

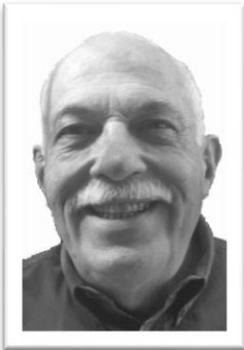


# The Ore Car



## FALL 2017 Newsletter of the Plumas-Eureka State Park Association

Tim Hardie, PESPA Chairman



### VOLUNTEERS GREET STUDENTS TO OPEN 2017 SEASON AT PLUMAS EUREKA STATE PARK

The season started with school visits in June after the severe winter damage to Park. Dedicated labor by DPR and PESPA volunteers attacked the damage in camp ground; (40 downed trees on campsites and roads, erosion on pathways in Historical District), to name a few. Roofs, fences, showers, trails presented staff and volunteers with huge challenges. Snow finally fully melted in late June on Eureka Peak, opening the traditional trails in the park for all to enjoy the natural beauty of this "Hidden Gem of the Lost Sierra".

Team work really kicked in for PESPA's annual community events of Gold Discovery Days in July and Dinner at the Park in August. The success of these events, plus tours to Assay Office, Blacksmith Shop, Museum, and Moriarty House are the



secret reward for volunteers' time and effort. Campground hosts, hike leaders, interpretive rangers join to broaden the public's knowledge of the natural and mining histories of this Park to visitors. Our goal is to inspire the next generation to continue these efforts and create new programs to expand the knowledge of this wonderful area.

PESPA passes the baton to next years volunteers. This group has put in three thousand + hours of volunteer time each of last four years to achieve the following: painting and repairing all the major structures in historical district, community cross country ski program,

manned museum store, staffed venues for tours, led hikes, supplemented DPR's staff, reroofed Moriarty House, helped public around ongoing ADA projects, established community outreach to all of Plumas and Sierra Counties, provided accurate information for new educational panels in Museum and on trails, supported Archeological programs within park, published the book "Plumas Eureka on Glass", and provided tours to elementary school classes from Paradise, Grass Valley and Portola.

Thanks to all for your gifts of expertise, time, and energy to successfully complete these projects and more, to further the goals of PESPA **Dedicated to supporting Plumas Eureka State Park and its interpretive and educational programs.**

## *Tim Quandt - Ranger*



### **PESP 2017 Season Draws to a Close**

As the 2017 season draws to a close, I am pleased to say that in spite of the adversities we faced heading into summer, with extensive damage to the park and its facilities caused by the winters' heavy snow-loads and tree-snapping winds, we were able to rally and pull out all of the stops to get the campground opened on time. While the campground and some of our other park facilities still have repairs looming on the horizon from some of the damage that staff weren't able to address over the course of the summer, for the most part, we were in decent shape as our visitors arrived.

For the first season in more than a few years, we saw the Jamison Creek planted with trout, not once but twice this summer! The stream is still flowing healthy at this time and it appears that levels will rise again before they fall any lower (as I write this, rain is falling and NOAA suggested today that we could see snowfall as early as tomorrow (9/21!!!).

Rain/snow in the forecast is welcome now. We still have a fire burning on McCrae Ridge, just outside the park to the west and after the recent episode of close calls near Quincy, we're ready for the fire season to go to bed. Truth be told, the fire burning on McCrae Ridge is well needed! It began as a lightning strike in early September and was allowed to progress as a controlled burn to reduce the hazardous fuels that have been piling up under the canopy for countless decades...perhaps for as long as 100 years or more! The slow rate of spread, location near wetlands and ability of our friends with the USFS (US Forest Service) to monitor and manage the fire proved to be an excellent prescription to the situation.

Hopefully, everyone reading this newsletter had the opportunity to visit the park and enjoy its magnificence as well as experience some of the changes that have happened over the past year. The Museum had changes made in the mining room to bring it into ADA compliance, offering those with mobility issues the ability to enter the room for the first time unassisted! Our displays in the room are still being updated, but new interpretive panels have been added to a couple of the display cases with more soon to follow. The parking lot also saw an upgrade with the disabled parking space receiving a treatment to make it more level, and the entire museum parking lot received a slurry seal to improve its surface. The counter in the bookstore area was also remodeled, as was the restroom. Hopefully, now those that live with disabilities, will find the museum to more accessible and enjoy visiting areas that had previously been a challenge.

The contractors working on the museum, shifted over to Camp Lisa, once the camping season began. Right now, they are feverishly working to complete the remodel on the camp before inclement weather hits. Also at Camp Lisa are the CCC (California Conservation Corps.), returning again for a second summer, who have been working on the Madora Lake Trail, bringing it into ADA compliance. They still have another year to go on this 3 year project, but the trail will be a nice addition once it is finished.

A couple other projects that saw action this season are a reroofing of the Moriarity House, which is still in progress, and a repainting of the Assay Office that included replacing some of the worn and compromised siding of the structure. Next stop, the Stamp Mill? More to follow with that project as I learn more, but it has been evaluated and by a structural engineer this season and we have our fingers crossed that one of our favorite landmarks in the park will see stabilizing improvements in the near future.

Now, I must go and squirrel away a stash of nuts before the snows fall. Long time locals predict another heavy winter this year...are they right? We should know before too long. To turn a phrase that is popular today, "winter is coming"!

# Plumas Eureka on Glass

A book review by Wendell Huffman

Curator of History, Nevada State Railroad Museum

It is a cliché that family histories are not particularly interesting to people outside the family, but if that is a rule, Bruce MacGregor's *Plumas Eureka on Glass* is certainly an exception. The stories of the various families that were drawn to Johnsville, in remote Plumas County California, by the Plumas Eureka mine are certainly a key part of the work, but the story of community they forged and the mine that justified its existence deal with broader, more fundamental issues, and speak to a broader audience.

Chronologically, the story fits into the half century between 1870 and 1920; a period of maturity for the western mining industry, characterized by heavy capital investments and sophisticated extraction and processing methods. During that span of years the reader follows the fortunes of the Plumas Eureka mine from the consolidation of various mining claims on Eureka Peak into the Sierra Buttes Gold Mining Company through to its inevitable decline.

Paralleling the life and death of the mine is the story of the associated community. The mine provided employment for scores of Cornish hard rock miners, who prospered with the success of the mine. The success of the mining operation further attracted entrepreneurs who saw an opportunity providing goods and services. Miners, managers, entrepreneurs and their families became a community. Even as they became related to each other through marriages, they became connected with the outside world with a transportation system that developed within the constraint of the local geography and climate. The community invented is recreation, blending both the era and national pattern and its own unique multi-ethnic cultural make up.



Three forces dominate the story: the ever present mine and mill, looming on the mountain above the town, relentlessly removing and shipping away the gold that kept the operation going; winter—the force that for years silenced the processing mill and isolated the town with seasonal regularity; and the town's ethnic mix of inhabitants—Cornish, Italian, Americans, and the odd “Frenchman” (who's role remains hidden in the shadows until the end). Against these forces, the residents strive to assert their will: to fit in, to thrive, and—ultimately—to keep food on their tables when the mine fails. The story becomes a struggle between determinism and will—the same story that men have faced everywhere. For many, the will triumphs only with the decision to leave the shadow of Eureka Peak. For one, the acts of will become a defiant protest against the forces he believed conspired against him, which threatened to destroy the community that harbored him. But even for those who left, Plumas Eureka remains home.

What makes the work all the more interesting is that it began with an heirloom: a box of glass plate photographic negatives of the Plumas Eureka Mine and the associated village of Johnsville. The book is the fruit of the endeavor to discover the context of those photographs. For the family, it is a rich account of their roots. For the rest of us, it is a rare opportunity to visit a small western town and its associated industry. As a descendent of Johnsville families, MacGregor was well placed to know many of the back-stories that would have escaped other writers, and at the same time his personal curiosity drove him to seek more information that other writers would have bothered with. Too, his training as a scientist may have predisposed him to seek the underlying causes of events, rather than merely being satisfied to report on the consequences. The book's subtitle—“a cultural history of the Plumas Eureka mine”—in an understatement. It is probably the most comprehensive—and personal—examination any industrial facility and its related community this author has read.

The beautifully designed book encompasses nearly 300 pages and is profusely illustrated with photographs and maps. The text is given credibility with a full complement of citations to sources. It is published by the Plumas-Eureka State Park Association.

## Meeting People: The best part of volunteering

By Dennis Black

This summer I was busy making something in the blacksmith shop and a young family stopped in. The husband, wife and their two charming elementary school age children were very engaged in what I was making. They asked questions about the blacksmithing and the conversation turned to the history of the park. I was surprised how interested the kids were about life at the mine a hundred and fifty years ago.

They stayed for quite a while so I asked the kids if they wanted to dress up like blacksmiths for a picture. I have a couple of old hats there in the shop and their kids tried on leather bibs and gloves that were way too big for the children. The mom took lots of pictures of the kids holding a hammer and tongs with our quaint blacksmith shop as the background.



She was sure that picture was going in their Christmas letter. (yes...some families still send out a Christmas letter)

I asked them if they had more time and since they were the only ones in the shop, I took them for a tour of the assay office and the Bushman Mill. As we walked together back to the shop, we talked of where they lived and how they ended up coming to Plumas Eureka. They thanked me for my time and said that their short stay in our beautiful park was everything that they had hoped for on their family vacation.

This family is just one of hundreds who come to visit every summer. Some families have been coming every year for decades. As volunteers at Plumas Eureka State Park, we have an opportunity to help our guests experience the beauty and learn the history of this important part of the "Lost Sierras", Without volunteers the historical area of the park seems to some as just some old buildings, but our volunteers make history come alive.

I love to blacksmith, but when I head to the park, I tell my wife, "I'm heading to meet some people". I would enjoy blacksmithing even if no one stopped in at the shop, but the best part of the day is meeting the various guests from all over the world to see our park. I met a husband and wife from Germany this summer who came to see America for the first time. I asked what they have seen so far. They replied, "San Francisco, Yosemite, Lake Tahoe and this State Park". (yep, we made the "must see" list of places to see in the US)

We could certainly use more volunteers. If you could give part of a day each week or if you only have one day to volunteer during the summer, we could find a spot to serve that you will love.

## **A Plumas Eureka State Park Field Trip**

**By Richard Martinez**

Last year my wife Carol and I shared a 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom at C. Roy Carmichael Elementary School in Portola. As we are both PESPA docents, it made sense to us to take our kids on an end-of-the-year field trip to our Park. We decided to invite our third grade colleagues, Alexandra Cone and Tenaya Kooyman, and their classes along.

Our concern was that our students, mostly 8 or 9 years old, might be young for such an endeavor. However, our familiarity with the Park and kids in this age group paid off.

When the students disembarked the bus we led them on a quick march up to and by the Stamp Mill and the area around it. Sadly this signature venue of the Park has been off limits for decades now but we felt that any school group that does not receive an orientation of this site misses a chance to appreciate the scale and achievement of the mine when it was at its prime.

We decided to break our sixty kids into five groups to be in a rotation through the historical venues of the Park: Moriarty House, the Assay Office, the Blacksmith Shop, the Museum, and a Natural History site situated between the museum and Moriarty House. Each group was given about twenty minutes at each site.

What made the trip so successful was in large part due to the enthusiastic participation of at least ten docents from our community who answered the call for volunteers. Also, a select group of parent volunteers helped with the management of the rotation. When the rotation was complete our students and parents gathered for bag lunches at the picnic tables by the blacksmith shop. There they were entertained by and with Patrick O'Reilly, our wonderful seasonal interpreter and musician.

As with every visitor we meet, we hope that our trip last June will inspire the students and parents to regard the Park as theirs now and for future generations.

We wish to thank everyone who contributed in making this visit such a success.

### ***PESPA Board of Directors for 2017-18***

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## TAKING A CHANCE – Bushman Stamp Mill

By Carl Chavez, Park Manager 1975 - 79

Any way you look at it, the Plumas-Eureka Area was/is a small operation. From 1975-79 it consisted of one park (PESP) and a staff of three. Our nearest State Park neighbor was the Sierra Area. That operation included Donner Memorial SP, the parks around Lake Tahoe as well as Grover Hot Springs SP and Bodie SHP. At the time we were blissfully independent of those parks and my nearest boss was located in Stockton 150 miles away.

That independence usually worked to our advantage but sometimes it would have been nice to have the additional resources, equipment and manpower that a larger operation had to offer. Rather than give up our independence I vowed to make do with what we had. To illustrate the point I offer the following account.

In the summer of 1975 an individual came into the museum and inquired if the park might be interested in acquiring a small operating stamp mill to put on display for demonstrating purposes. I indeed was interested in obtaining the stamp mill. The donor said it was ours and all we had to do was go get it and haul it away. The mill was known as the Bushman Stamp Mill and it was located about 35 miles away in a remote area northwest of Quincy.

Maintenance Worker Al Thomas and I drove to the site and inspected the donation. All of the major components of the mill were there, stamps, hopper, flywheel, etc. It was definitely worth salvaging. The problem was that it was on the other side of a dry creek bed. The only way across the creek was over a rickety, dilapidated, broken-down wooden bridge. The bridge was about ten feet above the creek bed and the only equipment we had available that I felt we could use for dismantling and transporting the heavy parts back to the park was an old Ford Tractor and a 2-ton stake side truck. We had no way of transporting the tractor but to drive it down Highway 70 all the way to the site.



In September, after the rush of tourist season was over I decided it was time to take a chance and try to retrieve the mill. We probably put more hours on the Ford tractor just driving it to and from the mill site than we normally would put on it in several months. When we finally arrived at the mill location with the tractor it was decision time again. Did we dare take the tractor across the rickety old bridge? I said “go for it”. This time I hedged my bet by insisting we first shore up the old bridge with timbers we found lying about the area. The tractor would be carrying considerably more than its own weight when it crossed the bridge.

I sketched the stamp mill and numbered the parts before we dismantled it. Once back at the park we would have to reassemble the structure utilizing new replacement timbers. It was necessary to make several trips back and forth across the bridge in order to get all the parts on to the truck. We held our breath as the tractor crossed and re-crossed the bridge. The bridge creaked and groaned as it swayed back and forth under the combined weight of the tractor and its load. We managed to load all the parts on the truck and drive the tractor 35 miles back home. Without telling or asking any State Officials what we were up to we had taken a chance and succeeded!

During my tenure as Park manager, which ended in May 1979 we were not able to put the Bushman Mill back together. The parts were left next to the gate leading up to the Assay Office and it was up to staff in about 1986 that successfully re-assembled it. Now if you go up to the park and take a walk amongst the historic structures you will find the restored structure that some day may be fully restored into a working mill. At that time the only thing missing will be how it got there!



## PLUMAS-EUREKA STATE PARK ASSOCIATION 2017 MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew your PESPA membership for 2017. Please fill out the form below and send along with your tax-deductible check!

PESPA is dedicated to supporting interpretation and education at Plumas-Eureka State Park and your continued support through memberships and donations also helps in the efforts to keep the park open.

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### Plumas-Eureka State Park Association Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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*You will receive correspondence and newsletters electronically if you provide your email address.*

Membership: **NEW RENEWAL** (Circle One)

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- Annual Single Person Membership (\$25)
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I'm including a tax-deductible gift of:

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Please mail your tax-deductible check to:

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*If you're moving or would no longer like to receive our mailings, please let us know. By emailing us at [pespa@digitalpath.net](mailto:pespa@digitalpath.net)*



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