IN THE VEIN...

The summer of 2017 is rapidly coming to a close, and what a great time we have had at the Empire Mine State Historic Park! The 122nd annual Miners Picnic is now behind us, and it provided entertainment and fun for many visitors. A strong cadre of volunteers led by Steve Sanchez, contributed greatly to the success of this popular event!

It is a highlight of my life to see visitors from all over the country and the world having lively and meaningful experiences learning about history and enjoying the beauty of the Park. Bringing life to the history of the Park is dependent upon the dedication and teamwork between volunteers and Park staff. I am proud of how successful this teamwork is and has been for many years. My wish is that this pattern of success continues well into the future! Of course, there is always a need for new volunteers to join in on the fun. Opportunities abound for anyone to match their skills and interests with needs at the Park.

Fall is fast-approaching, and planning is already under way for various activities, including, of course, the holidays. The EMPA Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 2, 2017. The program will feature Gary Noy, a well-known and very talented speaker. His topic will be “Cousin Jacks.” If you are not familiar with Mr. Noy, more information is available by visiting his website at www.garynoy.com. I am confident that you will be impressed with his accomplishments. He has recently made presentations to the Nevada County Historical Society and at the North Star House. This is a rare and free event, so put November 2 at 1:00 p.m. in the Docent Building on your calendar.

The Annual General Meeting is also a time to elect new members of the EMPA Board and for all EMPA members to offer comments and suggestions. The future of EMPA depends on people who are willing to serve on and make contributions to the Board. It is an opportunity to learn first-hand about how things work, from the “inside out.” Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. in the Docent Building, and we invite you to join us. Board applications will be available soon in the Visitor Center, and biographical information on all candidates will be published in a forthcoming issue of The Empire Star.

Finally, I wish to give special recognition to the dedicated volunteers at the South Yuba River Park Association (SYRPA) as well as the Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins for supporting these important historical sites. As you no doubt have read, thanks to the “Save Our Bridge” campaign, the State has budgeted for the complete restoration of the covered bridge at Bridgeport. Special activities at these Parks include the “French Connection” at Malakoff on September 9, and the Bridgeport Fall Festival hosted by SYRPA, which is scheduled for October 22. Spread the word!

JIM COE
THE ORPHANAGE OF THE HOLY ANGELS

By Bev Skinner

(Continued from the August issue of The Empire Star)

Hopefully you remember from last month’s issue that I was telling a very short version of the story of the Sisters of Mercy who operated several schools and ran an orphanage at the Catholic Church in Grass Valley. This was also where Katie Moriarty, the Cook and Housekeeper at the Empire Cottage, regularly attended services and where she also developed a friendship with some of the Sisters who were serving there in various capacities.

Though my original purpose was to tell the story of only the orphanage, I’ve found it impossible to entirely exclude the other work of the Sisters of Mercy as all of their efforts are intertwined to the point that it’s difficult to paint an accurate picture of the orphanage alone.

I explained that adequate funding for the ever-expanding orphanage and educational programs was an ongoing problem for the Sisters. Another constant was the need for new Sisters – especially as they expanded and added new programs. Many deaths occurred among the Sisters – most due to natural aging, but many younger Sisters died also of diseases such as pneumonia, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and other conditions common during that period of time. A number of these women were born and grew up in Ireland while a few were raised right here in Nevada County and other northern California towns.

To house all the orphans and boarding students and to provide space for the necessary classrooms, the construction of additional buildings was undertaken – one was on Bright-on Street and another on Pleasant Street. These buildings were torn down after the last of the orphans left Grass Valley in August 1932 – just two years before Katie also left Grass Valley. The cause of the closure had several parts: it was difficult for family members to get to Grass Valley to visit the children, there were many children in Sacramento who had no homes, and it was felt by the Bishop and his staff that they would have more community support in a larger, more metropolitan area. The decision was made, therefore, to locate a new orphanage in Sacramento. It was also important that the orphan boys have an opportunity to attend a Catholic high school which was not possible in Grass Valley. Up until about 1928, the boys had moved out of the orphanage and started working on local farms at the end of their elementary schooling, but a formal high school education was becoming more important for young men.

Last month I mentioned that one of the Sisters Katie had befriended was a Sister Dolores. She had arrived in Grass Valley sometime between 1892 and 1897 and was well remembered as Margaret Cavanaugh of Wexford, Ireland and was received as Sister Dolores. She first served as the “cook at Mt. St. Mary’s (for more than 25 years) and then later to have charge of the maintenance of the grounds and buildings until old age incapacitated her. Now in her eighty-fourth year, worn out by her labors, Sister Dolores awaited the summons to ‘go home’ to the God whom she had served for fifty-five years. Her summons came on November 26, 1949.”

Katie seemed to have developed a special friendship with Sister Dolores. When I learned that she had worked as the cook at Mt. St. Mary’s for over 25 years, I couldn’t help but wonder if some of the bond between the two women had developed, at least partially, over enjoying a cup of tea together while chatting about cooking and, perhaps, exchanging recipes! (continued on page 3)
THE ORPHANAGE OF THE HOLY ANGELS (continued from page 2)

In July, in preparation for writing this article, I visited the Grass Valley Museum located on the second floor of the original convent building at 410 Church Street in Grass Valley. It is open from April 15 through December 15, Wednesdays through Saturdays, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m., or by appointment by calling 530-273-5509. Here is a link to their website: www.saintjosephsculturalcenter.org/museum. There is no charge to visit the Museum, but donations are always gratefully accepted which help with the museum’s operation, maintenance, and restoration. It is staffed by a small group of volunteer docents.

I admit that I’ve left out a lot of the interesting story about the Sisters of Mercy, but since I’ve already devoted two issues to the topic, the “rest of the story” is up to you! Much of the material and all of the quotes in these articles came from the small booklet I purchased while at the Museum called, “The Story of Mount Saint Mary’s.” I’m placing it in the Cottage Library for the use of our Cottage Living History docents – its “new home,” fittingly, is in Katie’s old bedroom!

WHAT'S NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

By Jennifer Greenfield, Gift Shop Coordinator

The new Empire Mine postcard pictured below is now available in the Gift Shop. The wonderful photographs of the interiors of Empire Cottage and of the Clubhouse were taken by Park volunteers John Field and John Thompson, respectively.
NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

(Editor’s Note: I recently was surprised by a telephone call from Bob Jennings (you will no doubt recall the article in last month’s issue of The Empire Star which told of Bob’s recent move to Quincy to be closer to his family.) Bob was calling to ask if there would be room in a future issue to include the text of an email he had just received from fellow docent Terry Armstrong. Terry and his wife Eileen, along with their dog Maggie, are spending a year abroad, principally in Sweden and Denmark. The following is Terry’s account of their travels through the end of July):

Bob,

Eileen, Maggie and I are spending July in Denmark, mostly in Copenhagen. We rented an apartment here for the month, but have been up to visit Helsingør and just got back from a few days in Aarhus. Copenhagen is the hub of Denmark, but the other cities are interesting and worth visiting.

We spent June in Sweden, first near Stockholm, then in Malmø, and finally in Limhamn near Malmø. We will go back to Sweden in about ten days to an old farmhouse that we rented for August and September, and then to a nice little vacation house in Ystad for October and November. That is as far as we’ve planned, as our current residence permit for Sweden expires at the end of November. We had applied for a one-year permit, but were granted six months. When we visited the migration agency to get our residence cards, we asked about applying for another six months and were told to come back in October, so we will.

Maggie has turned out to be a very good traveler. We were very concerned about the long flight from Oakland to Stockholm, as she had never been on an airplane before and would have to go for at least 13 hours between patches of grass, but she did fine. I had booked two premier class seats for us so we would have extra room at our feet for her. Our flight out of Oakland left at 6:00 in the evening and Maggie laid down at our feet and slept there overnight. It was about noon Stockholm time when we landed, which seemed to be early morning for the three of us, and we soon found a patch of grass for Maggie to take her first “pee” in a long time. She caught on to riding on escalators, elevators, buses and trains very quickly and is now an old hand at traveling. She settles into our new routines quickly whenever we move from one apartment to another. She and I continue to go on a long jog early every morning no matter where we are and that helps us both get going for the day.

Eileen says “Hi.” We are enjoying our adventure and keep busy. We are both taking online courses to keep our brains working and getting out to explore as much as we can.

I hope that all is well with you and that you are enjoying being closer to family.

Terry
GETTING A SENSE OF THE MINERS

By Gage McKinney

I talked to Joan Lundstrom of Larkspur, California on a sunny morning in May. We were drinking coffee after breakfast at the oval dining table in Swan Levine Bed & Breakfast Inn in Grass Valley. Joan described her visit the day before to the Empire Mine. Going leisurely at their own pace, she and her husband Lou took in the springtime gardens, talked to the living history actors, and looked inside the Empire (Bourn) Cottage and Clubhouse. “We learned visually,” she said, “by seeing how the owners and managers lived.”

In the mineyard, Joan glimpsed into the lives of the workers. She imagined the constant rumble of the stamps, the pounding and the dust. Peering down the incline shaft, she felt a tinge of claustrophobia. She watched the blacksmith at the fire. She heard about the mine mules and their lives of toil. She learned about the miners from museum panels reading: “No margin for error” and “mutual trust and brotherhood.” Her overall impression: “Everything was so well done and active,” Joan said.

Yet after returning to the inn, Joan had questions. “I wanted more of a sense of the miners,” she said. “What kind of life was there for them and their families? Where did they live? Who did they marry? What became of their families?” One of our trained docents could have answered her questions, but being the one she asked, I did my best. I told Joan the story of one miner, John Hollow, a stalwart at the Empire.

Hollow was born in St. Just, a village on the southwest tip of Cornwall. He attended public school and Sunday school. While still a teenager he began work at the Levant Tin Mine, where the tunnels descend under the ocean. In his early twenties, and with five or six others from his village, he sailed third-class to America. A letter of recommendation, describing him as “sober, industrious and conscientious,” helped him land a job in a Minnesota iron mine.

After two winters in Minnesota, Hollow headed to Grass Valley where his uncle was living, and landed a job at the Empire. It was steady employment. In his leisure he became leader of the Salvation Army band and president of the Grass Valley Carol Choir, which sang the Cornish Christmas carols.

Hollow returned to Minnesota long enough to marry a fair-haired girl he courted there. He bought a lot on South Auburn, about half-a-mile from the shops of Grass Valley and less than a mile from the mine. His Swedish father-in-law came from Minnesota to build the married couple a house and there they raised their daughter.

Today, Hollow’s grandson is an endodontist and a docent at the Empire Mine. His great granddaughter, a fourth-grader, sings with her dad in the Cornish Carol Choir. The descendants of John Hollow revere the memory of the man who established their family in the Sierra foothills.

John Hollow’s story is uplifting, a hard-rock American dream. I could have told other stories. I could have talked about miners who were injured or maimed, or who died of consumption or when a rock fell from above. I could have said Hollow left Cornwall after an accident at the Levant Mine killed 31 men. I had forgotten that, maybe because it was a pretty morning, filled with the anticipation of a warm, leisurely Gold Country afternoon. Those other stories will keep for another day.
MORE NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

By Lynne Buenz

I recently learned that Angie Slicker, a long-time docent at Empire, would be celebrating her 95th birthday on September 5. Though not as active at the Park as she once was (or would like to be), Angie still enjoys staying in touch with the Park and hearing from her many friends. Happy Birthday Angie!

THE MINERS PICNIC LEGACY

By Lauren Wilson, Volunteer Coordinator

As I write this, the gold panning troughs are out, the pop-ups are popping up and the excitement of our 122nd Annual Miners Picnic is in the air. With the excitement rushing through me, I decided to make sure I knew the true history of the Miners Picnic and why we carry on the tradition. Thanks to the booklet in the Gift Shop entitled, “The Miners Picnic, A Legacy,” I was able to further paint a picture of the history of Miners Picnic. The booklet was put together by the Research Group with information obtained from The Union newspaper.

There is a notice in the June 5, 1895 Union newspaper of the very first Miners Picnic, calling it “the greatest event of the season.” Mines and local storefronts shut down on this day to join the festivities. There were contests and games throughout the day such as prettiest, youngest and fattest babies, nail driving, egg and spoon races, baseball and football games, wrestling, etc. The baseball and football games were local teams against each other such as Grass Valley vs. Nevada City and the competition was intense. Throughout the years, activities were added such as the cake walk, tug-of-war, the greased pig competition, mucking, life-saving and first-aid contests. There was no shortage of activities and there was fun for everyone.

The location of the first Miners Picnic was “Ismert’s Grove and Glenbrook Park,” now known as the Glenbrook Plaza Shopping Center. Throughout the years the location moved, and also took place in places such as Chicago Park, Shebley’s Pond, Watt Park (now the Nevada County Fairgrounds), Memorial Park and Lake Olympia.

Transportation to these locations was originally by private carriage or the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad. The cars of the Narrow Gauge Railroad were decorated for the event and there was a band on one of the cars to play music and put people in the Miners Picnic spirit. When the automobile became a popular mode of transportation, parking (much like today) became an issue. Prizes were awarded for the most modern and oldest automobile, increasing the traffic. Grass Valley-Nevada City Stage Lines eventually scheduled busses to reduce the traffic for the picnic goers.

The original event was sponsored by the Mine Workers Protective League, utilizing the proceeds for injured miners, orphans and widows due to mining accidents and for financial assistance when temporary unemployment occurred.

Since the State of California has taken over the Mine and made it a State Historic Park, the Miners Picnic legacy has continued at the Empire Mine State Historic Park. It is now sponsored by the Empire Mine Park Association, with proceeds benefitting the restoration and maintenance of the Park. Looking back at the past we can see how the legacy lives on in the present. The event continues to raise money for a great cause, the community continues to come together and the rich history of Empire Mine and the community around it live on.

If anyone is interested in learning more, the booklet is sold in the gift shop for $2.00 and has a plethora of information regarding the Miners Picnic legacy.
From an interview of Downey Clinch, Surface gang, explosives 1937. Interview date 11/21/85.

When the mines were closing in the 1950’s there were a lot of unused blasting caps around. They had come in from the Browns Valley, Murchie and Ziebright mines when they folded up.

Newmont had more than 100,000 blasting caps that they had to get rid of when they closed Empire. Some of them had been deteriorating in magazines in storage for a number of years. They have fulminate of mercury in them which can go bad over time which makes them very unstable and dangerous.

Jack Hamlin, who had been master mechanic at the North Star when it closed, went to work at Alpha Hardware in Nevada City. Somehow Alpha inherited the problem of getting rid of this stuff. Empire had huge powder magazines and had no one around to guard this stuff anymore. Experts looked at this stuff and said we had to get rid of it.

We asked Jack, “What can you do with it?” Powder is easy. You just put it in a pile, put some gasoline on it, touch it with a match and it will just burn up. But the caps are different. They become very dangerous.

He wouldn’t say what to do for a while, but he would take a pickup, disappear and be back in 3 or 4 hours. We found out that there was a shaft that was open at an old mine over on Massachusetts Hill.

This is where they would dump the mules when they died. No one would dig a hole for a mule! He threw all those caps down that shaft. It was deep so they figured no one would be digging over there and accidentally come upon those blasting caps.


I remember that once I was in Tombstone, AZ on an exploration job. I was sitting with the fellows in the exploration office they had there. We wanted to see if we could open up an area in their mine and find more values. This was about 9:00 at night.

The phone rang and it was Fred Searls calling from New York. I don’t know what time it was in New York. He asked about a certain drift in the mine. What was beyond the blockage that was in it? They couldn’t tell him because they hadn’t mined past the blockage. Fred said to send a crew down there and check out the thickness of the slide or whatever it is that is blocking the drift. These momentary decisions kept a person on edge all the time.

I covered over 40,000 miles in air travel during those years. Most of it was in old DC-3 planes that weren’t pressurized. Flying at 7,8 or 9,000 feet all over the west. We usually put in 15 or 16 hours in a day. It wasn’t mandatory, just necessary.
“ONE IS SILVER AND THE OTHER IS GOLD”

By Bev Skinner

Perhaps you’re among those who remember this little song from your childhood – I learned it many years ago while serving as a leader of my daughter’s Brownie troop:

Make new friends,
But keep the old –
One is silver,
And the other is gold.

This little ditty came to mind a few weeks back when I saw first-hand the changes in the women’s dressing rooms upstairs at the Cottage. I’d heard that there had been some “rearranging” going on up there, but I couldn’t have imagined the vast improvements they made in how well those rooms now function. No walls were moved or any drastic measures taken – but a lot of creative thought went on about how we use what we already have!

After a bit of sleuthing, I think I have the story straight: a relatively new docent, Patty Gizzi (Class of 2015), had a vision about how to rearrange our several racks of costumes plus where and how we store our many accessories between the two dressing rooms – think parasols, starched white collars, cuffs, and dust caps worn by maids, elaborate hats, jewelry, and full petticoats worn by our ladies – the list is a very long one. She presented her ideas, and even measured and created a “to scale” drawing representing her vision to a CLH Co-Coordinator, Cheryl Balmain, whose responsibility the costumes are. And – the other Co-Coordinator, Nancy Koring, gave them her blessing and encouraged their efforts. Patty was evidently persuasive enough and soon she, Cheryl, and Susie Brandanini, another “newish” and enthusiastic docent, set to work up there this past spring – the results are truly remarkable. Their vision was complete and the transformation, grand!

You’re no doubt wondering by now why this project reminded me of that childhood song. Well, think about it – our “new friends,” are Patty and Susie, while the “old friends” are represented by Cheryl and Nancy. This little story shows how important it is to inject “new blood” into our programs at the Park – our “new” (or not-so-new) volunteers “see” things in a new and different light and we’re grateful for their ideas, visions, and enthusiasm!

Thanks Patty and Susie – as well as, of course, Cheryl and Nancy!
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

Interpretative Coordinators

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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