

## A History of the North Star Mines, 1851-1929

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were flooded it could cause a shut down lasting many months. All available air pumps were started up. Steam was used for hoisting water which was bailed into the bailing skips. Then the Southern Pacific train bridge went out and fuel oil became scarce. Desperately the men began burning shaft timbers under the boilers. Finally, when fuel oil was obtained, it was so thick and heavy the heaters began smoking so badly the pumpmen had to work with air hoses blowing into their faces. But the men's heroic efforts held the water until the electricity came on at last.

Early in 1907 Dr. John Jones opened a hospital on Church Street in Grass Valley. There was a reception to celebrate this event on January 30th., attended by a large crowd. The Campbell residence had been converted into a hospital, open to anyone and to any doctor. Until that time most of those injured apparently were treated on the spot and the victim then taken home. If men hurt in the mines were single and living in a boarding house, they were taken to the County Hospital in Nevada City or even to San Francisco. The newspaper described the new hospital as a boon to the community, but warned that it would require many thousands of dollars a year to maintain, and that outside contributions would be necessary to keep it in operation. At the North Star, \$1.00 a month had been taken out of the men's wages to be paid into a fund toward their medical expenses while sick or injured. The Company now endowed a private bed for use of its men. Mr. Bourn of the Empire and many other citizens also gave liberal cash donations. Dr. John installed the first x-ray equipment in the county. After he died, his brother Carl took over the Jones Memorial Hospital, named in honor of their father who also had been a doctor in Grass Valley from 1874 until his death in 1900.

In April of 1907 the North Star Mines Company issued a report. Mr. Hague declared the Company was paying dividends annually at the rate of 10%. From May 1884 to December 1906 there had been a record output of 7½ million dollars. The unworked ground was expected to yield between 7 and 10 million below the 4,000 level in the next 15 to 20 years. Prosperity seemed assured.

Another happy event occurred that spring when Nevada County won the medal for the best mineral exhibit at the St. Louis Exposition. Mr. Hague attended the Exposition and was so impressed with the Nevada County display that he promised County

Commissioner, Sam Butler, that - should the County display win the medal - he would have it cast in gold. When this County was presented with the award, Mr. Hague sent gold from the North Star to the mint in Philadelphia and the jubilant Grass Valley newspaper account declared that the medal, containing about \$185 in gold bullion, had been placed in the courthouse in Nevada City for all to see. It should be realized that, over the years, gold was valued at between \$12 and \$20 an ounce, depending on the quality, and did not go over \$30 an ounce until 1933.

A news release in July, 1907 disclosed that a new electric compressor had been installed at the North Star Powerhouse. True to form, the paper described it as "one of the best in the country" and made the power plant superior to any in all of California. The mine was now down to the 4,700 foot level on the pitch of the vein. To date, the 3,700 foot level had been the richest level in the mine.

Up until February 1908 A.B. Foote had ridden his horse to work each day and occasionally his steed became impatient. If the noon whistle blew and Foote did not appear soon after, the horse sometimes managed to pull loose, forcing his rider to walk home to lunch! But now Foote's transportation was a Model S Ford car, powered by gasoline he purchased in jugs at the hardware store. George Starr of the Empire Mine was dashing about in a steam powered contraption. Foote's diary mentions an accident when his Ford frightened a horse-and- buggy on the mine road, causing the buggy to tip over. Another time, while driving a young lady, he came around a turn too fast and overturned, fortunately with no injuries resulting. The roads were frightful, muddy in wet weather and always very rough, so even short trips meant flat tires and getting mired in the heavy clay.

In August 1908, at the peak of prosperity, the North Star Company lost its leader with the death of James D. Hague. George B. Agnew of New York took over as President of the Company. Hague's engineer son, William or "Billy" as he was called, became the managing director. The Company felt one of the directors should give "personal attention to the Companies' affairs at Grass Valley". So in 1910 Billy Hague built a home on the hill above the North Star House, and moved in with his wife, Elizabeth.

Young Hague, assisted by Robert Bedford, developed time studies of the various mining operations