

Mineral King Chronicle



Photo by John Uhlir



Mineral King Preservation Society

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Letter from the Director

Greetings,

It is with great pleasure that I share with you the latest edition, and new layout, of the Mineral King Chronicle. We have had a busy summer, and I hope you enjoy reading about the events, activities, and behind the scenes work we have been doing here at MKPS.

Looking back on this past season, I'm thankful for so many great moments. From the conversations and connections made at our Picnic in the Park, and the magic of Music in the Mountains, each event was a reminder of how special it is to gather, share stories, and celebrate the place we love. Thank you to everyone who joined us, you make this work meaningful and inspiring.

I am thrilled to announce the upcoming year of celebration that we will kick off in 2026, as we launch our History Matters campaign. I invite you to join us in honoring both our nation's upcoming 250th anniversary, known as a semiquincentennial, and MKPS' 40th anniversary. Together, we'll reflect on the stories that have shaped our past while building momentum for the future. Leading up to 2026, we're busy preparing next year's events, a new video release, and a \$40,000 fundraising campaign to ensure these important histories continue to be shared and preserved for generations to come. Stay tuned, this is just the beginning!

Keep an eye on the mail, our annual year-end campaign letter will be going out in November and as always, your donations make all of the accomplishments you read about in the MK Chronicle possible.

Thank you again for being part of the Mineral King story.



Lisa Monteiro

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Curator's Corner

BY SANDI STRYD

Where is the Jean Koch Collection?

Good news! California Revealed has finished processing the Jean Koch Collection, and it's almost ready to share with you. Right now, we're carefully reviewing the scanned materials to be sure nothing was missed, scanned incorrectly, or mixed up. Once everything checks out, the collection will be available on our website—just in time for the next newsletter!

We were also honored to receive an invitation to join California Revealed at Sacramento on Film—Celebrating 15 Years of California Revealed archival screening night. Their invitation included a letter that truly made our hearts swell. We'd like to share a portion of it with you:

"Earlier this year, I had the honor of processing the Jean Koch Collection for digitization as part of our partnership with MKPS. It was a particularly moving experience, not only because of Jean's incredible dedication to the preservation of Mineral King's cultural and natural heritage, but also because I was working on her collection when our team received news that California Revealed would lose 85% of its federal funding.

In that moment of uncertainty, Jean's fearless advocacy and perseverance became a source of personal strength. Her work inspired me to write letters to our elected officials and community partners. It reminded me why memory work matters, especially now, in the face of political hostility toward the preservation of our histories and public institutions.

Thanks to your partnership, the Jean Koch Collection is now publicly accessible online. Her legacy, and the broader work of MKPS, will continue to inspire others like me, emerging archivists, students, and community members committed to safeguarding history that matters... We know how powerful grassroots efforts can be, as Jean Koch showed us."

What is Walt's Pilgrimage and why do I care?

During Walt's Pilgrimage, Lee Honors College students traveled from Chicago to California, visiting locations significant to Walt Disney's life, including his birthplace in Chicago, his boyhood home in Marceline, Missouri, his roots in Kansas City, and various California locations like Mineral King, the California Institute of the Arts, and finally, ending at Disneyland.

We are so happy that Christopher Tremblay Ed.D., Professor, always makes a stop in Mineral King with his honor students and then comes to the Three Rivers Museum to visit us in the Mineral King Room, where we provide them with snacks and a mind bending presentation by Laile Di Silvestro. Below is one of the students reflections of their day:

"My photo-bio-graphy of the day was of the natural landscape in the Mineral King Area. Our fifth day was one of my favorites for the whole trip, which I did not expect going into the trip but I was absolutely blown away by the site. The space that Walt Disney once proposed for the Mineral King Resort is a stunning landscape, and I am rather glad that the resort never came to fruition because I cannot imagine the landscape being altered for a commercial space, though I know that Walt had attempted to envision a resort that worked alongside nature. Walt Disney was a man who seemed to make the impossible possible, a true futurist. The Mineral King Resort stands as one of the few (another being E.P.C.O.T.) "what-ifs" in the Disney legacy, as the estimated 35-million dollar project undoubtedly would have changed the area in a number of ways. As such, it is no surprise to be that the project faced extensive opposition from environmental groups. While Walt Disney had seen the landscape and claimed to want to create a high-class ski resort that works alongside nature, I really don't think that would have been possible at the time, and the beautiful scenery would have been dampened to some extent. I have grown up in cities, so spending many hours up in the mountains with fresh air and a sense of tranquility absent from the sounds of bustling cars was a much appreciated experience for me. After spending time in the mountains, we visited the Three Rivers Museum, where we were given an excellent presentation which shed light on a topic of misinformation and debate regarding Disney history, not the first or last of its kind I'm sure."

- Mehran Nayeem



Grant News

We are excited to share that MKPS was awarded three grants in August:

\$2,500 from Tulare County

\$5,000 from Southern California Edison

\$19,999 from Groundwork Grants

The Groundwork Grants program is administered by the California State Library in partnership with Myriad Consulting and Training and is part of the library's "Ready or Not: California Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness Project," funded by the State of California.

Thanks to these incredible organizations, MKPS can continue to grow as we work to preserve the history of the Southern Sierra.



GROUNDWORK GRANTS

California Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness Project

Membership

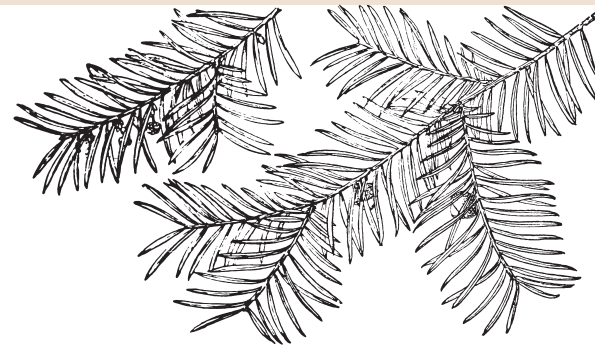
Did you know? Member dues fund exhibits, programs, and preservation projects all year long. If you haven't renewed yet, now's the perfect time to partner with us and help keep Mineral King's story alive.

Membership Tiers

- Student - \$15
- Individual - \$20
- Family - \$40
- Business - \$200

Preservationist Levels:

- Farewall Gap Friends - \$250
- Crystal Falls Champions - \$500
- Sawtooth Supporters - \$1,000



Scan to renew today!

The Legend of John Crowe

BY SARAH ELLIOTT

The following was written and read by Sarah Elliott at this year's MKDA Annual Meeting at the Barton Cabin in Mineral King on August 2nd. John was then presented with a plaque from the MKDA board for all of the work he has done for their community and Mineral King. A huge thank you to Sarah and John for allowing us to share this beautiful tribute here.

John Crowe has served on the Mineral King District Association board since 2002 and has been its president for the past 14 years. He played a key role in securing congressional legislation in 2004 that protects the right of cabin families to continue their legacy in Mineral King for generations to come. But before John ever took the helm of the Mineral King District Association... before he led us through decades of wild winters, congressional cabin challenges, road repairs, water rights negotiations, wildfires, evacuations, and potluck politics... before he became the man whose name is now synonymous with stewardship and service, he was simply a miracle born in the remote Sierra Nevada mountains.

It all began with a dream.



John and his mother Wanda in Mineral King.



MKDA President Kathy Hath presenting John Crowe with a plaque honoring his dedication and work for MKDA and Mineral King.

In the early summer of 1938, as the area was transforming from its mining past to summer retreat, John's father, J. Thomas Crowe — a Visalia attorney (sound familiar?) — became aware of a cabin for sale in a place called Cabin Cove. He set his sights on that cabin like a miner chasing gold. With that same unshakable hope, he brought his young wife, Wanda, up the rugged mountain road to see it.

Now, to call the cabin "rough" would be generous. No interior walls. No creature comforts. Just timber bones and the promise of a high-altitude escape from Visalia's searing summer heat. Wanda took one look and, with good reason, expressed her doubts.

But two months later, in August, with mountain stubbornness and a dream still burning in his heart, Tom convinced Wanda to return. She was now seven months pregnant with the couple's first child, and what happened next would forever bind their family to that patch of precious earth.

Whether it was fate, the thin Sierra air, or destiny, Wanda's labor began during their visit. Suddenly, that rough-hewn cabin became a delivery room.

John's father raced down the road a few miles in his Chevrolet station wagon to the new Atwell Mill Ranger Station, built just a few years earlier by the CCCs. Urgently, he asked the ranger to make a call on the hand-cranked field phone that was mostly used to connect the rangers with the fire lookouts.

"Meet me at the Hammond Fire Station!" Tom demanded of the family doctor in Visalia. Then he continued to speed the remaining 20 miles down the narrow mountain road to meet the doctor and guide him right back up the same winding path, treacherous even without the urgency of new life on the line.

Back at the cabin, the ranger had stayed with Wanda. The doctor arrived just in time; twenty minutes later, John Crowe was born. August 14, 1938. Two months early. In a mountainside cabin. At 6,750 feet elevation. High above Visalia, and hours from the hospital that never got the chance to deliver him.

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MKPS Executive Director Lisa Monteiro and John Crowe after the meeting.

“The stories, the stewardship, and the legacy he leaves behind will echo across every ridge, under every pine, through every meadow, and in every meeting, we hold for years to come.”

They swaddled newborn John in a nightstand drawer packed with hot water bottles. To further ensure the premature infant was properly incubated, the car's heater was also engaged, no matter that it was August in California's San Joaquin Valley. Little John Crowe made his first descent down the mountain road, a tiny pioneer on a path that would one day become his legacy. Consider: the rest of us traveled up the road before we ever came down it!

And that day, perhaps as a gesture of awe and gratitude, Tom handed Wanda the deed to the cabin. The mountains had tested them, and they had passed. They were a true Mineral King family before they even moved into their new summer hideaway.

Many decades have now passed. And while many came to Mineral King to escape the world, John stayed to shape it. Who better to lead the MKDA than the only president who could truly say: “This place is in my blood”?

He's walked every trail, patched every leak and fixed every creak, chaired every meeting, and reminded us time and again that what we do here in this historic, sacred place matters.

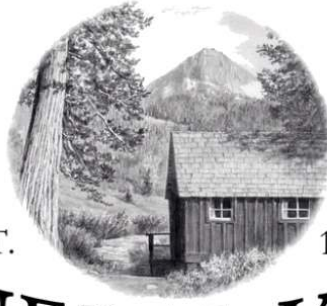
John Crowe wasn't just born in a cabin; he was born of this magical mountain place. And though he may be retiring from his post as president of the Mineral King District Association, the stories, the stewardship, and the legacy he leaves behind will echo across every ridge, under every pine, through every meadow, and in every meeting, we hold for years to come.

Thank you, John — our president, our guide, our legend.
And native son of Mineral King.



John accepting his plaque.

AMERICA 250



EST. 1986
MINERAL KING
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

is proud to present:

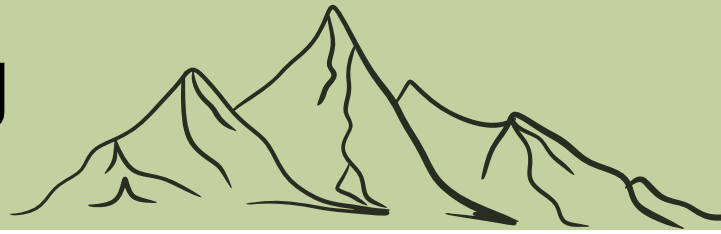
HISTORY MATTERS

Stay tuned as we launch our History Matters campaign and corresponding events to celebrate our nation's semiquincentennial and MKPS' 40th anniversary!

In 2026 we will be kicking off a busy season of events, new video releases and a campaign to raise \$40,000 to help continue sharing and preserving the stories that have shaped our country.

Stories Worth Telling

BY PHAE LOCKWOOD



As a kid, I dreamed of becoming an archaeologist. Digging up ancient artifacts, performing extensive research, sharing my findings with a rapt throng of history lovers from all walks of life. But most of all, I longed to see my discoveries displayed prominently in a museum. I remember visiting the touring King Tut exhibit in Fort Lauderdale, Florida as an elementary school student and leaving with an unshakable sense of curiosity and awe. How, I wondered, can we know so much about a guy who lived over 3,000 years ago? Not just a guy, but a pharaoh! And how miraculous that insignificant little me got to examine the irrefutable evidence of his aliveness, protected from millions of visitors by only a sheet of glass.

Suffice it to say, I did not become an archaeologist. I also had an explosive passion for music and acting which I studied rigorously through secondary school and at university, ultimately pursuing theater education as my career. But even still, I harbored a deep love of history, humanity, and the natural world, devouring countless Ken Burns docuseries, reading books by the likes of Terry Tempest Williams, and visiting NPS sites any chance I could. While I knew archaeological excavations probably weren't in the cards, I had a real desire to tell stories, not just on stage, but on a placard lovingly affixed to a glass case.



My husband and I moved to Visalia in the summer of 2022, and on our second full day in California, we drove up to the mountains. It was love at first sight...and sound and smell. The fragrant pine on that balmy day in August was more intoxicating than any liquor, and to this musician, the song of the wind whistling through the trees was a spiritual experience. The Sierra Nevada immediately felt like home, and while I was eager to explore its wilderness, I also grew an interest in the history of the area, particularly the Southern Sierra.

About a year ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Lisa Monteiro through our mutual involvement in community theater, and eventually came to learn that she was the Executive Director of MKPS. Right away, I was itching to pick her brain, to learn more about the organization, and to inquire about how I could potentially contribute in a volunteer capacity. But the universe works in mysterious ways, and only a few months later, MKPS announced they were hiring for a temporary position. I immediately applied, and after a delightful interview with Curator/Controller Sandi Stryd, I joined the team as the Programs and Outreach Assistant.

The last two months have been nothing short of a dream come true. During my first week in the office, I had the opportunity to inventory the Hasher-Kaplaneck collection, which included nearly 200 original photographs on film. Through a viewfinder, I marveled at images of Mineral King in the late 1940s, taken amidst snow surveys performed by legendary skier Vic Hasher and his wife, Bea, to assess the area as a potential development site. The couple was joined by the likes of US Ski and Snowboard Hall of Famer Cortland "Corty" Hill, as well as other notables like George Hearst and Otto Steiner. In a photo captured nearly 80 years ago, I could still feel the freedom, joy, and bliss emanating from these men as they sat shirtless in the sparkling snow, playing the accordion, smiles wider than Farewell Gap.

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Stories Worth Telling *(continued)*

Picnic in the Park

I've also been fortunate enough to facilitate and attend two amazing events within three weeks of one another! In July, we hosted our Picnic in the Park, a longstanding MKPS tradition where we enjoy a picnic lunch with the community while learning from local representatives about a different topic each year. This season, we welcomed CalFire, Tulare County, and the National Park Service to educate us about fire safety, which gave Mineral King residents the chance to ask questions and discuss best practices for protecting their homes and their families. In August, San Joaquin Valley singer-songwriter Ted Nunes serenaded us at our annual Music in the Mountains event. With over 100 people in attendance, including cabin owners, families, backpackers, day hikers, campers, and our friends from Silver City, we shared a wonderful evening with the most mind-numbingly beautiful view in the world.



My most substantial and rewarding project to date, however, has been the ongoing digitization and inventorying of our in-house collection of oral histories. Championed by Louise Jackson, former MKPS board member and author of *Mineral King: The Story of Beulah*, these recordings feature interviews with some of the individuals who shaped the cultural, economic, and physical landscapes of the Central Valley. As I listen to and transcribe each conversation, I find myself getting lost in the vivid descriptions of the California of yesteryear, creating full-color mental snapshots that evoke a sense of actually having lived alongside the speaker. What's more, many of the storytellers have since passed on, and without these audio records, their stories would be lost forever.



I feel overwhelmingly humbled and honored to help preserve these memories. This is my soul's highest calling: to tell the stories of our shared humanity. These stories are worth telling, and in doing so, we bridge the gap between who we were, who we are, and who we could become. Are we really that different from the spirited adventurers who sought their fortune and their future at 8,000 feet above sea level? They dreamed of a fruitful life in a magical place. Don't we all? An ancient Egyptian pharaoh and a pre-teen in 2007 converge for a brief moment in time, but dead kings can't rule contemporary kingdoms and living children who become living adults very much can. One and the same: a miner in 1860 who struck no gold, silver, or precious ore at all, and a 30-something MKPS team member who struck all the metaphorical gold one could ever want.

I can't imagine a treasure rarer than a story told by the person who lived it.

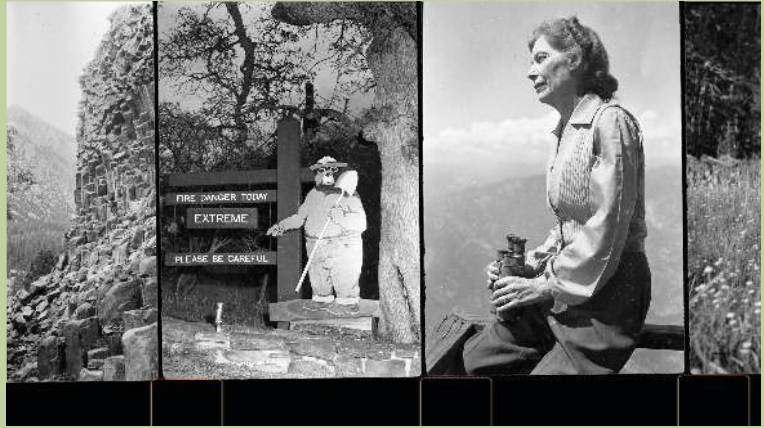
Left: Ted Nunes and Allan Benton at Music in the Mountains

A Giant Legacy: 135 Years of Sequoia National Park

On September 25th, 1890, 135 years ago, Sequoia National Park was established by President Benjamin Harrison. Although giant sequoia wood is ill-suited for commercial timber, loggers still felled thousands of trees. The park was created to protect the sequoias from further exploitation and ensure the survival of the coniferous species.

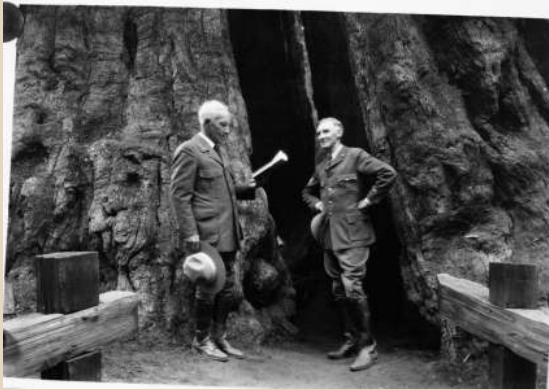
It would be nearly 26 years before a government agency was designated to oversee the National Parks, but the sequoias needed guardianship. Army Cavalry troops known as The Buffalo Soldiers served as the first rangers in Sequoia. They were led by Captain Charles Young, who, in 1903, would become the first Black military superintendent.

In 1905, civilian park rangers were appointed to support the cavalry. After almost a decade of service as a ranger, Walter Fry became the superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant (later Kings Canyon) National Parks. He is pictured below with Colonel John Roberts White, who served as the superintendent from 1920 to 1947. With the introduction of the Park Service in 1916 and the construction of the Generals Highway in 1926, traffic increased dramatically, and though Colonel White valued the enrichment and education higher visitation would yield, he worked diligently to quell mounting development initiatives.



Above (from left to right):
 1. Columnar basalt near Lewis Camp
 2. Smokey Bear fire danger sign at park entrance
 3. Fire Lookout Rose Vaughn at Mill Ranch Peak
 4. Meadow near Kanawyer Gap in Sequoia National Forest

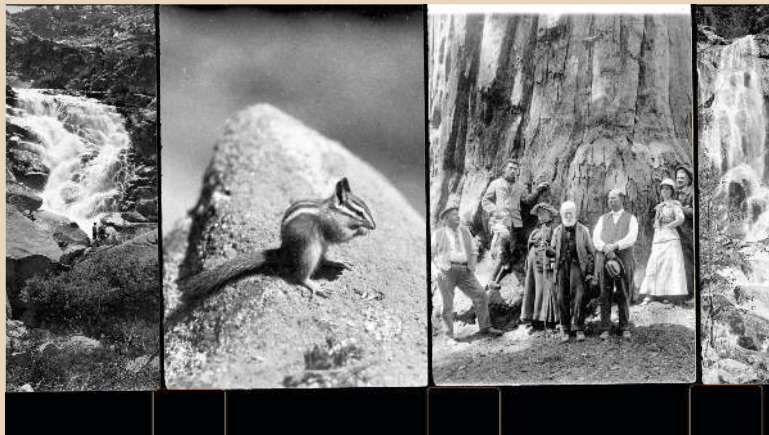
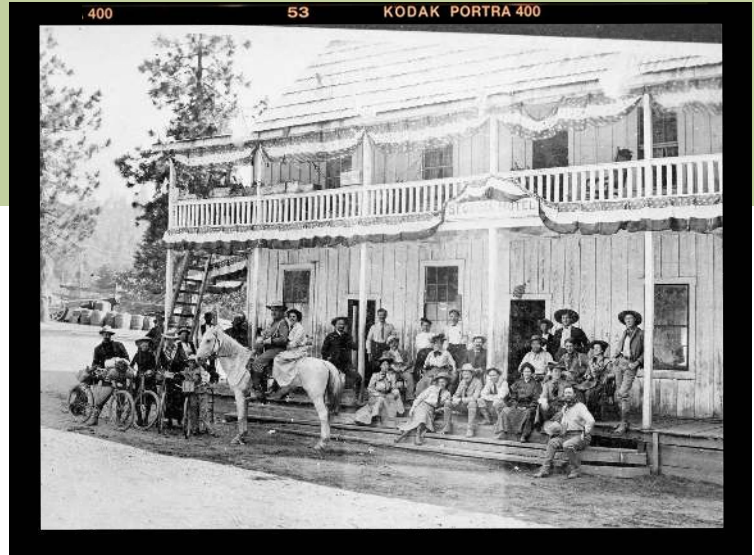
Below: A group at the Sequoia Hotel in Millwood
 Contributing institution:
 National Park Service



Left: Superintendent Walter Fry and Colonel John Roberts White

Below (from left to right):
 1. Tokopah Falls
 2. Chipmunk
 3. Tulare County residents pose with a sequoia
 4. Grizzly Falls

Contributing institutions:
 National Park Service & Tulare County Library (photo 3)



Sequoia National Park introduced the Civilian Conservation Corps, which conducted regulated development work: trail maintenance, construction, pest control, resource planning, and more. Eleven CCC camps operated in the park, including sites at Potwisha, Marble Fork, and Atwell Mill along Mineral King Road. Even now, visitors benefit from the dedicated work of the CCC men, whose labor laid the groundwork for the modern conveniences we enjoy in the parks today.

That relentless spirit of preservation and progress continued well into the 20th century. After an arduous battle with the Walt Disney Company over their planned development of a ski resort, Mineral King was formally annexed to Sequoia National Park in 1978. Today, Mineral King serves as a reminder that the work of protecting these wild places never truly ends. It is an enduring commitment that still guides Sequoia's story 135 years later.

Mineral King Preservation Society

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