# In The Vein . . .

Hello EMPA faithful!

This is a “call to order” -- in the famous words of Uncle Sam, “We Need You!!"

At the end of this year we have two Board members retiring: Larry Skinner (immediate Past President/training master), and Jim Ward (Membership Chair). Filling these vacancies is important to ensuring EMPAs continuity and success in supporting this wonderful Park and DPR in its on-going upkeep as well as maintenance and repairs.

Replacing the Cottage roof is an excellent example of this relationship – but it does not stop there! We also support the VIPs and interpretive programs and training, the Cottage and Clubhouse Living History programs, the Mine Yard with its interactive displays as well as providing new gold panning troughs for special events like Mothers’ Day and Miners Picnic.

But we need to do more!!

Maintaining this beautiful park is not easy and definitely not cheap! Future projects needing EMPA’s financial assistance include: brick and sidewalk repairs, a sprinkler system for the formal grounds that includes a water filtration system to remove the iron which stains the trees and beautiful rock walls. And we do not want to overlook the Clubhouse and its multitude of badly needed repairs.

We have too few people, doing too much work!!

So – PLEASE step forward with your offer to help! If you don’t wish to join the EMPA Board, you can still help with one of the various committees by sharing your talent, love and compassion for this very special park.

‘nuff said,

Mark S. Allen

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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>“This and That” (more about CLH)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPA Annual General Meeting Report</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall is Here (Message from Ranger Sherr)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates to Remember</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News of Our Friends</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Cheer Starts Here! (holidays at Empire Mine)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's That Time of Year (holiday shopping in the gift shop)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tales from the Tapes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Anyone? (report on VIP tour of the mineyard)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Wanted!</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Mine State Park Volunteer Coordinators</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Coordinators</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Intriguing Story of Electric Christmas Lights

by Caryl Fairfull

As docents, we aim to make history come alive, and some of our stories have taken on a life of their own! It took a visitor to point out to me that the mercantile in Grass Valley was unlikely to have carried electric Christmas tree lights in 1905. It dawned on me that day that there would be only the Bourns and a few of their contemporaries, who would have electricity at that time and could afford the lights. So that sent me off to do a bit of research ...

The history of electric Christmas lights begins with Thomas Edison. During the Christmas season of 1880, Edison, who had invented the incandescent bulb the previous year, hung strings of electric lights outside his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey. The neighbors thought they were festive. The first use of household electric Christmas lights is generally credited to Edward H. Johnson, a friend of Edison and the president of a New York City electric company. In 1882, the Detroit Post and Tribune visited Johnson’s house in New York City and provided the first news coverage of electric Christmas lights. Two years later, on December 27, 1884, the New York Times did a detailed story about Johnson’s Christmas tree. “It stood about six feet high, and dazzled persons entering the room. There were 120 lights on the tree, with globes of different colors, while the light tinsel work and usual adornment of Christmas trees appeared to their best advantage in illuminating the tree.” The reporter credited the electric Christmas lights as a serious invention.

The cost of the lights and the services of an electrician to install them was out of the reach of the general public. However, wealthy people would hold Christmas tree parties to show off electric lighting. Grover Cleveland ordered a White House Christmas tree that was lit with Edison bulbs in 1895. The first commercially available Christmas tree lights were produced by General Electric in multiples of eight lamps.

In 1910, there was an advertisement in Scientific American featuring “new Christmas tree ‘lamps’ to make the new electrical lighted tree more artistic and beautiful than ever.” The lights were in shapes of fruits, birds, nuts, animals, flowers and Santa Claus.

The use of small candles, despite their danger, was still the most popular method of illuminating household Christmas trees until well into the 20th century. A teenager named Albert Sadacca, after reading about a tragic fire in 1917 caused by candles lighting a Christmas tree, urged his family, which was in the novelty business, to begin manufacturing affordable strings of lights. The Sadacca family tried marketing electric Christmas lights, but sales were very slow at first.

As homes began to be equipped with electricity, the possibility of festive electric Christmas tree lights increased. Albert Sadacca later became the head of a lighting company worth millions of dollars. Other companies, most notably General Electric, entered the Christmas light business, and by the 1930s electric Christmas lights had become a standard part of holiday decorating. The Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree has had “lights” since 1931, but did not have electric lights until 1956. General Electric sponsored community lighting competitions during the 1920’s, but it took until the mid-1950’s for electric lights to be adopted by average households.

So – we need to be careful about saying that Libbie Starr and Agnes Bourn are going down to the mercantile to pick up some Christmas tree lights to use on their trees here in Grass Valley. They were much more likely to have bought them in San Francisco and brought them here, as there would have been more customers in San Francisco – even though the Bourn home on Webster Street did not have electricity until after 1905.
Cottage Living History and the Clubhouse docents had a “Wrap-Up” party on October 27. This was a happy and festive event with delicious food and very special apple desserts – made from the apples in the Empire Mine gardens! Angie McKissick, a new docent this season, played several tunes on her keyboard that might have been heard around Grass Valley in 1905. Angie is quite a talent, and we all thoroughly enjoyed her music and the historical background information she wove into her musical presentation.

Here’s some CLH paid attendance numbers for this season that you might be interested in: May, 606; June, 410; July, 546; August, 513; and September, 444.

There is still a serious need for additional volunteers for the two-day Holidays at Empire Mine event. Please call Jane Bland at 274-2440 and “make her day” by telling her that you’re available a part of one of those days. It’s an especially fun event for all concerned, and we invite you to be part of the festivities!

EMPAA Annual General Meeting Report

by Jim Coe, EMPA Vice President

The annual general meeting of EMPA was held on November 5. Two new Board Members were elected to join the Board beginning in January 2016. Brief biographical information on each follows:

Pat Maule has been a volunteer Tour Guide, and is a former President of the EMPA Board. Pat wants to become involved again and “participate in EMPA’s ongoing commitment to improve the Park’s facilities and enhance the experience of our visitors.” She also hopes to bring “enthusiasm, patience, and perseverance in accomplishing EMPA’s goals.”

Troy Hammer has been a VIP at the Park since 2009, and has worked in the Blacksmith Shop, the Cottage and Clubhouse Living History, the Nursery, and as co-coordinator of the Pasty Luncheons Program during the season as well as during special events. He brings a variety of experiences to the Board and will be especially helpful with his knowledge of the Park’s grounds and buildings.

WELCOME PAT AND TROY!
Fall Is Here
by Ranger Greg Sherr

Yes, fall is finally here! The leaves are turning, the weather is colder, and we all look forward to getting some much needed rain. As for the Park, the Empire Cottage is getting a new roof and the work will hopefully be completed by the end of November. EMPA has helped fund this extremely important project and we thank it for the support! Garden tours are still being offered on Saturday mornings, as well as tours of the Empire Clubhouse, grounds and mine yard. Please contact the Park for further information.

On a sadder note, former Senior Park Aide Barbara Neill passed away in October. She is survived by her husband Charles. We will all remember her fondly at Empire Mine. Many of you probably worked with Barbara in the past and knew her well. We wish her family, friends, and loved ones peace in dealing with their loss. [Editor’s note: there is a brief article and photo of Barbara elsewhere in this newsletter.]

At the Visitor Center, we have started to scale down our shifts to one Park Aide during the week and two on weekends. The exception, of course, is during our next big event – Holidays at Empire Mine – November 27 and 28 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Last year we had over 1,500 visitors on the first day of this two-day event and we expect a large crowd once again. Santa will be on site along with living history, blacksmiths, chestnuts roasting in the mineyard, flower potting, music and period decorations in the Clubhouse and Empire Cottage. Yes, the Bourn’s Cottage will be open for our annual Holiday event! This is a great time for families to visit the Park and learn about its history and enjoy the beautiful fall weather. I hope to see you at Empire Mine during this magical time!

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Dates to Remember

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 19</td>
<td>Coordinators Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 a.m. in the Docent Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, November 17 and</td>
<td>EMPA Board of Directors Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, December 15</td>
<td>9:30 a.m. in the Docent Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 27-28</td>
<td>Holidays at Empire Mine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo by Alana Buenz
NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

A SAD NOTE ...

Barbara Neill, who was a staff member at the Park until 2014, passed away on October 12, 2015. As a Senior Park Aide, Barbara had worked as Special Events Coordinator and in the Visitor Center since 2008. Her hard work and dedication to the Park are missed. Per Barbara’s wishes, no services will be held.

A-List Angie Hits the Headlines!

VIP Angie Slicker made the front page of the September 30th Territorial Dispatch in an article written by Courtney Ferguson. On October 31st, there she was again on the front page of The Union’s Home & Garden section in an article by Staff Writer, Emily Lavin. Besides being a fitting tribute to Angie, these articles help raise awareness for both EMPA and the Park. As if that’s not enough, how could anyone read about Angie and not be inspired? No doubt, her verve and dedication will motivate others to pursue their passions at every age and stage of life. Interviewing Angie is a tonic for one's outlook.

By the way, California Senior is a new magazine with high distribution in the Sacramento area (including Rocklin, Roseville and Granite Bay). They did a lovely double-page spread on Empire Mine in their November issue on pages 10 and 11. It’s a great article that was also written by Courtney. Check it out here: http://www.calsenior.com/node/12
Holiday Cheer Starts Here!

by Courtney Ferguson

On Friday, November 27th and Saturday the 28th, we'll present Holidays at Empire Mine. Event Chair, Bob Jennings has outdone himself in terms of preparation and creativity. With lavish decorations in Empire Cottage and the Clubhouse – plus more entertainment than ever before – it promises to be a festive occasion. Traditional Christmas cookies will be served in the screened porch area of the Cottage, and visitors can enjoy the festive music of Celtic Joy on Friday and Heather MacAdam on Saturday. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be listening attentively to gift wishes in the Clubhouse. We'll also enjoy live music by the Cornish Carol Choir, the Union Hill Carolers (all grammar-school age), Gianni Rome and Ken White, as well as bluegrass band Fire in the Kitchen. Balloon sculptor, Bernard Bradshaw will add colorful fun as well. The Gift Shop will be open, with a tempting array of unusual gifts for all budgets. Weather permitting, folks are invited to picnic on the beautiful grounds. Beverages and light snacks will also be available for purchase. We'll even have chestnuts roasting in the Mine Yard – everything to make the Holiday Season merry and bright! Last year we welcomed around 1,000 visitors each day. Be sure and bring your family and friends.

It’s That Time of Year –
Time to Start your Holiday Shopping!

by Jennifer Greenfield

The EMPA Gift Shop is featuring new, exciting items for your holiday shopping –

An onyx collection of bowls, vases, plates, boxes, and other creations –

1970's Alpha calendars with George Mathis sketches of Nevada County –

And – of course – the traditional lump of coal for those “naughty” gift recipients on your list!
From an interview of John “Cliff” Gregor, Mucker and Mule Skinner, 1931-1935. Interview date: 1/9/84.

There were four mules working the 5400. They were Peanut, Babe, Jasper and Sparkey. When you got off the man skip at 5400 station, the four mules were in the corral on the left hand side and all of the drifts and raises were on the right hand side. They had blasted out an area to put the corral.

Two skinners worked each shift with two of the four mules. If the night shift was blasting before leaving the shaft, and Peanut was in the area, he would just stop until the blasting was over because it would scare him.

When they took the mules down, the timbermen did the job.

One day I told Peanut to get going after I had him hooked up to the full cars, but he would only step back. After I unsuccessfully tried to get him going several times, I walked past him and went about 50 or 75 feet down the tracks where I found that a rock had fallen on the track. There was no way that mule could see that rock because the track curved and the rock was around the corner. He just sensed that the track was blocked.

There were times when the mules would pull tricks on you. If there was a curve in the track where a car had jumped off the track, Peanut would remember the spot where that had happened. If he was feeling ornery, he would jerk the cars forward at that exact spot to make a car derail. When I was putting the car back on the track, he would get to take a rest.

From an interview of Rudy Kutchar, Mule Skinner, 1939-1941. Interview date: 3/8/95.

I bought a 1940 Pontiac that had about 1,000 miles on it. I paid $800 for it. When you made $5.28 a day it took a while to save that up. I used it to drive to work at Empire.

I never saw any free gold all the time I worked there. At the 5450 the ledge was 6 feet wide solid quartz.

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

A beautiful fall day formed the perfect backdrop for a tour of the Mine Yard at Empire Mine State Historic Park. Held on Thursday, October 22, this tour was also special, as it was the final VIP Educational Tour of 2015. Thirty-four docents attended, and were treated to a first-class glimpse into the inner workings of the mine – including places not usually seen by the general public. Tour guides were Jim Dierberger, Frank Hamlin, and Larry Skinner. Larry had also arranged for a blacksmith demonstration by docent Dan Perkins who is pictured here.

The VIP Educational Tour Program began in the fall of 2014, as a partnership between the Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA) and park staff, with the purpose of “…providing an opportunity for volunteers (aka VIPs or docents) to learn about and see, first-hand, areas of the Park that they may not have previously seen or have very limited knowledge about.” It was intended to augment, and not replace, the initial docent training offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The subject of the first tour was the Hardrock Interpretive Area (formerly known as the Underground Tour Area), followed by tours of Empire Cottage, the Empire Clubhouse, the estate gardens and grounds, and, finally, the Mine Yard. A total of 140 docents took part in the program. We are grateful to Ranger Greg Sherr, and all Park Aides for their support.

The future of the program will now be considered by EMPA. Stay tuned!

Got 10 +/- Hours of Free Time for the Empire Star???

Our EMPA newsletter, the Empire Star, which is issued ten times each year, is in need of a volunteer (or two who could share the job) to process the newsletters that are mailed out each month to about 120 people. Evelyn Allison has been doing this chore for over two years now, and she’s ready to “pass it on” to someone else. Mailing labels are printed and provided to us for this purpose and the newsletters are already assembled and folded so it’s a matter of putting an address label on each one and then stamping, sealing and getting them to the P.O. We no longer use bulk mailing so it’s a simple matter of just getting them in the mail.

If you could spare a little time each month – mostly working in the comfort of your own home – we’d surely appreciate hearing from you – at which time the process can be explained. Contact Bev Skinner via e-mail at bev4411@gmail.com or via telephone at 477-1750. And thanks for thinking about serving EMPA, its members, and the Park in this manner!

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 due to space limitations.
Empire Mine State Park
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- **Trails**
  - Lianne Werner 273-0704

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