In The Vein

As I’m sure you know, California State Parks is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year; Park stationary and emails carry the emblem, Park employees and docents wear pins designed and produced for the occasion, and EMPA’s new website displays the official Sesquicentennial logo.

But did you know that this year’s Nevada County Fair had a special category, sponsored by the State Parks, celebrating this event? And, did you know that one of Empire’s Volunteers walked away with the Grand Prize in that category? Well, here are the facts!

Bert Wymer, a multi-talented (and creative) Over-the-Hill-Gang member, decided to enter the competition. Combining thin cross-sections of old ore cart rails and appropriately-sized spikes and sprinkled with paper-thin slices of gold bearing quartz, he created an "Empire Mine” award-winning collage. He proudly took home the large green and black Sesquicentennial Commemoration 1st Place Ribbon. Congratulations, Bert!!

On a sad note, Empire Mine lost “one of its own” a couple of weeks ago, and, as it’s so close to Veteran’s Day, I thought it would be appropriate to pay homage to him.

Paul Kleist realized his life-long dream of working in a Blacksmith shop when, at 80 years of age, he took the Park’s VIP training and the six weeks of blacksmith schooling and became a certified “Smithy!” He enjoyed many days in the shop, making hooks and candle sticks – and telling visitors the stories of the Empire Mine.

Paul was a WWII veteran, spending time in the Philippines and later as a member of the Occupation Forces in Japan. We thank him for his service, and are pleased that we had the opportunity to work alongside him in the shop as he plied his new-found trade. We salute you, Paul.

See you around the Park!

Larry Skinner

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Check out EMPA’s brand new website – it’s cool! – www.empiremine.org.
Where does “Mercury” Come from?

Many of us have asked that question many times and the group of docents and friends of EMPA who visited New Almaden Park just south a few miles of San Jose in early September finally found the answer! The source of mercury is the ore called cinnabar – and we learned that there was a whole lot of it mined at that locality in years past. Mining is no longer done there, but there’s still lots of cinnabar left – just like there’s no mining currently being undertaken at Empire – but, there’s lots of gold still there! It is the location of the first mining community in California – starting in 1847. Cinnabar itself is a beautiful ore – red or vermillion in color and before it was discovered that it contained mercury and how that could be used, the cinnabar was used as a pigment.

The term quicksilver is an alternative name for mercury. Interestingly, quicksilver is used in similes and metaphors to describe something that moves or changes very quickly – or that is difficult to hold or contain. Probably most of us experienced that characteristic as youngsters who played with mercury from a broken thermometer!

It’s now one of the parks owned and operated by Santa Clara County. They bill this particular park as “New Almaden – a 1.6 Mile Walk Through History.” While the town of New Almaden is a historic district, all homes are privately owned. It took four years to build the “Big House” – from 1850 to 1854 – and is commonly called the Hacienda or Casa Grande – and grand it is! It has recently been restored and now houses the Quicksilver Mining Museum as well as park staff and volunteer offices.

We were treated royally while there; they even acquired an extra van for us so there were three large vans which took us on a 3-hour tour on narrow, winding roads up into the hills where the mining was done. The most interesting part of the tour to me was seeing the few remaining remnants of the three independent communities on the Mine property – company towns in the truest sense. The laborers were of a diverse population and these neighborhoods were created and named for the people living in them – Englishtown, Spanishtown, and Hacienda where most of the processing took place down on the flats. Each of these little towns were completely owned by the Mining Company – and each had their own homes, stores, schools, churches, and taverns. The Company insisted on good behavior from the residents, but was paternal in their approach figuring that a happy worker was a productive worker! Each family was also expected to make all their purchases at their local “company store”!
New Almaden was the source of mercury for the Empire – highly important in the processing of the gold. There’s also another direct tie to our community in that Arthur DeWint Foote worked as a surveyor and engineer there from about 1875 to 1877 – and during this time, he married Mary Hallock in N.Y. and brought his bride there to live. Instead of living at the Hacienda where other management families lived, however, the young couple chose to live on “Mine Hill,” just adjacent to Englishtown, in one of the small cabins there and it was in that cabin that their first child, Arthur Burling Foote, was born. It was because of Mary’s writings and illustrations, widely published, that New Almaden Park gained some of the best descriptions of the mine at that time. Many of you, I’m sure, have read Mary’s fascinating book, *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West* (available in our Gift Shop most of the time), in which she describes her experiences in many mining towns as she followed her husband’s career – including both New Almaden and the North Star. Both A.D. and son, A.B. Foote, later became Superintendents of the North Star Mine.

Additional interesting tidbits to note:

Several docents from New Almaden are coming to Nevada County near the time you’re reading this newsletter – on Thursday, November 13. The last I’ve heard is that they’ll be visiting both Empire and North Star.

For our curious readers out there, the mine is named for a mercury mine in (old) Almadén, Spain, which had operated since at least Roman times. The term Almadén, translates to "the mine."

I purchased three small, but interesting, soft cover books while there and I’m placing them in the Docent Library in the Smurf Room very soon. One is of the series of books called “Images of America” and is full of many old photos while the other two are smaller publications published by the New Almaden Quicksilver Co. Park Association. The Footes are mentioned a number of times in all three publications.
The First Bourn/Polk Collaboration

By Lise Hinman, Oral History Coordinator

As Bev Skinner reported in the October Star, Betty Lucas has completed her effort to consolidate and organize a few hundred pictures taken by several EMPA members on their visit to the Bourn home at 2550 Webster Street in San Francisco and the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine. Greg and Gloria McCandless, the current owners of the Bourn’s Webster Street home, are doing an extraordinary job of bringing this home back to the glory of the Bourn era, and the house foreshadows details that Willis Polk incorporated in both the Empire Cottage and Filoli.

Betty has produced three versions for your viewing pleasure! They are:

1. A DVD that contains a 45-minute slide show, complete with music and some captions that help identify what you’re viewing. It can be played on either your computer or on your DVD player and viewed on your TV screen.
2. A shorter or “lite” version CD that will play on your computer, but not in your DVD player. It contains a 20-minute video and a folder of the individual pictures used in the video.
3. A CD of all the photos if you wish to view the individual pictures on a computer.

All of the versions/formats can be copied to your computer for your future viewing.

These are all available for you to view in the comfort of your possibly more modest home! The pictures are not intended to inspire D.Y.I. projects, but if your own project grows to this proportion, please take pictures for historic reference! Until we have a better place, all three versions will be found in the Oral History drawer, next to the new sign-in computer in the Visitors Center. They are well labeled – look carefully to be sure to get the one you want.

Please take an opportunity to see how the Bourns lived in San Francisco prior to the 1906 earthquake! It’s fun!
VIP Educational Tour Program Successfully Launched

Submitted by Lynne Buenz

On Thursday, October 2, 2014, approximately 45 participants were afforded the opportunity to tour the Hard Rock Interpretive Area (formerly known as the adit), under the expert guidance of tour leaders Ray Patton, Jim Dierberger, and Larry Skinner. Larry served as the overall tour organizer/leader, and arranged for a school bus to transport participants from the Park’s parking lot to the tour area. Many favorable comments were expressed, indicating that most, if not all, of those attending were impressed with what they saw, and also realized the countless hours of volunteer labor contributed by members of the Over-the-Hill Gang, which included the conversion of a donated modular home into a tour center.

Special thanks to Park Ranger Greg Sherr and Matt Green, Sector Superintendent, for allowing access to the area, and to Ray, Jim and Larry for making it such a memorable experience for all.

Interesting Tidbits from the Gift Shop!

Submitted by Jennifer Greenfield, Gift Shop Coordinator

We need help in the Gift Shop—a volunteer who can help with some bookkeeping tasks—like confirming and making bank deposits, reviewing/reconciling the revenue sheets, and preparing a monthly report for the EMPA Treasurer and Gift Shop. Knowledge of Microsoft Excel is required. The job requires approximately 2 - 5 hours a month, some of which can be done at home.

Some “old favorites,” along with new items that just might become a “new favorite,” are in stock in our wonderful Gift Shop—ready for you to begin your holiday shopping right here at the Park! A couple of the brand new items are tea towels and photo key chains—plus a wide selection of books, lots of jewelry and minerals, caps, tee shirts and the ever-popular lump of coal! Check out the photos included here—then come look—and shop—in person!

A recently published book containing a chapter exclusively relating to EMSHP may have some interest to those of you interested in mineralogy and microbiology. Chapter 13 of “Arsenic: Environmental Geochemistry, Mineralogy, and Microbiology,” is in Volume 79 in the series entitled, “Reviews in Mineralogy and Geochemistry.” The series is published by the Mineralogical Society of America (MSA) and the Geochemical Society. The copyright is held by MSA.

The link to where the book and its chapters are for sale on the MSA website is http://www.minpubs.org/index.html. Select “Reviews in Mineralogy and Geochemistry” from the pull down menu; then enter "79" for the volume number. Paper copies cost $9.25 and electronic copies cost $5.95. A paper copy of the entire volume (635 pages, soft cover) is $45. A link to a description of the volume and its Table of Contents is http://www.minsocam.org/msa/RIM/rim79.html.
EMPA Annual General Meeting
November 6, 2014

Those attending the annual meeting enjoyed a most interesting guest speaker – Phil Oyung. Most of you probably know who he is and possibly a little about him. Three generations of the Oyung family have a history at Empire Mine, almost as long as the existence of the Mine itself – not quite, but almost!

Phil (one of seven children – six boys and one girl!) shared many of his family stories about living in the Ogung’s little cottage – a stone’s throw from the Stamp Mill – where there were often eight or so members of the family living there. You might remember that after the nearby Starr home burned in 1935, a portion that was salvageable was added to the Ogung’s much more humble home. Phil shared that new room with some of his brothers and he talked about the fancy wallpaper and curtains that it contained – a big contrast from the other curtains in the house that were made from burlap bags!

He eventually went on to college at Sacramento State and earned a degree in Electrical Engineering. He had many interesting jobs in his career – one of which was working at the Empire Mine for the last three years of its existence – while he was still in high school.

Prior to Phil’s presentation, some important business was conducted when two members of the EMPA Board of Directors were elected: Sean Gilleran, who will be serving a second term, and Mark Allen, elected to his first term. Congratulations – and thanks to both!

DATES TO REMEMBER

Friday & Saturday, November 28 & 29
Holidays @ Empire Mine
11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Park-wide

Thursday, November 20 and
Thursday, January 15
(no meeting in December)
Coordinator Meetings
10 a.m. in the Docent Building

Tuesday, November 18 and
Tuesday, December 16 and
Tuesday, January 20
EMPA Board of Directors Meeting
9:30 a.m. in the Docent Building

Thursday, December 4
EMPA Christmas Open House
(EMPA members only)
3 - 5 p.m. in the Clubhouse
(RSVP by Nov. 24, 2014 to:
Jennifer Greenfield
jgardens2@att.net or 477-2637 )

Thursday, January 15
Second VIP Tour:
Empire Cottage
(Reserve your space at the Park Visitor Center by January 8)
Tales from the Tapes
By Jack Laird


In the early days the families generally had only one car. At the end of Ed's shift, the kids and I, along with the other wives, would be parked just a few feet from the collar of the mine. All of the sudden you would hear a hum from the cable. I told the kids the cable would sing a song. I told them it was the lullaby of the mine.

Then, in about three or four minutes, the first skip would come up. You couldn't tell one man from another because they were so covered with dirt. The kids would yell, “Where is Daddy? Where is Daddy?”

From an interview of N. K. Robbins, mucker and miner after 1935. Interview date: 5/8/98.

Even though you were working, most people didn’t have a lot of money in their pockets. They were pretty careful with their money. I was making something like $4.00 or $4.80 a day.

If you were boarding out, you could actually get room and board for a dollar a day. After my mother died, I moved out and ate in a restaurant and slept in a boarding house.

Down on Main Street in Grass Valley there was a boarding house run by an Italian family that on Sunday evenings you could go there for dinner. You would sit down family style and have real good raviolis or sometimes fried chicken and whatever vegetables they had. I remember paying 50 cents for a meal. It was a good place to go because you got a real good meal and you didn’t have to pay a whole lot for it.

There were a lot of boarding houses around here. A lot of them were family boarding houses. They would only take in 2 or 3 people. They wouldn’t put up with a lot of foolishness and drunkenness.

The preceding recollections are believed to be true; however, we are relying on the memory of the individual who had such a recollection.
A Letter from Greg & Gloria McCandless
Present owners of the Webster Street Mansion

The following is the message received by Jack Laird shortly after a large group of docents and friends of EMSHP visited their superbly restored home. Because the Lairds were traveling for an extended time immediately following our trip there, a copy of their note did not make it into the October Empire Star when a report of the fantastic visit was included.

Sept. 7, 2014

Dear Jack,

We want to thank you, Bev, and the Empire Mine group for the very thoughtful gifts. We had seen the photos at Filoli and are delighted to have a copy at the Bourn Mansion. Your gifts were an unexpected surprise and a wonderful addition to the mansion. Thank you also for the wine. We opened a bottle and it was very good.

Please convey our appreciation to the group and let them know that we enjoyed having the Empire Mine Group as our first guests and hope they enjoyed the tour. We were hoping to have all the construction work completed before you came; but it was not possible. Also, we would have liked to have spent more time with such a knowledgeable group and hope to have the opportunity to do so in the future.

Best regards,
Greg and Gloria

A Memorial Bench Dedicated in Jon Borad’s Name
By Bill Blount, Blacksmith Shop Co-Coordinator

Jon Borad passed away roughly two years ago. If you didn’t know Jon, you missed a big part of the Park experience. Jon was fulfilling one of his big dreams by leading the Blacksmith Shop and training new Smiths to carry on the tradition. Jon had been involved in other areas of the Empire Mine State Historic Park, but blacksmithing was his love and joy.

Nearly a year and a half ago, it was proposed that some sort of memorial be established in Jon’s memory. Since then the project has moved along in fits and starts – from getting State Park approval for a park bench, to carry Jon’s name, to design work, and finally, in the past several months, construction. Bill Gundred and Dave Frank took on the task of turning the design into reality. The wood work and the metal work needed to fit into the Park’s scheme and yet the Smiths wanted something that would reflect Jon’s passion for smithing and the Blacksmith Shop itself and, as the pictures show, this was accomplished. The finished product, a large and comfortable bench, has recently been installed outside the Blacksmith Shop next to the mine entrance. It is in a comfortable, shaded location and has already become a practical part of the park experience with many users each day. A small, tasteful memorial plaque will soon be installed on the bench in Jon’s name. Thanks to Bill and Dave for all their work and for the folks who gave thought to the design and worked at moving the project along through the halls of the Park system. Job well done!

Thanks Jon for making it all worthwhile.
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

**Interpretative Coordinators**

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<tr>
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<th>Name</th>
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**Research**

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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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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