ENFIA Interpreter

November 1, 2020 Vol. 2

New/Old Name

If it isn't broken don't fix it. Chuck Lowrie suggested keeping the original name, "Interpreter" and the board agreed. Thanks for all of the great ideas.

A Message from the President

Even in these unsettled times the ENFIA Board has been involved in several issues of interest to our membership, even with the Forest Service Offices and Carson Pass remaining closed for the summer.

Carl Gwyn has continued to operate, update and expand our website into a wonderful reflection of our mission with the USFS.

We were able to apply and receive a significant grant from the El Dorado County Small Business CARES Act Funds that were administered through the El Dorado Community Foundation. These funds will help offset Covid related operating expenses incurred during this past winter and summer.

With this grant and prudent management of the budget under the direction of Keli Gwyn, our Retail Manager, ENFIA continues to be healthy financially. We look forward to being back in business, and greeting and informing the public again in 2021. We hope all of you will continue your memberships and support this winter.

Keli Gwyn and the Desolation Rangers were able to update and save the Desolation Guidebook from going out of print and ran a photo cover contest for the publisher.

The Board continues to meet online via Zoom in the interest of health and safety, but we certainly miss the face to face comradery.

At this time we are proposing our Fall General Membership meeting to take place online on Saturday December 5, 2020, at a time to be determined in November.

For discussion at the meeting will be:

1) Minor Bylaws changes recommended by an attorney.

2)1-2 Board positions will be available for nomination and election. Please consider being part of the Board. The terms are 2 years. Meetings are once a month for 1-2 hours.

3) Discussion on a Carson Pass operations team plan for 2021.

Thank you for your continued support. Details on the General meeting will be released prior to the end of November.

“In Wilderness is the preservation of the World” Thoreau

Larry Moore President ENFIA

Meet Your ENFIA Board Members

Larry Moore-President

Growing up in Southern California I was fortunate that my father took me camping, fishing and hunting and introduced me to the outdoors. Later years found me hiking and backpacking in the Sierras, Rockies and New England.

Lynne and I settled in Placerville in 1980 as I continued my work in the medical field and this allowed us to explore the Sierra with our children.

Nearing retirement in 2012, the Youel’s recommended us to be docents at Carson Pass and we found a new outlet for outdoor energy and time. In 2015 Dennis Price asked that I join the Board of ENFIA and in 2017 I became the Board President .

Retirement has allowed time for renewed interest in Natural History and I became a California Naturalist through the University of California Program, which I would recommend to anyone. This has helped me with our interpretive activities at Carson Pass.

We continue to hike, bend down for flowers, turn over rocks, look for birds and photograph our unique place on the planet.

"Life is for learning” J. Mitchell

Frank Tortorich-Vice President

I first became acquainted with ENFIA about 1990. I had been a volunteer historian for the Amador Ranger District since 1978 doing historical research and inventorying all the hiking trails on the district. This gave me first-hand knowledge of the greater Carson Pass area and the Mokelumne Wilderness.

As I recall the Eldorado National Forest received a grant to build an information station at Carson Pass. This is when I met Mary and Joel Knowles. Joel and Mary (as best as I can remember) were among the founding members of ENFIA. Mary and Joel took on the leadership to construct the station building.

I knew that this was something I wanted to be involved with and joined ENFIA.

Construction began in the summer of 1991 and was in operation to the public in 1993. I am proud to say I was one of the first docents to work in the new Carson Pass Information Station.

I helped with building the station from the foundation up to the roof. Big accomplishment was that I helped lay the beautiful oak tongue and groove flooring we now enjoy.

In 2000 I was employed by the USFS and could no longer be involved much with the information station, but I did maintain my ENFIA membership.

About 2012 I became the USFS Carson Pass Ranger and began working closely with ENFIA and the operation at the station.

When my employment with the USFS ended in 2019, I could spend more time with ENFIA.

In December of 2019 ENFIA presented me with an Honorary Life Membership. I was touched and honored to receive this recognition.

In the summer of 2020, I was appointed by the ENFIA Board of Directors to fill a vacancy on the Board. I accepted the appointment not realizing I also became the vice President.

Karen Heine-Secretary

I have recently joined the ENFIA board to fill a vacancy left by Carl Gwyn. I retired last year from Douglas County Schools where I had been teaching English for 28 years. I have loved living in Minden, Nevada, because it allows me the opportunity for hiking and camping. I spend lots of time hiking in the Blue Lakes area as well as the Hope Valley area.

Five years ago, a friend suggested that I should become a docent at Carson Pass. I learned so much from Dennis Price and Frank Tortorich about the area that now I have enjoyed hiking north of Carson Pass in areas like Meiss Meadows and Big Meadows areas. The last few years have been an exploration of Lake Margaret, the Pot Holes, and the Silver Lake areas.

Being a docent gives me the chance to share what I know with other hiking enthusiasts as well as learn many new things from those many visitors passing through the management area. I look forward to spending more time in retirement taking photographs of the areas that I love and discovering even more of the beauty that is in the Mokelumne Wilderness.

Serving on the board allows me to take an active role in making Eldorado Forrest a great experience for the public. I don't camp as much at this point because I have an aging horse whom I don't leave often. He is twenty-eight and has been my companion since he was two. We also have several goats and chickens to keep him company. Two doodles, a Labradoodle and a Goldendoodle, accompany me on most of my hikes and cross-country skiing

adventures. They also join me in my other favorite recreation activity, kayaking. The joy of being outdoors drives almost all of my passions, so working with ENFIA to make the wilderness more accessible and enjoyable to the public seems a natural fit for me.

Keli Gwyn-Treasurer/Retail Coordinator

I am no stranger to volunteer work. I spent years serving as Parent Club Coordinator at my daughter's elementary school, during which time I completed the lengthy process required for the group to become a non-profit organization. Prior to that, I worked as a bookkeeper and spent several years in the retail industry. More recently, I lived my dream of being a multi-published author of sweet historical romances set in the Gold Country. After my husband, Carl, retired, I followed suit, trading publishing deadlines for more time spent hiking in our beautiful forest. As the daughter of a career US Forest Service firefighter, I enjoy carrying on my father's legacy through my work with ENFIA.

Bruce Odelberg-Member at Large

(Bio not submitted)

The Iconic Apple Grows in the Eldorado National Forest

By Lester Lubetkin and Jordan Serin

When we think of the Eldorado National Forest, we think of green expanses of pines and firs, lush meadows, gurgling streams and rushing rivers, clear blue lakes and majestic stands of black oaks; but there is another element of the forest; apple trees. Jordan Serin, Placerville Ranger District archaeologist, has been trying to unravel the mystery behind these trees and the people they are associated with.

Two apple trees in a historic apple orchard - the one on the right is an old variety known as Northern Spy.

Before the Eldorado National Forest was created (and before the Forest Reserve was set aside), miners, ranchers and loggers were living in some of the remote parts of the Forest. Some were alone or in small groups and some were here with their families. Some settled and built homesteads and some brought along apple trees - or at least the

cuttings to establish apple trees. Others obtained trees or cuttings from local sources here in California. And even later, Forest Service workers planted apple trees at two remote Forest Guard Stations.

Author Michael Pollan, in the first Chapter of his book *Botany of Desire*, describes how it is very hard to get apples with reliable traits (sweet, crisp, tart, red or green, for cooking or cider) from apple seeds. Each seed "contains the genetic instructions for a completely new and different apple tree", bearing little resemblance to its parents (the biologist's term is ***heterozygous***). So, even though the fruit may be exactly what the farmer desires, progeny from a tree grown from the seeds may vary widely in characteristics. Contrary to the image of "Johnny Appleseed" spreading apple seeds across the countryside, homesteaders often needed to bring cuttings or whole trees out with them in order to grow the apples they liked.

A late season sampling of apples from the Eldorado Forest.

Early on in colonial New England, apples were used for making cider. Later, as settlers moved west, some land grants required that apple trees be planted in order to receive the land grant. Between the need for settlers to be "self-sufficient" and the traditions of planting apple trees in homesteads, the common practice of planting apples at new settlements evolved. And because each apple planted had the potential to create a whole new variety, there was a great profusion of new traits or apple qualities that emerged during the western expansion period of the late 1800's. As Michael Pollan describes, the apple was the self-made fruit, following in the American tradition, where a superb apple was not dependent on the deliberate crossing of "aristocratic" parents.

In the Eldorado Forest, there are at least 13 old homesteads with historic apple trees which were often planted individually or in clusters near the home or work area (such as old mine workings). The intended purpose for planting these apple trees was for personal consumption. This included eating, baking and the ever-important cider. In places, cider was drunk more freely than water, since it was at times safer and healthier than water from contaminated sources.

There is also one large orchard in the Eldorado Forest with over 70 apple trees, many of which are planted in rows. This orchard was likely selling apples for baking, eating, drying and certainly for making cider to miners and others living in the area. Two sites with introduced apple trees were Forest Service guard stations in the early 20th century. Guard Stations were seasonal homes for Forest Service employees

assigned to patrol and enforce rules in remote areas of the Forest. Many of these trees are over 100 years old and have not been pruned or maintained for some time. Unfortunately, some have been improperly pruned by well-intentioned visitors (and land managers), leading to damage and potential disease.

A Baldwin apple tree bearing red apples noted for making excellent pies and cider.

In order to improve our understanding and management of these cultural resources, Jordan Serin collected leaf samples from 38 different apple trees around the Forest for DNA fingerprinting. These were collected as part of a study which included apple tree samples from Yosemite and Redwood National Parks, along with the Eldorado National Forest. The genetic code, or "genotype" for each sample was compared against a reference set of 1,317 different apple "cultivars". This is a way to determine the specific variety of each of the trees, which can be an important component in determining the historic significance of these resources and the sites they are a part of. From this, some information regarding the age of the site and activities can be estimated. Knowing the variety of the apples also helps in the preservation of the genetic diversity - serving as a form of in-situ genetic resource conservation. When preparing for historic restoration efforts where apple trees have died in the Forest, staff can use data from this study to replant historically appropriate varieties, or maybe even the exact cultivars. These data can aid in management decisions by helping to prioritize stabilization and restoration efforts for trees that offer the most value during the period of historic use and for trees that offer the most value for agro-biodiversity into the future.

We're familiar with the 8 to 10 common apple varieties we find in the market today, but in the mid- to late-1800's there were literally hundreds of varieties of apples, many of which have names that we rarely (if ever) hear today. Of the 38 apple tree samples Jordan collected, less than half (15 apple trees) were of known historic cultivars found in the reference set of 1,317 apple varieties;these 15 trees represent 8 different varieties. These varieties were popular cultivars from the mid-19th to early-20th century; and in fact five were among those listed by the American Pomological Society in 1852 as the most highly recommended apple varieties, including Baldwin, Gravenstein, Rhode Island Greening, Esopus Spitzenburg, and Northern Spy. Three other varieties

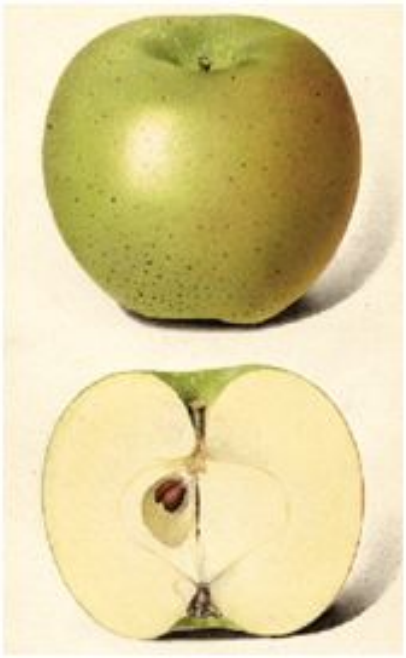
found on the Forest were Golden Sweet, Vandevere and Maiden's Blush.

But what about the other 23 apple trees? Five trees that were genetically tested match other trees from the Forest or from either Yosemite or Redwood National Park. These are likely cultivars that were commercially distributed and presumably desirable on a statewide or local level, but not available or no longer in existence at the national level, and their names have been lost for now.

With additional research and testing, it is possible that the names and sources of these unknown varieties will be rediscovered in an old nursery catalog or newspaper advertisement. And for the remaining 18 trees sampled from the Forest, these are varieties that don't match any of the reference trees nor any of the trees sampled. Could it be that these trees were started from apple seeds and so are truly unique? Or are they varieties that were shared and grown at the time, but we just don't know their names?

Apple trees from one of the Forest Service Guard Stations did not match any of the known varieties in the reference dataset. Could these be trees established from seeds that were scattered by an early Forest ranger? In contrast, at one of the old homesteads, where five of the eight surviving apple trees were sampled, 2 trees matched each other, one tree matched a cultivar found in Redwood National Park and the remaining three trees were each entirely unique.

Jordan also collected three paired samples to see if the cuttings (or ***scions***) that make up the fruit-bearing part of the tree were the same or different from the tree's root stock. Common practice is to graft the desired scion onto a pest-resistant rootstock. One of the pairs showed a difference between the rootstock cultivar and scion cultivar; a Golden Sweet scion appears to have been grafted onto the rootstock of a unique genotype not present elsewhere in the dataset. Of the other two paired samples, a Northern Spy and a Baldwin scion appear to have been grafted onto their own variety of rootstock.



Rhode Island Greening apples were extremely popular in the 1850's known for being one of the best apples for pies.

As a part of managing and protecting the Forest, Forest Service staff are concerned about loss and damage to these historic apple trees. Some of the threats to the trees include

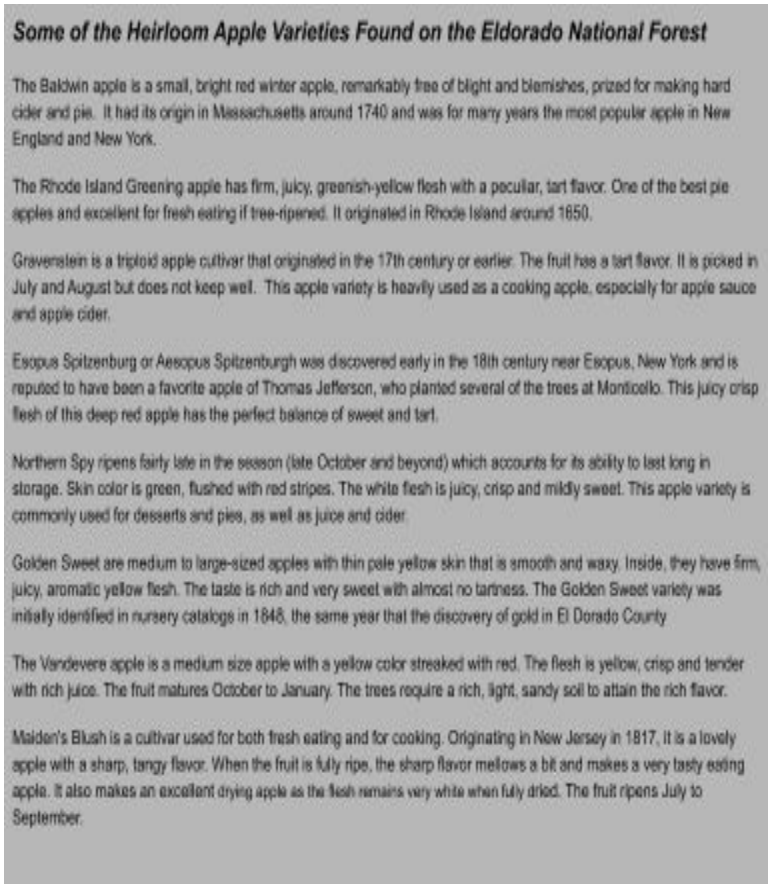
encroachment from surrounding vegetation, particularly in forested areas and along meadow margins. Marginal conditions such as lack of sun exposure or competition for ground water can lead to stress and damage to the trees. Another source of damage is inadvertent from people visiting the sites or damage from vehicles diverting water that would naturally flow to the trees. But one of the greatest threats to these historic apple trees on the Eldorado National Forest is from structural instability from top-heavy canopies full of unpruned deadwood, cavities in limbs, hollow trunks, and root damage.

And this is where there is an opportunity to volunteer with the Forest Service. You can let the Eldorado Forest know you would like to be notified if in the future there are volunteer opportunities to protect and improve these historic treasures by submitting your name to jordan.serin@usda.gov.

Through retaining these unique heritage apple trees we can experience how the planting of fruit trees played a significant role in the settlement history and development of the western United States. Apples are iconic symbols of American cultural identity so the historic preservation of these sites is a way to honor and better understand our national heritage.

Folks can learn more about the management of heritage fruit trees by registering for any of these upcoming free monthly webinars:

https://www.uidaho.edu/cals/sandpoint-organic-agriculture-center/conference



Oxen's Tale - Gold Rush Covered Wagon

By Frank Tortorich

Last time I wrote about the ox, that incredible draft animal that "pushed"[1] thousands of covered wagons over Carson Pass and all the other trans-Sierra wagon routes during and even after the gold rush.

There are many names for this nineteenth century mode of transportation: Prairie Schooner, Conestoga wagon, covered wagon, farm wagon, or just plain "wagon."

Conestoga is the only type of wagon in this group that does not apply. The Conestoga wagon was never used to come west over the Sierra Nevada to California or over the Cascades to Oregon.

It was a huge wagon reaching sixteen feet in length with long sloping ends and a curved body.

The Conestoga was designed to haul freight and could carry 3,000 pounds or more. The rear tailgate, when dropped, acted as a loading ramp. The curved body was created so as the wagon moved the freight would settle to the center of the wagon, thereby helping to keep the load in balance. The Conestoga wagon was used extensively on the Santa Fe Trail and in the east.

There were smaller versions of the Conestoga that some pioneers found stylish and used them for their migration to the west.

The most popular wagon was the small ten-foot straight body farm style wagon. This wagon could carry up to 2,000 pounds. Most of the weight was in food leaving little room left for the necessary items such as tools, bedding, clothing, cooking supplies and a limited

number of smaller personal items. Many folks tried to bring larger heavy family heirlooms, soon found out the weight was too much for the oxen and items were abandoned on the trail.

This wagon usually used three yokes of oxen: two ox being one yoke. This wagon had no seats, no springs, and no brakes. Therefore, most pioneers walked ten to fifteen miles a day, making the two-thousand-mile journey in about 125 days, give or take a week or two.

Most wagon trains consisted of about 25 to 30 wagons. Each wagon train elected or hired a captain who knew the trail and how to manage people. It was much like a ship's captain in that he had supreme authority unless he was fired or kicked out by a majority vote of the emigrants.

When traveling in a wagon train, the daily routine consisted of rising about 4 am, to turn out the animals to feed and prepare breakfast and lunch for the upcoming day.

The wagons would roll out about 7 am, traveling until 11 am, then "noon" for two hours. This was time to water the animals and allow them to graze. It was also time for folks to have lunch and rest or repair any wagon problems.

At 1 pm the wagons rolled out for another 4 or 5 travel hours and then circle up the wagons near good feed and water for the night.

The purpose for the wagon circle was to create a corral to impound the animals for the night. The pioneers set up the camp on the exterior of the circle. It took several days for the drovers and oxen to learn how to circle the wagons in an orderly fashion with tongues facing to the outside and not leaving any gaps. I can imagine in those first few days the air was blue with profanity from the drovers attempting to get the oxen to go in the correct direction to form a perfect circle.

If it was a military wagon train, they circled the wagon with the tongues to the inside of the circle. The difference is that if the military was to engage in battle immediately , with the animals and the tongues to the inside, the animals could be unhitched and therefore be already impounded inside the wagon circle, freeing up the soldiers to go to battle. With the pioneer wagon train, with the animals and tongues to the outside, it was convenient to unhitch the animals and turn them out to graze. At dusk, the animals were rounded up and driven into the wagon circle for the night.

In the early morning, the animals were driven out of the wagon circle to again graze before being hitched up for the day's journey.

While traveling on the open prairie a wagon train could travel about 14 to 18 miles each day, or about two miles per mile.

When the pioneers reached the Sierra Nevada the rate of travel dropped to about one mile per hour.

When the wagon trains reached Red Lake, everything came to an abrupt halt.

The pioneer faced the first summit known as the "Devils Ladder." This climb required the wagon to be emptied and all the remaining goods hauled up the steep grade by the women and older children.

The men added extra ox teams to the wagons and slowly inched their way up the steep hill. We do know that they did use ropes and chains attached to the tongue of the wagon. The purpose was not to help hoist the wagon but to rather create a safety line so the wagons did not roll down the hill backwards.

[1] See Vol. 1, No. 1 of the yet to be named ENFIA newsletter.

Saving the Desolation Wilderness Guidebook

by Keli Gwyn, Retail Coordinator

"What if?" Those two words can make the difference between leaving things as they are and entertaining exciting new possibilities. The latter was the case when it came to the Desolation Wilderness guidebook ENFIA has offered at our retail locations for years.

When I assumed the Retail Coordinator position this past February, I learned that the Deso guidebook was outdated, so much so that the books were being sold with sticky notes on the front covers alerting potential buyers to that fact. Having been a published author who is also a freelance editor, I know a lot about revisions. My background prompted me to ask the guidebook publisher's representative if they had plans to update the book. Sadly, Meredith said, "No. We're planning to take it out of print."

That disappointing answer led me to summon my courage and ask the first of three what-if questions: "*What if* I were to work with the Desolation Wilderness Rangers and perform an edit of the guidebook?" To my surprise and delight, the publisher, AdventureKEEN, accepted the offer!

I promptly set to work. Since much of the trail information is still current, my focus was on permits, campgrounds, fees, and the like. Not being familiar with Deso, I turned to Desolation Wilderness Ranger Dustin Bell for help. He and I spent the better part of two hours on the phone looking through the book and made good progress. My remaining questions were answered by Desolation Wilderness Ranger Tim Excell, who did an outstanding job nailing down numerous facts.

AdventureKEEN was delighted with the edits and eager to move forward with the revisions. Emboldened by that success, I posed my second what-if question: "*What if* we were to run a photo cover contest, tapping into the talents of devoted Deso hikers?" Once again, I received a "Yes" as my response. After securing Desolation Wilderness Ranger Excell and ENFIA President Larry Moore as our esteemed judges, Ranger Excell and I posted the contest announcement on several social media sites.

Throughout the month of August, my inbox was flooded with jaw-droppingly wonderful photos. I oohed and aahed my way through the entries, knowing our judges were going to have their work cut out for them. They rose to the challenge, approaching their task with thoughtfulness and thoroughness. Ranger Excell and Larry Moore spent hours assessing the entries, ultimately choosing the same three as their first-, second-, and third-place choices.

Once AdventureKEEN's editorial team confirmed that the winning entry satisfied their technical criteria, I had the pleasure of calling our first-place winner, Dan Deemer. I don't know which of us was more excited. Dan's honored that his shot will be "the new face of the Deso guidebook," as he put it, and I'm honored that he shared his great work with us. I'm sure you'll agree with me that his shot is superb once you see it, which I hope will happen soon. AdventureKEEN has given me permission to share the mock-up cover as soon as I receive it, so watch the ENFIA Facebook page over the next few weeks.

You might think the good news ends there, but…there's more. Our judges and I loved Chad Brown's second-place photo too, so much so that I posed a third what-if question to Meredith: "*What if* you were to use Chad's eye-catching image on the back cover of the guidebook?" She liked the idea, ran it by her editorial team, and said they agreed with my proposal. Chad's stunning shot will appear on the guidebook cover too. How's that for a win-win?

My thanks to Desolation Wilderness Rangers Dustin Bell and Tim Excell, ENFIA President Larry Moore, and the many talented Deso hikers who submitted photos to the cover contest. With their help, the Desolation Wilderness guidebook will continue to be a valuable—and extremely attractive— resource for years to come.