On Christmas Day, 1849, Mrs. William George Wilson delivered a healthy, 12 pound boy at Canyon Creek, near Georgetown. Soon a neighboring claim and the gold field grapevine had spread the tongue-in-cheek news that Bill Wilson had struck it rich and found a twelve-pound nugget.

Most took the news literally, however. “News of the big find spread like wildfire up and down the canyon where hundreds of men were at work,” wrote Bennett, “At once, there was a grand rush to Bill Wilson’s cabin. Every miner was anxious to see the 12 pound lump.”

The Wilsons thoroughly enjoyed the moment and lined up the men at the cabin door. A few were let in at a time to view the “nugget”. “Each of the miners loved being had,” Bennett recalled, “As each squad came out of the cabin, the men solemnly asserted that the Wilson nugget was the finest ever seen.” For three more days, the joke continued throughout the area. Bennett wrote of miners who came from more than ten miles away to see the 12 pound, giant. “Christmas Nugget”!

MERRY CHRISTMAS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
David Anderson
James Berardi
Syd Brown
Marianne Bryant
Robert Coats
Caleb Dardick
Ron Ernst
Paul Keasberry
Holly Mitten
Bill Stamatis

California State Parks
malakoff.diggins@parks.ca.gov

Green, Matthew
Sector Superintendent
matt.green@parks.ca.gov  530-273-3212

Youngren, Dan
Supervising Ranger
dan.youngren@parks.ca.gov  530-273-3024

Randar, Ryan
Unit Ranger
ryan.randar@parks.ca.gov  530-273-3024

Pfanner, Debbie
Park Interpretive Specialist
debora.pfanner@parks.ca.gov  530-265-2740
In the early Spring of 1852, Eli Miller (a tinsmith), Anthony Chabot (an engineer), and Edward Matteson (a jack-of-all-trades), met in Sacramento and decided to come up to the gold fields to try their luck at Red Dog, near Grass Valley. There they waited for the fall rains to bring water for sluicing. At the same time our intrepid miners at Humbug City had collected most of the available surface gold and realized the fine grains of gold from the ancient riverbed there, did not “make wages” with a sluice box or a pan, as the gold was just too fine. While waiting for the rains, Chabot made a 100 ft. long by six inch diameter hose from strips of saddlebag canvas and Miller constructed a three ft. funnel. With this invention it was now possible to bring water to the diggins which was far better than taking your excavated gravel to the water source for sluicing. Matteson suggested that another funnel be turned around and attached to the discharge side of the hose. A 3 ft. nozzle with an inch and a half outlet was fabricated by Miller. When attached, a new era began in gold mining techniques. With this new device, they had created a monster. More earth was let loose than the sluice could wash. Miller built a 200 ft. long 12 in. pipe, in 12 ft. slip jointed sections, to bring water down to a distribution box (made by Matteson) which had two 6 in. hoses attached. With this system, enough water came to the sluices to handle all the earth loosened by the nozzle. As Matteson had been observed bringing equipment to American Hill he was given the credit for the invention of Hydraulic Mining.

Notice the feeder pipe coming down the hill from a water supply ditch at upper right. Ed.
The major water supply for the workings of the Malakoff Diggins hydraulic mining equipment, was delivered via flumes and a ditch from Bowman Reservoir, located at the headwaters of the Yuba River at Big Canyon Creek, east of Graniteville, CA.

Bowman Ditch was 40 miles long, five feet wide at the bottom, 8 1/2 ft. wide at the top, and 3 1/2 feet deep. It had a grade of 16 ft. per mile. Water from the ditch was delivered to Waldron Reservoir for Malakoff’s thirsty needs. Construction was completed in 1869, having employed 800 Chinese and 300 whites.

In 1856, Anthony H. Chabot left the gold fields of California and pursued his interests in engineering. He is credited with San Francisco’s first regular water system in 1858. He also developed a water system for Portland, Maine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Chabot then became one of the incorporators of Oakland’s Gas Light Company in 1866. Later, he built the dam on San Leandro Creek and was partly, if not solely responsible for water systems in Oakland and San Jose, drawing from Los Gatos Creek. Anthony Chabot (The Water King) died a multimillionaire in 1888, leaving over $85,000 to charities, (including veterans, working mothers & shelter for homeless), and his name to Lake Chabot, Chabot Observatory & Chabot College.
Watch blue dark clouds
roll in over the hours
so I can hear its music
beat a rhythm on my roof

M. Eastman

Hopefully, a “tight” roof that will allow you to appreciate the rhythm from a dry, snug, bastion, free of annoying drips, will soon be a reality. Such is the goal of state park maintenance as they installed new tarps to replace those deteriorating covers that have adorned King’s Saloon and the Skidmore House for the immediate past. A new roof is in the works for the 1852 residence and 40 year old “re-construction” of the popular 19th Century watering hole.

Environmental Living Program Site to Be Upgraded

Foster Family Foundation was started by Ranger Jim Collins’ wife’s grandparents many years ago to provide support for furthering the education of children.

At the suggestion of Ranger Collins, Malakoff Diggins Park Interpretive Specialist Deborah Pfanner submitted an application to the Foundation to replace the deteriorating, temporary Mess site for the Environmental Living Students.

The foundation granted $5,000, to be implemented by FNBMD, to put a permanent roof over the ELP Mess. Staff hopes to have the work completed in time for the ELP opening in the spring.
Shivering in the December wind-blown sleet and guided only by a bright star in the east, Murph and Dooley slog into North Bloomfield with empty stomachs, pockets and prospects. “Ah, Dooley, even if we had any dust, the hotels are full for Christmas and no respectable citizen would rent a bed to common miners the likes of us. Look Murph, a lantern in the stable, a night in the warm hay would do for me. Dooley, truth be known Jay Ostrom or his plug-ugly would run us off, seein’ as we can’t pay the two bits to climb the loft. Murph, I see a freight wagon, blessed to just sneak aboard and curl up before we’re noticed.” Creeping around the partly open Dutch-door, the pair are startled by an alarmed voice from beyond the lantern, “Heaven-sake, you must be a God-send to rescue me from such a plight on this, of all nights. Come quick, the foal is catty-wampus between the stall and the mare, and can’t rise.” Our two vagabonds shuffle after Ostrom to a small corner stall. There in the hay, the foal is in distress, legs akimbo, no room to maneuver, stuck. Murph’s soothing voice helps calm man and beast as strong hands gently work to release the captive until it rises, shakes and nuzzles the mare. Finally eyeing the nomads with a steady gaze Ostrom concludes, “you surely don’t resemble the Magi but you’ll eat like kings this night, the Missus is making a meat pie and bread pudding.” After a snug nights sleep on full bellies, our heros awaken to a fresh Christmas snowfall. Ostrom hires them to haul out a wagon on skiis, then take folks for a Holiday snow ride. Later he tells the pair to show up tomorrow and they’ll have a job assembling his new Stationary Hay Press.

After meeky agreeing, Murph becomes philosophical, “that star is with us Dooley, it ain’t a gold strike, but a gold mine we’ve found; a job, a stove, bed and vittles with a roof above. Merry Christmas Murph. Aye, the same Dooley.”

Canter over to the Ostrom Stable this Holiday and experience surroundings that beckoned Murph and Dooley.

Jay Ostrom died in 1916 at age 93.
State Park Maintenance has had a busy fall replacing the exhausted white picket fences adorning North Bloomfield. 2,100 rough cut, red-wood pickets were hand milled at Empire Mine SHP by park staff and “The Over the Hill Gang” Volunteers. The fence is finished in a white stain that is designed to last 30 years, significantly longer than previous applications. Money for the project and associated tools is from a $5000 allocation by Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins.

The project should be finished by December.

1857

Yule-Time Killing at Humbug

December 23
Stabbing at Ball given at Lafayette House Hotel in Humbug
Confrontation between John Enders and Louis Goldberg
Goldberg stabbed Enders in side and victim grabbed knife, trying to pull it out and made wound worse.

December 26
John Enders died at Humbug
Nevada City Archaeologist Mark Selverston, currently contracted with California State Parks to provide an archaeological inventory of Malakoff Diggins, led a field trip on Nov 7 to orient the Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins Executive Committee to the mining and archaeological history of the park.

Mark has traipsed over practically every trail, animal path, overgrown road, tunnel, & coyote hole, for his survey; including a plethora of overturned stones, monuments to the impact of water cannons. His detailed overview covered not only physical history, but cultural history; fascinating the group with the legacy of French miners and entrepreneurs who migrated here following the Crimean War, thus anointing many place-names such as “Malakoff” itself.

About a half mile downhill from the NBF school or west on N. Bloomfield Road, adjacent to the Diggins Overlook parking, Mark pointed out the trace of an old road which is the site of Humbug City. A short walk revealed cellar dugouts and rocky foundations of the once bustling boomtown. The old road in the left photo, is shown in the photo to the right, behind the white building, going uphill between the rows of buildings. The road to the right of the white building is North Bloomfield Road. A Road-House to the far right is Casa de Pingree. The area the man is walking away from, is at bottom center, by the Christmas tree, now the Diggins Overlook Parking Lot.

Tunnels abound in the hillsides often dug to provide access under the Lava Cap, in the quest for gold.

*Just a few hi-lights from a very interesting & informative day. Ed.*

Mark Selverston, M.A., is affiliated with Sonoma State University’s Anthropological Studies Center, which provides consultant services, through which he has also developed archeological inventories for Empire Mine SHP, Bodie SHP & Lake Oroville SRA.
SNOW PLANT
(Sarcodes sanguinea Torr.)

Snow Plant, a common name considerably less grotesque than its scientific name, (given it by John Torrey, a famous New York botanist of the 19th Century), which translates roughly to "the bloody flesh-like thing," an allusion to the bright red color of the plant – the entire plant, not just the flowers. Belonging to the Monotropaceae, or Indian-pipe family, snow plant is the unlikely relation of such shrubs as manzanita, madrone, laurel, and azalea.

Snow plant has no chlorophyll; derives nutrition from fungi underneath the soil, and for this reason the plant is called "mycotrophic". These fungi are the “fungus-roots” of conifers, an interesting topic by itself. Many conifers (among other plants) require these fungi to live normally. Mycorrhizae are composed of strands of cells (mycelia) that grow about in the soil; are quite numerous and extensive, and the conifer uses them to bring water and minerals to itself. In return, the conifer provides the fungus with some of the products of its photosynthesis. Snow plant takes advantage of this arrangement by parasitizing the conifer, which makes sense, given that it is a plant without chlorophyll, and therefore a plant that cannot photosynthesize. This is why they are always seen beneath, or very close to, conifers.

Snow plant is difficult to confuse with other plants, and indeed stands a better chance of being confused with a misplaced piece of meat. It will be found growing out of pine needles and other forest litter on the surface of the ground, near a conifer. The above ground portion begins to grow in late spring, as the snow melts, and presents a dramatic contrast with the snow if the surrounding snow has not already melted, as is typical. The above ground portion is merely the stalk of the inflorescence, the ‘vegetative’ part of the plant being little more than a thick parasitic root. It achieves about a foot or so in height. The flowers appear closely packed together, yet evenly spaced. The flower (red, of course) has five petals, mostly fused along their edges into the shape of an elongated bell.

by Forest Jay Gauna

Look for snow plants in the upper elevations at Malakoff Diggins and on into the Sierras at Donner Memorial, Sugar Pine Point, D.L. Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks. Ed.

Scientific classification
Kingdom: Plantae
(unranked): Angiosperms
(unranked): Eudicots
(unranked): Asterids
Order: Ericales
Family: Ericaceae
Subfamily: Monotropoideae
Genus: Sarcodes
Species: S. sanguinea
Binomial name: Sarcodes sanguinea Torr.
A Diamond in the Gold Mine

A long overdue Christmas present arrived recently with the promotion of Malakoff stalwart Debbie Pfanner to State Park Interpretive Specialist. And Interpret, she does, whether School Groups, Campers, Town Tours, running the visitor center, stocking supplies, herding docents and volunteers, educating rangers, facilitating meetings, training school teachers for the ELP, networking with everyone from Nevada County to Sierra District, and taking the initiative to do so many important tasks that would otherwise go begging. Fortunately for Malakoff Diggins she is a reliable presence that has helped hold the park together during this turbulent decade.  

Ed.

For comment or input to the
Humbug Herald Newsletter
or
Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins

PUBLICITY
John Field, Kathy Field
Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins
friends.nbmd.publicity@gmail.com
http://malakoffdigginsstatepark.org/

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Laurent Clark
fentclark@att.net

WEBMASTER:
Michael B. Baca
http://www.southyubariverstatepark.org/
Ryan Randar
State Park Ranger

I was Born in Southern California and moved to Northern California when my dad took a new job. I attended Paradise High School and California State University, Chico. My parks career began in 2010 at Bodie State Historic Park. After two and a half years amid the cold, drafty buildings, range cattle and ghosts, I transferred to Lake Tahoe where I worked at Sugar Pine Point, Emerald Bay, and D. L. Bliss State Parks. I was delighted with the opportunity to transfer here and with my assignments at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park and South Yuba River State Park.

My fiancee Jenna and I are engaged to be married in October and along with Bella, my Chesapeake Bay Retriever, are excited about the new home we have purchased in the area. See you in the parks.

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HUMBUG DAY - THE VIDEO

A fun little video produced free for our enjoyment by Matthew Heilmann of Organic Media in Penn Valley, Ca.

Matt had never attended Humbug Day at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park before so a few years ago he just showed up for fun with personal curiosity. Having a camera with him was a good opportunity for Matt to shoot a home movie for his own entertainment. Years later, when Matt heard about our new Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins Association, he made contact with us and offered to share his video. After showing it to the Executive Committee and receiving their thumbs-up, it is now available to you on You Tube at https://youtu.be/6MP_oV3ZKL0

We will eventually play it in our visitor centers as well.

Please enjoy!

John Field
Publicity Director
friends.nbmd.publicity@gmail.com
SAN SIMEON Calif. - The new “Holiday Twilight Tours” invite the public to experience Hearst Castle dressed in holiday splendor. These special tours take visitors through the grounds, Casa del Mar guest house, and the grand social rooms on the ground floor of Casa Grande, all glittering with holiday cheer. This seasonal tour showcases magnificent holiday decorations, including two towering 18-foot Christmas trees, and a one-of-a-kind poinsettia tree.

“We welcome the public to come see William Randolph Hearst’s celebrated art collection in the warm glow of thousands of holiday lights,” said San Luis Obispo Coast District Superintendent Brooke Gutierrez. “Your knowledgeable guide will share stories of holiday festivities during the estate’s heyday while volunteer docents dressed in 1930s period attire bring the Castle history to life.”

Offered most evenings from December 19 through January 2, 2016, the new Holiday Twilight Tours will replace the regular Evening Tour only during this limited time period. Holiday Twilight Tours are priced at $30.00 for adults and $15.00 for children (ages 5-12). Advance tour reservations are strongly recommended and can be made at www.HearstCastle.org or by calling (800) 444-4445.

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Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park
Will be Open during the Winter
Day Use Fee $8 / Vehicle

Campgrounds and Visitor Center Closed for the Winter
Re-Open in Spring 2016
Contact: Reserve America
1-800-444-7275

Park Information: 530-265-2740  530-273-3884
Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins (FNB&MD) is a non-profit organization assisting the CA Department of parks and Recreation in the operation of Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park. Our mission is to provide financial support for the park’s interpretive and volunteer programs.

Your membership in FNBMD will:
• Help preserve, protect and enhance natural & cultural resources of Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park.
• Support interpretation of the park’s history, cultural resources, geologic features and biological diversity.
• Members receive a periodic newsletter and other notices of activities, plus a 10% discount on purchases at the Park Store in North Bloomfield.

Please fill out this form and mail to the address below or bring to the Malakoff Diggins Visitor Center with your tax deductible donation.

ANNUAL INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: $20.00
ANNUAL FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: $25.00
LIFETIME INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: $150.00
LIFETIME FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: $200.00
ANNUAL BUSINESS SPONSOR: $100.00
ANNUAL SMALL BUSINESS SPONSOR (less than 5 employees): $50.00

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I am interested in:
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