

NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

THE STAR

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021-22

Arthur & Mary Hallock Foote in Mexico

by Joan Clappier

Life as a mining engineer often took Arthur away from his family while he looked for new positions or took short-term consulting jobs. In late 1880, Mary and their son were staying in Milton, NY, at the Hallock family farm where Mary grew up.

Arthur accepted an opportunity to investigate mines in the state of Michoacan, Mexico. Normally Mary would stay in Milton during an exploratory trip like this, but the colorful Mexican culture had appealed to Mary since her first trip west to the New Almaden Mine. She was interested in going to Mexico ... and her editor encouraged her to bring back stories and drawings for Century Magazine.

In January 1881, Arthur and Mary left their son in Milton with Mary's family. They took a sleigh from Milton across the frozen Hudson River, travelled by train to New York City, and boarded a ship to Veracruz, Mexico. They left



the frozen Northeast behind and were now in the warm, tropical weather of the Gulf of Mexico.

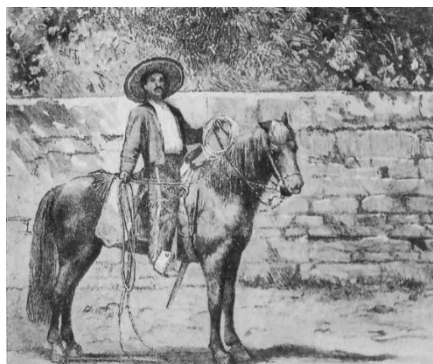
There was a railroad from Veracruz to Mexico City which made that leg of the trip easy. From Mexico City to Morelia, they

travelled by "diligence", a mule-drawn stagecoach escorted by armed guards. They covered approximately 160 miles over the main road, which was mostly in poor condition. There were stops along the way for food and overnight lodging. The route took them over mountain ridges and down into high valleys, with many beautiful views.



One stop was at Maravatio. They wondered why they had been awakened at 3 am at the previous

night's lodging to start the journey to Maravatio when they arrived there by noon. They learned

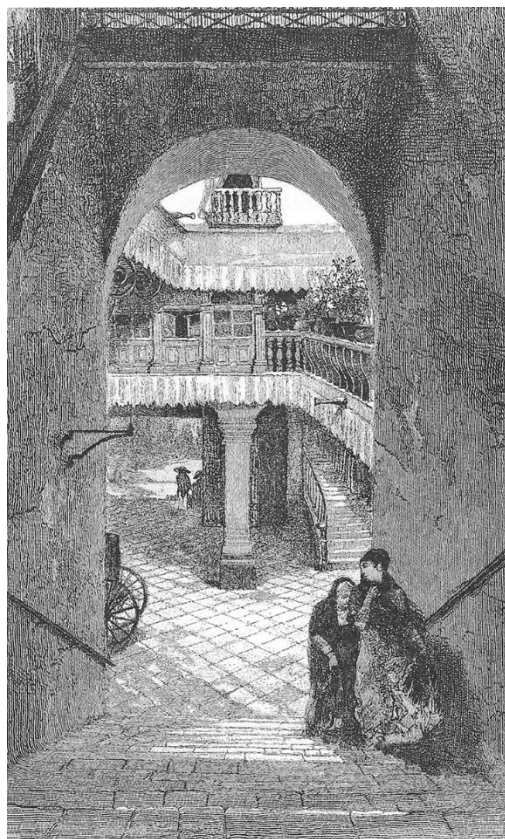


there was a major festival and bullfight in town that afternoon. Just about everyone headed to the Plaza Del Toros. Arthur and Mary were not anxious to see a bullfight, but after watching the impressive parade of the bullfighters, they finally followed the crowd. As the bullfight progressed, Arthur put his hand over Mary's eyes and escorted her out of the plaza.

In Mexico, at that time, there was a large gap between poor and rich people. Sometimes Arthur and Mary would take a break from bouncing around in the coach and walk alongside the rutted road. The weather was pleasant and they enjoyed the exercise. The local people they encountered thought it was very peculiar for the couple – especially a “lady” such as Mary – to be walking instead of riding. In Morelia, the “ladies” of the town would dress up in their finery and ride in their horse-drawn carriages around the town, smiling at each other from the windows of their carriages.

The Foote's host in Morelia was a wealthy Prussian banker named Don Gustavo Gravenhorst. He was a widower who lived with his thirteen-year-old daughter in one of the town's most exclusive residences. The furnishings were mainly European and the home was spacious with many rooms and servants.

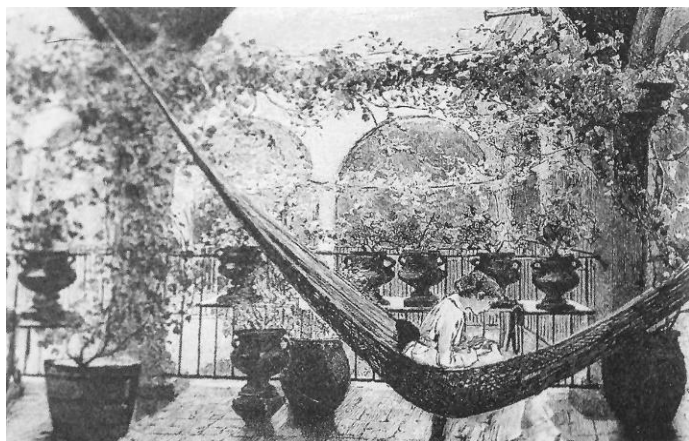
In her autobiography, Mary described the morning that the engineers and servants departed for 2-3 weeks at the mines. *“About twenty-five horses and pack mules were clattering in the court and [servants] were saddling and packing them with unlimited stuff piled on the pavement: hampers of fruit, cases of vintage wines, down pillows covered with silk, linen fit for the trousseau of a duchess – I*



saw what they called a camp bedstead – of solid brass – taken apart and strapped on a mule's back to go over the trails.”

When the men had left, life at the hacienda returned to a calm, quiet existence. The servants bustled about, cleaning and doing other chores, but they did it quietly and unobtrusively. The hacienda was huge, with a typical inner courtyard, corridors and balconies overlooking the courtyard, and a gateway entrance – all on a grandiose scale.

The lady of the house showed Mary around the elegant rooms and let Mary know that she was free to go anywhere she wished. By this time, what Mary really wanted was to be outdoors



sketching. Fortunately, the corridors provided her with views of the principal plaza, some of the town, and the cathedral. Within the walls of the hacienda, there was an abundance of fragrant, freshly watered flowers and vines, festooned along the arches. Mary spent many hours capturing the various views and shifting light with her drawings.

What Mary could not do was wander about the town and the marketplace. I don't know if it was a matter of security or that it simply wasn't considered proper for "upper class" women to do that. Perhaps both. When Mary requested an escort to walk to the market with her so she could sketch, the response was that she would go in the carriage with the driver and the white mules ... and an attendant ... and a chair for Mary to sit on ... and an umbrella for the attendant to hold over her head... and Mary would have to be wear appropriate "afternoon" dress.

Despite the difficulty of just wandering about town or riding a horse to sketch and write, Mary really enjoyed Morelia. She was also reaching a point where she really wanted to have a place to call *home* instead of moving every year or two.

If Arthur got the job at the mine it would last for many years. They could live in a modest hacienda in Morelia and raise their family. She would learn Spanish and immerse herself in the culture. The idea appealed to her. She had learned that there is more to "America" than the United States.

The engineers returned from the mines, and one morning there was, again, a clattering of horses and mules in the courtyard as they packed up to leave Mexico. There were a couple of others traveling with the Footes, plus the usual armed guards. Reversing their travel route, Arthur and Mary returned to Milton, New York.

Epilogue: Arthur continued looking for jobs, as well as waiting for a decision about the Morelia mine. While he was checking a mine prospect in Idaho, he developed a vision for a major irrigation system in the valley area around Boise. It would transform the arid region into viable farmland. He wrote to Mary that he was turning down the Morelia mine manager position and pursuing the irrigation idea instead. Mary was very concerned about Arthur's ability to do that project, and her concerns were well-founded.

Note: For information about the irrigation project, read the March, 2020 Newsletter, All previous NSHC newsletters are posted on the website, www.TheNorthStarHouse.org, under About / Newsletters.

References:

A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West by Mary Hallock Foote

Mary Hallock Foote by Darlis A. Miller

Mary Hallock Foote: Pioneer Woman Illustrator by Doris Blickford-Swarthout

President's Message

Paula Campbell, President



Editor's note: Due to a sequence of occurrences, this issue of the newsletter was delayed. Paula wrote her "final" message in December.

Greetings to our North Star House family! In this, my last month as president of the North Star Historic Conservancy, I would like to express my appreciation for the volunteers, supporters and donors who have created and continue to create a community home and landscape with the heart and grace of Julia Morgan.

I use the word "create" deliberately. Remembering Alexander Pope's timeless inspiration to gardeners: "Consult the genius of the place in all...", I understand that we renovate, yes, but the beauty of this work is in discovering and giving life to the Genius Loci. This an act of creation for which I am grateful.

Though I love working with our other volunteers (especially the mighty Garden Crew!), I enjoy working and walking the landscape on my own. In the quiet, I appreciate the setting of the house, the woods and field, the lovely interior. I am even tempted to set down my clippers and pick up a book for a delightful break in the afternoon.

The NSH family has said yes. Yes to creating a unique and extraordinary community jewel. Yes to building a vibrant and growing business and organization to support our mission. Yes to honoring the historic legacy that we preserve and enrich.

I admire you for what you do, and I am honored by your company.

Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.

From Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington

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Newsletter Editor
Joan Clappier

Coming Home ...

We are very excited to have one of the original pieces of Foote furniture back in the Dining Room, where the Foote family enjoyed it. This piece was originally built in the North Star shop specifically for the home and it has stayed in the family.

Kathryn Gardiner Hale, great granddaughter of Arthur D. and Mary Hallock Foote, passed away recently. Carole Miller had kept in contact with Kathryn, who willed this sideboard to the North Star Historic Conservancy. Lisa Robinson made arrangements with the estate executor and she was joined by Jim Borrelli and Sherian Kutzero on a recent trip to Reno to pick it up.

Kathryn also gifted us first editions of some of Mary Hallock Foote's novels and short stories. They will have a place of honor in the locked, glass front bookcases which will be built in the MHF room.

From all of us at the North Star House, Thank You Kathryn.

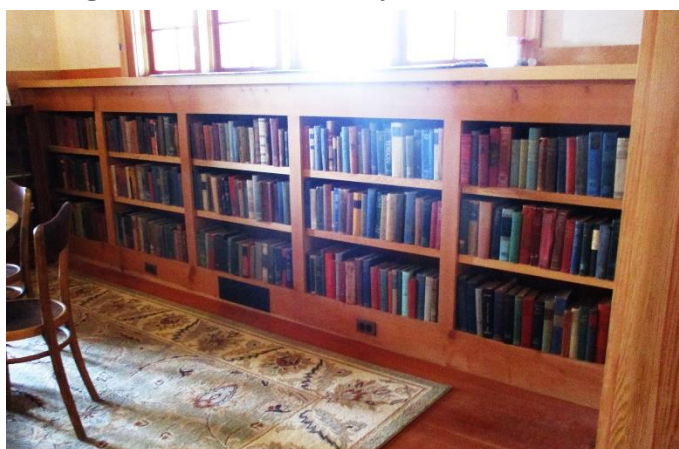


Progress in the Library

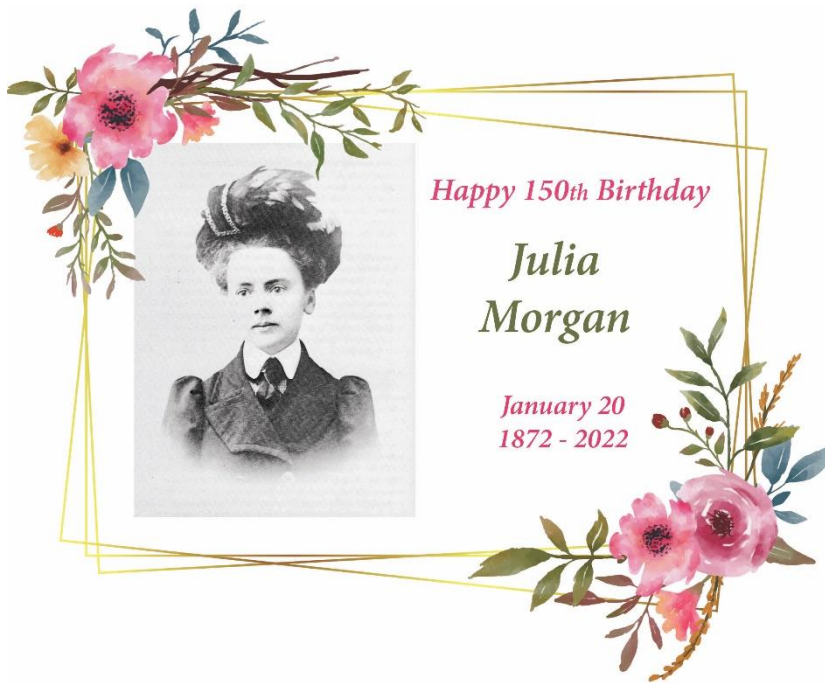
Question: What's better than a beautiful new bookcase in the Library?



Answer: A bookcase full of interesting, vintage books that beckon you to read them.



The Searls Historical Library had a book sale including 1,000 books donated from David Comstock. Lisa, Sherian, Marrilee and Arlene went to the library and selected books which were of AD and Mary's era and might represent the Footes' broad range of interests.



The NSHC Board of Directors held their regular monthly board meeting on Thursday, January 20, 2022.

We celebrated Miss Morgan's 150th birthday in the beautifully restored dining room of her historic house, complete with cake and a not-quite-historic rendition of "Happy Birthday". We raised our glasses to the woman who brought us all together.

On Sunday, October 17, Soroptomist and North Star partnered to bring you the first annual AutumnFest. It was well attended, lots of fun, and we plan to have the **Second Annual AutumnFest Oct. 2, 2022**



Left: Sales were brisk at the Soroptomist Garden Shop, with a wonderful variety of artisan crafts.

Below: Music was provided by the amazing band **Harmony Groove**.



Docent-led tours were available for the Heritage Garden (Right) and the North Star House



Mark Your Calendars for *AutumnFest*

October 2, 2022

Volunteers at the North Star House

Come join a team of fun, interesting people who are passionate about restoring this important, historic landmark. Whatever your talents and interests are, we offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, including giving tours, working on events, construction, gardening, fundraising, marketing, researching history, and more.

We have a simple on-line form that you can fill out and submit, indicating your areas of interest. You will be contacted promptly so that we can connect you with people in your area(s) of interest.

- Go to “Get Involved” on our website and scroll down the page to “Become a Volunteer”.
- Alternatively, go directly to www.TheNorthStarHouse.org/volunteer

Our volunteer force includes people with a wide range of backgrounds and interests. We work hard but we also enjoy working together and making new friends. Come help us meet our Vision.

Vision: To restore the unique rural roots of Julia Morgan’s North Star House as a center for exchanging ideas, nurturing the arts and fostering learning.

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner - 2021

On Wednesday, October 13, 2021, we held our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in the courtyard of the North Star House. This dinner is hosted by the Board of Directors.



We enjoyed beverages, appetizers and a good band on the front terrace before dinner. Then we gathered in the courtyard for a delicious buffet dinner.

Right: After dinner, awards were given to all volunteers by our Volunteer Coordinator and Mistress of Ceremonies Sherian Kutzera.

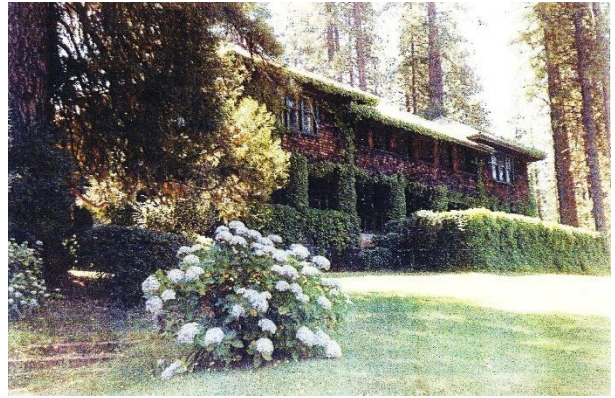
The “guests” (volunteers) were provided with a red carpet experience coming up to get their awards.



A huge Thank You to all of our volunteers. We can’t possibly do this without you!

North Star Landscaping

As many of you know, Arthur De Wint Foote was a horticulturist and an avid landscaper. The grounds around the house were beautiful, relaxing, and complimentary to the house. After the Footes left, the grounds suffered the same neglect that the house did. Restoring the landscaping is part of the overall plan for the North Star Historic Conservancy. The Heritage Garden was a start ... providing some history and examples. We have added a self-guided landscape tour, to highlight some of the wonderful heritage trees and plants on the property.



Into the Jungle on a garden tractor

Over time, volunteers are scheduling bring-your-own-tools work days to tame the overgrowth. They are creating defensible space, restoring the beauty of the grounds, and making way for landscape restoration which is being planned.



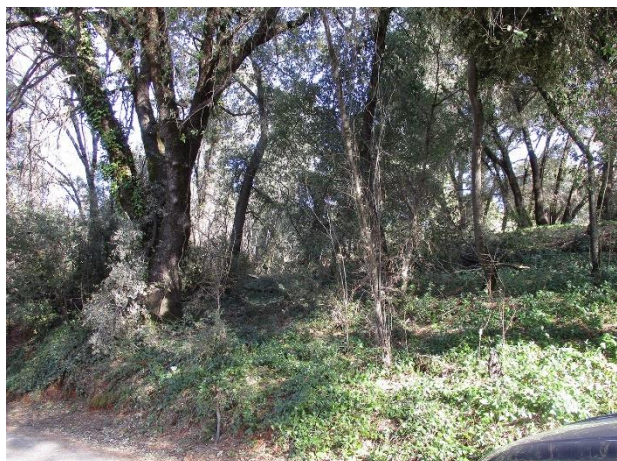
Trimming back the Hawthorn hedge, which had grown to 20+ feet high, was a *huge* job!



Below: The low, trimmed hedge, which lines the entrance road, is starting to leaf out and will return to its former beauty.



There are still acres to be cleared ...



... but the results are very rewarding.



Designed by Marrilee Shannon

Right: Area by the front gate was cleared to accommodate a new informational sign. The rest of this area will be cleared when time permits.



And then THIS happened 12/26/2021



As if we didn't have enough to do, the unprecedented storm broke a lot of trees on the property and brought down new loads of debris.



But the mighty North Star volunteer team will persevere.

Contact us if you'd like to help!



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Just go to the eScrip website, www.eScrip.com/signup. Please consider designating The North Star Historic Conservancy as a recipient. It's a terrific way to support our efforts to refurbish The North Star House.

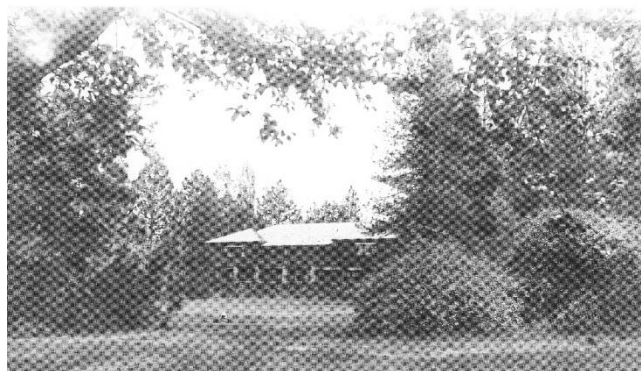


If you shop at Amazon.com, start using **smile.amazon.com**

Designate **North Star Historic Conservancy** as your charitable organization.

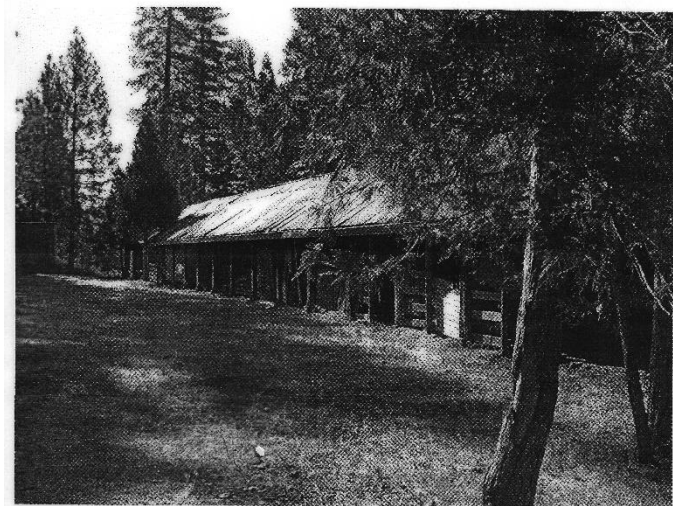
Shop the same as always, at all of the same stores. Amazon will donate a portion of your purchases to NSHC.

Editor's Choice: I've been waiting for an issue that I needed some "filler" so that I could use some photos I like. Here are some of the old, black/white vintage photos.



I like the way the trees and shrubs frame this view of the House

North Star Barns

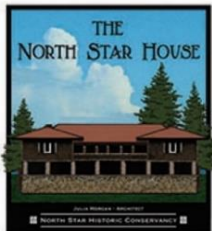
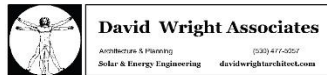


I have included this picture labelled "North Star Barns" because I am curious about it. Does anyone know where this barn was (or is)? One person suggested it might have been at the Central Shaft mine for the horses of people who rode there to work.

We can't rely on trees to help indentify a place because this area has all been logged.

If anyone knows the answer, please email me at: joan@thenorthstarhouse.org. Thanks

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

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www.TheNorthStarHouse.org 530-477-7126

Our Vision is to restore the unique rural roots of Julia Morgan's North Star House as a center for exchanging ideas, nurturing the arts and fostering learning. Your support makes this possible.

We invite you to join us: Become a Member ❖ Make a Donation

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- ☐ Rising Star \$ 100 +
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