(Editor’s Note: As this issue of the Empire Star was being prepared, EMPA President Jim Coe was on vacation. His column, “In the Vein” will return in the next issue.)

PAPER OR?

By Lynne Buenz, Editor/Publisher, The Empire Star

Remember being asked the above question when visiting a grocery or other retail store? Of course, since the plastic bag ban, it doesn't get asked, at least not in California. However, EMPA would like to ask this question when it comes to how you receive your copy of The Empire Star.

Currently, most volunteers and EMPA members receive an electronic copy of the newsletter via their email address. There are some, however, (approximately 100) who receive a printed copy in the U.S. Mail. Accommodating this involves having copies made at a local print shop, plus volunteer time to pick them up, fold and seal them, and deposit them in the U.S. Mail. The cost to EMPA for doing this is fairly substantial—approximately $1,320 a year—money that could well be spent on improving the Park.

I am often asked to include extra pages in the newsletter, however, at present, it is limited to 10 pages (five pages back-to-back). The reason is that five pages is the limit that can be mailed for one first-class stamp (presently $.49). Each additional ounce is $.21.

As Editor/Publisher, I do not personally handle distribution of the newsletter. The Park maintains the volunteer master email list as well as the list of those who receive the newsletter via U.S. Mail. The EMPA Membership Chair maintains the email and U.S. mail lists for EMPA members who are not volunteers. The latter responsibilities are being handled by Betty Lucas, EMPA Treasurer. Mailing responsibilities are presently being handled by volunteer Chrysan Silence. I am grateful to both of these ladies and to Park staff for their invaluable assistance.

If you are currently receiving a printed copy of the newsletter in the mail, and you have an email address, please contact either Lauren Wilson, Volunteer Coordinator (lauren.wilson@parks.ca.gov) or Betty Lucas (blucas1208@gmail.com), and they will be happy to add you to one of the email lists. The advantage of receiving the newsletter electronically is that you receive it in a more timely manner, it is in color, vs. black and white, and you will be helping to save EMPA's hard-earned dollars and valuable volunteer time! Thank you for considering this request.
‘TIS THE SEASON OF COOKING AND CELEBRATION

By Caryl Fairfull

In Cottage Living History we often talk about the food preferences of Mr. Bourn and what Katie is cooking for dinner. We show off the beautiful wood stove in the kitchen purchased at Sears & Roebuck for $25. We talk about the spiced and larded tongue that Mr. Bourn loves. Most people wince at the thought, but I thought you might like to know how to make larded tongue, from the book “The New Cyclopaedia of Domestic Economy, and Practical Housekeeper,” by Elizabeth Fries Ellet. Maybe you can use this as your Christmas entrée!

“Take a piece of fat bacon, cut it into strips for larding. Make a seasoning of pounded sweet herbs, eschalot, mace, and a little cayenne pepper mixed with white pepper and salt; sprinkle the bacon strips with it, and leaving a line for division down the centre of the tongue. Lard it all over. Braise the tongue, and then glaze; separate it in the space left, but leave it attached at either end, so that when laid open on the dish it is not entirely divided in two. Have ready some brown sauce, flavored with minced capers, sliced pickled gherkins, the juice of half a lemon, and half a small teaspoonful of cayenne pepper. Pour it when ready into a dish; lay the tongue upon it, and serve as hot as possible.”

Did you ever stop to think what it would be like to do all your holiday cooking on a wood stove? We have people come through the Cottage and tell us their mother had one, or occasionally they still cook on one.

I have trouble not burning cookies with my modern stove! Imagine the temperature fluctuations of a wood stove! Here is some advice from an expert: “A draft needs to be created when first firing up, the slide needs to be directed to the chimney. The positioning for my wood-burning cook stove is to the right to light, to the left to bake. If you forget to reposition the slide, the result will be a roomful of smoke. You can’t set it at 350° and walk away! The biggest challenge is keeping the oven heat even. Unlike a gas or electric stove, when you put something in the oven to cook and the temperature drops as the food absorbs the heat, nothing kicks in to compensate. What to do? Feed the fire wood that will burn quickly and offer more heat.

As the food begins to cook and its internal temperature rises, a longer, slower-burning piece of wood will maintain the heat. Open the oven door if it gets too hot – but not for long. Your oven may even have “hot spots” like mine. During baking, I turn bread or cookies 180 degrees halfway through the baking time. Stay in the kitchen when there is cooking to be done. In winter, it’s the best place to be.”

So, it is time to appreciate your modern conveniences when you are cooking and baking for the Holidays this year. It would be a lot more work on a wood stove.

“HOLIDAYS AT EMPIRE MINE” OFFERS A HISTORY OF GOOD CHEER

By Courtney Ferguson

Santa and Mrs. Claus, in their turn-of-the-century attire, will be asking, “What would you like for Christmas?” More important, they’ll be listening carefully to the answers that may range from the latest technical products to ponies and puppies. Surrounded by lavish, traditional decorations, the Clubhouse will be glowing with good cheer.

Outside, local vendors will have a selection of light food and drinks for sale, including Brew Bakers’ exclusive “24-Karat Cakes.” There will also be entertainment to delight the parents and children in line. On Friday, world-renowned story-telling juggler, Izzi Tooinsky, will perform his “Toymaker’s Journey through the Gold Rush” show, and on Saturday, crowds will enjoy Celtic Joy. Dressed in traditional costumes, they will fill the air with festive music and good cheer.

Empire Cottage will be all decked out as well – with Living History docents portraying the characters who shaped our gold mine history. Singer/guitarist Heather MacAdam will play seasonal music on Friday, and harpist Kurtis Bershaw will perform on Saturday.

In the mineyard, one-man band, Gary Hinze will add more festive flair – with chestnuts being roasted nearby. Visits to the Blacksmith Shop and the Gift Shop are also highly recommended.
CELTIC JOY – NOTEWORTHY NEW DOCENTS
By Courtney Ferguson

You may hear them before you see them, as Celtic Joy’s music fills the air with pure enchantment. They’ve performed in the garden, under the Assay Office porch, and in the Cottage for “Holidays at Empire Mine.” Dressed in a variety of stunning period costumes, they add musical authenticity to Empire Mine’s tours and special events.

“We’ve been playing together for four years,” said band spokesperson Colleen Carson, “and earlier this year we decided to join Empire Mine’s dedicated docents. We’re all local and share the same passion for music and tradition, making Empire Mine an ideal fit.” Colleen Carson (harp), Brad Carson (guitar), Aubrey Niles (fiddle), Linda Johnston (pennywhistle and flute), and Jessica Pittaway (pennywhistle, flute and Irish drum, the boudhran), Celtic Joy performed in the garden at the 122nd Miners Picnic in August, surrounded by an appreciative audience. For further details about this talented group, visit them on Facebook: Celtic Joy.

Park visitors warm to the magic Celtic Joy creates. Now official docents, the group plays vintage music from Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and more.

(Photograph by Michael McCartea)
WHEN CAROLS WERE HEARD IN THE MINEYARD

By Gage McKinney

By this time of year, back in the mining era, many miners were already practicing their Cornish carols. The carols were the folk music of Cornwall, the Celtic homeland in the southwestern-most corner of Britain. The carols came to Grass Valley with the Cornish pumps, lunch buckets, and other paraphernalia of the Cornish miners. The men practiced as a chorus in the Methodist Church in Grass Valley, and informally in smaller groups whenever they gathered. In this season, when the men arrived early for their shift at the Empire Mine, carols sounded across the mineyard.

In the early 20th century the Cornish choir gathered to sing at the intersection of Main and Mill Streets on Christmas morning. By mid-century, they sang on the Union Building steps on Mill Street on Christmas Eve. They performed at the Methodist Church, and at various times, sang in the churches of Grass Valley and Nevada City, and at the Roman Catholic orphanage. Directed by Harold J. George, they performed on radio in Sacramento and San Francisco.

In those times, Christmas bonuses contributed to the festive spirits. Typical bonuses at the mines were $10 or more, depending on a worker’s function and tenure. These were substantial sums when miners earned less than $5 a day. The miners responded with their own largess, the singing of their sacred songs.

The Grass Valley Carol Choir would appear shortly before Christmas at the home of Empire Mine Superintendent George Starr and his wife Libby. They would sing a selection of their carols, starting with “Sound! Sound! Your instruments of Joy,” and continuing with favorites such as “Lo, He Comes” and “Hark What Music.” These songs were composed by mining men and sung by mining men, and with a group of boy altos, sons of the miners.

After their performance, the carolers were offered cookies and tea or hot chocolate, and at the Starr home, usually something stronger than tea. In later years the men sang for manager Fred Nobbs and his family. When they repeated the performance at the home of Errol MacBoyle, owner of the Idaho Maryland Mine, the singers went home with apples from the Loma Rica orchards. When they performed at the North Star Mine for Superintendent A.D. Foote and his family, it must have been as they came off their shift. Mary Hallock Foote remembered them standing to sing in the North Star House, and how the dank smell of underground hung in the air after they had left.

The Empire Mine has been closed for 60 years, and the singing miners are gone. Yet this year, as every year, the Grass Valley Cornish Carol Choir, directed by Eleanor Kenitzer, will sing on Mill Street at Cornish Christmas (Friday nights from November 24 to December 22). It’s a mixed choir now, with women singing the altos parts and men singing tenor and bass. What matters is the music lives. When I look up to the choir singing on the Union steps today, I remember when I was a young boy – snow on the street, Mr. George conducting in hat and overcoat, and the miners, their mouths open and round, singing on the same high steps.
SUPERVISING RANGER REPORT

By Supervising Ranger Dan Youngren

(Reprinted from the Fall 2017 Issue of Bridgeport News)

It is amazing how fast the seasons change! It seems that just two weeks ago we were melting in 100+ degree heat and now the nights are cool and crisp. I have to say that this is the best time of the year for a Park Ranger since the rush of park visitors is slowing, the ability to take some time off is here and transitioning into off season projects is a VERY welcome change.

Just like the leaves starting to change, we welcome some new changes with our Park Ranger staffing. The Empire Mine State Park Ranger, Greg Sherr, has accepted a voluntary transfer to the South Yuba River State Park that is effective October 1. Ranger Greg brings with him veteran park experience and a personality that our park volunteers and park visitors will enjoy. I anticipate Ranger Greg will be working closely with our Volunteer Coordinator on various activities in the near future.

I encourage all of you to come out and take a hike in one of our three beautiful parks this fall. Try a hike at the Empire Mine Hardrock Trail where you can sit and listen to Little Wolf Creek or walk down the main street at Malakoff Diggins where the maple trees look like they are on fire with their beautiful fall foliage or, if you are adventurous, hike the South Yuba Trail from the Purdon Crossing to Edwards Crossing where you can really enjoy the wild and scenic South Fork of the Yuba River. I hope to see you on the trail!

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INTRODUCING SECTOR PARK INTERPRETER JENNA RANDAR!

(Reprinted from July 2017 Issue of Bridgeport News and Summer 2017 Issue of the Humbug Herald)

Hi, my name is Jenna Randar, and you may have seen me hiking around your park recently with my Stetson on. No, I’m not out impersonating a Ranger, I’m the new State Park Interpreter I for Empire Mine State Historic Park, Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, and South Yuba River State Park, or for brevity’s sake, the Sierra Gold Sector. From the sandy beaches of Southern California to the desolate backbone of the Sierra Nevada, I have worked for California State Parks for a decade, doing everything from giving interpretive tours, to museum collections work, to managing a special events program. While my skill set is broad, my passion revolves around the art of interpretation, creating opportunities for park visitors to form their own meaningful connections to a place. It is my mission to begin recruiting new volunteers as well as providing formal interpretive training to those who perform interpretation in our parks. My door is always open, feel free to say hello at any time, I can be reached at Jenna.Randar@parks.ca.gov, or give me a call at 530-273-0219.

(Except’s Note: A very successful Interpretation Workshop was held at Empire Mine on Saturday, November 4, which was attended by volunteers from all three Sierra Gold Sector Parks. Stay tuned for more training opportunities yet to come.)
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 Alice Lowery Estrada, daughter of William Bourn's chauffer. Interview date 6/24/90.

I remember Mrs. Bourn very well. She was a very sweet person. Very thoughtful, very warm. She had diabetes bad. That was mainly the cause of her death. It ran through the family. She ran around in a wheel chair. A pretty sick person. She was quite nice.

I remember at Christmas time we would all gather in the big recreation room at Filoli. She would always be there handing out the bonus checks for the employees.

Mr. Bourn was always upstairs. He didn't get down at all. If he did, he didn't want anyone to see him. Everybody would scatter. He would be sitting in the garden enjoying the garden.

A Mr. Saunders would come from the mine to Filoli. He would go into the big house and either saw Mr. Bourn or Mr. Bourn's secretary. He must have been some kind of bookkeeper or something. He would always bring mercury for us to play with. Right now it would raise people's hair, but it sure was fun then.

From an interview of Frank Knuckey, Mule Skinner 1930's. Interview date 11/12/85.

I want to tell you about Fanny. A lot of stories about the mule skinning underground are not quite up to par. I worked with Fanny on the 3400 level. She pulled 7 ore cars and that was all. I swear that mule could count.

There was a 6-inch link between cars. That link would bang when she started out. That way she didn't start pulling all 7 cars at once. As she started pulling, the cars would add on as she moved. If she heard 8 bangs, she would stop. She would refuse to pull 8 cars.

There were times when the timbermen would want to haul some timber in. They would put a timber car on the back of the train. We would have to tighten the link on the timber car so it wouldn’t bang. You had to fool Fanny.

The mule had it pretty darn good. She had a mule barn made out of 2 x 12's. She had electric lights. We had carbide lights. The mule had a better deal than we did as far as that goes.

Every payday I bought a plug of chewing tobacco. I would cut off a piece of tobacco about the size of what a man would use for a chew. I would put it in the palm of my hand and she would take it. She would drool and really enjoy that tobacco.
Above photos, which were taken in the Cottage, are from past “Holidays at Empire Mine” celebrations. Photo on right by Richard Bannister; photo on left provided by Courtney Ferguson.
Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Coordinators

Interpretative Coordinators

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THE EMPIRE STAR

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On the web at www.empiremine.org