IN THE VEIN

First of all, I wish to acknowledge and thank Courtney Ferguson, EMPA’s Outreach Coordinator, who graciously agreed to write this column the past couple of months while I was away. THANK YOU, COURTNEY!

Fall has officially arrived, and the colors in the Park and surrounding areas are at their peak. The gardens continue to be an attraction for Park visitors and, once again, I would like to acknowledge Park staff and garden volunteers for their efforts.

Around the Park …

Cottage Living History has completed another successful season, thanks to the efforts of all volunteers who participate in the program, under the leadership of Co-Coordinators Cheryl Balmain, Jane Bland and Nancy Koring. Over 2,100 people visited the Cottage this summer, and experienced a step back in time that we hope they will remember and recommend to their friends.

The Gift Shop continues to be EMPA’s main fundraiser. This is due in no small part to the efforts of a dedicated core of volunteers, which include Co-Coordinators Gloria Kenney and Chrysan Silence, and Gift Shop Committee members Evelyn Allison, Carol Bordeau, and Forrest Cureton. These folks continue the tradition of excellence.

If you have visited the Park recently, you may have noticed the newly completed shingle roof covering the historic garage building near the Park entrance. Thanks to a generous contribution from EMPA and the efforts of Park staff, you will soon forget the ugly tarp that has covered this leaking roof for the past several winters.

I am pleased to announce that Patty Gizzi has recently joined the EMPA Board. Patty is an active volunteer in Cottage Living History, and has helped to manage the period costumes used in the program. She has also managed the Silent Auction at Miners Picnic for the past couple of years, and served on the committee for “Mine, Wine & Dine.” Welcome, Patty!

Finally, the Board and the Park depend on people like you. There will be at least three openings on the Board in 2019. Applications are available on the rack outside the Gift Shop.

JIM COE
THE STARR CLUBHOUSE ON OSBORNE HILL
By Caryl Fairfull (all pictures courtesy of Caryl Fairfull)

A recent question posed for an Empire Star article was “What is the story of the Starr Clubhouse on Osborne Hill?” Today, we have some answers. After reading two articles from the Union circa 1925, and checking with Gage McKinney and the Doris Foley Library, I stumbled onto the best source— Vince Seck—our own George Starr. Who could be a better source for this information than George Starr?

Vince had recently visited the property at 14370 Osborne Hill Road, and had rapport with the owner, Patrick Donaghey. We drove up to the property and were admitted by Dr. Donaghey, who graciously showed us around. He has lived on the property for nearly 40 years and most of it is in original condition. We could see some views of the Sierra Mountains through the trees, but trees and vegetation have obscured the wonderful views that George Starr enjoyed in 1925. Mr. Starr created a three mile scenic drive called Starr Drive or Skyline Drive. It started at the Mine area, near the Hoist House up to the top of Nob’s Hill and on to Osborne Hill so that people could drive their newly minted cars up there from Grass Valley to enjoy the views of the Sierra Mountains, south to the orchards in Auburn and as far as Mt. Lassen to the north. The road was constructed of mine tailings and completely privately funded. (The Union, June 26, 1925 and August 2, 1925.)

Patrick invited us to walk the loop driveway to the front door, where we could imagine cars pulling up for a visit. There is a wide entrance stairway with a barbeque off to the left side of the patio area. The patio is on the south side of the house, which sits on five acres, and Patrick has added a sunshade trellis that you see in the picture for comfort on the patio. He pointed out the rock work by various craftsmen of varied skills, and invited us into the front door; the original handsome door with red trim has an upper left panel that opens to visualize guests before admittance.

(continued on page 3)
THE STARR CLUBHOUSE (continued from page 2)

Stepping through the door, we arrived into the great living room of the Clubhouse with a large rock fireplace and beams from Malakoff Diggins. Stepping through the doorway on the back left is a bar area that looks as if George Starr had his last drink just yesterday. Across from the bar is a wood paneled service sink area. We were told the Clubhouse has two bedrooms and two bathrooms. It would be fun to see a list of guests who passed through the front door. George Starr envisioned this as a place to escape the noise and hassle of the mine and it may have served as a bit of a “man cave.”

Patrick then guided us around the property and pointed out a cabin that was once used as a dog kennel. It had a fenced area with side doors so dogs could escape bad weather. Not far from the kennel was the horse stable, that accommodated four horses at its prime, but is now a woodshed and winemaker's studio. We walked through the small Zinfandel vineyard, which is not producing well. We arrived in the new vineyard of Sauvignon Blanc on the top of the hill with fabulous views toward the Sierra Mountains because Patrick has cleared much of the manzanita away. Just a few yards away is a reservoir that provides water to the house and for irrigation. The fencing at the top of the reservoir is for dogs to be trained to fetch ducks from the water. What a wonderful get away, not far from the mine, just as George Starr intended.

Patrick has visions of adding some of this property to the Park one day, and it would add one more dimension to life at the Empire Mine. People might even drive up on the Scenic Drive created by Mr. Starr. We can dream, can’t we?
NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

We were saddened to learn that former docent Thelma Stade had passed away on Friday, September 21, 2018, at the age of 85. Both Thelma and her husband Tom were active in Cottage Living History, often portraying William Bowers Bourn, Jr. and his wife, Agnes Bourn. Thelma also portrayed Katie Moriarty, the Bourn’s Housekeeper and Cook at Empire Cottage. Tom served as EMPA Treasurer for a number of years, and working together they managed the Silent Auction at Miners Picnic, also for a number of years. Additionally, they handled mailing of The Empire Star to those without email.

A memorial service and celebration of life for Thelma took place on Saturday, October 20, at the Grass Valley United Methodist Church. The family requested that memorial contributions be made to the Grass Valley United Methodist Church organ fund (236 South Church Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945) or VetsFirst at http://www.vetsfirst.org)

Thelma Stade as Katie Moriarty
(Photo provided by Bev Skinner)

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TO GOLD MINERS, WORLD WAR I WAS NEVER FAR AWAY

By Gage McKinney

The men of the Empire Mine, the workers no less than the owners, participated in a global mining economy. In August 1914 Grass Valley was a continent and ocean away from the roar of the guns in Europe. Yet, given the international orientation of mines and miners, the war was never far from their thoughts.

William Bourn Jr. saw the war as an abrogation of Western culture, of the values derived from the Hebrew prophets and Socratic philosophers. For him, the brutal subjugation of Belgium and the starving of its once free people was a sufficient indictment of Germany and her partners in war. Bourn lent his considerable fortune and influence to help bring America into the war on the side of Britain and France. His workforce in Grass Valley—largely European-born miners and their sons—stood shoulder to shoulder behind him.

In San Francisco Bourn organized the Friends of France to promote America’s entry into the war, drawing support from his friends in the Pacific Union Club. He raised money to send ambulances to the Western front and recruited university students from Stanford and Berkeley to drive them. With his friend, Charles Mills Gayley, an Anglo-Irish professor at Berkeley, he organized the American League to promote his aims. The League had chapters throughout California, with its strongest chapter in Grass Valley.

Empire miners and their families contributed to humanitarian efforts throughout the war, beginning with a drive for Belgian relief in 1916. General Manager George Starr made a large contribution and the workers contributed as they could. After America entered the war in April 1917, the mine hosted a gala fund-raising event for the Red Cross, supported by the workers and attended by 1,500 people from Grass Valley and Nevada City. The county, led by its miners, exceeded its quota for buying war bonds.

By the fall of 1917, the Empire Mine was hoisting a flag each morning with 49 stars—the number of its workers who had joined the U.S. military. Others, especially Cornishmen, traveled north to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Richard Trathen, a 30-year old native of Pendeen, Cornwall, was one who served. He had a brother, James, who died early in 1917 while fighting with a Devonshire regiment in France. After learning of his brother’s death, and though he was still a British citizen, Trathen joined the U.S. Army. He trained with the 91st Division at Fort Lewis, Washington and saw action in the Meuse-Argonne offensive and Battle of Flanders. He was awarded a Purple Heart. After the war he returned to Grass Valley, where he raised a family. He was lucky. In Grass Valley’s Memorial Park, a plaque honors nurse Elina Hill and 18 elms represent 18 men, none of whom came home.

Cheers and parades marked the signing of the armistice 100 years ago, on November 11, 1918. But following a punitive peace settlement, and the collapse of President Wilson’s dream of an America-led League of Nations, disillusionment replaced the cheers. The slogans which once prompted men to enter the fight sounded hollow after the fight had ended. Already, the seeds of another war were in the ground.
Eileen and I, with our dog Maggie, visited Muckross House and Killarney National Park on a lovely fall afternoon while we were on a tour of Ireland. My first impression was that Muckross Estate is an older and much larger version of Filoli, the Bourn residence in Woodside, as William Bowers Bourn, Jr. and his wife Agnes chose the Filoli site since it reminded them of Muckross. The Muckross Estate, which is now the Bourn Vincent Memorial Park, includes nearly 10,000 acres, and the larger Killarney National Park of which it is the centerpiece covers about 25,000 acres.

Will Bourn first rented the Muckross property in 1910 and in 1911 purchased it for £60,000 as a wedding gift for his daughter Maud when she married Arthur Rose Vincent, who had served as a judge in the British Colonial Service. The years of the Bourn and Vincent ownership are regarded as the heyday of Muckross as a privately owned estate. Between 1911 and 1932, the Bourns and Vincents spent over £110,000 on improvements, including the Sunken Garden, the Rock Garden, and the Stream Garden. Most of the improvements were the work of Arthur Rose Vincent during his twenty-two years of residence on the estate.

After Maud Bourn Vincent died unexpectedly of pneumonia in New York in February 1929 while on her way to visit her parents in California, Arthur Rose Vincent and their children Rose and Billy continued to live at Muckross for another three years. He and Will Bourn then decided that the estate was too big an undertaking for any private individual and presented it to the Irish nation to become the country's first national park.

Muckross House is a huge Victorian mansion completed in 1843 for Henry Arthur Herbert and his wife Mary Balfour. It was designed by William Burn, an Edinburgh architect, famed for his plans of Victorian country houses. Visitors must be on a guided tour to enter the house, with tours starting about every half hour and taking about an hour. The Bourns and Vincents are mentioned frequently on the tours, but much of the focus is on a two-night stay by Queen Victoria in August 1861. The Herberts spent nearly six years preparing for the visit and extensively modified and decorated the house. Purchases included tapestries, mirrors, silverware, a complete set of musical instruments, specially commissioned linen, china and servants’ uniforms. Most of the purchases are still in the house and are featured on the tours.

The Muckross House tour guide for the group I was in told us that the word “muk” means pig in old Irish, while “rus” means peninsula. At one time, there were many wild boar on the peninsula between what is now called Muckross Lake and the larger Lough Léin to the north, and the area was eventually named Muckross.

Muckross House is the main feature of the estate, but the surrounding gardens, lakes, hiking trails and a traditional farm are part of the experience. An adjacent Craft Center and the Garden Restaurant are well worth visiting, as is the near-by town of Killarney.

(continued on page 8)
From an interview of Frank Knuckey, Mule Skinner 1930's. Interview date 11/10/85.

On the way to work I would pass several homes that had apple trees. If it was that time of the year that apples were ripe I would take my mule, Fanny, an apple.

I remember one year I bought a new pair of rubber boots. Empire was quite wet. There was a lot of water. You were always standing in water. My new boots were black lace with cleats on the bottom.

There was one place when coming out with the mule train where we were going at a pretty good clip. There was a switch there. Just a rail switch. As we would go over it we would flip the switch over. Going back in I would have to ride on the front car and when we got to that switch I would reach down and kick it closed with my foot so the cars would go up the track.

Well this particular day I forgot about the new cleats and new boots. The cleats stuck on the end of the switch. The car rolled up on my heel and threw me head first into the mule's rear end with a carbide lamp.

I was glad it wasn’t a horse. If it was a horse I probably would have been killed right there. Horses panic – mules don’t. Fanny stopped. I couldn't move. I had broken my foot. The old mule turned around in that narrow tunnel and just stood there and looked at me like, “what’s wrong?” So all those apples really paid off!


I left the Bullion in 1936 and went to the Ziebright which was owned by the Newmont Mining Co. I went up there to rustle a job. A great big fellow, a foreman, came out. I told him I wanted a job.

He said, “are you a miner?” I said “yes, I am a miner.” He said, “by God you better be.” He said, “I want 12 holes a shift and if I don’t get them, down the road you go.” I said, “OK, you'll get them.”

That seemed like a lot of drilling to me. I was used to drilling about 5 to 8 holes in the rest of these mines. The Ziebright vein was about 12 feet wide and 12 feet high. Two men working together set up a 12 foot bar and put the machines on that bar.

Each of us had 12 twelve foot holes to drill. We drilled and rigged out. Then a blasting crew came along and did the blasting. Each miner had his own tool nipper. That quartz was so hard that you could only use a drill once. We used a 4 foot then changed to an 8 then changed to a 12.
Killarney’s Great Estates

The Desmond Rebellion led by Gerald Fitzgerald, the Earl of Desmond, against the English crown came to an end in November 1583. The Province of Munster was devastated after four years of war and many people died of famine. The lands of the rebels were confiscated and granted to undertakers loyal to the English crown. Sir Valentine Browne was granted the lands of O'Donoghue Mór of Ross, near Killarney. For almost 400 years the Browne family held these lands.

In the mid-1720s, one member of the Browne family, Valentine 3rd Viscount Kenmare, built a new house at Killarney. His son, Thomas 4th Viscount Kenmare (1725-1795), was largely responsible for the development of the town. Aside from promoting tourism, he encouraged the building of roads and houses and he attempted to establish a linen industry. Thomas’ son Valentine (1754-1812) was granted an earldom in 1801 for supporting the union with Britain.

In August 1861, Queen Victoria spent one night at Killarney House, the Browne family home, before departing for the Herbert residence at Muckross. In the 1870s, the Brownes built a new red-brick mansion overlooking Lough Leane (the Lower Lake). This, together with a reduction in the amount of rents they received during the Land War, caused them financial difficulties. By the end of the century, the Brownes had started to sell off their estate to their tenants.

The first member of the Herbert family to settle in County Kerry was Thomas Herbert from Wales. He came to Castletown as land agent to Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury. Thomas’ son Edward was probably the first Herbert to settle at Muckross, on land leased from the Mac Carthaigh Mór family. In the 18th century the Herberths became very wealthy due to their local copper mining activities.

The Herbert family inhabited four different houses during their long tenure of the Muckross Estate. The present Muckross House was completed in 1843 for Henry Arthur Herbert (1815-1866) and his wife Mary Balfour, a talented water-colourist. Henry Arthur achieved high political office and served as Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1857-1858. He died in 1866 and his son, also called Henry Arthur, but known as Harry, inherited the estate. The Herberths experienced financial difficulties during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Standard Life Assurance Company of Scotland finally foreclosed on their mortgage in 1898.

The Muckross Estate was briefly the property of Lord Ardilaun, a member of the Guinness family. However, in 1911, William Bowers Bourn of California purchased it as a wedding present for his daughter Maud and her husband, Arthur Rose Vincent. Maud died in 1929 and the estate was granted to the Irish State by Maud’s parents and husband in her memory. It was known as the Bourn Vincent Memorial Park and it became Ireland’s very first National Park on 1st January 1933. It was later extended to include lands that had once belonged to the Browne family, Earls of Kenmare.
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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
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

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