

# NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

# THE STAR

## NEWSLETTER

### President's Message

Larry Dulmage



We began 2023 with an interesting and thought-provoking Board retreat. It set the tone for a renewed sense of purpose and energy among board members, which resonates through our wonderful volunteers. We also continue to attract new volunteers who bring different talents and ideas to the organization.

There's finishing work to do in various rooms on the first floor. If you haven't been inside the house for a while, please come back for a visit. Demolition work continues on the second floor to get it ready for renovation.

Grounds work is becoming y obvious. Clearing brush and trees not only improves our fire safety but enhances the overall beauty of the property.

Our plans include growing our events program to attract a broader range of residents and tourists alike, creating a robust calendar of public events: expanding into 2024, Stay tuned.



AutumnFest 2023 has been expanded to a Family Event with games and craft activities for children. Activities will include painting rocks and birdhouses, making paper "critters", and games.

Demonstration and Performances include:

- A professional florist will show us how to combine succulents with a pumpkin to make a stunning centerpiece. (The demonstration pieces

will also be available for sale.)

- A wonderful magician from the Nevada County Magicians Guild will entertain both children and adults.
- Music will be provided by Rhonda Lynn & Edgewood Station

Both the Historic House and the Heritage Garden will be open with docents. We will also offer a landscape tour. Bring your cell phone and follow the map and information as you walk about and see some of the heritage trees on the property.

Food and beverages will be available for sale, including Coco's/Lazy Dog ice cream, Dr. Sara's pies (yum!), and Grajeda's Mexican Grill.

All proceeds benefit the North Star Historic Conservancy and Soroptimist International of the Sierra Foothills, both of which are non-profit organizations.

## Next Speakers Series Talk



Join us for this informative talk by Dr. Karen McNeill, October 8, 2:00 p.m. at the North Star House. Her presentation will focus on Julia Morgan's post-graduate education at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the late 1890s.

Morgan is noted for being the first woman admitted to this prestigious architectural school, receiving a degree in 1902. She returned to California and was licensed as an architect in 1904. "Julia Morgan in Paris" is the title of Dr. McNeill's chapter in the recent publication, *Julia Morgan: The Road to San Simeon*. She will discuss how the challenging curriculum of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts influenced her future career, which included more than the 100 buildings she designed that are found throughout California.

Pre-order tickets, [TheNorthStarHouse.org/eventlink](https://TheNorthStarHouse.org/eventlink) for \$10 online, or \$12 at the door.

## Meet Our New Committee Chairs

This year we've welcomed two new people to head our Docent and Events Committees: Lois Hensel (Docents) and Gailynne Bouret (Events).



Lois moved to Grass Valley in 2010 from San Francisco after she retired from a career in finance and securities. She became a docent at the North Star House in 2021 and took over docent activities from Lisa Robinson at the beginning of this year. Lois has done a large amount of research into the history of the house, its residents (the Footes), and its creator (Julia Morgan). Much of this endeavor she's shared with the docents in improving their skills

in informing visitors as well as her own.

Lois devised an instructive tool for our docents to use during tours using 8"x11" poster boards that feature a photo of people and places associated with NSH adding text and significant facts about each person and place on the reverse. Currently, Lois is building a data base locating as many as possible of Julia's homes and buildings that are still standing. One item she found while searching through online records was particularly striking. Upon arrival in San Francisco as a young woman at the start of her career, Lois lived in a girls residence that she has since discovered to be one of Morgan's buildings.

When not involved with work for the North Star House, Lois spends her time reading, traveling, and baking.

### Fun fact . . .

*Lois collects beautiful, unique Christmas ornaments, some one-of-a-kind artisan pieces. It began with this piece (right) purchased at Macy's, New York, in 1972. She realized then that ornaments weren't just bright, colored orbs!*



*Continued, page 3*



## What's Going On Upstairs?

*Editor's note: Docents are often asked by visitors who stand by the entry, point to the stairs behind the glass doors and ask, "What's up there?" Rich McRay, foreman of the construction team, provided the following update. Thanks to Tom Milam for giving me a tour of the work in progress. We hope this will satisfy your curiosity!*

Restoration of the North Star House began 20 years ago, starting with a massive clean up of the house grounds and followed by tearing down the structural modifications made by Rev. Mansdoerfer. The highest priority was installing a roof to preserve what remained of the house. After that, the next step was concentrating on the ground floor so the house could be used as a rental venue. Thus, the second floor was used for storing items donated to us in case these would be valuable in the future. In hind sight, it wasn't a great idea considering the dangerous hanging ceilings and other trash from collapsed ceilings and years of debris accumulation. Thereafter, we stopped

*Continued, page 4*

## New Committee Chairs (from page 2)

Gailynne and her husband, Brian Lucas, moved to Grass Valley from Cupertino in 2021. She started as a docent in 2022 and later assumed the lead of the Events Committee from Joan Clappier in February. The committee resumed planning activities after a three year hiatus and, to date, it's been a busy several months. The Speakers Series returned with two events that featured members of the Mining Museum and author Stacey Guill who talked about her research and publication about the Foote family's life in Boise, Idaho before their move to Grass Valley. Gailynne proposed the theme of "Solstice at the North Star House" for the summer open house. We look forward to expanding this into a bigger event next year and, hopefully, make this a regular feature of NSH's calendar. The committee sponsored a play reading under the direction of Judith Offer. Plans are underway for a public reading of "Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan" during Julia Morgan Day, April 21, 2024. Two events are scheduled for October, AutumnFest and the last of this year's Speakers Series featuring Dr. Karen McNeill (see page 2).



Before retiring in 2020, Gailynne worked at NASA Ames Research Center through the non-profit entity, Bay Area Environmental Research Institute. She produced and edited annual reports and newsletters for NASA's Airborne Science Program, provided web content for the Earth Science Division, and served as an HR assistant for BAERI. She and Brian share their home with two very sweet, very spoiled Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Lucy and Lina.

### Fun fact . . .

*Gailynne studies historical fashion and sews reproduction outfits. She visited the Revolutionary War camp re-enactment during Nevada City's Constitution Day in 18th c. dress. Another hobby is embroidery.*

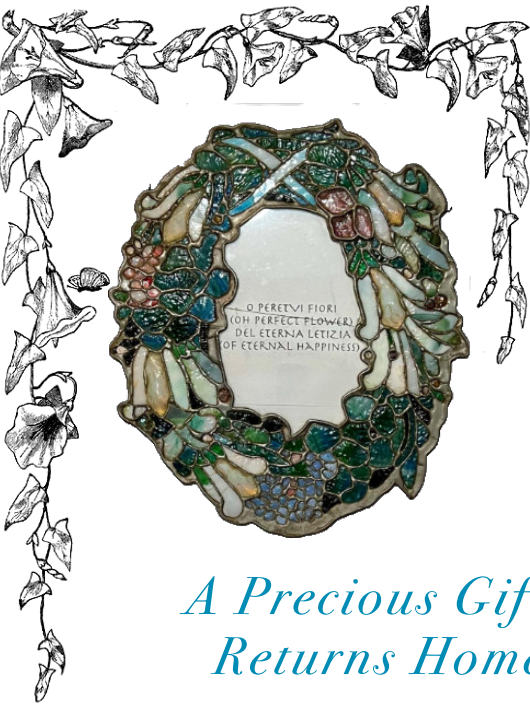




Upstairs (continued from page 3)

## A Precious Gift Returns Home

On September 13, Annie Gardiner Brillhart, the great granddaughter of Arthur D. and Mary Hallock Foote, came to the North Star House for a private talk with some of the docents and construction crew. In addition to sharing her memories of visiting the house during her child and young adulthood, she brought a collection of family photos and a sketch done by a young Mary Hallock prior to her entry into the Cooper Union where she learned the skills for her career as an illustrator. These items were on display in the dining room with "Do not touch" notes scattered among them. However, one item that everyone admired and studied was a piece that she donated to us: a stained glass wreath given to the Footes following the death of their younger daughter, Agnes, in 1904.



Continued, page 5



Original electrical switch plate

Our first task regarding the second floor was to refurbish the log columns on the courtyard walkways, followed by shingling the second floor exterior walls, which is continuing along the south courtyard wall. As shingling work proceeded around the exterior, significant water damage was discovered and repairs made. The image (right) shows the finished walkway and shingling, with the ceiling ready for installation. The south courtyard walkway is being finished to this level, and the ceilings will be installed after the appropriate wiring is installed. This same treatment remains to be applied to the west walkway recess, but there is no schedule for this. Currently, costs estimate are being obtained for all second floor window and door replacements.



Tom demonstrating the operability of original windows

As for the second floor interior there's still some plaster to be removed before reconstruction can begin. We know that the ceiling joists in the southwest classroom are structurally deficient and must be augmented or replaced, and there may be the same problems in the northwest classroom; however, that ceiling is yet to be removed.

There's a plan to install a power distribution panel for the second floor, tentatively scheduled for this fall. Access ports in the floor are present in several locations that are necessary for first floor wiring.

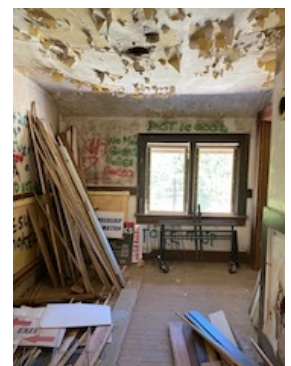
Although we've made good progress, hazards still remain which makes the second floor off-limits to all but the construction crew. We'll keep you posted.

accepting these items and began the clean up. It seems never-ending, but much of the hanging plaster is gone. The attic still has ad hoc construction that we'll remove when we have sufficient resources to do it.

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Exterior walkway on side of north courtyard



Hanging ceiling in graffiti filled room

Gift (from page 4)

It was created by a glass artist in San Francisco who knew Mary and wished to pay respects to the Footes for the loss of their beloved daughter. Although the family was still living in the cottage at the time, they hung the piece in the middle of the west-facing windows of the NSH's living room upon their move into the house in 1905. Perhaps this was the best display for illumination of colored glass reflecting into the central heart of the house.

As Annie told us, it remained there throughout the residence of subsequent generations. Upon the sale of the house in 1968, it passed through the hands of various relatives until Annie received it. She hopes it will be reinstated to its original position. NSH board members and the building team are determining how best to do this to preserve its presence within the house as well as to protect it.

Despite its age, it is in good condition apart from a horizontal crack in the central pane. Volunteers are working with conservationist regarding this repair. One detail that wasn't apparent to us as we viewed it was an inscription: "O peretvi fiori del eterna letizia". Board member Joan Clappier provided the translation: "Oh perfect flower of eternal happiness." We can appreciate how much this meant to AD and Mary, and their descendants.



#### Upcoming Events at NSH:

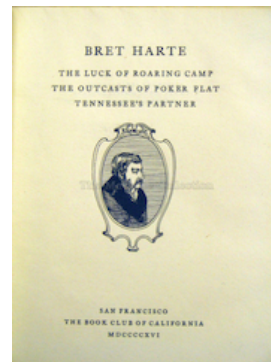
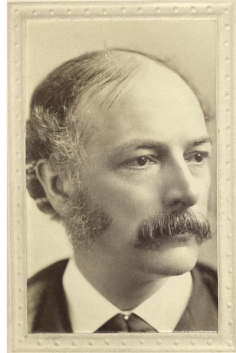
- Nov. 3-4 Special Magic Show for Halloween
- Dec 3: North Star Holiday. Enjoy the North Star House with it's beautiful decorations

Check back soon on our website <http://thenorthstarhouse.org>



## James Hague, Bret Harte and The Luck of Roaring Camp

By Gage McKinney



North Star mine owner James Hague initiated the creation of the North Star House by authorizing Julia Morgan to design it. He may have initiated something just as lasting by telling a story that fired the imagination of Bret Harte and led to the creation of an unforgettable character in American fiction.

Hague, who had visited San Francisco several years earlier, returned in May 1867. He was about to begin work as the lead geologist on the U. S. Government survey of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parallel from the Sierra Nevada to the Rockies. On arrival, he called on his friend from Massachusetts, Robert S. Swain, director of the U. S. Mint. There he met Swain's chief clerk, Bret Harte, who was already building a literary reputation.

Hague, a cheerful conversationalist, told the men a story about a kind-hearted but profane old soldier. Hague began:

*It was during the [Civil] war, in a night train of old-fashioned day coaches on the New York Central, when a company of soldiers, coming in at Buffalo, crowded the cars far beyond their capacity and made the journey miserable for all other passengers, among whom was a woman with a crying baby who persistently refused to be comforted, and all were irritated beyond endurance.*

At that moment, an old, tall, unkempt soldier stepped forward and reaching out for the child, said: "Let me take your baby a

*Continued, page 6*

minute, ma'am." Hague continued:

*The woman placed the baby in the hands of the soldier, who, holding it caressingly in his arms and swaying gently to and fro, immediately began to sing as a soothing lullaby: "There! There! There! Damn your little eyes! There! There! There! Hell! What a screamer!" and so forth, until the baby, apparently relieved by change in the situation, suddenly ceased crying.*

A few minutes later the old soldier returned the baby to the grateful mother's arms, saying gently: "You bet, I just thought I could quiet the damned little cuss!"

Bret Harte became animated on hearing the story and asked Hague to tell it again. After Hague repeated the story, Harte asked for more details.

Hague met Harte another time, at a breakfast in Harte's honor at the Union Club on California Avenue in San Francisco, which probably marked one of Harte's early literary successes. Later, in July 1868, Harte launched the *Overland Monthly* magazine as its first editor. In August, the short story "The Luck of Roaring Camp," appeared in the magazine. Harte's friend, Mark Twain, called the story "perfect."

James Hague may not have read the story until it appeared in Harte's collection *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches*, published to acclaim in

1870. When he read it, Hague took special interest in one of the camp's "prominent citizens," the character called "Kentuck." It's Kentuck who calls the baby in the story, "The damned little cuss!" and who exhibits "more tenderness and care than he might have been deemed capable of showing."

Throughout his life Hague knew many famous writers, especially Henry Adams, Mary Austen, Clarence King, and Edward Evert Hale, author of "The Man Without a Country" and other popular stories. The writer he knew best was his brother-in-law's wife, Mary Hallock Foote. Hague met famous writers in Britain, including Thomas Carlyle. Yet Bret Harte, who lived his later life in England, Hague never saw again.

But after reading Harte's story, Hague always wondered. In the white-hot furnace of Harte's imagination had the gruff but kind-hearted soldier on a crowded train metamorphosed into a resident of Roaring Camp? Had he become gruff Kentuck, who closes the story, dying as he cradles a dead baby in his arms? Like James Hague, we'll never know.

Sources: James D. Hague, "Two Letters," *Overland Monthly*, series 2, volume 40, September 1902, 335 – 336; Ben Tarnoff, *The Bohemians: Mark Twain & the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature*, New York: Penguin Books, 2014.



## NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

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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.

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