

MINERAL KING CHRONICLE

MINERAL KING PRESERVATION SOCIETY
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Photo credit: Steven Bakos, YourOwnHike.com



Letter From the Director

LISA MONTEIRO

Dear MKPS Members and Supporters,

For many, winter is a time of reflection and we have been looking back on 2022 here at MKPS. While these reflections are a valuable way to summarize a year and useful in helping to shape the way we will plan future programs, I much prefer the inspiration that comes with January as we plan for the future. The groundwork that we have been laying the past few years is starting to pay off and it is an exciting time to be building the future of the Mineral King Preservation Society.

I hope you will mark your calendars for this year's annual events in Mineral King; you can find those dates on page 8. For events off the mountain, keep an eye out for information on the screening of the packing video to be held in Visalia, and the unveiling of the Native American exhibit, "Native Voices", in the Mineral King Room at the Three Rivers Historical Museum this summer.

One of our goals for 2023 is to increase MKPS memberships. We hope you will consider renewing your membership this year when renewals are sent out in April. You can also give a membership as a gift and help us spread the word about joining. We are always striving for ways to reach new people while staying connected with our long-time members and supporters.

I wish you all the happiest and healthiest new year,

Lisa

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Mineral King Memories

The following is an excerpt of a story written by MKPS member Brian Reynolds. Brian has also been working with us as part of our oral history program. We hope to have oral histories up on the website this summer! There you will be able to listen or read the stories, view pictures, and sign up to add your story!

My name is Homer T. Hart. The “T” is for Thomas. I was born near Farmersville, California, in 1898. I was a sickly child, so my parents decided a trip to the mountains might help. My family had been camping in the Mineral King Valley for about ten years. We traveled from Farmersville to Mineral King in wagons drawn by horses and mules, taking three days to get there. In those early days, the Kaweah River Bridge had not yet been built and we traveled the old road, on the north side of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River.

I would like to tell you a little bit about me and my family. My father was Edwin Finley Hart. Born in Missouri in 1860, he traveled west to California as a young man. His father, Amos Hart, had already visited San Francisco and other parts of California during the 1848 Gold Rush. It is said that Amos Hart built the first tongue and groove floor in San Francisco, and participated in a vigilante lynching in Hangtown (Placerville).

My father married Martha Ellen Frans, who was from Ivanhoe. Together they raised seven children: three girls and four boys: Frances (Fannie was the oldest child). Then, in order, Charles Edwin; Hugh, Elizabeth (Betty), Virgil, myself, and Ruth. The Hart family camped in Mineral King for many years before any family cabins were built. The first Hart cabin was built by Hugh in 1909. Ultimately, there were six cabins related to the Harts in west Mineral King. Besides Hugh and Jessie Hart’s cabin, there were: the Hester cabin (Fannie and Ed Hester); Edwin and Belle Hart’s cabin; Elizabeth and Les Avery’s cabin; the Bissiri Cabin (Edwin’s daughter Nadean married Paul Bissiri). In 1923, Beulah and I bought a cabin next to brother Hugh’s cabin, which had been built by Mr. Herman Bechtel in 1921. Apparently, Mr. Bechtel’s wife didn’t take to the mountains.

Our cabin, #7, was small: one room only. Constructed from lumber sawn at Atwell’s Mill, it was built using a balloon design (where the weight of the roof rests not on beams but the exterior walls), with a board and batten exterior. Beulah and I slept in a Murphy bed and our daughter Marilyn, nearby in a single bed. We doubled the size of the cabin in 1940, adding a master bedroom off the kitchen and living room area. We also used a generator for electric lights, when many/most cabins used propane lamps.

Those early days, of camping and sharing good times around our cabins, were marvelous. Given the arduous trip “up the hill,” the family would spend several weeks at altitude, avoiding some of the typical hot, summer weather “down the hill.” Hiking, fishing, deer hunting, and pack trips into the back country were common pastimes. On one trip to the Kern River Canyon, about 1920, my father and the rest of us were riding down Rattlesnake Canyon and a Ranger caught up with us. The Ranger asked: “Mr. Hart, did you and your party camp last night up Rattlesnake Creek? Someone left a campfire smoldering. That is going to cost you a \$50 fine!” I daren’t tell who was responsible for putting out the campfire, but it wasn’t me!!



Curator's Corner

SANDRA STRYD

HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all! What a wonderful start to the new year with lots of snow on the mountains!

MKPS has also started out with a bang. Antoinette Cloutier is now working with us part-time as our Assistant Archivist. Antoinette has a BS in Business Administration. She is the former owner of Antoinette's Coffee and Goodies and has volunteered in numerous community organizations in Three Rivers. Antoinette jumped right in and added a new collection from Janet Livingston to our PastPerfect software. We plan on taking this live this quarter. Instructions on how to look at the collections we have in PastPerfect online will be sent out to all of you just as soon as it is available.



Antoinette Cloutier



Photography work area

Antoinette and I have been working on adding a photography work area in our office. This will allow us to take better pictures of our artifacts for PastPerfect online and our archives. Anyone that knows about photography and cameras will always be welcome to give us advice. Antoinette can be contacted at antoinette@mineralking.org or stop by our office in the Red Barn in Three Rivers.

Winter in Mineral King Over the Years



Photo credit: Unknown, courtesy of the Tulare County Library, Annie Mitchell History Room



Photo credit: NPS, 1967



Photo credit: NPS, 1969

Have any Mineral King photos to share?

We can scan your photos and return the originals. Email Sandi at Sandra@mineralking.org for more information.



Photo credit: Stephen Bruno, 2019

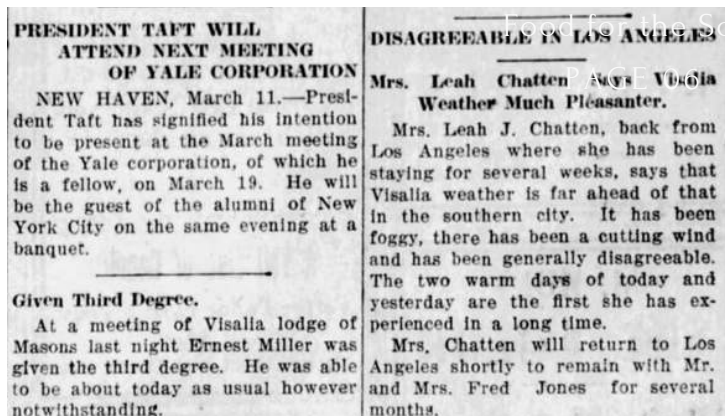
On July 27, 1888, forty-two-year-old Leah Jackson Davis took sole ownership of the Discovery Claim on the Cherokee Lode in Mineral King. It was a twenty-acre gold and silver claim on a steep slope carved by treacherous ravines and frequented by avalanches and landslides. It wasn't just the terrain that was daunting. It was fourteen years after the first woman had courageously signed her name on a mine claim notice in Mineral King, but women had quit claiming mines there in 1879. Anna Mills (credited with being the first woman to climb Mt. Whitney) led a short resumption of female mine ownership in 1885. Our Leah was the sixth woman to own a claim after the hiatus, and after her there was another long pause in female claim ownership. Leah arguably had different motivations than the other women. Her husband had died only a year earlier, and this mine claim had been his. It represented both his lost future and their shared past. Leah spent the requisite \$100 annual investment in the claim for two years, and then passed it to her son before marrying long-time miner Richard Chatten. Decades later, Leah had developed a reputation as one of the best loved Tulare County pioneers. She enjoyed entertaining friends, family, and visitors with tales of her trip west over the plains in 1856 and her adventurous first decades in the county. Indeed, she was held in such high esteem, her thoughts on the weather shared front page news with President Taft. Leah died in 1928.



Leah Jackson Davis 1890-1900. Photo by Robinson & Churchman, Visalia; public image courtesy of Leah's descendants



The interior of an adit on Leah's Cherokee mine claim



Article on page 1 of the March 11, 1909 edition of the Visalia Daily Times

Volunteers Needed!



MKPS has received a grant for \$3,000 from the Society for Industrial Archeology along with matching funds from the National Park Service to preserve the water jacket on display outside at the Three Rivers Historical Museum. Additional grant funding has been applied for to pay for interpretive panels.

If you or anyone you know has **construction experience** and are looking to help out on a great historical project, please reach out! We are also seeking donations of old barnwood that you may have lying around.

We need to frame the wall along the sea-train and frame out a shorter wall coming opposite a short wall that already exists. This short wall will help to be a wind and rain break on the exhibit.



Former SEKI curator, Ward Eldridge next to the water jacket



Newly constructed base for the water jacket

This relic, an iron water jacket used in at least two silver smelters, has the potential to be a focal point of a new outdoor exhibit that communicates key industrial themes. The New England Tunnel and Smelting Company Water Jacket Preservation Project will entail preservation of the relic; development and installation of an outdoor display that will identify the water jacket as a significant artifact and inform the public about its history and its technological and cultural context; and involvement of the public in the relic's preservation process.

SAVE THESE DATES!

Picnic in the Park

Saturday, July 15

12 PM



Music in the Mountains

Saturday, August 12

5 PM



STAFF

Lisa Monteiro - Director
Sandra Stryd - Curator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stuart Hendricks - President
William Martin - Vice President
Daniel Vassar- Treasurer
Lisa McEwen - Secretary
Forrest Jones
Marc Mertz
Kate Pinkham Wu

Our WISHLIST is now Online!

We have an Amazon wishlist that can be viewed by visiting the link below:

<https://tinyurl.com/2p5znvm7!>

MKPS MISSION

The Mineral King Preservation Society is dedicated to protecting and preserving the cultural and natural history of Mineral King and surrounding southern Sierra communities, and to educating the public about the historic and natural significance of these areas through programs and displays.

THANK YOU!



Thank you to everyone that donated to our year-end campaign.

As of this printing you have donated **\$7,146.00** toward this fundraiser! I know we say it a lot but we would truly not be where we are without your ongoing generosity. Thank you!



THANK YOU TO THE TRHS FOR PRINTING OUR NEWSLETTER AT A DISCOUNTED RATE! IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL AND SAVE ON PRINTING AND SHIPPING COSTS FOR MKPS AND TRHM PLEASE CONTACT US AT LISA@MINERALKING.ORG

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