of making deposits in the bottoms of rivers. But whatever the United States may do in the premises, the farmers settled down below the miners, after mining had become a fixed and legitimate business, and after the miners had acquired rights, of which they cannot now be divested. It is incumbent, therefore, for the farmers to invent ways to save themselves from the destruction they fear, and while so inventing such ways to remember the first great principle that mining cannot and will not cease.
IT’S MINERS PICNIC TIME!

By Jack Laird, Miners Picnic Chair

Preparations are well under way for EMPA to show off its finest on August 23rd!

Along with all of the regular Miners Picnic activities and entertainment, we have added a few new events for the enjoyment of our 1,000+ visitors. For starters, the very talented band, Rush Creek, will be playing on our stage this year.

We will also be giving out the prize packages and awards to the winners of the Gold, Grit and Glory writing challenge – AND the winning Gold Raffle tickets will be drawn and the Gold Prizes awarded.

Grab the Gold Raffle!

We have added metal stamping to the list of children’s activities. New Empire volunteer, Kathy Field, has graciously offered to handle this event.

The popular “Search for the Gold” challenge is back again this year. The goal of this activity is to try to get our guests to explore areas of the Park that they might not normally visit -- while learning something interesting about that location. While on that subject, I could use suggestions for new locations to highlight. If you have an idea for an area of the Park that might be overlooked by our visitors, please contact me with your suggestions.

From all of the positive feedback I receive regarding Miners Picnic, I would say our visitors appreciate all the effort that all of us put into making this a rewarding day for all. If you’re attending this year’s event, but not working – please wear period clothing if possible instead of your Park vest. You don’t have to get fancy ... but, it’s just nice to look out and not see a sea of goldenrod vests on those who aren’t working!
From an interview of N.K. Robins, Mucker and Miner at Empire after 1935.  Interview date: 5/8/98.

I don’t recall being part of any strike.  I remember one time they talked about it a little bit.  They had sort of a meeting down there by Memorial Park.  It was kind of a farce.

The fellow that was kind of the instigator of it, who was probably a union rep, got up and gave a big talk.  He talked about how he was going to get Empire to produce the physical records for the year which got everybody laughing.  That kind of broke everything up.

He called on one old timer, I think he was an old Cousin Jack.  He said, “Well, you’ve been around here for a long time.  You know how things go.  What’s your opinion?”

The old timer got up and studied it for a while and finally said, “Well, if things don’t change, they’ll stay the way they are.”

That ended the meeting!

From an interview of Fred Whitford, Senior Mining Engineer.  Interview date: 8/23/95.

In the Pennsylvania Mine the men sat facing forward on the man skip.  In the Empire shaft they sat sideways.

The Idaho-Maryland shaft was so steep you put a leg over the shoulder of the man in front of you.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.

STILL Needed: Items for the Silent Auction!

I’m still seeking quality, new and/or gently used, items for this fun and popular event.  You can bring your donated treasures to the Gift Shop or the Smurf Room – we need them before August 18 so I have time to make descriptive signs for each item.

Last year we received some wonderful items and we grossed about $2,000.  The Auction will only be as good as our donations!  Go through your closets and cupboards and consider donating those things that you simply are not going to use!  It’s a therapeutic and cleansing process!  Or ... get creative and offer a “service” to the highest bidder.

If you have any questions, please email me at cajbordeau@gmail.com or call me at 305-6913.

Please do not bring items the day of the event!
Carol Bordeau
Silent Auction Chair
"Reproduced from an actual poster used at the Empire Mine."

THE WISE OLD OWL

A miner who'd never felt pain
Once jumped on a moving ore train,
But he slipped when he jumped
And his "coco" was bumped
And now he says "NEVER AGAIN!"
Yes, now he says "NEVER AGAIN!"

AVOID INJURY:—DO NOT JUMP ON MOVING CARS OR TRAINS
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www.empiremine.org
Empire Mine Park Association

Thanks to these folks for taking the lead in making the Empire Mine State Historic Park such a unique and enjoyable experience!

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THE EMPIRE STAR

This Newsletter is a Cooperative venture between the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Empire Mine Park Association.

On the web at www.empiremine.org