

# GOLD BUG GAZETTE

Volume 1/No.2/October 2017/Hangtown's Gold Bug Park Development Committee, Inc., Placerville, CA

## OUR SECOND EDITION

In an effort to keep our Hangtown's Gold Bug Park Development Committee members, park employees and friends in the "know", we have established our park newsletter. The newsletter is a quarterly publication. This publication will be emailed to members of the Hangtown's Gold Bug Park Development Committee, volunteers, park employees, and friends of the park. Danny Johnson, Editor. Beverly Johnson, Co-Editor, Historian

## OUR NEWSLETTER WILL BE PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

Our newsletter will be published in January, April, July and October. The deadline for submissions for the January edition is December 15, 2017. Send them to our editor at [dmjente@yahoo.com](mailto:dmjente@yahoo.com).

## WE HAVE A BRAND-NEW NEWSLETTER NAME BUT WE STILL NEED A LOGO FOR OUR NEWSLETTER MASTHEAD

We are proud to announce the new name of our newsletter: Gold Bug Gazette. We thank Pat Harrington, our Gift Shop Manager for submitting the new name. We still need a logo for our masthead. Don't be shy. Send in your ideas. All nominations will be considered. Please send your nominations to Danny Johnson, our editor, at [dmjente@yahoo.com](mailto:dmjente@yahoo.com)

## DIDN'T RECEIVE A NEWSLETTER?

Send your email address to Danny Johnson at [dmjente@yahoo.com](mailto:dmjente@yahoo.com)

## THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING!



crafts like cork screws and bottle openers, recipe books, miner's hats, and dozens of beautiful knickknacks are sure to please any recipient.

Think Gold Bug Park's Gift Shop when you think about getting your holiday stocking stuffers and one-of-a-kind gifts for family and friends. According to Gift Shop Manager, Pat Harrington, the store shelves and cases are loaded with inexpensive, high-quality items for both young and old... Gifts such as jewelry, collectible gems and mineral specimens, gold pieces, sweatshirts, artistic blacksmith



## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT, Charlie Basham



### In the Diggin's

We've had a terrific summer at Gold Bug Park! Despite the extreme weather there was a steady stream of visitors coming here from virtually every corner of the world. To these excited guests the Gold Rush is still alive... and our park's amazing staff and volunteers helped stoke their imaginations.

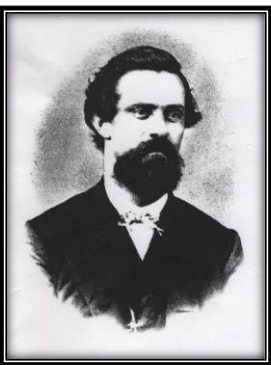
I'm not just swinging an empty shovel here, folks. Gold Bug Park *consistently* earns high marks and gets amazing guest reviews on the web-based travel organizations like TripAdvisor, Yelp and even Facebook! TripAdvisor again awarded the park its coveted "Certificate of Excellence" for 2017 and ranked it the #1 thing to do in the greater Placerville area. Most reviews also specifically mention the personable, knowledgeable and engaging staff who work at Gold Bug. And, locally, the good people of Placerville again selected the park as the area's "Best Local Attraction" in the Mt. Democrat's 2017 annual readership poll.

These reviews and recognitions are important. They're proof the park's providing visitors with value, entertainment and memorable experiences. The reviews often will convince a potential visitor to drop by. And, we get unsolicited and candid peeks into what we are doing right -- and even where we might look for improvement.

The Development Committee had a busy summer, too, with three major fundraising events: Priest Mine tours over Memorial and Labor Day weekends and a unique "Murder in Gold Bug Mine" murder mystery dinner mid-July. These events were supported by the talented Georgetown Regulators whose presence adds color and excitement to the park's festivities. These events are important in that they attract people to the park who might not come otherwise. Plus, 100% of the proceeds collected go right back into the park as exhibits and support for the educational programs.

The park volunteers have nearly finished the large mining equipment exhibit near the Stamp Mill. The next big project will be to replace the public's gem panning troughs. Earlier this year the Committee also replaced the panning troughs set aside for the school tours. We also benefitted from two Eagle Scout projects which resulted in log benches and the caption boards for the mining equipment exhibit.

## HATTIE'S HISTORY CORNER by Beverly Johnson



John Dench

### Who was John Dench?

John Dench, described as a "first class citizen" by the Mountain Democrat, arrived in the gold country in 1859. Then in his early twenties, he was taken in by an African-American woman he called Aunt Nancy. Aunt Nancy helped John to get a job as a teamster, hauling fruit from California to Nevada for area farmers. In the early 1860s, John moved to Placerville, where he apprenticed in James Phipps' harness shop on the corner of Sacramento and Main Streets. In 1863, John purchased his own shop on the south side of Main Street from Phipp's competitor, J. Corning. Later, in 1868, he purchased the business and stand of A.A. Van Voorhies, whose brother Henry made saddles, harnesses, bridles and whips. Henry and John became partners. After Henry's death, and about six years before his own death, John took in Louis Reeg as a partner. Their shop was on Main Street where The Bookery now operates.

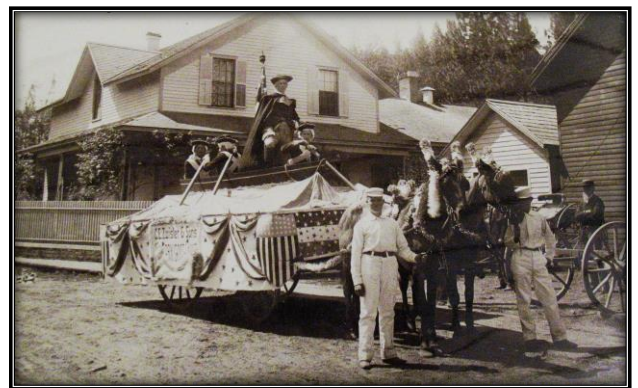
In addition to being a saddle maker, John Dench held shares in many profitable gold claims including the Vulture Quartz (Craddock's claim), the One to Sixteen (likely on Craddock's property on Bedford Ave), the Electric (just north of the Vulture), and the Rattler (in Diamond Springs).



4th of July parade, Placerville, 1876

committees that organized town dances and other community activities. He even built and operated a skating rink for the town's children so they would have a place to go.

John Dench died one night in early November 1899 while walking to his home on Pacific Hill from a local saloon on Main Street, where he had been enjoying the company of his friends. Early the following morning, a towns person found him slumped up against a fence, his cane and lantern by his side. The coroner reported that he had been suffering from rheumatism and heart disease and had died of natural causes. Citizens packed Confidence Hall for his funeral. John is buried in the Masonic section of Union Cemetery



4th of July parade, Placerville, 1876

## **MINING THE MINERS by Charlie Basham**

Gullibility, ignorance, and a crazy dream of enormous riches often dulled the judgement of many would-be '49ers. And those same vulnerabilities sharpened the creative cunning of crooks, conmen, and charlatans. There were dozens of get-rich-quick schemes hatched over the years that separated the hard-earned gold and cash from the miners -- and lined the pockets of the swindlers.

An item in the Richmond, Indiana, *Palladium* newspaper on February 7, 1849 carried a fascinating article about an invention that would significantly help the Argonauts headed to the California Mother Lode: *Gold Grease!* Its use was quite simple: "The operator is to grease himself well, lay down on the top of a hill, and then roll to the bottom. The gold, and "nothing else," will stick to him. Price \$10 per box."

Some tricksters got inventive by creating convincing, labor-saving contraptions such as the "*Buffum's Eldorado and Scientific Gold Sifter, Separator and Safe Depositor.*" This "revolutionary" mining machine was uncomplicated and straightforward: Shovel pay dirt into the machine and add water. As you turned the crank the machine did all the work to separate the gold from the dirt... even helpfully packing the smaller nuggets and gold dust into bottles for an easy deposit with the bank or assayer. Of course, there was a helpful provision for the larger nuggets that

wouldn't fit into a bottle. These glittering chunks would be deposited into a pork barrel. It's said that one group of East Coast mining company investors actually argued whether they had enough pork barrels!

Most of these types of heavy metal machines never made it to the Mother Lode. Instead they were abandoned along the prairie trails when wagon weight became an issue for survival.

### **PRIEST MINE FUNDRAISING TOURS CONTINUE by Charlie Basham**

For the last three years the Gold Bug Park Development Committee has worked with the city of Placerville to provide public tours of the Priest Mine on long holiday weekends. During that time, more than 2,000 people have taken the tour. Despite a record heat wave and reduced operating hours over the Labor Day weekend, 170 guests took a tour of the Priest Mine. The guided tours are a Development Committee fundraiser for the preservation, protection and display of the park's mining artifacts.

The Priest Mine is a hard rock gold mine, dug entirely by hand at the peak of California's Gold Rush. It provides a unique and up-close experience with history. Amazingly its stone walls still bear the scars from countless pick scrapes. Every mark tells the story of backbreaking work, gold fever, dreams for a better future and the harsh realities of life in an unsettled country. The first fifty feet of the Priest Mine is believed to have been dug sometime before 1867 by Cornish or Chilean miners who were among the first to arrive in California with mining experience. It was completed around 1894 by claimants William Craddock and John Dench.

The miners endured the hardships because of their dreams for instant wealth and "something better." Coming to California was a monumental gamble. But for most the greatest failure was not in the journey and going bust in some faraway land, but by not taking a chance in the first place; it was a freedom to pursue life's dreams.

### **MURDER IN THE GOLD BUG! by Charlie Basham**



There was a murder at Gold Bug Park in July! Sixty-five guests formed a posse to solve the crime at a fun "Who Dunnit?" murder mystery dinner fundraiser hosted by the Development Committee. The murder plot was a blend of the Gold Bug Mine history with the region's colorful mining characters. In addition to the evening's "deadly" entertainment, participants were treated to a catered dinner, wine tasting, a rich assortment of raffle prizes and a guided tour of the Gold Bug Mine. For most of the guests it was their first visit to Gold Bug Park.

Placerville's Nello Olivo Winery provided free wine tastings and the murder mystery was written and performed by Georgetown's Interactive Entertainment company. This event was a different kind of summer fundraiser and by all indications, it's success means a murder mystery dinner could become an annual and much anticipated happening in Placerville.

#### **Board meeting dates:**

September board meeting was cancelled  
October 2  
November 28  
December TBD

#### **Other important events**

October 28 -Adult Halloween Spookfest in the Priest Mine  
October 29 – Kids Halloween Spookfest in the Priest Mine  
November 24 – Self-Guided Mine Tours and Gift Shop will be open

Winter Self-Guided Tour Schedule begins November 1: Weekends 12:00-4:00