IN THE VEIN...

Summer has arrived and the Park has never looked so lovely. Special thanks to Park employee Jennifer Wood and her one person staff as well as all garden volunteers for dedicating their time and energy toward keeping the Park famous and a draw for weddings and tours. It attracts visitors from all over the world. Jennifer says she would love to have more help in the field. If you like to get outdoors, make new friends, and love the gardens, don't be shy. Check in with Jennifer just about any day of the week to find out how you can have fun helping in the gardens.

July is typically a relaxed time at the Park. In the meantime, our wonderful volunteers are preparing for the second annual “Mine, Wine & Dine” fundraising event to be held on Friday, August 3. All funds raised from this event are dedicated to supporting improvements or repairs in the Park. Tickets are going fast, so don't wait to buy them. They are available at the Gift Shop or may be purchased through our website at www.empiremine.org.

On August 25, the annual Miners Picnic will be held. Steve Sanchez is the volunteer chair of this event, and will need help in many capacities. Among other special features, it would also be wonderful to have living history volunteers dress in period attire and mingle with the crowd. This event is a reenactment of the welfare fundraiser event begun over 100 years ago to benefit the widows and families of deceased miners.

I am proud and pleased to announce that the Board has a new Membership Chairman. Rick Sweringen will be assuming the responsibilities of this position, which have been ably managed on a temporary basis by Betty Lucas, while she simultaneously served as Treasurer. Rick has a personal goal of increasing EMPA membership by making contacts in our local and international communities. Go Rick!

Treasurer Betty Lucas has informed the Board of her intention to retire at the end of this year. We are very grateful to Betty for all the work she has done, which has benefitted not only the Board, but the entire EMPA membership. In the meantime, the Board is seeking someone who would be willing to assume the duties of this position.

Until next time...

JIM COE

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**Inside this issue:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Living History (CLH)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLH, continued</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Highlight</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates to Remember</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vein Glory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakes, Cakes, Cakes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tales from the Tapes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions of Empire Mine State Historic Park</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMSHP Volunteer Coordinators</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPA Board of Directors/Committees</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE OYUNG FAMILY OF EMPIRE MINE

By Caryl Fairfull

Many EMPA docents know Phil Oyung and see him here at the Park occasionally. Last month I wrote about the Chinese community in Grass Valley. This article will focus on the Oyung family, also spelled Owyang or Oyeung, and their life here. It is based on an interview of Phil Oyung by Marsha Lewis and transcribed by Lise Hinman in September 2016.

Phil Oyung was born in 1938 in the cabin that is still here in the Park to parents George Owyang and Susie Sing Owyang. But the name registered at the courthouse is Oyung. He had five brothers and a sister. His grandparents also lived here, so a total of 10 people lived in the small cabin.

(continued on page 3)
THE OYUNG FAMILY OF EMPIRE MINE (continued from page 2)

Phil remembers tending over 300 chickens, a dozen turkeys, and some goats. The children also helped with a large vegetable garden that fed the family and provided some income by selling to Purity and later to SPD Markets. Phil said they often gave vegetable “freebies” to mine shop staff who stopped by on their way home. They had corn, tomatoes, string beans, raspberries, a big fig tree and a loquat tree.

Phil remembers a happy childhood. They sneaked into the bowling alley and swimming pool and occasionally played tennis on the tennis court. He reminisced that Mr. Nobbs, who lived in the building which now houses the present State Park offices, was more forgiving of the children, and that Jack Mann, the Mine Manager, was strict and stern when he caught them sneaking into the bowling alley. The family had a garage with many old trucks and old cars. All the boys learned to fix the cars, and sometimes drove them to Grass Valley for a movie. But usually they walked to town. He also noted that they had a television set in the 1950’s, but he saw his first TV at the Nevada County Fair in 1948. The only channel was KGO from San Francisco.

The interview really focused on the house. The house started as a one room cabin and two bedrooms were added in the front. He said that Grandma Gum Ming had one bedroom, and his parents had the other. His Grandfather, Geung, went back to China. His mother had a kitchen with a pantry and hot and cold running water. The tiny bedroom off the hall belonged to his brother, Walter. Chinese travelers sometimes stayed in the tiny cabin with the family. There was a small privy at the back of the house and later an indoor bathroom. They had a radio, which stimulated Phil’s interest in electronics. He later did electrical work underground in the mine for $1.00 an hour.

Phil went to Union Hill School and to Grass Valley High School, which later became Nevada Union High School. He went to Sierra College and Sacramento State and became an Electrical Engineer. He worked in the gardens here with his Dad over summer vacations during high school and college. He later worked at McClellan Air Force Base. His sister went to St. Mary’s Convent and then on to business school.

His father, George Owyang, worked forty years in the gardens at Empire Mine and Phil believes that is the family’s greatest legacy. Phil worked in the gardens after George’s retirement. He also remembers following his Dad around the mineyard machinery as a kid, among the dangerous machinery and stamp mills, which he says OSHA would never allow today.

Phil reminisced about shutting the mine down in 1956. He said that someone wanted to buy the Cottage (he called it a mansion) and use it as a restaurant, but the sale was never completed. He remembers selling off much of the mineyard equipment and furniture. Phil is now 80 years old and sees his family cabin as an important historical place. He still lives nearby and I was happy to run into him at the Park in May. He verified some of the facts in this story. We are grateful that this interview took place and his oral history was recorded. Many thanks to Phil Oyung, Marsha Lewis, and Lise Hinman.

************
VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT:
MINEYARD LIVING HISTORY

By Lauren Wilson, Park Interpretive Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator

Saturday, June 9 marked the first Mineyard Living History session of the season. The machine shop was open and the moving belt equipment was in full swing. Volunteers in period attire were positioned throughout the mineyard portraying and interpreting the various working positions of the mine. There were also docents who demonstrated the working two stamp mill, as well as Empire Mine’s newly added and functioning Cornish Pump assembly.

Scheduling Mineyard Living History can be difficult as shade in the mineyard is lacking and the sun can get extremely hot, but this day was the perfect temperature. The visitors thoroughly enjoyed talking to the docents and seeing (and feeling) the moving equipment in the mineyard. The next opportunity to see Mineyard Living History will be at the Miners Picnic on August 25, 2018.

Dates to Remember

Tuesday, July 17—9:30 a.m.
EMPA Board of Directors Meeting
Docent Building

Thursday, July 19, 10:00 a.m.
Coordinators Meeting
Docent Building

Friday, August 3. 6:00—10:00 p.m..
“Mine, Wine & Dine” Fundraiser

Saturday, August 25—11:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Miners Picnic

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WHEN MINERS WALKED
By Gage McKinney

“Do you remember miners walking to work?” I asked Brita Berryman Rozinsky, a Grass Valley native who remembers earlier days. “Oh, yes,” she said. “They walked along Conaway Street where we lived, probably on their way to the Empire.” Her father, machinist Edwin Berryman, walked to the Empire with his friend, Al Hooper, who worked in the mill.

Big cities, and towns on the prairie or plains, developed in grids of parallel and perpendicular streets. Grass Valley developed linearly, along the supply route from the river at Marysville to the diggings. The miners wore paths on either side of Wolf Creek, through Boston Ravine and along the ridges of Gold Hill, Ophir Hill and the adjacent uplands. Those who came to extract riches from the earth walked in the footsteps of the Native Americans and followed the tread of wolf and bear.

At the dawn of the 20th century, they were still walking the same paths, which had been graded for horse and carriage and were soon to be rocked and paved for automobiles. They built homes along the way, determining the patterns of settlement. Most Grass Valley addresses put a miner within a mile or two of the Empire yard.

Miner Albert Jeffrey walked to the Empire from his home near Colfax Avenue. Mechanic Oakley Johns came from another direction, from his home on French Avenue, and over a rickety foot bridge on Wolf Creek. John Hollow, a shift boss, built his house on South Auburn Street—a mile’s walk either way from his work at the mine and his evening band practice and lodge meetings in town.

Royce Clemo, another native, remembered the walking era. “My father, Edmund Clemo, was assistant chief electrician at the Empire,” he said. “We lived at 417 South Auburn Street.” Edmund Clemo met Phil Keast every morning, and for decades the pals walked shoulder-to-shoulder.

Every morning the streets of the town filled with hundreds of miners swinging their lunch buckets, exchanging greetings, and walking to their jobs. Many Empire workers lived on the streets nearest the mine, including Empire, Pine, Race, Whiting and Berryman streets, Mainhart Drive and Neville Way. Boarding houses lined Kate Hayes Street, which skirts a hill like a deer path.

Around the turn of the 20th century, shift boss Alva Mitchell walked all the way from Chapel Street. In 1910 engineer Albert Richards came daily from Pleasant Street, though perhaps he could afford a horse.

Walking miners were so common they were hardly noticed. Newspaper editor Edmund Kinyon noticed them when he came in 1911, bringing a prairie boy’s eyes. He found Grass Valley marvelous and strange.

The old patterns changed in the 1930s when automobile dealers in Grass Valley won national awards for sales. The miners parked their new cars beneath sheds built by the mines. Yet even then, not all workers drove. Stenographer Helen Stewart walked to work in the office, though sometimes she got a

(continued on page 6)
WHEN MINERS WALKED (continued from page 5)

lift on the way. Miner Sam Martini was walking from Washington Street long after others were driv-
ing.

In the years before Grass Valley acquired snow removal equipment, and in an era when the town saw plenty of snow, the streets were impassable after a storm. Then everyone was on foot again.

Now in our day, mending our sedentary ways, we are treading the old paths again. Even though gold mining is gone, generations of hikers and joggers are still following Miners Trail towards the Empire Mine.

Cakes..Cakes..Cakes

Once again, we need your help to make the Miners Picnic Cake Walk possible. This year the Picnic will be held on August 25th. We need donations of cakes, cupcakes, cookies, or brownies – all geared to children and children at heart.

Please call or email me, if you have any questions. There will be cake boxes at the front desk of the Visitor Center. Cakes need to be delivered to the Clubhouse kitchen the morning of the Picnic. If this is a problem, we can arrange something else.

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
From an interview of Phil Keast, master mechanic and mechanical engineer, Empire Mine 1920-1957.

The rescue team would go down to San Francisco for state rescue competitions. The oil fields also had rescue teams.

The first mine rescue training started at the North Star Mine about 1915 using Draeger breathing equipment. George Starr started the mine rescue at Empire. They got a premium on their insurance because they had the mine rescue set up.

They used to have banners in the office showing the competitions in San Francisco. Purple banners with gold letters. They had sticks across the top with gold rope like football banners. They were given as awards to Empire from the competition in San Francisco.

The Idaho-Maryland and the Empire were the two main mines that had the rescue teams. If the other Grass Valley mines needed them, they would come from those two mines. Once a year the Bureau of Mines would send a man to Empire to give additional training.

In the safety office they kept an 800 foot spool of 1/4 or 3/8 inch manila rope. When they went into the mine where they had made it smoky, the men would put down the spool and take the end with them when they went into the smoke. This way they could follow the rope out.

The men would get extra pay for being on the rescue team. They would have a two-day training class. On the first day they would have lectures. They would show them what they were to do and how to use the breathing apparatus.

On the second day they would actually go down at regular shift. They would finish the training about 2:00 in the afternoon and go home. It was kind of a premium as they would be off 1-1/2 or 2 hours early.

Charlie Plumbtree ran the safety program. He would go around and ask the men if they wanted to get on the mine rescue team.

From an interview of Charles Concannon, nephew of Kathryn (Katie) C. Moriarty, Empire Cottage housekeeper. Interview date 4/8/2002.

The only time Aunt Katie would leave Grass Valley was when she would stay at our house in San Francisco for a week or two each year. She would take the train. When my mother and I came up to visit here we would also take the train. It was an all-day trip.

The last time I went to Grass Valley was when I was about 18 years old. I drove as I had a car then. I never met any of the Bourns.

Aunt Katie was a very likable person. She was very straight-laced. You had to follow her rules. She dressed in a very relaxed manner. She didn’t wear anything like a maid’s uniform or anything like that.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.
IMPRESSIONS OF EMPIRE MINE STATE HISTORIC PARK
(and Reflections on Being a Docent)

By Lynne Buenz

My “career” as a Docent began with a week-long training session in 2007, during which time my “classmates” and I were given the opportunity to learn about the history of the Empire Mine and the Bourn family, as well as the “do’s and don’ts of being a volunteer with the California State Park system.

We also learned about all the volunteer opportunities available at the Park, with each program coordinator making a presentation describing these opportunities. It was hard to choose among them; however, I initially chose to work in the gardens, and in Cottage Living History. I also had a brief “stint” in the Gift Shop, and began “shadowing” experienced Docents in preparation for leading tours through the historic gardens.

Working in the gardens meant an early morning start to the day, before the official opening of the Park. During the summer months, we arrived at 7:00 a.m. (not being a natural “morning person,” that was a challenge for me!). It was worth it, though, as I had the opportunity to get up close with and learn about all the plants and trees, especially in the historic rose garden. It was a genuine pleasure to work with Angie Slicker, Pat Coe, Lyn Muth and many other garden loving Docents. We worked side-by-side raking, pulling weeds, dead heading the roses, and other special tasks we might be assigned to on any particular day.

In Cottage Living History, my first year was spent on the inside, dressed in a maid’s costume, listening to the dialogue of the lead characters, guiding visitors from the living room through the writing room to the kitchen and learning more about the history of the Bourn family and their friends and colleagues. The year following, I decided to try the outside role as an Interpreter, explaining to Park visitors about the history of the family and the Cottage before they went inside. It is a true delight and pleasure to meet people from all over the world, answer their questions, and share information. On a recent occasion, one visitor I encountered was truly “in awe” of the Cottage and of the Park in general. I told her that I understood that feeling, as although I’m now in my 12th season as a Docent, I’m still amazed that something well over 100 years old has been so beautifully preserved and stands as a legacy to the family that originally created it.
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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
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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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Special Note: The Board presently has three 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