

# NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

# THE STAR

## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020

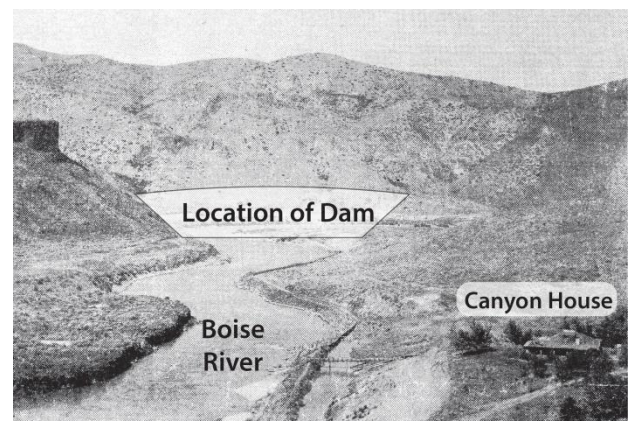
## Arthur De Wint Foote's Idaho Irrigation System

*by Joan Clappier*

The gold rush in south-western Idaho began in the 1860s. The Oregon Trail stretched from the Missouri river to Oregon, running right through the Boise River valley. Train service was available by the early 1880s. Farming settlements sprang up to support the mining operations. Everything was in place for major population growth except for one problem: the region was arid, high desert. The only farming was right along the river.

Civil Engineer Arthur De Wint Foote arrived in SW Idaho in 1882 for a job managing the Wolfstone mine. His wife, Mary Hallock Foote, remained in Milton, NY, with the children. Arthur was a problem solver – a visionary engineer, who looked at situations and designed ways to make them work better. In the Boise valley, he studied the topography and envisioned rich irrigated farmland where it was barren and dry. There had been others before him who had designed irrigation canals to bring the Boise River water into the valley, so there were already some dry or seasonal canals. But Arthur took it further. He surveyed the entire area and designed a 75-mile canal that would draw water from the Boise River and irrigate a half-million acres of desert via 5000 lateral ditches.

In 1883, the Idaho Mining and Irrigation Co. was formed with General Charles Tompkins as President and Arthur Foote as Chief Engineer. Tompkins worked on securing financing while Arthur secured water rights and had responsibility for designing and overseeing the construction. There was a depression in the US in 1882-1885, so financing was very difficult. Even after financing came in, they encountered construction problems and also shut-downs due to disagreements between investors. Through all of this, they had to continue doing a certain amount of construction work in order to retain their water rights, so Arthur was sometimes spending his own money. The family was being supported by Mary's income from her writing and illustrating.



Boise River canyon where Arthur planned for the canal and dam to be built. He also built the "Canyon House" where the Footes lived – very isolated from the city of Boise.

By 1891, the company became insolvent. The family remained in Boise while Arthur took jobs such as survey work for the government. Then in 1895, Arthur was hired by the North Star Mine and the Foote family relocated to Grass Valley. For the first time in their married life, Arthur had a long-term, secure job and the Footes had financial security.

And what became of Arthur's ambitious irrigation design? The US government was encouraging westward expansion. That meant they had to solve the western water-shortage

problems. In 1902, Congress passed the Reclamation Act, leading to the formation of the US Bureau of Reclamation. The Bureau used Arthur's irrigation plan and completed the irrigation system in 1909. Although Arthur lost money on the project and was quite discouraged, he did live to see his design implemented, bringing water into the Boise River valley. Arthur De Wint Foote is credited by the US Bureau of Reclamation for the design of the irrigation system, and he is recognized in Boise as an important figure in their history.

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## President's Message

*by Betzi Hart, President*

"Follow the Star...." IN THE NEW DECADE

It's Spring of 2020 and we find ourselves renewed with excitement for what is happening at The North Star House. Throughout the winter, the construction crew has continued to restore and renovate the ground floor rooms.

The Library, Study and Living room are getting new or refurbished wall paneling and ceilings. Behind the walls, the main rooms have sprouted electrical system upgrades that will power the House for years to come. Two of the most notable changes are the new seating in the Library and the refurbished dining room buffet. Soon you will see the new window coverings ordered by the Interiors Committee.

When you drive up to The House you will notice that our famous shingling team of Roger and Lisa has turned the corner and are working on the east side of the House. Painting, staining and caulking are ongoing.

The lighting has been improved and the walkway from the parking lot has been enhanced thanks to the work of Sherian and Marilee. Larry is finishing the last bench in the garden and Paula's team of gardeners have been working to make sure the Heritage Garden will be beautiful for springtime.

The Events Committee has a terrific program planned for this year. The first presenter in the Speaker Series, Chris Enss, treated us in February to a look at the history of Woman Suffrage in the Wild West. On May 3 (which may be rescheduled), Jeffrey Boylan and Gary Smith, from the North Star Mining Museum, will join us for a journey via historical slides from the construction of the innovative North Star Powerhouse in 1895 to its rebirth into a world class mining museum. A discussion of The Nisenan Homelands and our local Native American tribe will be lead by Nisenan Tribal Representative Shelly Covert on July 12.

Historian Gage McKinney will round out our Speaker Series on October 4 with the story of "James Hague: The Man Behind the North Star."



*Betzi Hart (left) and author Chris Enss at the Woman Suffrage presentation.*

This year we hope to launch "Friday Nite Local" concerts hosted by The North Star House. These live concerts will be outside, pairing major local performers with opening acts by local musicians relatively new to the music scene. Scheduling is currently uncertain due to the Covid-19 virus.

As we monitor the ongoing health concerns associated with Covid-19, the North Star Historic Conservancy may need to reschedule some planned events. We will post updates to our website as necessary.

Our plans and preparation for the second floor art gallery and learning center are still on track. Thank you to our fabulous volunteers and generous donors who make this all possible. Remember, there is always something happening at The North Star House if you  
"... follow the Star."



## Heritage Garden Update

*by Paula Campbell*



We are delighted that the Heritage Garden at The North Star House has been selected for the annual Garden Tour, put on by Soroptimist International of the Sierra Foothills (SISF). Due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak, the 2020 garden tour has been cancelled. We will, however, be on next year's Garden Tour in May, 2021.

SISF was instrumental in the creation of the Heritage Garden when, in 2015, the club made the first major donation toward its creation. Since then, many professional designers, donors, volunteers (thank you, Rotarians!), and businesses have worked to make the garden a reality, and many members of SISF have volunteered to work as part of the Garden Crew to maintain the garden. We are all thankful for these productive – and fun! – partnerships and are now pleased to share the garden with the community.

The Heritage Garden honors North Star Mine manager AD Foote's horticultural skills and his relationship with plant propagators Luther Burbank and Felix Gillet. It also honors Julia Morgan, whose California Arts and Crafts design for the North Star House inspires development of the landscape surrounding it.

Plants in the garden are continuing to grow and mature. The final bench has been built. We are busy sprucing things up for spring.

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## Moods and Views of The North Star House



# Margaret Warner Swan Levine Gallery at The North Star House

*By Howard Levine*

Many of our friends from “The House” have asked what is going on with the gallery? Currently, we have directed most of the construction effort to physically clearing out the second floor, getting it ready to add the infrastructure that is needed such as fire suppression, electrical, lighting, HVAC and an elevator. As we move forward with the design of the second floor, we have been refining the requirements for the gallery as well as reviewing the use of areas adjacent to the gallery. We are confident that the result of this work will be a much better, enhanced gallery. We should have a final drawing for the next newsletter.

We are excited about the way the gallery project is progressing and we ask supporters to help us find and secure renowned Nevada County artists (alive or deceased). We are striving to develop a distinctive collection at The North Star House. We have had a number of families come forth and offer works by artists such as Richard and Beverly Hackett, Gillian Hodge, Dick Hotchkiss, Michael Keating, M. W. Swan, Osborne & Woods, Dick Gilbert, Tom X and others.

We look forward to sharing our layout soon and hope you stay involved with us as we continue to piece together the art history of Nevada County.



## CONSTRUCTION SCENE



Above: Dry rot in walls delays shingling



Left: The DR buffet top is refinished and looking beautiful



Above: Sherian puts primer onto “puzzle pieces”



Right: beautiful new cedar stacked in 2nd floor room



Left: Fascinating wall structure and old reinforced plaster uncovered inside the walls

## New Board Members at “The House”

The North Star Historic Conservancy is pleased to welcome **Lisa Robinson, Joan Clappier, and Tom Milam** to the Board of Directors. All three have demonstrated strong commitment to NSHC and they bring varied talents and experience to the Board.

Lisa and Joan both joined the Docent Committee two years ago and both soon added the Events Committee to their resumes. From there, each has followed her own heart into increased involvement with the house.

Lisa, a retired Registered Nurse, joined the BOD in July 2019. She is now Chair of both the Docent and Interiors Committees, and continues to help with events. Lisa has also joined the construction crew and can be found assisting wherever help is needed. (As a nurse, she probably didn't envision being up on scaffolding shingling a house!) She has experience creating very nice power point presentations and will be a key person in creating more and better interpretive displays at the House. Lisa brings enthusiasm and strong organizational skills to the Conservancy.

*“Having been raised in Monterey County I have always been familiar with Julia Morgan because of The Asilomar Conference Center. I can't help but be a part of a restoration project that pays homage to the quality of her work and vision.” - Lisa Robinson*

Joan joined the Board in February, 2020. As a retired software engineer, she has been actively involved in updating and expanding our website. She also helps with marketing. Joan is co-Chair of the Docent committee, has created an online library for volunteers, and serves on the Events Committee as organizer of the North Star Speaker Series of lectures. As a member of the Historical Research Committee, Joan is enjoying doing research and is working towards organizing and archiving NSHC's growing collection of photos and information.

*“Two of the best things about volunteering here are the wide variety of things to do and the fun, talented group of volunteers to work with.” - Joan Clappier*

Tom's first experience at the North Star House was in 2004, shortly after the Nevada County Land Trust (now Bear Yuba Land Trust), acquired the house and grounds. Signing on for a volunteer workday, he helped clear vast amounts of overgrown vegetation. From there, Tom became involved with cleaning, repair work, and anything that was needed to prepare the property for land trust events.

After Tom retired from his career as a video engineer at Grass Valley Group and AJA Video, he came back to the House and joined the construction crew. He is lead on the substantial project of rewiring the entire house. He is fascinated with Julia Morgan and has learned enough about how Morgan designed houses to predict where he will find open spaces within the structure to run wiring. Tom's project management experience is a real asset. He joined the BOD in February, 2020.

*“I kept thinking, what an amazing place. Wouldn't it be great to help restore its heritage in a meaningful way – to be actively used by the community.” - Tom Milam*



## Volunteer Spotlight: Laurie Harrison-Dayton

When Laurie Harrison was a child, she and her mother enjoyed looking through houses that were under construction and figuring out where everything was going to be in the home. When she was 10 years old, she was invited to join a career exploration program. She was asked what field she might be interested in learning more about and she picked architecture. She was given some books to read and *she discovered Julia Morgan*.

Laurie went on to study psychology and art history at Stanford. In 1984, she and her husband, Charles Dayton, moved to Nevada City with their two young children. She still loved architecture and they bought an 1870 Queen Anne house. They still live there, and it has been featured on the Home Tour a couple of times. Laurie spent her child-rearing years being actively involved in the school system and other community activities.



A couple of other things happened during those years which started pulling her towards the

North Star House. She heard about a dilapidated Julia Morgan house in Grass Valley. She also read *Angle of Repose* and learned about Mary Hallock Foote. The pull towards “the House” was getting stronger.

Laurie took her first tour at the House in 2006 or 2007, with Peggy Levine. It seemed like a daunting task to restore a home that was in such poor condition. She ran into Peggy again in approximately 2010, and she decided it was time to get involved. She became a docent, working with Rose Sponder.

Laurie subsequently joined the historical research committee, working with Carole Miller and Carol Stuart. That has been a fun and interesting journey. In addition to local research, Laurie has travelled to:

- The Stanford library, where the letters between Mary Hallock Foote and Helena de Kay Gilder are archived. Laurie, Carole M. and Carol S. spent three days there reading letters.
- Boise, Idaho, reviewing documents in the Idaho State Archive about both Mary and Arthur D. Foote. She also visited the site on the Boise River where Arthur had built a house and the Foote family lived for a while.
- San Luis Obispo, where the Julia Morgan papers are archived.

Her notes and pictures from these trips have augmented the NSHC collection of historical information.

Laurie is enjoying her involvement with the North Star House. In addition to research and being a docent, she is on the Interiors Design committee and is part of the team developing a Private Group Tour program.



**NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY**  
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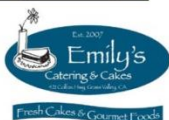
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