

NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

THE STAR NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

HER OWN IMAGE IN A POOL

By Maria Hetherton

The aesthetic pleasure of a perfectly placed reflecting pool dates at least to the gardens of ancient Persia. Reflection pools are culturally significant—think of the stately rectangles mirroring the Taj Mahal or the monuments and trees along our National Mall. Estates often reveal grand facades reflected in architectural pools or ponds designed to evoke a natural environment.

The North Star House Heritage Garden will include a small, round reflecting pool reminiscent of the one once gracing the House's courtyard area.

In the c. 1906-7 photograph to the right, we recognize the stone columns of the North Star House's U-shaped courtyard. The Foote family chose to landscape the area with a Zen-like austerity, including just a few potted plants and a couple of yews toward the area's outer periphery. Perhaps the landscaping choices reflect Mary Hallock Foote's appreciation for the same East Asian aesthetic that inspired proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement. An almost stark addition was the round, simply designed reflection pool.

In the photo, we can see the little girl, identity unknown, and dog—as well as the House's



Her Own Image, *continued on pg. 4*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Larry Dulmage

This newsletter issue attests to the busy, productive spring we've spent "on deck" at The North Star House.

In recent months, we've made great strides, and I'm thinking about our incredible volunteers whose talent, dedication and consistency—painting window frames, installing cabinets, cleaning out storage areas, prepping new flooring—leave me grateful and hopeful.

I extend thanks also to our members and donors without whose generosity little could happen. Your gifts have provided building materials like lumber and cement, the means to repair our well, and a new lawn mower that helps maintain the beauty of the House's grounds.

It's exciting to arrive at a juncture where we can break ground on a new project that will open the House's second floor to the public—The M. W. Swan Levine Gallery, to honor the memory of Peggy Levine.

David Wright has donated his expertise to create architectural renderings of the second floor layout, and we are engaged in the preliminaries that will keep the

project up to code: building an outside stairwell, installing an elevator and sprinklers and restoring the main stairwell. So far, we've acquired the permit for the outside stairwell, and that work has begun.

As we continue the work of restoring The North Star House, and look toward new projects, I make my appeal. What can you do, and whom can you tell about the gem that is The North Star House, and its value to the community? Aside from its inherent beauty, and the story it tells, it's a place where folks convene to celebrate life events, enjoy music and theater and support our local farmers at the weekly Growers Market. And now our vision includes the art gallery to expand our commitment to the House as a cultural center.

Please make a commitment to help spread the word, and help us grow our membership. I am optimistic that with your help we can continue the good work we've begun.



KIKA KANE

By Maria Hetherton

Kika Kane has loved the North Star House since moving to Nevada County in 1977. A fan of Julia Morgan's architectural designs, she hated watching the house sink more and more deeply into disrepair. When she stopped by the House's outreach table at the Growers' Market last fall, she welcomed the opportunity to volunteer.

Kika started out helping with clerical tasks, but her star really began to shine when she offered to help with renovation projects. How many people do you see smiling and exuding a radiant spirit while taping for paint prep, sanding large swaths of wood paneling, or dusting out a saw room? That is Kika, who is also open to trying new skills like glazing and cutting glass windowpanes. She makes it look easy; she makes it look fun—for two full days a week, every week.

With experience in the tour guide trade, Kika has also

trained to become a House docent, pleased to represent a historical Julia Morgan home and share what she's learned about home's early residents. She also looks forward to helping in the Heritage Garden once it reaches completion.

For any readers pondering a role at The North Star House, consider Kika's summary of her volunteer efforts: "This has been a good way to come back after retirement, and have fun, too!" She especially noted how impressed she is with all the other renovation volunteers, and the fact that progress "bumps up" substantially with each new addition to the corps.

We are thrilled to welcome Kika, and appreciate her good cheer and willingness to help with "whatever needs doing."



WELCOME, HOWARD LEVINE

By Maria Heatherton

When Howard Levine first saw the North Star House in 1975, he recognized a gem, despite the dark, heavy atmosphere resulting from years of hard wear and a series of ungainly renovations. "I've just been to this absolutely incredible building," he declared to his wife, Peggy, and there the story began.

In the course of a fifty-year partnership, Howard and Peggy, both accomplished fine arts printmakers, worked to refurbish and preserve buildings of historical significance: the Swan-Levine House, of course; as well as the Parsons-Quick Cigar Manufacturing Building and the Holbrook Hotel, both in Grass Valley; and two San Francisco residences. When the North Star House fell empty a few years later, its

cultural importance and potential never wandered far from Howard's and Peggy's consciousness.

This is a story mostly about Peggy, as Howard sees it. He valued and supported her advocacy on the House's behalf, the advocacy realized in the foundation of The North Star Historic Conservancy. Peggy passed away in September of last year, yet Howard maintains, "She isn't gone from this place, and I still have a partnership with this place." Of his recent appointment to the NSHC Board of Trustees, Howard adds, "This is the continuation of our lives together, doing buildings."

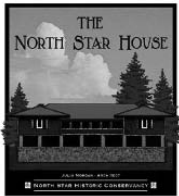
Buildings are hardly all Howard does. He directed the Grass Valley Downtown Association for thirteen years, and currently serves as Grass Valley's mayor. The revitalized

tenor of downtown Grass Valley reveals just a facet of his facility for administrative process, his organizational skill and ability to fundraise. He brings a wealth of expertise and a depth of well-fostered community connections to the House's governing board.

Howard's vision for The North Star House revolves around the legacy of three women: Julia Morgan, Mary Hallock Foote and Peggy. He wants the community to understand how the House, among the longest surviving of Morgan's residential designs, embodies the spirit of her



Howard, continued on pg. 5



NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

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We need your **HELP** with the Ongoing Restoration and Transformation of the **Historic North Star House**.

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Her Own Image, *continued from cover page.*

architectural features—mirrored perfectly in the pool. The image is surreal; haunting; romantic, perhaps; and fascinating. It suggests distinctions between permanence and mutability; realism and imaginative depiction. It's interesting that the reflecting pond claims this central placement in the home of a renowned artist and illustrator like Mary Hallock Foote.

Perhaps the photograph resonates with Foote's illustration for the 1878 edition of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, shown to right.

Foote's inspiration came from the description of Hester Prynne's fey and free-spirited daughter, Pearl, entertaining herself along the sea shore:

"At first, as already told, she had flirted fancifully with her own image in a pool of water, beckoning the phantom forth, and—as it declined to venture—seeking a passage for herself into its sphere of impalpable earth and unattainable sky."

Did the romanticism of the image, a child coaxing her phantom self from a pond, inspire the several photos that exist from the earliest generations of the Foote family at North Star House—of young girls poised at the edge, and reflected in, that round courtyard pool?

The photo is an intriguing representation of the images already represented by the reflecting pool. It also sets in

time the rise of photography with its roots in the Victorian Era, a visual art that can be realistic, interpretive, or selective in how it chooses to depict its subject—not unlike the insight Mary Hallock Foote employed in her choices as illustrator, choices that would affect how the reader "saw" the story.



Illustration from The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne; the 1878 illustrated edition, available online through Project Gutenberg. www.gutenberg.net



The future M. W. Swan Levine Art Gallery is now in demo stage.

Howard, *continued from page 3.*

best work. He wants to ensure the community recognizes in Mary Hallock Foote a renowned presence among Nineteenth Century artists and writers. And he wants to honor Peggy's devotion to keeping the House's refurbishment vision alive.

Howard is excited about the project that will harbor this three-fold legacy: the art gallery named in Peggy's honor, and The North Star Museum of Art. "Nevada County has such a fabulous history in visual and creative arts, and this place can be the beacon where arts are demonstrated and displayed. A repository for the great art of Nevada County. A seed that can define the future of the greater region." Crucial to it all is the cumulative efforts of our advocates and volunteers, and Howard wants to be "the megaphone" for increasing those ranks.

Ultimately, says Howard, "It's not about me; it's about Peggy, and seeing the vision come true."

MARKO GLENDENNING

By Maria Hetherton

Marko Glendenning brings rich expertise to North Star House renovation projects. He came three years ago to Nevada County from Santa Cruz after a thirty-five year career that ran the gamut from carpenter/contractor to building engineer and inspector. “I went to the dark side,” he jokes. He enjoyed ten years in Hawaii, where he built pole houses, and hit the surf whenever he could. On one memorable Island project, Marko had the pleasure of working for and meeting George Harrison.

Marko has volunteered at the House for three years, and if you are wondering about the impact of that, look no further than the elegant cabinetry

he recently installed in the Julia Morgan Room. As this newsletter goes to press, he continues to restore the room, once the Foote’s master bedroom, to its original state, including reinstalling a door to the side stone terrace that had been walled up. He’s also begun installing frames for a trio of windows that graced the wall on the courtyard side.

With each restoration effort, we are able to grow in appreciation for Julia Morgan’s fine eye and genius for creating visual through lines, once altered or canceled in the clumsy alterations of previous owners. This is one of the surprising results of efforts like Marko’s.

Marko’s experience with building



code compliance means he’s been able to provide valuable input on projects involving ADA accessibility: handicap ramps, stairs and the proposed elevator.

He also volunteers to serve as site manager for events and weddings: “It’s great! I really have a ball with people.” What a valued “face” to the identity of the North Star community; what a gifted craftsman working toward the House’s restoration.

GROWERS MARKET AT THE NORTH STAR HOUSE

The Growers Market takes place EVERY SATURDAY FROM 8AM - 12:30PM THROUGH NOVEMBER 17 on the grounds of The North Star House.

There are a variety of vendors to visit, offering a wide selection of produce in addition to meat products, fish,

flowers, crafts, and plants. And live music! Grab a cup of coffee and a morning snack and enjoy the view from the stone terrace of The North Star House.

The North Star House is open from 9 – noon, with House Docents available to answer questions.

Perhaps you will be inspired to lend a hand.

MONDAY OPEN HOUSE HOURS at the North Star House

As of Monday, June 11, The North Star House is now open to the public from noon – 3pm. The house will be available each Monday for community members to stop by and see this historical gem. History docents will be on hand for informal tours and to answer questions. They are a wealth of information about Julia Morgan, Mary Hallock Foote, and her husband, Arthur DeWint Foote.

Previously, the House was only open to the public on Saturday mornings during the Growers Market. Thanks to our dedicated docents, we are now able to have the House open on Monday afternoons.

If your service club or book group is interested in bringing a bag lunch, the stone terrace can be made available. Give us a call!

If you are interested in renting the North Star House for an event or party, this would be an ideal time to tour the site.

For large groups interested in a formal tour of the House and Grounds, please call the office at 530-477-7126 or contact us through the website at www.thenorthstarhouse.org.

IRRIGATION WATER UPGRADE UNDERWAY IN 2018

By Joe Heckel

The Grounds Committee is tackling an ambitious project in 2018: the replacement and upgrade of our onsite irrigation system. Our irrigation system is comprised of an onsite well, a pump and two deteriorating concrete storage tanks. All of the landscaping found on our fourteen acre parcel are irrigated by our onsite system including our ornamental and heritage plants, the Heritage Garden and our lawn areas which are used for our events.

The new irrigation system includes two 1,500-gallon tanks, piping and a reconstructed wellhouse. Peters Well Drilling, a NSHC sponsor, helped our crew in the design and layout of this new system. The tanks are being purchased with the assistance of Merrill and Sons.

Ken Bales, our Grounds Committee Co-Chair, has begun the grading and site preparation work. Once the tank is installed, the committee will work to reconstruct the wellhouse and piping. David Wright, a NSHC board member, has worked closely with Peters Well Drilling and Merrill and Sons to finalize the design and costs of this project.

The new irrigation system will eventually include the added bonus of more fire protection. NSHC will have the capability of hooking this irrigation system into an onsite fire hydrant. Once the irrigation system is up and running, NSHC will begin to explore funding opportunities for the installation of the hydrant.

The Grounds Committee is largely responsible for overseeing and maintaining our 14.6 acre property.

Maintenance and upkeep efforts focus on the improved areas of the property: landscaping, primarily lawn areas; roadways; walkways; drainage; parking areas; signage; utilities; and fire protection, i.e., vegetation management. The committee works with the Board, the onsite caretaker and the other NSHC committees to set priority for its work projects.

If you like to work outdoors and wish to help with Grounds Committee-designated projects—even if only for a few hours each week—please contact us. There are a number of great projects planned for 2018!



Excavation Complete; Bring on the Tanks!

“THE YANKS ARE COMING”: THE LOCAL ROLE IN WORLD WAR I

On Sunday, November 4, at 2pm, author Gage McKinney will speak on “‘The Yanks Are Coming’: William Hague, Engineers and the North Star House in World War I.”

McKinney will tell the story of William Hague, the young manager of the North Star gold mine who took American know-how to Europe and died in a field

hospital in France.

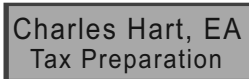
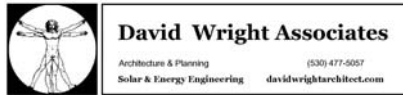
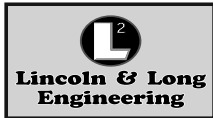
The presentation will be given at The North Star House, 12075 Auburn Road, Grass Valley, at 2 pm, and will last about one hour. Coffee, tea and snacks will follow the presentation, and McKinney will answer questions and sign books.

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FEATURING **ONE MILE BAND**

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5:30PM - 9:30PM

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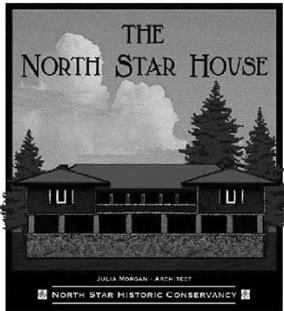
ROAMIN' ANGELS CARS

Tickets available at SPD. In advance \$35 members. \$40 general. \$45 at the door.

www.thenorthstarhouse.org



Volunteer Mark Glendenning made repairs to the Julia Morgan Room fireplace, and built and installed new cabinets containing artifacts donated by the Foote family descendants.



North Star Historic Conservancy
12075 Auburn Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949
www.thenorthstarhouse.org

See what so many of us are doing for fun! Get involved! It's contagious!!

details inside