IN THE VEIN

Last month, I introduced myself as the new President of EMPA. I thought it might be appropriate now to tell you a bit more about myself.

Growing up in Grass Valley, I was always fascinated with the Empire Mine and the California Gold Rush. When I visited the Mine as a youth, I felt like a kid at Disneyland, and I still have my bottle of gold to this day. When I went to college I attended Humboldt State University where I studied geography and geology. It was there where my love of gems and minerals and earth processes really took form. I loved learning about how plate tectonic events played such a huge role in our landscape as well as the process of gold and earth’s precious metals in our area. When I graduated and moved home, I became a volunteer at the Empire Mine in 2013 and subsequently became the secretary of EMPA. My passion for earth science and our local history has made me a captivated volunteer and avid lover of the Empire Mine. I am proud to be the first-ever female President as well as the youngest in EMPA history. I am also honored to share my love of the Empire Mine with all of you and share our journey together to preserve its incredible history.

I hope that everyone has been enjoying this amazing winter, and has had the chance to enjoy the beautiful snow. Spring is slowly approaching and we are looking forward to the blooming flowers and vibrant colors at the Park. While it is the slow season for visitors, EMPA is still plugging away making preparations for the year’s anticipated events. Our signature fundraiser, “Mine, Wine & Dine,” is still looking for sponsors, so please pass the word to friends, family and anyone who is passionate about our Park.

Cheers!

Bri Cosbie
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THE GOLD RUSH AFFECTED THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE?

By Caryl Fairfull (all photos provided by Caryl Fairfull)

A year ago, my husband Doug and I were in New Zealand (NZ) touring some old mining towns on the west coast of the South Island of NZ. We had a wonderful day experiencing living history in a town called Reefton, not too far from Christchurch. In Reefton, named after the quartz reef where gold is found, we stopped at the Miners Hut, and chatted with about seven Bearded Miners while they prepared “Billy Tea” for us by throwing tea into a cast iron pan with water at a rolling boil. Tea with the Bearded Miners was a quintessential living history experience!

The gold rush in Quartzopolis and Reefton started about 1860, and helped to spur development of modern conveniences. In 1872 telegraph messages heightened interest in gold to a fever pitch. In 1888, Reefton became the first town in NZ and the Southern Hemisphere to receive electricity. In 1892 the railroad arrived in Reefton. In 1870 the population was several thousand, but today it is just over 1,000. There are some parallels here with developments in Grass Valley.

We went to the Blacks Point Museum, just two miles from Reefton, and were greeted by a man dressed in a vest and top hat, and carrying a pocket watch. He guided us through the museum full of gold mining history. We learned that the miners in Reefton had strong Cornish connections, just like Grass Valley. In the museum we were surprised to find a stamp mill that came from the Miners Foundry, no less! It was amazing to discover so many commonalities happening across the world at the same time.

The proud picture of Margaret Hocking, who petitioned the NZ Parliament for women’s voting rights, made me think of Ida Bourn and her role in the Woman Suffrage Movement in Grass Valley. I am sure the two women would have liked each other. Margaret could have offered Ida advice. Did you know that NZ was the first country to legalize women’s suffrage in 1893? The year 2018 was the 125th anniversary of NZ voting rights for women. Women’s suffrage proceeded from New Zealand to Scandinavia, then to Europe, and finally to the United States in 1920. The U.S. is nearing the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage.

On another trip down under, this time around Cape Horn and around the continent of South America, we were surprised to learn how the California Gold Rush affected South American ports. In 1849, over 15,000 adventurers reached San Francisco by sailing around Cape Horn (over 15,000 miles). This included Captain Chase, Sarah (Chase) Bourn’s father. The voyage took four to eight months. As we sailed in comparative luxury to modern-day Buenos Aires and Ushuaia, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; Puerto Mont, Chile; Lima, Peru; Panama; and San Juan Del Sur, Nicaragua, we learned how these cities grew due to the gold rush traffic. All these ports were provisioning points for the sailing ships traveling from the East Coast to San Francisco, loaded with Forty Niners. A quicker route was over the Isthmus of Panama or through Nicaragua via Lake Nicaragua, only half the distance and taking only two to three months. William Bourn came to San Francisco across the Panama Isthmus, leaving Sarah behind. The entire world was alive with the excitement of the gold rush in the late 1800s. The gold rush stimulated development, social change, and inventions worldwide.

* * * * * * * *
MEET DUSTIN PATTERSON — THE NEW SUPERVISING RANGER FOR
EMPIRE MINE AND MALAKOFF Diggins STATE HISTORIC PARKS

I grew up in Ventura County, in an active outdoor family that loved to camp all over the western United States. In high school, I ran cross country and track, and I was fortunate enough to compete on the first national team from California. I attended UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) and graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Zoology. While at UCSB, I hung up my competitive running shoes and instead joined the triathlon team and the surf team. I first started working for the State under UCSB as a beach lifeguard and later became the head lifeguard of the UCSB aquatics program.

In 2011, I joined California State Parks and attended the academy as a cadet in BVST 36. I graduated from, BVST 36 in 2012 and started as a ranger at Carpinteria State Beach. After nearly a year at Carpinteria, I transferred to the Santa Barbara area and primarily worked for the State Parks of the Gaviota Coast: Refugio State Beach, El Capitan State Beach, and Gaviota State Park. Refugio and El Capitan have popular and busy campgrounds, seeing over a million visitors a year. The next few years I faced and responded to a variety of challenging events at and near the parks, including the 2014 Isla Vista riots and mass shooting, the 2015 Refugio Oil Spill, the 2016 Sherpa Fire, the 2017 El Capitan mudslide, the 2017 Thomas Fire, and the 2018 Montecito mudslide.

In 2013, I married my fellow BVST 36 graduate, Leigh Collins. Leigh and I moved to a State residence at El Capitan in 2014 and welcomed our daughter, Arietta (now 4 years old), to our family. Leigh worked as a ranger in Malibu until she switched classifications in 2015. She now works as an environmental scientist for California State Parks OHV. In 2017, our family grew with the arrival of our son, Brennan (now 21 months old).

In my personal time, I enjoy being with my family, hunting (turkey and deer), raising chickens, and gardening/botany. Leigh and I are avid runners and we are excited at the prospect of new trails to explore. Our family loved Santa Barbara, but we are excited to join the Sierra foothill community and we are happily shopping for a home to make our own. We are thankful to be welcomed into the State Park family in the Sierra District and cannot wait to live and work in such a beautiful area and for such a fine community.

Dustin Patterson, Supervising Ranger
Happy New Year to our Park volunteers and partners! As we start 2019, I am excited to see what the upcoming year will bring and to be working with all of you and the Park Staff who work in the Sierra Gold Sector. It’s going to be a pleasant change from the desert for me. As we look forward to the New Year we have some exciting things happening in the Sierra Gold Sector State Parks. We are finally almost back to full staff, and actually were able to get a Supervising Ranger position for Empire Mine and Malakoff Diggins State Historic Parks. We were also able to get a K9 Ranger position. This position has been vacant since the former K9 handler, Mike Smittle, retired. Lastly, Ranger Greg Sherr retired at the end of December. Please join all of us in wishing Greg a happy retirement.

Supervising Ranger Callan McLaughlin

JOIN US FOR SPRING BIRD WALKS AT SOUTH YUBA RIVER STATE PARK (SYRSP)

Spring at SYRSP is the time of the year when a large number of birds arrive to nest and raise their young or, in some cases to just rest and then continue their migration. Some of the more notable arrivals include: Bullock’s Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Nashville Warbler and several varieties of Swallows. Resident Western Bluebirds, Spotted Towhee, California Quail, and several species of Woodpeckers are also often seen this time of year. It may also be possible to see the elusive American Dipper, John Muir’s favorite bird.

Bird walks with park docents are offered at SYRSP’s Bridgeport location the second Saturday of each month (March 9, April 13, May 11 and June 8) and the following Fridays (March 22, April 26, May 3, and June 21). Typically, we see 20 to 30 bird species. All of the walks will begin at 8 AM except for those in June which begin at 7:30 AM. The walks last about two hours over mostly flat terrain. Meet at the Bridgeport north parking lot (where the Buttermilk Bend trail starts). Bring binoculars and good walking shoes.

For more information, contact South Yuba River State Park at (530) 432-2546
When describing small towns and rural settlements, sociologists write about “insiders” and “outsiders.” In Nevada County, insiders recognized the Wasley family as kith and kin, people who belonged.

Like most Cornish families, from one generation to the next, the Wasleys used the same given names. Every generation had a William. William the first, according to family lore, came to Nevada County from Cornwall about 1851, soon after gold was discovered in quartz and mechanized mining began. Four generations of Wasleys descended into the mines, becoming experts in the local geology.

William, the third, grandson of the immigrant, didn’t go into the mines. He managed pear orchards for the Shaw family on Spring Hill (near the present Sierra College Drive). When Fred Searls, then vice president of Newmont Mining Company, acquired a property with five acres of pears, he wanted William Wasley. Searls was another insider, the grandson of a 49er and State Supreme Court Justice. His family had known the Wasleys for three-quarters of a century.

Fred built a 22-room mansion beside his pear orchard on the western slope of Banner Ridge. He only visited his home once or twice a year, as his office was in New York City, and he was prospecting around the globe for Newmont. He wanted the Wasleys caring for his house when he was away.

William the third moved in with his wife and two sons. When Fred came to town, the Wasleys retreated to one end of the house to make room for Searls, his visiting friends, and the parties he threw for 200 guests. “The dining room was as big as a basketball court,” remembered Bill Wasley (William the fourth), now 91. “The great room had a massive stone fireplace and a fabulous view.”

Bill Wasley remembers Fred vividly. “He was always in his suit and felt hat, but with rubber mining boots, always ready to go underground.” Bill added: “He was down-to-earth and could talk to anyone.” Fred used to tell Bill stories about the local narrow-gauge railroad and mining in faraway places. “My father would tell me, ‘Don’t bother Mr. Searls, he’s a busy man.’ But Fred would say, ‘Let the boy ask questions – how else will he learn?’”

All the Wasley brothers (Bill Wasley’s three uncles) worked on Fred’s property at one time or another, building a road and erecting rock walls. On one occasion Fred told young Bill’s uncles, all of them miners: “If you ever need a job, go over to the mine and tell them I said to hire you.” “And,” Bill Wasley recalled, “Fred Searl’s word was as good as gold.”

Eventually, the three Wasleys went to the mine. In the office they told the superintendent what Fred had said. The superintendent scoffed. He wasn’t going to hire them just because they said they knew Fred Searls.

At that moment, according to the family story, Fred walked into the office, and greeted the Wasleys like family. Then turning to the superintendent, he asked: “Have you hired these men yet?” The three were promptly added to the payroll, and at a premium wage, because Fred said there were no better miners in the district.

Back in Nevada County’s mining era, that’s what it meant to be an insider.
MEET THE NEW K9 RANGER TEAM:

MARTIN GILBERTSON AND MIRO

I grew up on the Central Coast of California in Santa Maria, where I graduated from Righetti High School in 1986. After earning an A.S. Degree in Architectural Drafting from Allan Hancock College, I started an engineering career, doing survey and design work in the construction of commercial irrigation systems.

After working extensively in the Santa Ynez Valley, I became familiar with Cachuma Lake Recreation Area, and accepted a position as a Santa Barbara County Park Ranger in early 2000. After five years of boat patrol and patrolling a 550-site campground, I moved on to the City of Santa Maria in 2004. In Santa Maria I assisted in creating a city ranger program, as a Supervising Park Ranger.

In January 2007, I accepted a position with California State Parks. I graduated from BVST 30 and was assigned to the Malibu Sector where I remained for over 11 years. In Malibu, I was a Field Training Officer, weapons inspector, and a member of a multi-agency marijuana eradication team. In March 2016, I was certified as a K9 handler, and have been paired up with my K9 partner, Miro Z. Lijavy, since then. Miro was born in the Czech Republic and is trained in handler protection, search, tracking, and narcotics detection.

I have been married to Kelly for 22 amazing years, and we have two children. My son Joseph played high school lacrosse and is an avid surfer. He will be completing Marine Corps Boot Camp in January, and hopes to one day follow me as a Park Ranger. My daughter Jessica just graduated from high school, and will be moving with us and attending community college. She hopes to continue playing roller hockey as a goalie.

Malibu was a dynamic and fast-paced work location, but Kelly and I have long realized it would never be “home.” For some time now, we have been looking for a work location and associated community that would provide all the challenges and rewards of a State Park Ranger career, in a place we could call home. We have made several trips to the area and have been impressed with the State Park family and the strong sense of community. When the opportunity came about to transfer to the Sierra District, it was an easy decision to go.

I look forward to working with all the volunteers and State Parks employees in such a magnificent place.

Martin Gilbertson, Ranger
Tales from the Tapes
by Jack Laird

From an interview of Downey Cunch, surface gang, explosives after 1937. Interview date 11/21/85.

Fred Searls traded all over the world. If he saw anything that was new or better, he got it for Newmont. In late 1939 or 1940, he was in Sweden. He was visiting a huge mine. While there he ordered 20 tons of 1-1/4 inch hexagon drill steel from a Scandinavian company. About that time the war got more violent. Since we didn’t receive the shipment for a long time, we thought the ship had been sunk. About a year later, we got word that our 20 tons of drill steel had arrived in San Francisco. It was brought up by S.P. to Colfax, transferred to the narrow-gauge rail cars and dropped off at our warehouse on Bennett Street.

One of my first jobs was to unload the steel. They did not have to pay for it until it arrived in San Francisco, so that was why they had sort of forgotten about it. Mr. Searls had ordered it, so absolutely they had to use it, but they didn’t have any drills fixed with the proper chucks. They had 7/8-inch and 1-1/8 inch, but no 1-1/4 inch octagon. That required ordering special chucks. Then they found that in the making of that steel they had used different metallurgy. Sometimes they were unfamiliar with what was what in the States, you couldn’t forge a bit on it.

So, it layed out at Bennett Street for a long time. It was trucked to Empire and stacked outside on an old steel rack up by the old dry. It layed there for years during the war. By then, rain water had gotten into the holes in the center and caused it to rust.

From an interview of George Rondoni, timberman, motorman, Idaho-Maryland Mine 1938-1942. Interview date 4/15/93.

I never did see any free gold. The serpentine rock would swell and break the timbers. To see a big timber like that buckle and crack was something. It was just like breaking a stick. The timbers would be about 2-1/2 feet around. The timbermen would have to replace them before they completely broke.

You couldn’t see the rock move as it moved very slowly. The ground was sound. It was just that swelling.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.
20 QUESTIONS (Test Your Knowledge)

By Lynne Buenz

As I’ve mentioned in another article, my volunteer training with State Parks was in 2007. At that time, the training sessions were a week long, and participants who completed the training were qualified to volunteer at any one of the nearby State Parks — Empire, South Yuba River, and Malakoff Diggins. Over time, I have come to value the training I received even more than I did at the time. In addition to learning the “do’s and don’ts” of volunteering, we also received a great deal of historical information; information that has been of tremendous benefit to me.

One of the training aids we received toward the end was a crossword puzzle that tested what we had learned, both about the Empire Mine State Historic Park as well as mining in general. I had hoped to duplicate the puzzle in this space, but was not able to do it successfully. However, shown below are questions that were posed under the “Across” portion of the puzzle (answers will be printed in next month’s issue).

1. Term used for very rich gold ore; also means to sneak gold out of a mine. __________
2. Poisonous chemical compound used in gold recovery process. __________
3. Iron “wagons” used for carrying gold ore out of a mine. __________
4. Entrance or opening down into a mine. __________
5. The Empire Mine is rich because of __________.
6. George __________ first discovered gold on Ophir Hill.
7. Type of gold recovery from streams and rivers. __________
8. Mr. William __________ Jr. had the Empire Cottage and grounds built.
9. First quartz outcropping found on __________ Hill began the Empire Mine development.
10. A Cornish miner was often nicknamed a __________.
11. Term for a vein of gold bearing quartz. __________
12. A special meat and potato pie enjoyed by Cornish people. __________
13. Large bars poured from molten gold are called gold __________ bars.
14. Type of rock in which gold is found. __________
15. An underground worker at the Empire Mine. __________
16. The price of gold has gone __________ since 1956.
17. Quartz with gold inside was called __________.
18. Many persons became __________ from finding gold.
19. Town nearest the Empire Mine State Historic Park. __________
20. Legendary “gremlins” said to inhabit the mines. __________
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Note: Changes in directory listings on this and the following page should be sent to Lynne Buenz, Editor/Publisher, at lbuenz@hotmail.com
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