IN THE VEIN. . .

I am happy to report that our recent Mother’s Day Springtime event was a huge success. The unofficial count suggests that 2,000 people -- including paid and unpaid adults and children -- enjoyed a beautiful day at the Park. Bob Jennings chaired the event with the assistance of Troy Hammer and many others. All of us docents had a great time entertaining our visitors. I especially enjoyed acting as Mr. Bourn and interacting with people who entertained me with their enthusiasm and great questions.

I took advantage of the open house event to ask visitors questions that required them to use their smart phones to find answers. My guests researched the origin of the official beginning of Mother’s Day as a national event and identifying the Prophets portrayed in Michelangelo’s images on the wall.

The grounds were beautifully prepared by Park staff and volunteers. Happily, the “Gold of Ophir” roses were still in bloom for Mother’s Day. As I mentioned last month, this variety of rose was discovered by Robert Fortune in Eastern China in 1845 and covers the arbor leading to the rose garden.

EMPA is fortunate to have Courtney Ferguson acting as publicist for our special events. Her skills and public contacts have taken Mother’s Day participation to new heights amounting to a 1000% increase in attendance since 2001! The challenge now for the Park staff and volunteer docents is to keep up with this success by providing more security and living history volunteers for next year. Docents will have even more fun if we can have some relief during the day. Please don’t hold back if you want to get involved in any of our future events.

I am pleased to announce that our “Mine, Wine, and Dine” fundraiser (scheduled for 6:00 – 10:00 p.m., on Friday, June 9) has received good support from our community with many sponsors contributing money or goods. All proceeds from this fundraiser will go toward much needed repairs to the Park’s historic structures. Steve Sanchez is Chairman of this fundraiser and he has been working tirelessly. Let’s support the Park and Steve’s efforts by purchasing tickets for what is shaping up to be a very memorable event.

I am also pleased to announce that John Lucas has recently joined the EMPA Board. You may know John from his involvement in the Clubhouse and his very “stylish” handle bar mustache. John is working hard for us to be able to display the beautiful and historic dresses used by the women in the Bourn family, which are currently hidden from view. When the dresses are finally displayed, I guarantee you will be impressed!

Finally, EMPA could also use volunteers to help with managing our membership database and website. If you have these skills or know of someone who does, please let us know. Thank you and have a happy summer.

JIM COE
How long has it been since you've visited the Empire Cottage during one of its Living History days and heard Mrs. Bourn tell her visitors that she has electric lights in the Cottage here in Grass Valley while she still has gas lighting at her home in San Francisco? With that lead-in, Mr. Bourn is prompted to explain the situation with the gas and electric companies in the City at that time – 1905.

Bill Dempsey, a long time volunteer at EMSHP and one who often plays the role of William B. Bourn II at the Cottage – even portraying him once for Alex Burgh, Bourn’s “real life” grandnephew – usually tells the story something like this:

“There were many power companies serving different sections of the City of San Francisco – some big, some small. With so many companies, there was bound to be some duplication while some areas had no service at all – a void. Our home on Webster Street happens to be located within one of those voids. Two of the largest companies were San Francisco Gas & Electric (where Bourn had been elected as President in 1890) and California Gas & Electric. These two companies had always gotten along just fine together and they eventually decided to consolidate and solve the City’s problems.

“First, they individually bought up some of the other smaller companies – like those owned by Claus Spreckels, the famed “Sugar King.” When the dust cleared, they were the only two remaining firms. They then formed a brand new company, chose a Board of Directors, and incorporated under their new name ‘Pacific Gas and Electric’ – what we commonly call PG&E today.”

This important merger officially took place on October 10, 1905 – which happens to be the same year as the “setting” for Cottage Living History. Bill, and several others who play William B. Bourn II, are frequently heard telling their guests something like, “We’ve just tentatively chosen our new name, ‘Pacific Gas & Electric’ – PG&E – I think it has a nice ‘ring’ to it – what do you think?”

Just after this merger occurred, the new company equipped a railway car for a traveling exhibit of rural electrification that included such modern conveniences as an ice-making machine, a motor-driven sewing machine and a cream separator. The great earthquake and resulting fire, just six months later, devastated San Francisco and much of Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s infrastructure, creating enormous engineering and financial challenges. However, the company’s substantial capital allowed it to survive, rebuild, and eventually expand.

While researching this story, I couldn’t help but think about all the accomplishments of William B. Bourn II – he was so much more than just the owner of a fabulously successful gold mine in Grass Valley. Our current CLH Manual, originally lovingly created by another long-term docent, Jean McKeen, points out some personal traits of Mr. Bourn – among which are: “He was a shrewd businessman, an astute judge of character, always persistent, and he possessed great vision and foresight.” You could easily use all of these terms as well as these adjectives to describe the man: confident, bold, aggressive, and competitive. And – just maybe – there was a little “Bourn Luck” involved too!

ENTERTAINING MOMENTS FROM A
COLORFUL MOTHER’S DAY SPRINGTIME EVENT

Popular Guitarist George Souza Played Music Near the Tea Garden (So frightfully civilized!)

(Photo by Richard Bannister)

Barbershop Quartet, the Forte Miners, Filled the Mineyard with Songs Such as “Dangerous Dan McGrew” and “Lida Rose” from “The Music Man”

(Photo by Richard Bannister)

Popular Local Band Stepside, Performed Country Favorites Near the Mine Shaft for People Waiting to Take the Tour.

(Photo by Courtney Ferguson)

Fire in the Kitchen Played a Variety of Old-Time Music Outside the Cottage. Tad Kitgada (left) Is One of the Park’s Volunteer Trail Walkers — and Also Leads School Tours. Partner Diana Claire is Pictured on the Right.

(Photo by Richard Bannister)

At left: The Forever Young Chorus Added a Touch of Broadway to the Mother’s Day Springtime Event.

(Photo by Stephanie Bond)
FUN FACTS FROM THE PAST

By Barbara Jarvis

City Accepts Starr’s Offer

Mr. Starr recently made a proposition to the city, agreeing to macadamize Colfax Ave. to the city limits, a distance of 1,800 feet, for the sum of $240. He stated that the macadam would be spread to a width of nine feet and it would be 12” deep. Work will start soon, but will not be completed for some time. This will give the city a fine piece of road where hitherto has existed one of the worst in the city.

Daily Morning Union, 30 Apr 1905, Pg 2, Col 2-3

HELP NEEDED!

As mentioned in President Jim Coe’s message on page one of this newsletter, the Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA) needs help with managing the membership database, as well as the Park website. Neither task is time-consuming, but both are extremely important. If you or someone you know is interested in helping or would like more information, please contact Jim Coe either via telephone at 274-2675, or via email at coejim@sbcglobal.net.

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.
(Editor's Note: The following is the fifth in a series of articles written by Gage McKinney especially for the Empire Star. Mr. McKinney is the author of No Depression Here and When Miner's Sang. His most recent book is MacBoyle's Gold, the biography of gold miner Errol MacBoyle of Grass Valley, copies of which are available in the Gift Shop.)

THE COMPRESSOR MAN WORE A TOP HAT

By Gage McKinney

No one should entirely believe the description of Grass Valley's Madison Lodge in the 1898 volume Fifty Years of Masonry in California:

“Go down into the deep shafts and along the chambers and you will meet Brethren . . . stripped to the buff, perspiration issuing in streams from every pore . . . Then go to the Lodge room at night, and there, dressed in the garb of gentlemen of elegant leisure, you will find these same Brethren . . . conducting the affairs and ceremonies of Masonry with true politeness, dignity, and skill, as if they were the professors of chairs in colleges. . . .”

Judging from the inaccuracies (Grass Valley's mines were cool) and hyperbole (professors?) one would think the writer had never set foot in a gold mine or a lodge room. Yet for all that, there's some truth in the passage. The Masons and other fraternal organizations made miners into gentlemen.

There was no better example than Bennet Opie, the reliable compressor engineer at the Empire. When a whistle signaled the end of the shift, Opie would leave his work with grease on his overalls and dirt on his brow. Just a few hours later, freshly showered and shaved, he would stand on a dais before a roomful of men, elegantly dressed from the tips of his tuxedo slippers to the peak of his black top hat, ready to inculcate the lessons of the Masonic order.

Born in Cornwall in 1863, Opie probably had reading and arithmetic drilled into him in a village school and memorized scripture in Sunday School. Then at nine he went to work in the mines. At 19, handsome, with a high brow and strong chin, and uncommonly tall for a Cornishman, he came to America and two years later to Grass Valley. Like many others from the old duchy, he entered the new world through the portals of the mine and the pillars of the lodge.

No one would mistake Opie for a college professor. He was merely, as a newspaper said, one who gave “earnest and exacting devotion” to both the mine and lodge. Yet he acquired through lodge work an ornate vocabulary, powers of elocution and a thoughtful disposition. By rubbing elbows at lodge dinners with mine owners (like John and Edward Coleman), jurists (like Judge George Jones) and industrialists (like John Glasson) he at least partially absorbed the outlook and tastes belonging to men of wider scope and experience.

Like Opie, many Empire miners secured a place in the American middle-class through the steady employment of the mine and the steady influence of church and lodge. In pre-television days, Grass Valley had plenty of fraternal orders, including Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Pythias and Red Men. The various Masonic orders included Royal Arch and Knights Templars. Most men belonged to more than one. Miners’ wives and sisters had their orders, too, like Eastern Star, Rebekahs and Pythian Sisters.

Opie was still employed at the Empire when he died in 1939. In addition to being a Mason, he was a singer with a rich bass voice and is pictured as a promising young man in my book, When Miners Sang. At the Empire Mine we can remember him for fulfilling that promise.
Gold Panning at Bridgeport 2017
Begins May 27

Interested in trying your hand at Gold Panning? When you visit Bridgeport in South Yuba River State Park this summer, be sure to stop by the troughs near the Visitors Center. Learn from docents how the old 49ers used simple pans to find hidden treasure in the shallows of the Yuba River. After a panning demonstration, practice your technique in the troughs before heading down to the river to do your own prospecting.

Docents at Bridgeport provide step-by-step panning lessons, share stories about the history of our area, and describe other ways the precious metal was extracted during the California Gold Rush, such as hard rock mining and hydraulic mining. Gold panning is fun and educational for the entire family and kids get to keep the treasures they find in the troughs.

Docents offer gold panning demonstrations at Bridgeport from noon to 2:00 p.m. every weekend and holiday, beginning Memorial Day Weekend, May 27 through Labor Day Weekend Sept. 4. Gold panning sessions for private groups and school talks can be arranged at other times by prior reservation.

Good times await you in the South Yuba River State Park at Bridgeport.

17660 PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD
PENN VALLEY, CA 95946

Call the South Yuba River State Park for more information and private group reservations at (530) 432-2546.

Photos by John Field
From an interview of Downey Clinch. Surface gang, explosives 1937. Interview date 11/21/85.

The powder magazine at the Pennsylvania Mine had an entrance that was very narrow. The magazine was also very small. A truck load of dynamite consisted of 400 cases. Each wooden box weighed 50 pounds and had to be stacked neatly so they would all fit. They stored the dynamite for both the Pennsylvania Mine and the Empire Mine there in order to keep the Empire shaft free for other things.

The dynamite caps house was in the Empire yard near the hay warehouse out from the machine shop. A fellow named Thomas, John Thomas, everybody called him Tommy John, would spend all day long cutting the fuses and crimping the caps on them. The fuse would come in 3,000 ft. coils.

He had a bench with pegs. He would cut the fuse to 6 ft or 9 ft. Whatever he wanted. He had a cutter that was operated by his foot. He would put a brass blasting cap on the end of the fuse and crimp it. It was a very efficient system.

Often times the dynamite was used under wet conditions and would not detonate; so Tommy John would dip the caps in a white liquid called celakap which made a very water resistant seal. When the powder monkey came to pick them up he would tell Tommy John what length fuses the miners wanted.


I was born in the front bedroom of the house that is down the hill from the clubhouse. The house was owned by Empire.

My dad was master mechanic in the machine shop. Dad worked at Empire for nearly 30 years. He started out when he was very young. He was a hoistman at one time.

My dad was Albert Hooper. His brothers were Frank Hooper and Louie Hooper. They all worked there. My Uncle Frank was superintendent of the mill. He worked there over 50 years. My cousin started the mortuary in town.

Our house was a lovely house. The mine provided it to my dad. We moved out in 1918 when I was 9 years old. My dad bought a ranch out on Maryland Road. He walked to the mine up and over the hill from Maryland Road. We lived on the ranch for four years. In 1922 we moved into town. I went to high school in town.

We had the whole world to play in when we lived at Empire. There was a big pine tree by the tennis court with a swing in it. And we played down what we called the grass walk. That is where you could go to Empire St. That long strip. It had flowers on each side that were beautiful.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.
MALAKOFF DIGGINS SHP CELEBRATES 51 YEARS!
HUMBUG DAY
HOSTED BY FRIENDS OF
NORTH BLOOMFIELD & MALAKOFF DIGGINS
SATURDAY JUNE 10, 2017
11 A.M.-4:00 P.M.

ENTERTAINMENT & FAMILY FUN

[World’s Shortest] Parade, Izzy Tooinski, Buffalo Gals, Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Blessing, Gold Panning, Blacksmithing, Candle Making, Tin Punching, Weaving Demonstration, Organized Kids Games, Fox Walkers Demonstrations, Sierra Muzzle Loaders, Special Walking Tours, ECV Chapter 10 BBQ, Ice Cream, Popcorn, Rootbeer Floats, Snow Cones, & More!

• Commemorate Malakoff Diggins’ Golden Olden Days as park staff and volunteers in period costume interpret our historic heritage at North Bloomfield, formerly Humbug, California; with music, games, crafts, food and fun.

• Tour the historic buildings and grounds, echoing with the ghosts of miners and early settlers or poke around the relics of by-gone horse & buggy days in the fascinating Ostrom Stable.

DIRECTIONS:
Follow Hwy. 49 north, 11 miles from Nevada City and turn right on Tyler Foote Rd. Then follow the double-yellow lines for 15 miles to the Park.

For More Information call 530.265.2740 or check out our website:
www.malakoffdigginsstatepark.org
friendsofmalakoff@gmail.com
23579 North Bloomfield Road
Nevada City, CA 95959
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

Interpretative Coordinators

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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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Return Service Requested

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