

NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

THE STAR

NEWSLETTER

President's Message

Rich McRay



2024 opens with a renewed sense of excitement and promise as we redirect our time and energy toward not only restoration, but also to our important role in providing a place for our community to focus on history, fine art, performance and education.

In 2023 the North Star House reached a milestone on the journey to returning to its historic splendor. Significant restoration work on the first floor was completed along with major fire suppression work on the grounds. The clearing of the second floor, the future home to the Gallery, is well underway. We also hired our first-ever Executive Director, Holly Mitten. Holly brings a broad range of skills and experience, along with enthusiasm and a love of the North Star House. She is an exceptional addition to our North Star family.

Continued, page 2

North Star History

Birth of the North Star Mine

Joan Clappier

In 1851, the North Star gold vein was discovered on Lafayette Hill in Grass Valley and a claim was filed. It was common in those days for claims to change owners and names over the years, and the North Star was no exception. By 1875, the name "North Star" had been established and the mine was satisfactorily productive. Then, at a depth of 1200 feet, the owners hit a barren zone. The mine was declared "worked out" and it sat idle for nearly 10 years.



William Bowers Bourne II

William Bourne, Jr. inherited the Empire Mine, another "worked out" mine, after his father's death. After finishing his college engineering courses in 1879, he focused on making the Empire mine operational again. It took four years and some risks, but he followed his instincts and training, and he drilled deeper; thus resuming profitable operations. As the Empire and North Star mines were only about 1.5 miles apart and had similar geology, Bourne bought the North Star (inexpensively!) and began the same process to restore profitability to the North Star Mine.

James D. Hague was an experienced, well-respected mining engineer as well as an astute businessman and financier. He came to Grass Valley, to purchase a mine. After speaking with Bourne, Hague bought the North Star Mine. Hague wanted to expand the operation and needed much more power to keep the pumps running to dewater the mine. He hired his brother-in-law, Arthur De Wint Foote, to build a new power plant. Hague knew that Foote had the

Continued, page 3

Message (from page 1)

Throughout the year we welcomed visitors, expanded our docent program and hosted a wealth of events, from weddings to magic shows, including a new ghostly historical mystery. In addition to our popular speaker series, we introduced a new event to celebrate summer solstice, co-hosted AutumnFest with Soroptimist International of the Sierra Foothills and enjoyed a members-only Stargazing at the NSH with the Nevada County Astronomers. We enjoyed sharing the constellation of embedded stars on the terrace, with our guiding North Star properly aligned to the heavens. Be sure to see it when you visit.

I am honored to be following in the footsteps of our long-time visionary leader, Larry Dulmage. We will be building on the foundation he created, completing a robust plan of restoration for the house and grounds, while expanding our series of events and opportunities to welcome guests to this very special place, the North Star House. Beyond saving the house, we're finding more ways for the community to use and enjoy it.

*Richard McRay, President
North Star Historic Conservancy*

POSTSCRIPT-Exciting News coming soon! Watch for a special announcement March 14th!

Welcome Holly Mitten, Executive Director

Some people just can't retire. And, lucky for us, Holly Mitten is one of those people.

Holly accepted the job as our first Executive Director in November and has been using her decades of nonprofit experience to get us on track to not only meeting our goals but taking the next significant steps forward in achieving our vision.



Before becoming our ED, Holly worked at the North Star House, volunteering mostly on the grounds or at events. "After all those years on the administrative side of things, I was enjoying the simple routine of helping one or two days a week without any other responsibilities."

Holly was an attorney before "retiring." She volunteered at numerous open space and conservation non-profits in the San Francisco Bay Area, as a board member and board President. These included the Trail Center (Los Altos), Committee for Green Foothills (Woodside) and San Mateo Coast Natural History Association (Half Moon Bay).

Locally and most recently, she served six years on the Board of SYRCL and over five years working with State Parks as the President of Sierra Gold Parks Foundation. Holly brings a wealth of experience to the Conservancy. We are so fortunate to welcome Holly to our North Star family. Her knowledge, experience and enthusiasm are a perfect fit for us as we look to the future.

In her spare time, Holly loves adventure and travel. She is an avid hiker and backpacker who prefers adventure travel, including road trips. Her favorite trip was to Mongolia, where she rode a Mongolian horse on the Mongolia steppe and hung out with Mongolian eagle hunters. Holly's best stateside adventure was a 50 mile backpacking trip through Yosemite collecting water data at the headwaters of the Merced River – at over 8,000 feet!

Continued, page 4

Birth of NS Mine(from page 1)

background and skill to do inventive engineering and problem-solving. Foote was a visionary, but a poor businessman, so the two men complemented each other.

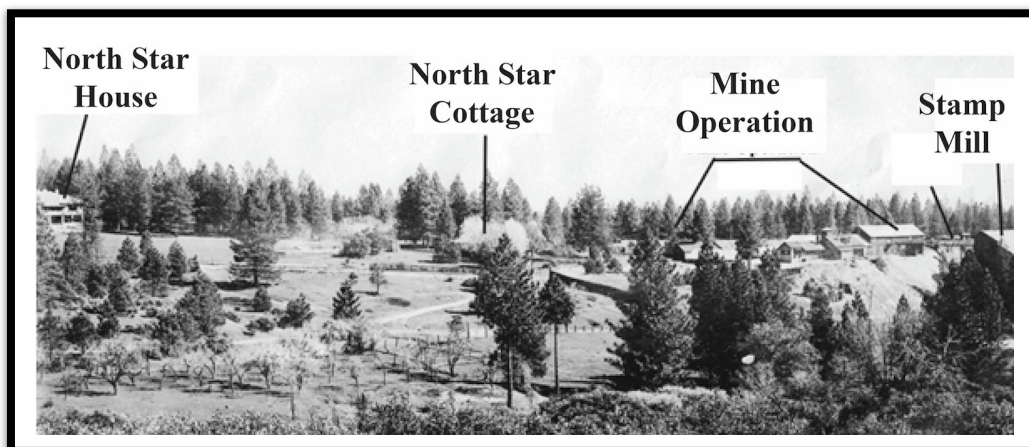
Arthur Foote arrived in Grass Valley in 1895 and turned his energy towards generating more power for the mine operation. He designed a much larger diameter Pelton wheel for generating power than had ever been built, to the chagrin of inventor Lester Pelton who was convinced it wouldn't work. Foote's design worked and was capable of generating far more power than the small Pelton wheels then in use. Foote created a powerhouse capable of meeting the power needs of the expanded mine operation. Hague hired Foote as the mine superintendent and, in 1896, Foote's wife and family joined him in Grass Valley.

The original mine operation, including drilling, stamp mills, cyanide plant and assay office was located fairly close to where the Foote family lived before the North Star House was built. The family grew very familiar with the noise and vibration of stamp mills that ran 24/7. The original mine shaft was on a slant angle from the opening toward the northwest. By 1896, they had found a very good gold vein closer to the current location of the Powerhouse.

The decision was made to sink a vertical shaft at that spot to intercept the vein. Drilling the new "central" shaft took from 1897 to 1902. The Auburn Road mine continued operating while the new Central Shaft location was set up for operation. Ultimately all equipment from the original site was consolidated into the Central Shaft location.

The gold mines operated continually through the depression. They were closed by a federal order during World War II to divert labor to the war effort. Mining resumed after the war, but most mines in California ultimately shut down around 1956 because the federal government had fixed the price of gold sales to \$35/ounce during the depression. This order prevented a price increase even though the cost of labor and materials continued to rise. It was no longer profitable to operate gold mines.

The Empire Mine and the North Star Mine were very profitable gold mines in California. The North Star Powerhouse building has been turned into a first-class mining museum. A lot of gold mining history has been preserved in western Nevada County. Tours are available at the North Star Mining Museum, the Empire Mine, and the North Star House.



View of the North Star property from Auburn Road

Holly (from page 2)



Holly making friends in Mongolia

Holly is also an avid reader, loves gardening and all genres of music which is why she also volunteers at the Center for Arts.

After her many years in nonprofit work, Holly saw the ways the Conservancy could do better and take the next steps towards fulfilling the bigger vision we have held since our restoration work first began. She asked a lot of questions, offered some observations and made various suggestions, which led the Board to ask her to help in a formal capacity.

"I love this place, and I can't think of a better group of volunteers to support," she says. "I'm looking forward to meeting more of the members and supporters as we head into a year full of new and exciting happenings. I want to help North Star House become the community resource and gathering space it can and should be."

We couldn't agree more!

Welcome Jenni McGuire

Meet Jenni McGuire, who joined the North Star House Administrative staff, August 2023

Ask Jenni McGuire how she likes her job, you'll hear an enthusiastic, "I love it!"

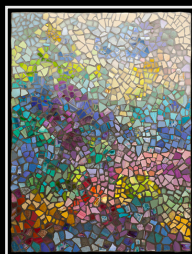
Yeah, you say, how can answering phones, collecting mail, ordering supplies, be that exciting. Her cheer and expediency in tackling these tasks stems from her respect for the dedication of the volunteers working around and above her while she's on the job. She may not be drilling, sanding, tearing out walls, or re-wiring, but she feels what she does contributes to the benefit of the house's progress and future. "I do whatever I can to keep things running smoothly," she says.



"Everyone working on the house and grounds is incredibly dedicated to the restoration and preservation of this very special place." Living 3 miles down the road from the house, Jenni considers it a neighbor. "It still astonishes me that this historically important house came so close to being

Continued, page 5

Some of Jenni's mosaics (clockwise top, L to R) "Humpty Dumpty", "Let's Toast", "Acorn", "Hot Day",



McGuire (from page 4)

demolished.” Apart from the fumes during paint and varnish days, she loves working in the office when the house is a beehive of activity. It leads to ideas of participating in the labor. “I have some experience with building and carpentry,” she says. “I hope to someday help with hands-on projects as well as office tasks.”

Jenni’s background as an artist is part of that appreciation of the house and its garden. Her background is a blend of gardening and art. In the late 1990s she taught horticulture to at-risk kids in Sonoma County, and began integrating mosaic garden art into the curricula, such as stepping stones and bird baths. Perhaps it was the process of breaking dishes and scrap tile that was enormously therapeutic for the kids and adults, as well. She was hooked. From there she worked with cement as a sculptural medium, especially the re-use of scrap materials that would otherwise be landfill. For many years she’s enjoyed teaching mosaics and sculpture at Sierra College Community Education in Rocklin, the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, and at Cabrillo College Extension in Santa Cruz. Additionally, she also teaches classes at her home studio. “It’s a comfortable setting and I have so many materials right there.” In addition to lending a helping hand with hammer and saw with the NSH construction crew, she’d love to teach mosaic workshops here, as well. “I think the original residents of NSH would approve of its house as a venue of creative endeavors.”

You can see other samples of Jenni’s mosaics at jennimcguiremosaics.com; however, a major work is local. Several years ago, Jenni was commissioned to create a mural for Chicago Park Elementary School. The next time you drive to Colfax via 174, stop by for a peek.

One Window ÷ into Three*Rich McRay*

When working on an old house, one expects to find a few surprises, and restoring the North Star House has provided many. The most challenging was the west-facing window in what was Mary Hallock Foote’s office. When we began renovating the room, it appeared to be a single window mounted on the sill board which, in turn, is mounted to the concrete wall below.

Obviously it was not an original window as it was an aluminum-framed window manufactured in mid-20th century (Photo 1). When shingling the outside of the house, we took the shingles up to the window’s trim thinking a new window would fit the opening as the previous one had. Wrong!

*Photo 1**Continued, page 6*

Windows (from page 5)



With winter approaching, we didn't want to leave the room open to the elements while we worked on the inside of the window's wall, so we moved the exterior window away from the house by putting 2x4's under the frame, allowing interior work on the wall to proceed. Upon removal of

Photo 2 window trim and the interior frame, we discovered that the original sill was about 10 inches higher in the wall than the outside window frame indicated. Not only that, the original arrangement was three windows that slid up in the wall to open. We reinstalled a supporting structural sill where the original had been (Photo 3). The presence of nail holes in the studs and wood imprints from the original sill on the side of the studs gave us the exact location.



Photo 3

This discovery gave us the useful knowledge of what the paneling under the three windows should look like, and we proceeded to panel accordingly. Somebody thought we should take a picture at that point, which we did. From the inside of the room, the new paneling under the window can be seen with the old window still mounted to the outside of the house (Photo 2).

Upon seeing the old three window tracks we realized that they were completely inaccessible unless we tore down the inside of the upper wall. We didn't. After taking many measurements and careful construction, we created a three-window frame that could be inserted into the wall with all three sets of tracks aligned with those in the upper wall. Meanwhile, our previous caretaker, Richard Kleger, built three custom-made windows in his Massachusetts workshop. Two of those windows can be seen in Photo 3.

These windows were never counterbalanced, but they could be fully opened to about 28 inches. As each window weighed 16 pounds and with no counterbalances, we doubted that they were opened very often, especially if a table or other furniture had been placed next to them. Therefore, they had to be counterbalanced, even though that would limit vertical travel to about 14 inches, still plenty for cross ventilating air flow. It only takes about 1 lb lift force to get it open.

We retrieved six 7 lb window counter weights from our hardware supply of original NSH parts. Additionally, we purchased a bucket full of counterweight pulleys from a 1905 house in Alabama. With these recycled parts, we had all of the counterweight hardware we needed

Continued, page 7

NSH Receives Historic Signage

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation has approved a grant to North Star Historic Conservancy in the amount of \$2,025.00 for a National Register Marker for the North Star House that will be situated at the House's entry on Auburn Road. An installation date and celebratory event will be announced at a later date.

Windows (from page 6)



Photo 4

The rest of the story is straight forward: trimming the windows, inside and out, shingling the exterior gap under the windows, and finishing the interior and exterior new pieces of wood (Photo 4). What remains is installing lift handles and drag devices to hold the windows open; but, essentially, the hard part is behind us.

In Memoriam

Larry Dulmage

Founding visionary who led our restoration efforts for two decades, the architect of our future. His commitment to quality and historic integrity guides us today.

President
North Star Historic Conservancy
2017 - 2018
2022 - 2023

Next Speakers Series Talk

Gage McKinney to present, “A Kindergarten for Mining Engineers”

Mary Hallock Foote wrote: “We laugh at Mr. Hague a little about his mining kindergarten.” Throughout his career James Hague, owner of the North Star mine, helped to develop the talents of younger men. When the North Star became a consistently profitable operation, he hired young engineering graduates to come to Grass Valley and develop their talents for gold mining. More post-graduate school than kindergarten, the North Star launched many stellar careers.



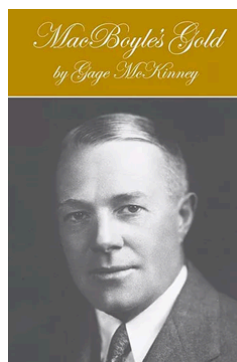
On Sunday, March 17, at 1:00 pm, historian Gage McKinney will tell the stories of some of these well-educated young men who had their first professional job

in Grass Valley. They honed their engineering and management skills under the tutelage of mine manager Arthur D. Foote, who they universally revered. They displayed their social aplomb and conversational skills at tea with illustrator and writer Mary Foote, who they never forgot.

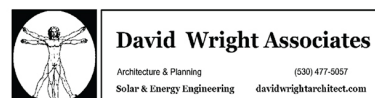
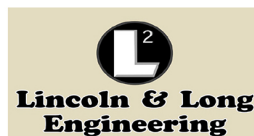
The young men who McKinney will describe went on to remarkable careers as mine owners, investment bankers and chemical engineers.

Their stories help demonstrate why Grass Valley was one of the most exceptional mining settlements in the world, a rural place of surprising sophistication, leaving a cultural legacy enjoyed in Nevada County to this day. And North Star House was at the center.

McKinney will be elaborating on stories found in his book *MacBoyle's Gold*, which will be on sale at the event. Gold mine owner Errol MacBoyle was one of the most successful of Mr. Hague's “kindergarteners.” A portion of sales will go to the North Star Historic Conservancy. **Tickets are \$12 online/ \$15 at the door.** Scan QR code or click [here](#) to purchase. Light refreshments will be served.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Volunteers Always Welcome!

We have a wide variety of volunteer opportunities from restoration work to maintaining the Heritage Garden to social media, marketing and more. Click [here](#) to learn more. We would love to have you join us!

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Join Us in Supporting The North Star House



NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 1538, Grass Valley, CA 95945

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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Wish List

- \$50 Three new plants for the Heritage Garden
- \$150 Quality set of kitchen utensils and knives for event use
- \$250 Battery-operated leaf blower for grounds maintenance
- \$300 Sound system for our speaker series, including microphone, speakers, and stand

Thank You!