In The Vein

Happy Summertime!  I ran out of space last month, so I’ll just continue listing a couple of more things that your Association is up to:

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“VIP Educational Tour” program: One of the goals that the Board has adopted for this year is to organize a series of ‘in-house tours’ for Park Volunteers, to broaden their general knowledge of the Park. As this program develops, it will enable, for example, the Cottage, Clubhouse, Gift Shop and Garden people to learn about what goes on at the other end of the Park -- and vice-versa! In the future, it could also cover some of the “hidden” or “undiscovered” or “what-in-the-world-is-that?” spots in and around the Park that we’ve always wondered about. This project is in the ‘infant stage,’ but is moving forward; watch the Star for the first tour! And if you have an idea for a specific tour, let us know!

** * * * * * *

Visitor’s Center / Park Aide Station and the Theater area: Have you noticed some activity around this area recently? A few guys from the Over-the-Hill-Gang are busy working on several things:

- They are remodeling the two small rooms behind the Visitors Center check-in-area to provide more office space and storage room for the Park Aides.
- In the Theater, where Visitors sit to watch the movie, there’s going to be some new lighting so that the artifacts hanging on the wall will be able to be seen! And there could well be some new displays coming soon, too!
- The last activity is that the old projector and screen will be replaced -- with a brand new 70-inch LED Monitor! This type of display is at its best in a well-lit room, so it fits right in with the improved lighting and new ‘decor’!

EMPA is funding this project; we hope these changes will enhance the Visitors’ experience!

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Changing Pace: In case you haven’t heard, Supervising Ranger, Don Schmidt is retiring in June! Don has been a real ‘hands-on’ Ranger, who has exhibited a talent for keeping a whole lot of balls in the air. We are going to miss him! Be sure to reserve July 20 for his Retirement Potluck! More information will be coming soon.

Looking forward to seeing you around the Park!

Larry Skinner

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Wow ... the 2014 “busy season” is gearing up in a hurry! Not only are we staffing from eight to ten regular Cottage Living History days each month with an average of eight people each weekend day, but there seems to be a plethora of special presentations and events to schedule ... sometimes on those very same days.

The first two big days on the horizon occur this month on June 21 and 22 in downtown Grass Valley at its second annual “G.V. Gold Rush Days.” Last year was the first attempt and was surprisingly well attended. This year, however, the plans are in place for a big expansion ... with more displays, vendors, celebrity guests, etc. EMSHP and SYRSP were important players in last year’s event ... kind of the “main attraction” in fact ... and I’m sure that we were responsible, to some degree, for its success!

There were lots of us participating that weekend last summer ... the equipment trailer was there and manned the whole time, there were plenty of Blacksmiths “striking while the fire was hot,” “gold panning” instructors helping the crowd find a small treasure to take home, Park employees at the ready to answer questions, plus a number of volunteers in costume, representing local inhabitants of the early part of the 20th century.

I know that a few of you will be recruited by various groups around the Park for some of these “specialized” jobs ... BUT we also need people to help man a booth where we are ready to chat with people about the Park AND its volunteer programs. It worked as a service to those attending, and -- it turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to recruit new volunteers for the Park!!! Last year we generated a list of 25 people who were interested in becoming VIPs at the Park ... or, at least, were interested enough that they wanted to learn more about the options as a volunteer at the Park. We kept in contact with those people over the next eight months via phone calls and emails and in March, seven of those people completed the training and are currently working as volunteers at Empire! I’d like to see this happen again this year! We’re always in need of more “first class” volunteers! And ... we’ll have “resting” chairs in our space!
Another new year is approaching and we have finished our 2014 training class for the new Smiths. Bob Thorpe and Dave Frank guided the group through the six weeks of training along with the assistance of four helpers. We have added ten new smiths to the roster and are looking forward to seeing them grow and advance through the year. Several are being shared with other parts of the Park and we hope that works out well. We now have 47 smiths on our active list and a couple more in the wings recovering from medical conditions. Below is a photo taken on the last day of classes this year. Good looking group, huh?

We are now in the process of building stock for both the Gift Shop and for the Smith so that we can fill the wants and needs of our guests in the coming season. Sales have been running just a bit ahead of last year and we intend to pump this up as the season progresses. Much of our action comes over the Christmas holiday season.

School tours are running hot and heavy with most week-days in May having a tour in the morning and with many self-guided tours occurring in the afternoons. It seems that June might be a bit slower, but with still plenty of activity. The schools do keep us busy!

As always, a big part of our “job” is to greet and talk with the guests as they tour through Empire Mine. Often we are the only “live” bodies out in the Park so the guests always seem to enjoy our chats and seeing the hammer strike the steel!
In Full Swing
By Ranger Greg Sherr

Our Mother’s Day Event was busy to say the least! Attendance was up from last year and the weather was beautiful! Those fortunate enough to visit the park enjoyed a day of tours, living history, blacksmiths, ice cream, hot dogs and family. The greatest challenge of the day was parking – we simply do not have enough spaces for this event! Next year, we plan to shuttle visitors from the Calvary Bible Church parking lot on Highway 174 to help alleviate this problem.

For those of you who have not been to the park lately, I encourage you to do so. The gardens are looking fabulous thanks to dedicated staff and EMPA support! Special events are a constant with our wedding season going strong. The living history programs have been well attended and I have heard many visitors speak glowingly about having such quality interpretation in the park. Great job to all volunteers involved in living history! The gift shop has been a constant stop for park visitors and they are doing a great job of keeping up with the heavy traffic. In addition, several of our new docents will start to lead tours this week and new blacksmith docents are working inside the blacksmith shop. I encourage everyone to get involved!

Looking ahead, the 2nd annual Gold Rush Days celebration is scheduled for June 21 and June 22 in downtown Grass Valley from 10 am – 6 pm. There is a square dance scheduled for June 21 from 6 pm – 8 pm on Mill Street. We will have gold panning, blacksmithing, the 150th State Park’s display, docents dressed in period costume and our mining trailer at the event. For those who attended last year, we will be in the same location on Mill Street across from The Owl Restaurant.

Brochures for Miner’s Picnic are being given out to the visiting public with the event taking place on August 23 from 11 am – 4 pm. We are expecting another large crowd this year. Posters and announcements for this year’s event will be coming out in the next month.

In other news, Supervising Ranger Don Schmidt has announced his retirement at the end of June. We will miss him greatly! Ranger Dan Youngren has accepted an out-of-class Supervising Ranger assignment and is hoping to permanently fill the position after it has been advertised State-wide. Senior Park Aide Barbara Neil has been off work due to an illness and will hopefully return to work in August.

I encourage everyone to come out to the Park and smell the roses!

Ranger Greg Sherr
Something NEW Has Been Added!

Be sure to notice the two “directory” pages in this issue of the Empire Star! They’re always the last two pages of the newsletter – in this issue, those are pages 7 & 8.

When you have a look at those pages, it’ll be obvious (I think!) what the addition is. That’s correct – email addresses for all those listed on those pages are now included! It’s something that I’ve been wanting to do for several months now and my wish has finally come to fruition.

I have the blessing of these people to publish their addresses, but, as a courtesy to them, here’s a “tech tip” that is often useful. Many of you are aware of how to do this, but for those “less computer savvy people,” like me, here’s how it works. When you send an email to a group of people and don’t, necessarily, want all of their email addresses to be visible to all recipients, do this: Put your own name in the “To” line in an email document and then in the “BCC” line, type in the rest of their names/addresses. You’ll get a copy, of course, and everyone else will also receive it, but it will not show the other recipients nor their addresses.

A Challenge from the Gift Shop!

Here’s the challenge -- open to all Volunteers -- take and submit a photograph of the Cottage kitchen and/or Katie’s domain for possible reproduction on a post card! The card will be one of a series of cards depicting the interior of the Cottage that will be sold in the Gift Shop – just think about where your photo might end up -- Borneo, Transylvania – or someplace more common like the U.K., Germany, or Peru.

It seems to be a difficult scene to capture so there’s where the challenge comes in! This request has actually been made earlier too – but without any success ... so dust off that camera and get your creative juices flowing.

Contact Jennifer Greenfield, Volunteer Gift Shop Coordinator, if you have questions. She’d be happy to talk with you.
The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.

From an interview of Rudy Kutcher, Empire mule skinner, 1939-1941. Interview date: 3/8/85.

The mule and I pulled rock out of about 5 stopes. You would keep a tally of how many cars you drew out of each one. You would give that to the shift boss when you go off each night.

Sometimes there would be a lot of waste rock in one area with not much quartz. The mucker would have to pick through the rock to get out the quartz. He wouldn’t get out many cars so I would take some of the cars that were easily filled and move them from the other guys’ total so he wouldn’t look bad.

At that time we got paid for 8 hours, collar to collar, so you only worked about 5 hours because you spent about 3 hours to and from where you were working.

We had bales of hay there to give the mules plenty to eat.

Tales from the Tapes

From an interview of George Oyung, Empire handyman. Interview date: 2/3/83.

We had one dinky riding mower and one push mower. That’s all I had to work with.

In the cottage the glasses were kept in the cupboard in the butler’s pantry. The booze was also kept there. There was a wood box at the end of the stove and another wood box outside the back porch. I filled those wood boxes many times.

Katie would send out the laundry. The laundry man would deliver it back to the cottage. The only time the downstairs laundry was used was when the Bourns came here on vacation when they brought their servants.
Empire Mine State Park
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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