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IN THE VEIN

There are lots of exciting projects happening throughout the Park while the weather is warm. The greenhouse roof restoration has begun and we are looking forward to seeing the space being utilized once the project is complete.

The EMPA Board is very excited to report that the Clubhouse roof restoration project has been approved, with work scheduled to begin August 1. The expected completion date is mid-November. The roof leaked badly throughout the winter and damaged the inside walls, so this is a very important project, and the beginning of extensive work needed to save this historic structure.

As previously announced, the third annual “Mine, Wine & Dine” event is scheduled for Friday, August 2, 2019. We are thankful for all of the awesome local sponsors who have donated to this fundraiser that helps EMPA to support projects in the Park.

The 124th Miners Picnic is also coming up August 31, so grab your loved ones and come enjoy the tradition of the gold rush days. There will be musical entertainment from the Stamp Mill Stompers, Beyond the Rails and Past Due &Playable as well as a beer garden, food for sale and a mine yard rescue reenactment. This is such a fun event for people of all ages and we hope to see you all there!!

The process of creating the new Sierra Gold Parks Foundation is still in the works. As one might expect, this is a very tedious process, and much work remains to be done. I would like to thank all of the members on the transitional committee from EMPA, Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins and the South Yuba River Park Association for all of their hard work to make this new organization possible. As more pertinent information is developed I will keep you posted on the progress. If anyone is interested in being on the Board for the Sierra Gold Parks Foundation, which will be supporting our three local parks, or if you know of someone who would be interested, please email me at bpacillo@gmail.com.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Carol Braley for her 25 dedicated years of volunteer service in the Empire Mine Gift Shop. It is volunteers like Carol who make the behind-the-scenes activities at the Park thrive. As always, the Gift Shop can use more volunteers, especially during the busy summer season, so if you are interested in helping out, please inquire in the Gift Shop.

Until next time,

**Bri Cosbie**
SOME HISTORY ON THE MINERS PICNIC

By Caryl Fairfull

On June 5, 1895, the Grass Valley Evening Telegraph noted that the Grass Valley Miners Union Picnic would take place at Ismert’s Grove and Glenbrook Basin (the latter being known today as the Fowler Center, with B&C Home Center, Save Mart, etc.). It would feature baseball games and foot races. The picnic was sponsored by the Mine Workers Protective League and proceeds went to the widows and orphans of miners killed or injured on the job. The picnic was dedicated to the hard rock miners who knew how to party as hard as they worked. On the day of the picnic, businesses closed and stamp mills were quiet all over town. If the picnic was cancelled for rain, the miners had to report to work!

An article in the Daily Morning Union on June 1, 1895, told of a $40 prize for the drilling contest open to anyone, and $20 for the Mine Union member contest. The winning teams for baseball and football could win $20. Trains ran hourly and a round trip ticket plus picnic admission was 50 cents, round trip from Colfax was $1.00. Walk-in admission was 25 cents. As years passed, parking lots were provided, as cars gained popularity and fewer arrived by train. The picnic rotated between Glenbrook Basin, Chicago Park, and the Fairgrounds area.

Probably due to a 1942 Federal Order that stopped mining operations during the war, the picnic seems to have ended in 1943. The picnic was not on Bourn property until the Empire Mine State Historic Park restarted the traditional picnic in 1977.

Activities at the picnic changed over the years. In the early years there were prizes for the Free-for-All (fight), fat man’s race, fat lady’s race (really!) and for the prettiest, fattest and youngest babies. There were drilling and sawing contests for ladies and Cornish wrestling contests for the gents featuring Grass Valley vs. Nevada City and mine vs. mine. Cornish wrestlers wore canvas jackets. See how it is done on You Tube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JdrPOQ4L1Q

Other activities that evolved:  
1900 - Cake walks and tug-of-wars between mines began. A 1903 tug of war featured Empire Mine vs. Central Mine. They tied after pulling for 86 minutes!  
1906 - A greased pig contest ended quickly because they forgot to grease the pig!  
1914-19 - During WW I, Red Cross nurses sold Liberty Bonds at the Picnic.  
1927-28 - Life-saving and First-Aid contests began, and Empire Mine teams won both the underground and the surface First-Aid contests.  
1936 - A mucking contest was introduced. Winners received a trophy and their names were added to a plaque that remains here at the mine. A good mucker could fill a cart in 5-6 minutes!  
1937 - Sound trucks furnished by Buffalo Brewery provided music and public announcements.  
1942 - President of the Miners Union suggested that downtown businesses stay open, since they were already suffering reduced business due to the war. They still opted to close on picnic day.

When the Miners Picnic restarted in 1977 on the park grounds, as it is today, it featured the Nevada Union High School Band and Cornish wrestling contests. Since then, the Picnic has become a happy tradition and a chance to dress up and enjoy a picnic on the beautiful Park grounds. Bring the family and join us on August 31.
A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHANGE

By Lynne Buenz

Change is a part of life. We all know that, and yet we often find it hard to adjust. Recent articles in The Empire Star have informed of the pending formation of the Sierra Gold Parks Foundation, a consolidation of the park associations at Empire Mine State Historic Park, the South Yuba River State Park, and The Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins. EMPA, as the park association at Empire has been known, was incorporated as a California corporation in 1976, “...to promote the educational and interpretive activities of the State Park System, principally in the Empire Mine Project...” In 1978 the Internal Revenue Service determined that EMPA was qualified as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and therefore exempt from Federal income taxes.

During its 43-year existence, EMPA has financially supported or contributed to a myriad of projects at the Park, and provided continued financial support to volunteer interpretive programs. The one I am most familiar with is Cottage Living History, which has an extensive inventory of historic costumes and other “props” needed to create a meaningful experience for Park visitors, all the result of financial support from EMPA. EMPA has a proud history, and all who have been a part of it should be justifiably proud. Soon, however, it will become a thing of the past.

While what lies ahead is uncertain, no doubt there will be advantages as well as disadvantages for all three State Parks. The future of this newsletter is one uncertainty. This brings me to the real point of this article. At the present time, EMPA is (and for an extended time has been) financing the cost of copying and mailing via U.S. Mail the Empire Star to a small group of individuals who have requested that it be sent to them in this manner. Many of them were volunteers in the past, but several are still active. There are also members of EMPA with no volunteer history who have, at some point, requested that the newsletter be mailed to them. As far as I know, Empire is the only local State Park to afford this courtesy. The cost, however, is substantial. With the rising cost of postage (currently $.55) along with the cost of copying, over $1,000 in EMPA's funds are expended each year for this activity, and are therefore not available for improvements to the Park.

In October 2019, I will have served as editor/publisher of The Empire Star for four years. What many people do not know, however, is how the newsletter is distributed. This responsibility is handled by several people working behind-the-scenes. The individual handling the mailing via U.S. Mail is Chrysan Silence. Chrysan is also the current Co-Program Leader for the Gift Shop at Empire. E-mail distribution is a two-fold process: 1) distribution to EMPA members who are not volunteers is handled by Rick Sweringen, the current Membership Chair for EMPA; 2) distribution to current volunteers is handled by Kyle Ingram, Volunteer Coordinator at the Park. I wish to personally thank and acknowledge all of these individuals for their invaluable help. Contact information for each of them is as follows:

Chrysan Silence – email: cmsilence@hotmail.com; telephone: 477-6659
Rick Sweringen – email: rsweringen@cs.com; telephone: 408-202-3470
Kyle Ingram – e-mail: Kyle.Ingram@ca.parks.gov; telephone: 273-7714

If you are presently receiving The Empire Star in the mail, and have an email address, please consider switching to email instead. In doing so, you will save funds needed for other projects at the Park. If the newsletter is ultimately eliminated as part of the park association merger, the decision may be made for you!
Cake Walk

Once again, we need your help to make the Cake Walk at the Miners Picnic possible. This year the Picnic will be held on Saturday, August 31. Donations of cakes, cupcakes, cookies, or brownies are needed – all geared to children and children-at-heart.

Please call or email me, if you have any questions. Cake boxes will be available at the front desk in the Visitors Center during the week prior to the Picnic. Cakes need to be delivered to the downstairs kitchen in the Clubhouse the morning of the Picnic. If this is a problem, something else can be arranged by contacting me.

Thank you for your sugary donations to this fun event!

Lhinman0@gmail.com. (that is a zero behind hinman)
530-273-8266
925-588-8259

Empire Star Editorial Policy — All articles submitted for publication become the property of the Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA) and, as such, are subject to editing and/or other modification. In addition, articles may NOT be published the same month they are submitted in some instances due to space limitations.
WHO WAS BEST SERVED BY THE “MINE WORKERS” UNION?

By Gage McKinney

The most revealing fact about the local mining union, the Mine Workers Protective League (MWPL), is that many card-carrying members derisively called it the Mine Owners Protective League.

The MWPL descended from the first miners’ union in California, which formed after dynamite (called “giant powder”) was introduced into the Grass Valley gold mines. The Giant Powder strike of 1869 raised a fundamental question: who ran the mines? Could the owners who risked their capital dictate how the mines would operate or did the workers who risked their lives also have a voice? The history of local unions is a story of how these questions were answered.

The 1869 union was short-lived. Later in the 19th century, local miners organized a new union in affiliation with the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), which eventually had 200 locals representing hard-rock miners across 13 states. The WFM never solidified its membership and had limited influence in California. When in 1907 Grass Valley miners struck for an eight-hour day, they declined the WFM’s offer to send an experienced negotiator. The Grass Valley men would negotiate their own terms without outside help. The WFM later splintered and dissolved.

The MWPL formed in Grass Valley in 1919 in response to the inflation which followed World War I and the wage demands of miners whose real incomes were shrinking. The MWPL quickly recruited a majority of miners in the district and achieved a stunning success, a roughly 10% wage increase. The MWPL was never as successful again and gave back the gains of 1919 two years later after a period of deflation.

Historians David Beesley and Lynn Bramkamp have argued that the MWPL wasn’t a real union at all, because it didn’t strictly represent workers, but was principally a mutual aid society, because it provided benefits to members and their families. The Miners Picnic, which we commemorate this month at our historic state park, was a community celebration and also a MWPL fundraiser to help provide for widows and orphans.

The MWPL membership was largely mine laborers, but also included men who had risen to become shift bosses and foremen. These men were often leaders due to their seniority and always influential due to their talents.

Unions in these gold fields always had less to do with class distinctions – owners vs. workers – and more to do with local affiliations – insiders vs. outsiders. Mining men had ambitions to rise in society and so identified, at least partially, with the successful men around them, the mine managers and owners. They put their aspirations above their situations. They became rooted in the community, and like the owners, they had a vested interest in the uninterrupted success of the local mines.

The fissure between insiders and outsiders became obvious during the local upheavals of 1937–38, Nevada County’s labor war. In those years an outside organization, a genuine industrial union, attempted to organize in Nevada County. The supporters of this new, assertive union castigated MWPL as “a bunch of Cousin Jacks who only stood for larger pasties and more beer.” In the struggle between a local mutual society

(continued on page 6)
WHO WAS BEST SERVED... (continued from page 5)

and a national union, the MWPL colluded with mine owners, merchants and the county sheriff, and its supporters took the law into their own hands. Though often scorned by the men it presumably represented, the MWPL prevailed in 1938 and survived. It was still representing local miners in 1956 when gold mining ceased at the Empire Mine.

Non-stop fun and gold-mine history are waiting for you at the

124th Annual Miners Picnic

Saturday, August 31, 2019

Empire Mine State Historic Park • 10791 E. Empire St., Grass Valley

Special activities from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

Celebrate our gold-mine history at this popular event!

• Cheer the rescue team on, as they save the injured miners in the exciting Mine Rescue Reenactment at high noon
• Bring your own lunch and picnic on the beautiful grounds (or purchase food, drinks and treats from local vendors)
• Enjoy lots of live music, exhibits – and an old-fashioned cake walk
• Choose from tempting items in the silent auction
• Marvel at the lavish attire worn by our Living History docents, as they recreate our colorful past

“A picnic … a tradition … and tons of fun for everyone since 1895!”

Everyone's invited – including well-behaved dogs on leashes.

Phone (530) 273-8522 or visit www.empiremine.org for further details.

Tickets on sale at the Visitor Center:
$7 ages 17 & over, $3 ages 6 – 16, FREE admission for children under 6 – FREE parking.

Designed by Sherry Sanchez, this year’s poster is ready to spread the word!
From an interview of George E. Clark, Miner. Interview date 9/30/87.

If you were “stopeing,” you blasted to the outside. Your two holes would be parallel to the open wall. Your next two would be parallel to those. You would shoot the first ones off, then the second and so on. It would be like flipping the pages of a book.

In a drift it was a different proposition. Depending on how hard the rock was, you would set your drilling machine up about 5 feet high. You would tip your machine down at about a 45-degree angle. You would drill one hole at that angle right in the middle of the face of the tunnel. After that one was drilled, you would slide over and drill one on each side.

Then you would tip your machine up and drill 3 holes in a fan shape above the previous holes. You would lift your machine up and drill 2 holes almost at the top of the tunnel.

After that you would drop it down about two feet from the floor. You would tip your machine up to drill your holes close to the holes that you had drilled down. It was just like wedge shapes. You would have three wedges drilled into the wall. Under them you would drill three holes we called lifters. When you loaded the center holes pointing down, you would put about 10 sticks of dynamite in each one depending on how hard the rock was.

The fuses are about eight or 10 feet long. On the three holes pointing down, you would cut your fuses off about a foot outside the hole. You cut the fuses for the holes aiming up the same. Then you start at the top and cut your center holes a couple of inches longer. You would cut the two side holes a little bit longer than those.

When you lit the fuses the last ones to go off would be your lifters on the bottom. That would kick the whole pile out as far as you could get it.

You would set your slick sheet back about two or three feet from the face. If you put it too close, the blast would lift it on you. I have put them as close as 18 inches and had it stay there.

From an interview of Bob Paine. Interview date 3/1/83.

I had a touch-and-go operation with the Empire for the last 54 years. I went to work for the Alpha Hardware Company. I was a truck driver and it was my job to haul the powder. It was always on a Sunday because that was a safe time to haul it. I brought the acetylene one and the oxygen tanks to Empire and the blasting caps.

I later got a job with the Nevada County Railroad. We hauled all of the gold from the Empire to where we connected with the Southern Pacific at Colfax. I was never permitted to see the gold.

All of the days that there was a train leaving, I was the dispatcher. I was the boss. I always knew the makeup of the train. There was to be the caboose for the strong box. I know that sometimes the shipment was more than a million dollars, but I never saw the gold in the strong box.

I know that when they brought the gold from Empire to the railroad they never ever used the same route. During my time there was never an attempt to hold up a gold shipment. We always had a flat bed car in front of the caboose and behind it so no one could hide in a box car. We had instructions that the train went straight to Colfax with no stops in between.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.
MINERS PICNIC—124 YEARS IN THE MAKING!

By Courtney Ferguson

(All Photos by Richard Bannister)

Accounts of early Miners Picnics remind me of what wild events they must have been — with tug-o-wars, fat baby contests and other activities we, thankfully, don’t see often today. Saturday, August 31 will be the 124th Miners Picnic — with a different kind of line-up.

Rather than having lots of entertainment scattered around the Park, the plan this year is to make more use of the special stage by the Clubhouse. “Trad” jazz band, the Stamp Mill Stompers, are scheduled to play their 1920’s style of music in the morning. Mid-day we’ll enjoy light-rock classics from Beyond the Rails, as they make their Miners Picnic debut. Popular bluegrass band, Past Due and Playable, will perform in the afternoon. Our Living History docents will recreate our golden past, and at noon, the nail-biting mine rescue reenactment will take place. Visitors are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets, and picnic on the stately grounds — or they can purchase food and snacks from Sweeney’s Weenies, Back Porch Market and Lazy Dog Ice Cream.

Vintage cars, an old-fashioned cake walk, and a silent auction will add to the fun. With activities for children, exhibits, a visit from our resident mountain man, George Steger, as well as those adorable prospecting mini donkeys and their mini horse buddy, this year’s event promises to live up to its reputation as “a picnic...a tradition...and tons of fun for everyone!”

Past Due and Playable will close the event with their lively bluegrass music.

Ready to go prospecting - and stealing hearts in the process - the mini donkeys and their mini horse friend are always popular guests.
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Program Leaders

**Interpretive Program Leaders**

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
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**Administrative Program Leaders**

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<td>Nursery</td>
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*Note: Changes in directory listings on this and the following page should be sent to Lynne Buenz, Editor/Publisher, at la_buenz@hotmail.com*
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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*Not a voting member of the Board.

Special Note: The Board presently has two open Director positions.

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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