



# The Prospector

Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

GPA Portland, Oregon Chapter



December, 2018

## Christmas in the Gold Fields

by Gary Noy

**“... it was always a day that the gold seekers remembered well.”**

The Holiday Season was always highly anticipated during the California Gold Rush years. The celebrations were pure mid-19th Century Americana, but with a twist. The extraordinary nature of this worldwide event and the fact that many who participated in the Gold Rush were young and far from home added to the intensity with which the holiday was celebrated. In its earliest days, the Gold Rush was almost exclusively male and the sentiment was a mixture of homesickness and “boys will be boys” revelry. Christmas in the gold fields could be a day of lonely reflection or frantic carousing, but it was always a day that the gold seekers remembered well.

A Gold Rush Christmas was usually an unassuming, often spontaneous affair that consisted primarily of eating, drinking, convivial companionship and entertainment. Although, in the mid-19th century, gift giving was becoming fashionable primarily due to the popularity of the practice in the Victorian Royal Court, Christmas Gifts during the Gold Rush are rarely mentioned. However, if there were presents in the gold fields, they were practical in nature. Knitted socks were always prized, as were scarves or mittens. In the towns where there were children, little girls might receive homemade rag dolls and miniature quilts, while little boys received tops or other wooden toys lovingly carved by their friends and family.

### **Presents and Parties**

Often Christmas represented the only time when some people, both adults and children, received presents or had parties. As a result, the holiday held an important place in the hearts, minds, and memories of 19th century folk.

There are many accounts of Christmas festivities in the gold fields - most modest, some complicated, but all heartfelt.

Andrew Hall Gilmore penned an example of a humble, hardworking holiday on Christmas Day 1851 in a letter to his brother in Indiana:

Thursday night - 25th

Dear Brother,

“Christmas Gift to You.” Oh, I wish that I could be at home today. I think we would have a Christmas party. We would have the old gobbler roasted with a score of fat hens, pound cakes, pies, and lots of other good things. But the best of all would be the pleasure of seeing you all. Probably if we live we may be with you next Christmas.



I will tell you what kind of a day it has been and what we have been doing. It has been the most rainy day I believe that I have ever seen in this country. ... As we had no invitations to any Christmas parties: and feeling no inclination to go on a “bust”, we thought we might spend the day as profitably by going down to our diggings and working like fine fellows, even if it was Christmas and awful rainy at that. So Aaron and I encased ourselves in our waterproof suits and went to work .... We made \$11.25 each, which was a tolerably good rainy day’s work ...

*Continued on Page 4*

# Secretary's Report November 18, 2018

## 2018 Portland Gold Prospectors Board of Directors

### **President**

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gmlewis238@msn.com

### **Vice President**

William Bench 503-708-4997  
swbench@comcast.net

### **Secretary**

Yolanda Kragerud  
YKragerud@yahoo.com

### **Treasurer**

Bev Parker 503-666-4301  
bevpark@comcast.net

### **Claims**

Jerry Johns 503-686-9422  
jerryjohns@gmail.com

### **Board Members at Large 2017-2018:**

Charles Foster 503-630-7669  
fostercr@rconnects.com  
Robert Burns 503-680-8885  
rdburns77@hotmail.com  
Vern Freitas 209-535-5683  
vernonjfreitas@gmail.com  
Jim Schmidt  
jschmidt118@q.com

### **Board Members at Large 2018-2019:**

Richard Ruth 503-663-9087  
richard.ruth5@comcast.net  
Elaine Ruth 503-663-9087  
richard.ruth5@comcast.net  
Ken Burns 503-631-3071  
Kenhellenburns@gmail.com

### **Honorary Board Members (Super Volunteers):**

Larry Sharp 971-269-8220  
Steve Lewin  
goldpan123@yahoo.com

### **Library**

Steve Kragerud

### **Hospitality**

Elaine Ruth 503-663-9087  
richard.ruth5@comcast.net

### **Newsletter and Website**

Tim Snyder 503-481-1133  
WrshpMzshn@gmail.com

President **Mike Lewis** called the meeting to order at 1:30 P.M.

All members participated in the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

**Attendance** - 50 attendees and 2 visitors were present.

**Meeting Minutes** - A motion was made and seconded to accept the Secretary's Report of the previous month as written and published in the November newsletter. The motion was approved by the members present.

**Treasurer's Report** - A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasury Report for November. The motion was approved by the members present.

**Correspondence** - We received the monthly Newsletter from Eastern Oregon Mining Association.

**Club Merchandise** - At this time we don't have enough people interested in buying T-shirts and Sweatshirts to place the order. We do still have patches for sale for \$6.50 and hats for \$5.00.

**Election** - The Election was held, votes were counted and the results are:

Vice President Jim Erwin  
Secretary Yolande Kragerud  
Board Members

Charlie Foster  
Mike Torres  
Brad Gary  
Joe Wood.

**Gold Show** - The Gold and Treasure Show will be held next year at the Portland Expo on March 30th and 31st 2019. We will set up on Friday, March 29. A lot of planning and preparation goes into this since we are hosting it this year. If you volunteer for this you will receive a t-shirt and free admission to the event. You

will have to pay for parking which costs \$8.00 a day or \$ 14.00 for both days. Vendor packets will be available soon for this event for anybody who wishes to rent a table to sell their goods/services. At this time we have celebrity appearances by Emily Riedel from the TV show Bering Sea Gold and the Mayor of Nome Alaska Richard Beneville. This is our club's biggest fundraiser so we need lots of people to step up and volunteer. A sign up list is available.

**Library** - Jim Irwin was kind enough to put together four nice 3-ring binder books which contains articles and pictures of Gold Mining related information that was donated to the club a few months ago. These are now available for our members to check out from the library. Dave Chiara also donated a couple books this month. Our library is getting bigger and better every month.

**Raffle** - The Raffle was held with \$1 and \$5 tickets. Joe Wood was the big winner of the Gold Nugget.

President Lewis adjourned the meeting at 2:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Yolande Kragerud, Secretary.





Jessyca Harman tries her hand at the coin drop



Bev Parker found the kernel of corn in the corn drop, so she wins the nugget!



Ken and Helen Burns proudly display their daughter's T-Shirt printing skills. She'll be glad to print some for you!



Newly elected board member Joe Wood wins the raffle nugget!



Oly Swenson demonstrates his home-made Miller table for Cindy Wright



Members vote for club officers for 2019/20

### Christmas in Rich Bar

An elaborate Christmas (that was more a reward for perseverance than anything) was described by Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe in 1851. Better known as Dame Shirley, Clappe wrote a series of letters describing her life in the Gold Rush community of Rich Bar, which was located in the Feather River Gorge. These letters are considered one of the best eyewitness accounts of the California Gold Rush. Here, Dame Shirley recalls the "Saturnalia" of Christmas 1851:

The saturnalia commenced on Christmas evening, at the Humboldt [Saloon], which, on that very day, had passed into the hands of new proprietors. The most gorgeous preparations were made for celebrating the two events. The bar was retrimmed with red calico, the bowling-alley had a new lining of the coarsest and whitest cotton cloth, and the



broken lamp-shades were replaced by whole ones. All day long, patient mules could be seen descending the hill, bending beneath casks of brandy and baskets of champagne, and, for the first time in the history of that celebrated building, the floor (wonderful to relate, it has a floor) was washed .... At nine o'clock in the evening they had an oyster-and-champagne supper in the Humboldt, which was very gay with toasts, songs, speeches, etc. I believe that the company danced all night. At any rate, they were dancing when I went to sleep, and they were dancing when I woke the next morning. The revel was kept up in this mad way for three days, growing wilder every hour.

### The Christmas Nugget

But the most delightful Gold Rush Christmas story is that of the "Christmas Nugget" recounted in William P. Bennett's 1893 memoir of the California Gold Rush entitled *The First Baby in Camp*.

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 giant "Christmas Nugget."

Reprinted from Sierra College website  
<http://www.sierracollege.edu/ejournals/jsnhb/v2n1/christmas.html>

## Chapter Potluck, January 20, 2019

The first planning meeting is scheduled for:

December 8th, at 3PM  
Roundtable Pizza  
16550 SE McLoughlin Blvd.  
Milwaukie, OR

We have reserved the "meeting room" - although we may need more room!

Thanks to Jerry, we have a great outline for the meeting(s) and the banquet - I am using that information for our meeting on Saturday.

We will be working on the following:

- Theme
- Decorations
- Estimated attendance
- Budget
- Communications
- Food list
- Banquet flow
- Room arrangement
- Gold nugget raffle
- Door prizes
- Kitchen crew
- Supplies
- Slideshow

The chapter will pay for pizzas and non-alcoholic beverages at the meeting. If someone would prefer the salad bar instead of pizza, the chapter will pay for that as well.

I look forward to seeing everyone on Saturday.

Mike

PRESIDENT'S BLOG  
DECEMBER, 2018

Hello, fellow prospectors!

I hope you all had an enjoyable Thanksgiving!!

Thank you to everyone who attended the November Chapter meeting. We had elections for Vice President, Secretary and four Board Members. Congratulations to Jim Erwin, who is the new Vice President, Yolande Kragerud who retains her position as Secretary, and to Jim Irwin, Michael Torres, Brad Gary and Joe Wood who are our new Board Members. Larry Sharp remains an honorary Board Member.

As we discussed at the November Chapter meeting, Jerry Johns is coordinating our participation in the **2019 Gold and Treasure Show** which will be in Portland, at the Expo Center, with set-up on March 29<sup>th</sup>, and the show on March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Thank you to all of you who have already signed up to help with the show! As mentioned previously, we will continue to have a sign-up sheet at the monthly Chapter meetings. This is a major project for the Chapter and also a primary source of income for the Chapter.

We are also getting ready for the Chapter's annual potluck, which will be held at the January, 2019 Chapter meeting. The first organizational meeting will be held at Round Table Pizza, 16550 SE McLoughlin Blvd, Milwaukie, OR, 503-653-6444, on December 8, 2018, at 3PM. We have reserved the "meeting/party" room at the restaurant. Please join us!

We still need an Outings Coordinator for 2019. The Outings Coordinator will determine the dates and locations of outings/activities throughout 2019. Jerry Johns and I are available to assist, and other members will assist in running specific outings. Our goal is to have more outings throughout the year, whether they are on the club's claims or at other locations. Please give consideration to this request as it would be a **great** help to our Club.

We received a fun suggestion - to have members talk about how they became interested in gold mining or to have members tell interesting stories about gold mining. This is an opportunity to share information during chapter meetings, particularly when we do not have guest speakers. Please keep this in mind – in case the opportunity comes up!

Please remember If anyone has any pictures from our outings or other get-togethers, please send them to Tim Snyder @ [wrshpmzshn@gmail.com](mailto:wrshpmzshn@gmail.com).

I have been President of the Club for nearly a year and would like to know how you think the Club is doing and how I am doing. Please feel free to talk with me at a Chapter meeting or by phone or e-mail, or please fill out a card at a Chapter meeting - to convey your ideas, comments and/or concerns. This information will help me to do a better job and will help the Club be more viable.

Hope to see you at the next Chapter meeting on December 16, 2018

Thank you and Happy Prospecting!

Mike Lewis  
President  
Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

# The Ballad of Hard-Luck Henry

by Robert Service

Now wouldn't you expect to  
find a man an awful crank  
That's staked out nigh three  
hundred claims, and every one  
a blank;  
That's followed every fool  
stampede, and seen the rise  
and fall  
Of camps where men got gold in  
chunks and he got none at all;  
That's prospected a bit of  
ground and sold it for a song  
To see it yield a fortune to some  
fool that came along;  
That's sunk a dozen bed-rock  
holes, and not a speck in sight,  
Yet sees them take a million  
from the claims to left and  
right?  
Now aren't things like that  
enough to drive a man to  
booze?  
But Hard-Luck Smith was  
hoodoo-proof — he knew the  
way to lose.  
'Twas in the fall of nineteen four  
— leap-year I've heard them  
say —  
When Hard-Luck came to  
Hunker Creek and took a  
hillside lay.  
And lo! as if to make amends for  
all the futile past,  
Late in the year he struck it rich,  
the real pay-streak at last.  
The riffles of his sluicing-box  
were choked with speckled  
earth,  
And night and day he worked  
that lay for all that he was  
worth.  
And when in chill December's  
gloom his lucky lease expired,  
He found that he had made a  
stake as big as he desired.  
One day while meditating on the  
waywardness of fate,  
He felt the ache of lonely man to  
find a fitting mate;

A petticoated pard to cheer his  
solitary life,  
A woman with soft, soothing  
ways, a confidant, a wife.  
And while he cooked his supper  
on his little Yukon stove,  
He wished that he had staked a  
claim in Love's rich treasure-  
trove;  
When suddenly he paused and  
held aloft a Yukon egg,  
For there in pencilled letters was  
the magic name of Peg.  
You know these Yukon eggs  
of ours — some pink, some  
green, some blue —  
A dollar per, assorted tints,  
assorted flavors too.  
The supercilious cheechako  
might designate them high,  
But one acquires a taste for  
them and likes them by-and-  
by.  
Well, Hard-Luck Henry took this  
egg and held it to the light,  
And there was more faint  
pencilling that sorely taxed his  
sight.  
At last he made it out, and then  
the legend ran like this —  
"Will Klondike miner write to  
Peg, Plumhollow, Squashville,  
Wis.?"  
That night he got to thinking of  
this far-off, unknown fair;  
It seemed so sort of opportune,  
an answer to his prayer.  
She flitted sweetly through his  
dreams, she haunted him by  
day,  
She smiled through clouds of  
nicotine, she cheered his  
weary way.  
At last he yielded to the spell;  
his course of love he set —  
Wisconsin his objective point;  
his object, Margaret.  
With every mile of sea and land  
his longing grew and grew.

He practised all his pretty words,  
and these, I fear, were few.  
At last, one frosty evening, with  
a cold chill down his spine,  
He found himself before her  
house, the threshold of the  
shrine.  
His courage flickered to a spark,  
then glowed with sudden  
flame —  
He knocked; he heard a  
welcome word; she came —  
his goddess came.  
Oh, she was fair as any flower,  
and huskily he spoke:  
"I'm all the way from Klondike,  
with a mighty heavy poke.  
I'm looking for a lassie, one  
whose Christian name is Peg,  
Who sought a Klondike miner,  
and who wrote it on an egg."  
The lassie gazed at him a space,  
her cheeks grew rosy red;  
She gazed at him with tear-  
bright eyes, then tenderly she  
said:  
"Yes, lonely Klondike miner, it is  
true my name is Peg.  
It's also true I longed for you  
and wrote it on an egg.  
My heart went out to someone  
in that land of night and cold;  
But oh, I fear that Yukon egg  
must have been mighty old.  
I waited long, I hoped and  
feared; you should have come  
before;  
I've been a wedded woman now  
for eighteen months or more.  
I'm sorry, since you've come  
so far, you ain't the one that  
wins;  
But won't you take a step inside  
— I'll let you see the twins."



The new **Washington Gold and Fish** pamphlet is available. You must have it with you whenever you prospect in the state of Washington.

Download a copy to print here: [Gold and Fish](#)

We understand Washington's rules will change in 2019! Check with <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/mining/> for current information.

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### 2018/2019 Events Calendar – Subject to change as year progresses.

- December 8 Planning meeting for chapter potluck dinner 3pm  
Roundtable Pizza • 16550 SE McLoughlin Blvd • Milwaukie, OR
- December 16 PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm
- January 20 Chapter potluck dinner 1:30pm
- March 30 & 31 Gold and Treasure Show – Volunteers needed!  
Portland Expo Center



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