In The Vein . . .

I would like to start off my first article in the *Empire Star* by thanking our wonderfully talented EMPA Board. With the expert guidance by outgoing President Larry Skinner, my training wheels will soon be off. Additional guidance from Vice President, Jim Coe, and Treasurer, Virginia Hamilton, has helped me see what an awesome responsibility this Association has in maintaining the financial support this Park needs to maintain its ranking as one of California's most historic and loved State Parks.

I would also like to give special recognition to our Finance Committee whom has worked tirelessly over the past several months to put together a *spending plan* and an *investment plan* which I feel this Association needed years ago – but the timing is now perfect. With the growing list of desperately needed building repairs and upgrades, these two *plans* will greatly benefit the Park with timely financial support.

But, hear me now!! Now is not the time to coast along. My goal is to double our general membership, expand our Board participation and get down to some serious “fund raising” – or how about “fun raising”? Yes, fund raising can be fun! And with major repair needs to the Cottage roof, sprinkler system replacement throughout the entire grounds and a ship load of upgrades to the Clubhouse, additional financial support is greatly needed. And I strongly feel that getting the word out to local businesses and our community is our best option.

So, let’s put together some *fun* raisers for this summer/fall and beyond and make it happen! For those EMPA members who have already renewed their membership this year, I thank you very much; for those who have not yet, please do so – then I can thank you all -- and please, tell a friend, neighbor or coworker and invite them to become members too! Believe me, the benefits to this Park are worth every penny and you also get some GREAT reading to boot, in this and future issues of the Empire Star.

Thanks to all and see you in the Park,

Mark S. Allen

Check out EMPA’s brand new website – it’s cool! – [www.empiremine.org](http://www.empiremine.org).
COTTAGE LIVING HISTORY
A Little Something for Everyone
by Bev Skinner

Things are really beginning to “hum” at the Cottage on the Hill as we make preparations for the new season – many of our costumes have already been cleaned while others are being laundered at home – plus a myriad of other small chores are on the schedule to be completed by May 1!

Cheryl and Nancy, the CLH Coordinators, are asking our volunteers to at least consider playing another character this year – you might just be surprised how much fun you could have doing that! They’re also asking everyone to help recruit new VIPs (more about this below). Anyone who thinks they might be interested in becoming a new docent at the Park needs to first call Ranger Greg at 273-8522 to sign up for two part-days of all-Park training: March 6 and 7 – OR – March 13 and 14 (more about this in Ranger Greg’s article on page 3).

They’ve also set the dates for additional training sessions for just CLH docents: they’re scheduled for March 14 about 1 p.m. (immediately following the Park training), on March 18 at 3 p.m. and the third is set for March 21 at 10:30 a.m. – our new docents need only attend one of these three.

The annual Kick-Off meeting for all new and returning CLH Docents is April 14 at 10:30 a.m. in the Docent Building.

The Cottage Library is missing a book – and we’d really appreciate having it returned as we have others waiting for it! It’s titled, On the Edge of the World by Richard Longstreth – about four San Francisco architects at the turn of the century (the 20th century that is!). We love it when someone is interested in the books in our small Library, but it’s important that we know who has them! If you have it, but have not finished it, please call me at 477-1750 so we’ll know where it’s residing at the moment.

It’s mentioned in the second paragraph above, but the subject bears repeating – over and over again! As active docents, we can do wonders at recruiting new VIPs for the Park if we just set our recruiting skills to the “on” setting when we’re out and about among our friends – and strangers alike! It’s so easy to talk enthusiastically about EMSHP with people and share with them what great opportunities it offers – for visitors, of course, but for volunteers as well. There are so many ways to serve the Park, our community, our guests – at the same time that we’re having fun and making some great new friends!

As well as convincing some of our friends and neighbors to take the plunge and become active docents, during the last couple of years we’ve also focused on recruiting new docents at Grass Valley Gold Rush Days and other such events as well as at the Cottage – on CLH days and special events there too. And – we’ve found that it works! Just last week, I had calls from two people who received my follow-up communications and are signing up with Ranger Greg – and those two calls translate to four new docents! We may have talked to 200 people at these various events, but it’s worth it to get a handful of new VIPs! Try it – you’ll like it!
At Empire Mine, we are still waiting for Winter! As the Midwest and East Coast suffer through a harsh winter with record lows, we have been basking in sunshine and warmer than usual temperatures for most of the season. There are numerous flowers blooming at the mine with visitors commenting on the intoxicating aroma coming from the daphne near the visitor center front entrance. Volunteers Bob Jennings and Troy Hammer have been working with our grounds staff and have planted hundreds of roses from cuttings taken from the historic rose garden at Empire Mine. These roses will be available for sale at Empire Mine in a couple of years.

With March approaching, there are exciting things happening at Empire Mine. First, our school tours are ongoing and have been well attended. Secondly, our public tours have been packed with eager visitors wanting information on this exceptional historic park. I would like to thank the blacksmiths, school tour guides, public tour guides, and security and gift shop volunteers for keeping things running smoothly!

We have two sets of training dates this year for those interested in becoming a volunteer at Empire Mine State Historic Park. Our first training dates are Friday, March 6 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 7 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. The second training dates are Friday, March 13 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 14 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Prospective docents must attend both a Friday and Saturday session to be able to volunteer at Empire Mine. All volunteers must bring cash or check for $25 and a photo identification for fingerprinting. I am looking forward to another great group of volunteers this year and hope to see everyone at the Park as Spring edges forward.

New Season
by Park Ranger, Greg Sherr

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An Important Revival at the Park
by Bob Jennings

A very special project has been undertaken at our Park by an enthusiastic and hopeful group of volunteers. On Tuesday, February 3, Troy Hammer and Bob Jennings met with an excited group at the park nursery to learn and perform the art of rose propagation. Jennifer Greenfield, Master Gardener, instructed the group and offered tips and techniques for successful propagation. Jennifer Wood and Joy Feller, Park gardeners, provided the prunings of many of our beautiful heritage roses of which there are over 60 varieties in the Park. The roses date back to the 1800s -- but two date, amazingly, to the 1300s. Five hundred "starts" were planted that day including several different varieties. Two more work days provided several hundred more. One heritage variety, Cherokee, will be pruned and propagated later when it is appropriate. When the "starts" have rooted, hopefully in mid-September, they will be moved to one-gallon cans and brought to the Gift Shop to be sold. This popular project will hopefully please the many visitors who have asked about owning a heritage rose: a real and precious remembrance of our beautiful park.
Stamp Mill Update
by Don Schmidt

If you have been to the park lately, you have probably noticed that our beloved little stamp mill is getting a new lease on life. Thanks to the efforts of the Over-the-Hill-Gang volunteers, the mill looks great and is just about ready for the installation of the motor, drive belt, and safety cage. Once the power pole and wiring is installed in mid-March, it will be ready for testing and the final components. It should be ready to use on the public tours in late March or early April.

The restoration of the stamp mill is part of three projects that State Parks and EMPA hope to have completed in the near future.

The next project, restoration of the Cornish pump, is in the planning and approval stage, though some work has already been accomplished.

Reconstruction of the original retort and restoration of the retort room is a bit more complicated and will require some special skills to complete.

Your contributions to and membership in the Empire Mine Park Association are helping fund these projects, which will undoubtedly enhance the public’s enjoyment of the Park. Thank you for your support!
Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission

The Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission helps to preserve Nevada County’s rich historical legacy for the benefit of county residents and visitors. Thanks to current technology, our rich history meets the 21st Century with the unveiling of a new GIS web-map that takes users on a virtual tour of the Historical Landmarks in the county.

Nevada County GIS staff collaborated with the Commission to create the interactive map which allows users to digitally explore points of historical interest. Each landmark includes a photo, description, and key information.

The map works well with computers and mobile devices, such as smart phones, and can be found at the following link: http://nevadacountylandmarks.com.

The Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission was formed in 1969 by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors and charged with the mission of identifying and preserving historic sites for the benefit of county residents and visitors. This grew out of the interest of a small group of Grass Valley residents in locating the many historic plaques and markers and making the list available for others. The result of their work led not only to the creation of the Commission but in the publication of EXPLORING NEVADA COUNTY, a record of over 250 such markers throughout Nevada County. A hard copy version of the book can be purchased in the EMPA gift shop for $17.75.

*Articles on the work of the Commission will also appear in subsequent editions of The Empire Star.*

Jim Dierberger, Chairman, Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission
EMPA’s *New and Improved Website*

Have you checked it out yet?

Over the past several months, Margi Nielsen (Board member and Webmaster), Courtney Ferguson (EMPA’s Outreach Coordinator), and Judy Barlow (consultant), along with others, have worked diligently to come up with a new website. If you haven’t seen it yet, you need to get on at www.empiremine.org and do some exploring. New photos, new maps, new stories – a whole new look. It’s not perfect yet (will it ever be?) so your comments and observations are welcome!

As an added bonus – as of March 1, you’ll be able to view the current issue of the *Empire Star* newsletter on this website. The plan is to have the most current ten issues available – that would be a complete years’ worth of newsletters accessible at any time.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**March 6, 7, 13, & 14**
Training for new docents
(see Ranger Greg’s article in this issue for details - page 3)

**March 15**
A special “living history” day at New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum
21350 Almaden Road, San Jose 95120
(call 408-323-1107 for additional details)

**March 17**
EMPA Board of Directors Meeting
9:30 a.m.
In the Docent Building

**March 17**
Media Workshop led by Courtney Ferguson
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm
In the Docent Building
(see Courtney’s article in this issue for details - page 8 - RSVP to 432-8023 or courtneycopy@gmail.com)

**March 19**
Nevada County Historical Society Speaker Night
7:00 p.m. at the Madelyn Helling Library
Topic: the S.F. Bourn Mansion presented by Bev & Larry Skinner and Jack Laird
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 Orlo Steele, Mucker at Empire in 1950. Interview date: 5/5/94.

There were boards in the drift that would be dry. Everything else would be wet. At lunch time we would sit on one and stretch out because it would feel good. You would take your coat off when you were working but you would put it back on when you stopped because you would get cold.

The carbide light would last about two hours at medium drip. If you turned up the water that dripped onto the carbide you would get a brighter flame but it would use up the carbide faster. You had a carbide canister that was shaped so you could put it in your back pocket.

You would set the water where you wanted it, about half way so it would start dripping. Then you would spit onto the carbide to get it to start making gas. Then you would screw it onto the bottom of the light. You would then flick the wheel to light the gas.

If you wanted more light to see where you were working, you would reach up and turn up the water a little bit, but that would also use up your carbide faster.

From an interview of Phil Keast, Master Mechanic and Mechanical Engineer, Empire Mine, 1920-1957. Interview date: 7/31/78.

We would sharpen 1500 drills a day. In 1914 they put in a Lodge & Shipley lathe in the machine shop that was 15 feet by 2 feet between centers for turning mill stems and cam shafts.

The cupola on the roof of the blacksmith shop had louvres to let the smoke out. There were no hoods over the forges. I doubt you could get anyone to work in there today.
Create Media Magic on TV & Radio Interviews …

because next time, it may be YOUR turn!

Come to our FREE “Media Magic” Workshop, and learn the simple secrets of how to handle – and excel – when it’s your turn to be interviewed on local radio and TV.

It’s easier than you think to:

- Turn “nerves” into enthusiasm
- Polish your communication skills
- Attract new visitors to our EMPA events
- Be a confident EMPA ambassador, and
- Enjoy the experience

Publicist Courtney Ferguson will be our facilitator. Bring your upbeat personalities, your passion for Empire Mine, and your curiosity – and have fun perfecting your techniques. Courtney promises a lively, interactive, and informative workshop. Everyone who is interested in learning the basics of a good interview is invited – and welcome. St. Patrick’s Day is the ideal time to polish your “gift o’ the gab!”

Tuesday, March 17th
2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Docent Building

RSVP to
Courtney Ferguson
432.8023 or courtenycopy@gmail.com

V.I.P. Educational Tour of the Cottage
a Success!

by Lynne Buenz, Coordinator, V.I.P. Educational Tours

On Thursday, January 15, approximately 15 active docents had the opportunity to take a guided tour through Empire (Bourn) Cottage – including the upstairs and lower levels that are not open to the general public. The tour group was divided into three smaller groups, and each area of the Cottage had a guide (or guides). At the end, the entire tour group gathered again in the living room, and there was time for questions as well as feedback. The general consensus was that the tour had been beneficial and had added to each individual docent’s knowledge base about the Cottage.

As noted previously, the V.I.P. Educational Tour Program is co-sponsored by the Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA) and Park staff. Special thanks to Ranger Greg Sherr for his support, as well as other staff who have handled reservations and answered questions along the way.

The next V.I.P. Tour will feature the Clubhouse – including, once again, areas not open to the public. This tour is scheduled for Thursday, April 16. The group size will once more be limited, and advance reservations will be required. Call the Visitor Center. Details to follow soon!
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

Interpretative Coordinators

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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!

EMPA Board of Directors

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Vice Pres., Jim Coe / 274-2675 / coejim@sbcglobal.net
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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