IN THE VEIN... 

We have concluded another successful year at the Empire Mine State Historic Park, and now are starting a new year. How fast time goes! Building upon the past, I predict 2018 will be even more successful.

I am honored to be EMPA President for 2018. I am joined by a very talented team of officers and directors: Troy Hammer, Vice President; Betty Lucas, Treasurer; Brianna Pacillo, Secretary; Sean Gilleran, Steve Sanchez, Steve Ruble and Dan McCarthy. We have room for four more Board Members and it is not always required to be a volunteer at the Park to join the Board. If you would like to add your wisdom to the Board, please contact me.

Looking back, I am grateful for all of our volunteers who have made the Park’s annual events so successful. The Miners Picnic and Mother’s Day Springtime event were overwhelmed with many happy guests. All of our special events bring thousands of young people into the Park who will carry their memories into the future ensuring a continuing legacy for preserving our cherished State Park.

We now are looking for a chairperson for our next Mother’s Day Springtime event. If you would like to chair this event that honors mothers and grandmothers, you would have the full support of many experienced volunteers and Board Members. Please contact me or any Board Member if you would like to chair this happy event.

Park staff experienced a new record for visitors attending “Holidays at Empire Mine,” which was held the first two days after Thanksgiving. All of us who were there had a heartwarming experience! Any ideas to help with parking would be most appreciated by the Park staff! ( Helpers for Santa would be welcomed as well.)
HARVESTING ICE RIGHT HERE IN WESTERN NEVADA COUNTY!

by Bev Skinner and Anne Lohmann

While there are still arguments over whether more ice was needed in the 1860's for chilling booze or making ice cream, there is no question that there was an active ice-making business, not just in the Truckee area, but also right here in western Nevada County. For a few years, each summer three teams of horses would drag and load large blocks of ice from where it was stored in the Blue Tent area to local towns where it was delivered to the porches of homes and commercial businesses – especially the saloons.

Our local ice-making business actually began with events in France in 1848 when the overthrow of the Louis-Philippe monarchy left that country in chaos. The resulting effect of riots and famine caused many French families to flee their country. One of those Frenchmen to leave early-on was Francoise Sauvee, who came to Northern California in the 1850's, hoping for gold and wealth. He soon discovered that the easy days of finding gold were past, but because many of the original mining claims were no longer profitable to work, the land they were on became quite cheap to buy. The government also provided some homesteading offers. So he, with his wife and 3-year-old son, Victorien, settled in Nevada County, near an area today called Blue Tent, where he acquired a large amount of land and concentrated on ranching instead. On this Sauvee ranch there were several ponds that froze over in the winter and the ice was converted into ice blocks for a small winter business.

Then, early in 1863, after enduring the troubles in France and the death of their young daughter Mary, Louie and Alexandie Brindejon, with their 3 year-old son Louis, decided to come to California as well. They settled on a 450-acre ranch near the Sauvee Ranch. Shortly afterwards, the two families entered into a partnership to make and harvest ice that was to be stored in barns on the Brindejon property. Two barns were built there, one for storing the ice in sawdust, and the second to house the draft horses that were used to deliver the ice to merchants and homes in the summertime. As more and more of their fellow countrymen moved to the Blue Tent area, it became a real enclave of Frenchmen. Several of their descendants still live in the area today.

Rock Creek ran through the Brindejon property and its pure water was trapped in reservoirs, frozen, and then cut into 22-inch blocks. The ice was then packed in sawdust, where it could be kept for as long as two years. The total production for the Sauvee/Brindejon ice business is not known, but at another nearby ranch, the Arbogasts harvested 200 tons each year which they sold for $6 a ton for a total of $1,200. That was a nice profit for a part-time business in those days.

This story has become much too long for a single page, so “stay tuned” and read the second part in the next issue of The Empire Star – in March! I must, however, give my thanks now to the present owners of the Brindejon farm, Anne and Bob Lohmann. You'll hear more about them and the current status of one of the original barns built on that property!
IN THE VEIN (continued from page 1)

EMPA is blessed to have Courtney Ferguson as our “Public Outreach Coordinator.” All of her efforts to promote special events at the Park continue to bring more attention to our mission of keeping history alive and well.

Special recognition is due to Jennifer Greenfield who manages the Gift Shop. The Gift Shop has historically been the main fundraiser for EMPA. Thank you, Jennifer, and the dedicated staff of Gift Shop volunteers.

A special thank you also goes out to Board Member Steve Sanchez for bringing his famous people skills into full play by leading the charge for the first major EMPA fundraiser ever held at the Mine. As I write, Steve is already leading the “Mine, Wine, & Dine” Planning Committee for 2018. This event was very popular, and people are already requesting tickets for the next one scheduled for Friday, August 3, 2018. Mark your calendar for a fun time that raises money for Park upgrades.

I also want to recognize and thank all volunteers who work behind the scenes as tour guides, gift shop workers, blacksmiths, living history actors, lunch workers, history researchers, security, traffic controllers, van drivers, and especially the “over-achieving” “Over The Hill Gang” led by Tom Newmark and Jim Ward.

EMPA will continue to explore other ways of fundraising by taking advantage of the Park’s beautiful grounds for special events. One idea that is currently being explored is something that is becoming popular in state parks called a “Photography Workshop.” Amateur photographers have the opportunity to learn from professionals and have special access to areas in the Park to take photos. Our sister parks — South Yuba River and Malakoff Diggins — are planning such an event, and I look forward to learning from their experience.

I encourage new volunteers to join our “family” at the Mine. Talk to your friends and neighbors and encourage them to join us by simply stopping at the Park Visitor Center to sign up for the volunteer training program coming up in March. This only happens once a year, so do not miss it! Talk to your friends and anyone you come in contact with about joining our team. If you are already a member of our team, you know how rewarding it is to be connected.

The EMPA Board fully supports the Park staff’s efforts to bring the “Hard Rock Trail” to life. This will be a very popular tour once it is set up. Newmont has some clean-up work to do, and after that, I look forward to opening up a whole new experience for our tour guides and visitors.

If you are a member of EMPA, you are doing your part to support the Park. If you are not, why not join? The cost to join is very reasonable, and you will get a 10% discount at the Gift Shop. Please encourage friends to join us as well. Visit our website at empiremine.org or go to the Visitor Center for a membership application.

JIM COE
SPECIAL NOTE FOR COTTAGE LIVING HISTORY (CLH) DOCENTS

By Nancy Koring, CLH Co-Coordinator

HAPPY NEW YEAR, Cottage Living History Docents! Cheryl, Jane and I wish you health and happiness in 2018, and we hope that you will want to continue as a volunteer at the Cottage!

There are some dates you should know that you might pass on to potential CLH docents. As you are aware, you are the first line of recruitment. All your POSITIVE experiences told to others might interest some new volunteers.

First, February 17 from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm is the Empire Mine Open House. Anyone thinking of volunteering gets free admission to the Park, a map, and access to sites around the Park where volunteers are involved to get a sense of the activities. This might also be a nice time to take friends and family to the Park, as all Living History areas will be represented.

Next, March 3 OR March 10 are the dates for the one-day training session for new volunteers. Just one day is needed to learn all I learned in a week! Amazing, but true, and great use of time for potential volunteers. The times have not been set for this training, but I’m sure the Park will have that information for new volunteers at the Open House in February.

Thanks again for all you do. I’ll be calling all of you soon to update our roster, and I’m looking forward to talking with each of you.

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.
THE LAST COUSIN JACKS AT THE EMPIRE MINE

By Gage McKinney

They were the last of the Cousin Jacks, the last of the Cornish bound for an American mining district. Claude and Pete Edwards arrived in Grass Valley in 1950, ages 13 and 11. America was only “the next parish over,” as the Cornish expression goes, but the trip was high adventure for youngsters who had hardly been out of Cornwall.

Accompanied by their mother, Maggie Edwards, Claude and Pete left the village of Pendeen in the far west of Cornwall. They crossed the Atlantic on the Queen Mary and rode the train from New York to California. The boys had obtained their working knowledge of America at matinees, so when crossing the plains, they kept their eyes peeled for Indians. They arrived on the platform in Roseville wearing the high socks, short pants and blue blazers they had worn to school in Cornwall.

Their father, Leslie Edwards, and their older brother Bert, met Maggie and the two boys at the depot. Leslie had been a pumpman at the Geever tin mine in Cornwall, where the drifts extended under the ocean. “He and Bert immigrated six months before us,” Pete recalled. “Dad became pumpman at the Empire Mine and was already playing tenor horn in the Grass Valley band.”

Settling in America “wasn’t a difficult adjustment,” Claude remembered. The cricket bat Claude brought never got used, and the boys’ soccer ball wasn’t prized as it had been in Pendeen, but the gains outweighed the losses.

As soon as they arrived, their mother took the boys to J. C. Penny’s on Mill Street to replace their short pants with Levi’s. At Christmas they got cowboy shirts. American schools they found easy and more relaxed than British schools, and for the first time they went to school with girls. They were warmly welcomed by their aunt, Annie Granfeld, who was already living in Grass Valley. “We were welcomed by a community of Cornish families,” Pete recalled. Some, like the Hollows and Farleys, the Edwards had known back in Cornwall.

The Edwards boys seized new opportunities. “I worked under the gardener at the Empire, mowing the lawns and manually moving the sprinklers for $1.08 an hour,” Claude said. Soon he was driving a car. He eventually had a 35-year career with Lockheed Corporation and a second career with the City of Santa Clara.

Pete landed a job at the Parkview Market, owned by former Empire shift boss Dick Heather. Later at the Bank of America on Mill Street, he began a long career in banking and insurance.

The family’s migration had been calculated. When they came, Leslie Edwards was a 49-year-old asthmatic. His four brothers had mined from Africa to Australia and all had died before reaching 50. Leslie feared the same if he didn’t move to a drier climate. Maggie knew her sons eventually would have to leave Cornwall to support themselves. By immigrating as a family, she reasoned, the family might stay together.

Over lunch at the Mission Grill in Santa Clara, I asked Claude and Pete whether the family’s calculations had worked out. “Yes,” the brothers said emphatically. Their father lived a long life, and the family stayed close, all remaining in northern California.
SUPERVISING RANGER REPORT

By Dan Youngren

(Reprinted from January 2018 Issue of Bridgeport News)

Happy Holidays to our Park Volunteers and Partners! As we end 2017 and look forward to 2018, I am excited to see what this upcoming year brings. I am excited since I believe that California State Parks is truly starting to recover from the economic downturn that the early 2000s devastated us with. Did you know that in 2007 the South Yuba Ranger staff consisted of seven Rangers and one Supervising Ranger? Currently, we have only three Rangers assigned to the South Yuba River State Park and just one Supervising Ranger to cover all three parks in the Sector. We have been doing more with less for a long while. I am encouraged by what I have been hearing and seeing lately with our Department. Our Department has tapped into a new funding source that could very well turn into much needed permanent field positions. If this happens, minor maintenance project timelines will shorten, new and improved interpretive programs will be developed and morale will reach new heights. We could see some of these changes this upcoming year. Fingers crossed!

Now you know what I asked Santa Claus for...

Lastly, I want to thank all of our dedicated and positive-minded volunteers who have given so much this year. Remember, without your passion, our parks are merely just structures and static displays. Volunteers make our Parks come to life!

“Behind the scene” at 2017 “Holidays at Empire Mine.” Pictured at left are (L-R): Lee Anderson, Suzy Steele, Laurie Hart and Patti Gizzi. Pictured at right (L-R): Georgia Martinson, Jim Coe, and Janis Meals. Photos by Cheryl Balmain.

Editor's Note: OOPS! In the November/December 2017 issue of The Empire Star, the photographs on page 9, which were identified as images from past “Holidays at Empire Mine” celebrations were incorrectly credited. The photo on the right was provided by Courtney Ferguson, the one on the left was by Richard Bannister. My apologies for this error.
From an interview of Alfred J. Holman, Leaser, mine mucker, Empire, Garden Center, Ziebright, Bullion mines. Interview date 11/12/85.

When I left the Golden Center Mine, I went to work at the Bullion. They were opening up the shaft at that time. The shaft had grown over. There was manzanita and other brush all over the collar of the shaft. So we cut that down, cleaned it out and started opening up that shaft.

Then it had to be pumped out which took considerable time so I left there for a while. I went back later and worked there on the 900 foot level and on the 1500. That’s where the rich ore was, on the 1500. It was so rich that you could see gold in it most any place you looked.

I was there when it was shut down on midnight the 31st of March. I think that it was 1934 when they shut down that particular stope because they were overreaching on the Empire property. The foreman came to me that night and said, “if you had what you trammed out of here tonight, you would never have to work anymore. It’s been going for $2,000 a ton.”

I have worked in several mines and I have never seen anything that was so rich as what came out of the Bullion. It was owned by the Idaho-Maryland company at that time.

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

From an interview of Phil Keast, Master Mechanic and Mechanical Engineer, Empire Mine 1920-1957. Interview date 5/3/87.

The electric hoist was a Wellman-Seaman-Morgan that was installed at Empire in 1914. It was a very good hoist. It was 500 horse power. We had very little trouble with it. Each drum had 6,200 ft of 1” wire rope.

The hoist was installed too close to the shiv wheels at the top of the head frame. We had winding trouble. That is the reason for the idling tower out in front of the hoist house. If you took those idlers off you couldn’t wind the wire rope evenly on the drums.

The idling tower is made with landing barge steel bought from Stockton after WWII. The tower had a wooden frame previous to that. I made the drawings and one Sunday morning we cut out the wood and put in the steel frame.

The hoist motor was 1,040 volts. It had air brakes on the drums.
SPECIAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: In late November, I received an email from Bob Jennings, which forwarded the latest message he had received from docent Terry Armstrong. You may recall from the September 2017 issue that Terry and his wife were spending an extended time in Sweden. The latest email details a continuation of their travels. It had been my intention to publish Bob’s submission in this issue, however, I simply ran out of room! It will be included in a future issue.
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

**Interpretative Coordinators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour Guides</td>
<td>George Sanford</td>
<td>274-1646</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tang62000@comcast.net">tang62000@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Tour Guides</td>
<td>Park Staff</td>
<td>273-8522</td>
<td><a href="mailto:empiremine@parks.ca.gov">empiremine@parks.ca.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Tour Guides</td>
<td>Marilyn Sakowicz</td>
<td>272-5507</td>
<td><a href="mailto:emsako@sbcglobal.net">emsako@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith Shop</td>
<td>Marilyn Sakowicz</td>
<td>272-5507</td>
<td><a href="mailto:emsako@sbcglobal.net">emsako@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith Shop</td>
<td>Bill Blount</td>
<td>477-0317</td>
<td><a href="mailto:willie5311@gmail.com">willie5311@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Living History</td>
<td>Cheryl Balmain</td>
<td>273-6087</td>
<td><a href="mailto:balmainiacs@gmail.com">balmainiacs@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Living History</td>
<td>Nancy Koring</td>
<td>273-5510</td>
<td><a href="mailto:seekoring1@uddenlink.net">seekoring1@uddenlink.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubhouse Living History</td>
<td>Betty and John Lucas</td>
<td>679-0310</td>
<td><a href="mailto:blucas1208@gmail.com">blucas1208@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Tours</td>
<td>Marsha Lewis</td>
<td>274-2834</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mjlewis847@yahoo.com">mjlewis847@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineyard Living History</td>
<td>Vince Seck</td>
<td>273-4574</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vinceseck@yahoo.com">vinceseck@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineyard Living History</td>
<td>Frank Hamlin (Intern)</td>
<td>268-5672</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vinceseck@yahoo.com">vinceseck@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineyard Stations</td>
<td>Vince Seck</td>
<td>273-4574</td>
<td><a href="mailto:frank@hamlin.net">frank@hamlin.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineyard Stations</td>
<td>Frank Hamlin (Intern)</td>
<td>268-5672</td>
<td><a href="mailto:frank@hamlin.net">frank@hamlin.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luncheons</td>
<td>Jane Bland</td>
<td>274-2440</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Janebland16@gmail.com">Janebland16@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luncheons</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
<td>575-9155</td>
<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrative Coordinators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Barbara Jarvis</td>
<td>477-1557</td>
<td><a href="mailto:barbaraj@ncen.net">barbaraj@ncen.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History</td>
<td>Lise Hinman</td>
<td>273-8266</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lhinman2@gmail.com">lhinman2@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>Jennifer Greenfield</td>
<td>205-7469</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jgardens2@att.net">jgardens2@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
<td>575-9155</td>
<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHG</td>
<td>Tom Newmark</td>
<td>265-3848</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rajotom@fsaccess.net">rajotom@fsaccess.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Lauren Wilson</td>
<td>273-7714</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lauren.wilson@parks.ca.gov">lauren.wilson@parks.ca.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Garden</td>
<td>Carol Terrell</td>
<td>368-0047</td>
<td><a href="mailto:terryrarmstrong@gmail.com">terryrarmstrong@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Propagation</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
<td>575-9155</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bluesycarol@gmail.com">bluesycarol@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Lianne Werner</td>
<td>273-0704</td>
<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Changes in directory listings on this and the following page should be sent to Lynne Buenz, Editor/Publisher, at 1a_buenz@hotmail.com
Empire Mine State Historic Park
10791 East Empire Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945

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THE EMPIRE STAR

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On the web at www.empiremine.org