

Plumas Eureka State Park

TOURING THE MORIARITY HOUSE MUSEUM

DOCENT HANDBOOK

by

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May, 1987

B. Parlor Subthemes

1. In the earlier days, snows of ten feet were common in Johnsville. Often a member of the family would have to leave the house through the attic and dig tunnels to windows in order to provide **light and** to the door for access. Thus, another use for the parlor ladder can be discussed.
2. San Francisco postcards indicate correspondence with Maggie's sister, Annie Nolan, in San Francisco.
Note the scenes from the 1906 earthquake.
3. Bible and Family Album: parlor traditions

C. Furnishings

1. Settee and chair: Italian walnut, upholstered in the burgundy fabric recalled by Edna Louis. Note: Most mining communities like Johnsville had many immigrant families; thus, origin and styles of furniture would have been quite varied.
2. Parlor Lamp: Blue “drapery” pattern
3. Carpet: Edna Louis recalls a red or burgundy carpet with a floral background.
4. Portraits: John Moriarty, Edna, Nita, Elva and Francis Moriarity, c.1909

5.4 The Kitchen

A. Interpretive Themes-

1. Daily Activities of special interest

- a. Grooming: Once the stove was lighted in the morning the kitchen was the only warm spot in the house. Here, the family congregated for washing up, tooth-brushing and hair-braiding. Mr. Moriarity shaved in this room.
- b. After breakfast, lunches were made for the older children and John. John's dinner pail was of **the** type used by miners: two compartments topped by a tin cup. Edna's father died when she was only **six**, but one of her memories of him was that he would save a bit from his lunch for her, to be given to her when she met him on his way home from work in the mine.
- c. In the winter, before the children left for school, Mrs. Moriarity put the membrane from an egg on their lips to keep them from becoming chapped in the freezing cold air. The skis which they wore, called "**snowshoes**" were warmed by the stove and then waxed with "dope".

2. Weekly Activities of special interest

- a. Bathing: Family members bathed in a large galvanized tub (in Lean-To). The water was heated in a big kettle on the stove, and children lined up for what was truly their "Saturday Bath".
- c. Clothes Washing: Three tubs were used to wash the clothes - one for whites, one for "coloreds" and one to rinse. Mrs. Moriarity used a big stick to fetch clothes from one tub to another. A washboard was used for scrubbing. The family did not have the more modern wringer washers or Humboldt Washer of the day. Edna recalls using a very small "child-sized" boiler to help her mother with the dish towels. (Such a boiler is in the pantry.)

d. Ironing:

Although ironing boards as we know them were available, many families simply suspended a nicely planed board between two stat-back chairs, or between a chair and table top. Sad irons were heated on the stove and came in many sizes. Housewives thought it was the weight of the iron, not the heat, which removed wrinkles.

A flat sad iron and a crimping iron are on display in the kitchen.

3. Kitchen Furnishings of special interest

a. Calumet baking pan: early advertising

b. Tinware pudding mold: designed for the pudding to be poured in the base and rise into the mold.

c. **Tin skimmer:** Peddlers traveled from town to town

in the late 1800's, offering a variety of goods and services from popcorn poppers to scissor-sharpening. Tin peddlers worked during the winter to make kitchen utensils and spent the spring and summer hawking their wares. The cookie cutters and funnel are two other tinware examples in the kitchen.

d. Hand-crafted meat saw

e. Pointed ice-cream scoop

f. Wooden salt cellar

g. Cast-iron string; holder, "Beehive"-pattern

h. Ski dope

i. Grooming Articles, e.g. razor strop, straight razor, shaving brush and mug. (teeth were brushed with soda)

j. Glass nursing bottle

k. Ceramic Infant feeder and graniteware infant/invalid feeder

l. Examples of blue graniteware: soap dish and creamer (see following section on Graniteware.)

m. Blue gingham apron, embroidered with deer is a docent reproduction from an original apron in the Sorrocco collection.

n. Miner's lunch pail with compartments for hot coffee, warm lunch and cup.

o. Cut Plug Tobacco tins for children's lunches

- p. "Catchemalive" mousetrap
- q. Ironing board and slat-back chair
- r. Bin table
- s. "Wire dish cloth" made from a network of steel rings, also called a "chain cloth" used to scour out burned kettles.
- t. Soap saver or shaker- closed wire mesh box used to hold soap scraps and swished around to make suds.

B. Interuretive Themes: Root Cellar

Preserving fruits and vegetables in the home root cellar was one way the Moriarity family prepared for winter. Small piles of produce were laid on straw and then covered with more straw. Apples from Downieville were stored in wooden crates. Dirt and sawdust were also used for insulation. Root vegetables such as carrots, beets, parsnips, rutabagas and turnips require very cool temperatures, while apples, potatoes, and cabbages can have it slightly cooler. Pumpkins and squash stored well if their stems were left on. Root cellars have to maintain temperatures between 30-45°, with a high level of humidity. To prevent their drying, some items were wrapped in newspapers.

At night in the winter, Mrs. Moriarity would ask, "Who wants to go down and get the apples?" Then one of the children would pull up the leather strap to raise the root cellar door and fetch them.

C. Interpretive Themes: Pantry

Since there was no refrigeration in the Moriarity household, canning, drying, salting, and pickling were ways the family was able to preserve food. Maggie, having some German ancestry, enjoyed making sauerkraut and cottage cheese. The sauerkraut was made by alternating layers of finely shredded cabbage and coarse salt in a crock. The salted cabbage was left to ferment in a warm place for several weeks. Cottage cheese was made in a bag, like a flour sack, hung on the clothesline outside.

When it was time to slaughter the cow and pigs, friends helped from town. Maggie would then corn the beef and pork. This was stored in small barrels. Edna remembers her mother making "wonderful head cheese and pickled pigs' feet. Nothing went to waste." (See Country Home, July August 1984, for information on preserving.)

It was Mrs. Moriarity's job to milk the cow each day.

The milk was kept in buckets on the pantry shelf; it was not around long enough to spoil with so many children to serve. Sometimes, to supplement the family's income, Tom and Bill sold milk in town.

Jam making was another of Maggie's chores. She would send the children out with a lunch and oldlard pails to spend the day picking gooseberries. As Edna recalls, "Sometimes they picked them and sometimes they didn't." Then they would soak them in buckets to remove leaves and debris so that their mother could make the jam. Sandwiches of gooseberry jam and bread were often in their school lunches.

Mrs. Moriarity also enjoyed baking pies, especially mincemeat. Nita made baked goods and was partial to lots of cinnamon. And oatmeal cookies was another family favorite.

One of their most frequent purchases at the market in Johnsville was syrup. Edna remembers that the promise of pancakes helped to get the children out of bed in the mornings.

D. Kitchen Subthemes

1. Marketing in Johnsville
2. Special recipes: head cheese, sauerkraut, gooseberry jam
3. The preparation of dope (see 2.3 "Snowshoe Racing")
4. Mail-Order Catalogs:

For the most part, the Moriarity family lived in the simplicity of the pioneers, but mail-order catalogs were beginning to modernize their lifestyle.

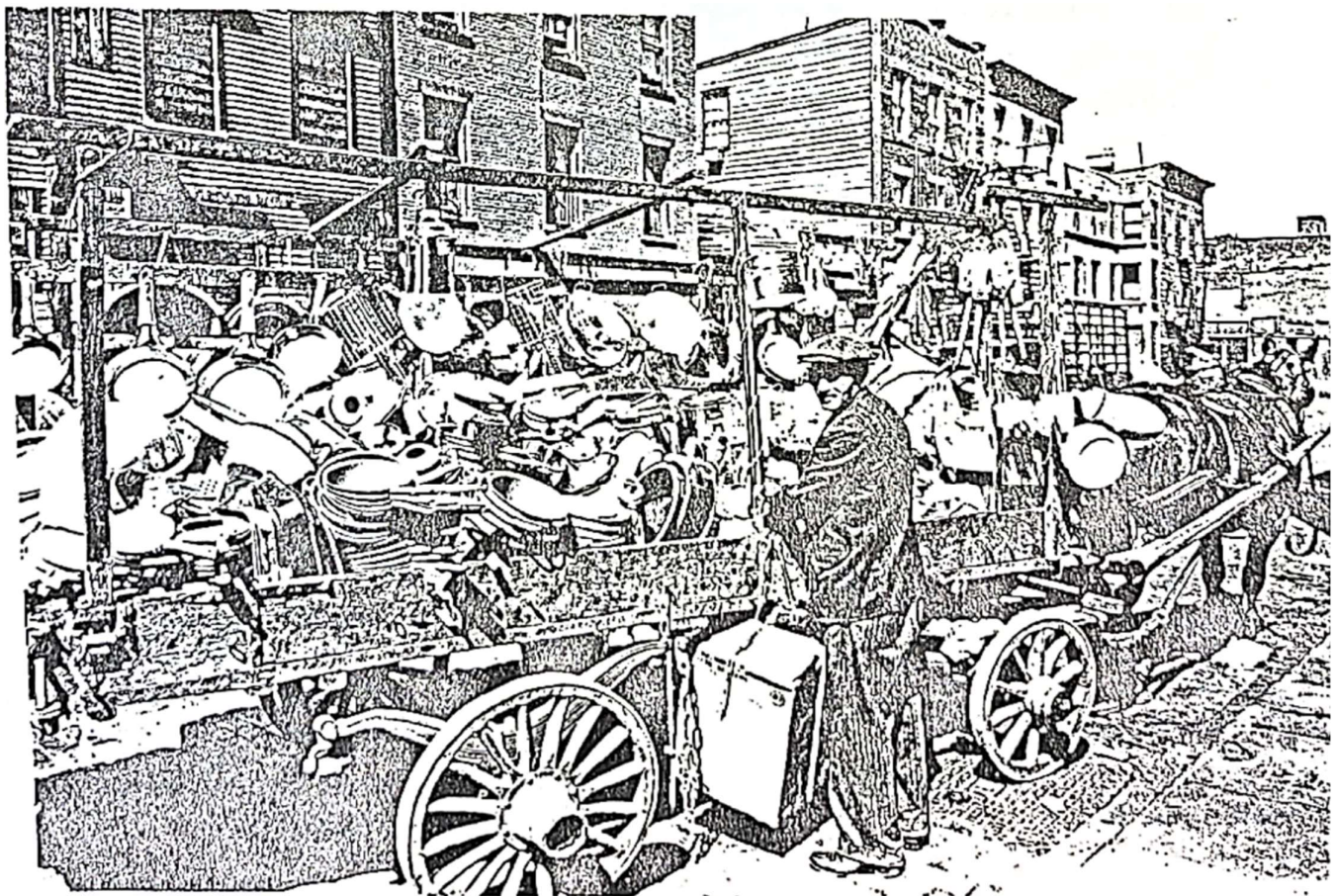
Richard W. Sears and A.C. Roebuck were the innovators of this new convenience which soon became known as the "wish book". The first one appeared in 1891, and most of its 32 pages were devoted to watches. By 1893, the name of the company was firmly "Sears, Roebuck & Company" and the catalog boasted nearly 200 pages, offering a much broader line of merchandise. By 1900, it weighed four pounds!

Items in Maggie's kitchen which may have been ordered through the mail from Sears or its competitor, Montgomery Ward, include the agate iron pots and utensils, an egg beater, mousetrap, jelly press, hair and tooth-brushes, soap and soda for brushing teeth. There were, of course, a multitude of other items available through the catalogues - each had a simple no-nonsense variety and an embellished counterpart - but it is unlikely that the Moriarty's spent their money on anything but the necessities.

GRANITEWARE notes from Graniteware by Vernagene Vogelzang
and Evelyn Welch

"Graniteware" is the name most commonly used for all enamelware made between 1870 and 1930. It has also been referred to by other names such as: "agateware", "speckleware", and "granite ironware".

"Graniteware" most probably came from its gray and white speckled appearance, but its strength, durability and hardness were also praised in advertisements. The cookware became very popular because of its light weight and relative ease in cleaning. Graniteware was mass produced and provided the housewife with pieces of the most modern design. According to Vogelzang and Welch, "Henry IV once said that it was his goal to put a chicken in every pot". Apparently, it was the ambition of the enamelware manufacturers to provide a pot for every task



*Peddler's wagon laden with graniteware and other housewares. New York City.
The Bettmann Archive*

For \$4.37 a housewife could buy a complete set of twenty-four pieces through the Sears' catalog. For an additional .08 each, she could buy a kitchen spoon, a soap dish, a two-quart saucepan, a wash basin, a long-handled skimmer or a nine-inch pie pan. There were pieces of granite-ware made especially for photographers, cowboys and gold-miners too.

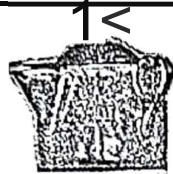
Graniteware came in green, white, red, purple, blue and turquoise. Most of the pieces in the Moriarity House are the very common gray color, however.

It is hard to find examples of graniteware in good condition today. Turn-of-the-century housewives found that the cookware easily chipped and rusted, and that holes often appeared. Sometimes buckets were repaired by stuffing a piece of rag in the opening, but there were also kits marketed which included nuts, screws and washers for a more efficient job. On the pantry shelf in the Moriarity House is a green package of Mendets.

Many people were afraid to use the chipped and rusted graniteware because they believed the metal would contaminate food and poison their families. Eventually, however, another problem arose for graniteware manufacturers - aluminum, which overtook the market. Nevertheless, some cooks still swear by graniteware for making sauces and pie crusts, and for keeping milk cold.

Listed below are some of the more unique examples of graniteware found in the Moriarity House:

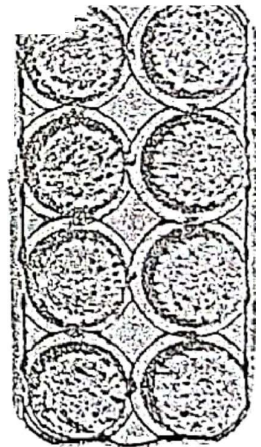
1. Infant/Invalid Feeder



2. Handihook Lid "One size fits all"



3. Muffin Pan, cups crimped over wire frame, very old



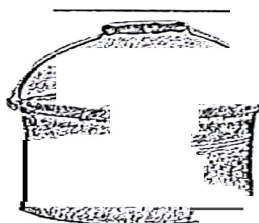
4. 1 "Triple Saucepan" with lid



5. Tea Strainer



6. Small Buckets; graniteware buckets, old lard pails, and cut-plug tobacco tins were all used for carrying lunches and collecting berries



5.3 DINING ROOM

A. Interpretive Themes

I. "Family Around The Table"

(This was actually a multi-purpose room where the family could gather not only for eating, but to perform a variety of necessary chores.)

- a. Eating: Benches and stools were common because they could be simply constructed. Chairs were generally reserved for the adults. Older children assisted younger children with their food, while Maggie would have been busy with two-year-old Edna and the infant Orleie.
- b. School Work: Sitting at the dining room table; the children would have done their lessons by kerosene lamp. The **Johnsville school**, at the far end of town, was quite a walking, or skiing, distance from the Moriarity's. The classroom was on the lower floor of the I.O.O.F. building (of which Mr. Moriarity was a member). All the children of grammar school age would have been taught in this room, seated according to capability. According to a 1906-7 report, an old saloon was rented for the primary school. ¹
- c. Fancy Work: Without television or radio, the family occupied themselves in a variety of creative ways. One of these was termed "fancy work". Maggie and the girls crocheted, embroidered and tatted in the evenings. Clothing, especially under clothing, towels, pillowslips and a variety of other items were embellished. In addition, doilies were made and used in profusion. (Examples of chemises made from flour sacks with crochet lace.)
- d. Sewing and Mending: Often an entire family would have items or clothing made from the same bolt of cloth. Since money was scarce, the girls may have had only one or two dresses which, when outgrown, would have been passed down to younger children. Once an item was beyond repair, the material scrap was cut for quilts or torn into strips for rag rugs. (Treadle sewing machine highlighted.)

1. Plumas County Historical Society Publication, Vol. 16, p.23.

- e. Reading: In addition to the important mail-order catalog and prayer book, other reading material of the time included:

Plain Home Talk and Medical Common Sense,

By E.B. Foote, M.D.

Dr. Chase's Receipts or Information For Everybody; by A.W. Chase, M.D.

Gray's Anatomy

White House Cook Book, F.L. Gillette and Hugo Ziemann, steward of the White House. "containing cooking, toilet and household recipes, menus dinner, giving table etiquette, care of the sick, health suggestions, etc." (Wards)

Also:

Little Women, Jane Eyre, Black Beauty, Mother Goose

Campaigns of the Civil War, and classics by Hawthorne, Shakespeare, Dickens and numerous poetry volumes.

Paper-covered books were also becoming popular, particularly series for boys and girls.

- f. Carpentry: Items such as the bootjack and "tramp art" frames as well as whittled toys and household items could have been made by John and the boys.
- g. Games and Toys: Mrs. Moriarity did not approve of card-playing, so cards and card games are absent in this house, although quite popular at the time.

(Mr. Moriarity, however, did enjoy a good card game, particularly when he could gamble, and spent many evenings in Johnsville socializing with his fellow miners.) Edna does not recall much game-playing

Except for perhaps marbles and ball. Playthings often were created from household items such as the overturned footstool-wagon.

2. China Cabinet

When the Moriarty's traveled west, they most likely brought with them as many supplies as they could with which to furnish their new home. Emigrants brought everything from wood-burning stoves and rocking chairs to hens and gardening tools. This corner cupboard which dismantles into three pieces could have easily been brought from the East.

Even though the Moriarity family did little entertaining, they still would have had a few special items tucked safely away in the china cabinet. "Pressed glass was mass-produced and cheap and caught the popular fancy. Typically Victorian pieces were the spoon holder, celery vase, pickle caster and revolving center condiment caster... Covered animal dishes were made by glass factories in the 1880's."² Toothpick holders were considered the perfect wedding gift and came in all shapes and sizes.

B. Subthemes

1. Irish Crochet: Brought to America from Ireland in the 1840's by immigrants fleeing the famine in their homeland.³
2. Baseball: Baseball was a favorite summer activity among the miners and businessmen of Johnsville. For many years their team played those of other mining towns and communities in the county. One game on record was on July 4, 1902. Johnsville beat Quincy, 21-14.
3. Hats: Hats were very much in fashion, but were also used for protection. Edna recalls wearing a straw hat even in the winter to protect her eyes from the glare of the sun on snow. She also remembers that her brother Francis was so fond of bats that he wore one to bed every night which his mother removed after he was asleep.
- 4-. Small iron stove: It was not uncommon to keep a small stove in the lean-to which would be brought into the dining room or bedroom if needed in the winter. In the Moriarity house, both of these rooms have stovepipe holes in the ceiling (now plated over).

2. **Marshall B. Davidson**, *The American Heritage History of American Antiques*

3. *Ibid.* p.315

C. Dining Room Furnishings of special interest

1. “Tramp Art” picture frames: One of the many popular turn-of-the-century craft projects, tramp art frames were made from cigar boxes. Two other popular crafts involved making jewelry and pictures from human hair and the pressing of flowers into framed mementoes.
2. Pressed glass toothpick holder: described as "most appropriate for wedding gifts". Average cost was .75; a box of toothpicks was .02.
3. Ceramic footwarmer, c. 1890' s: these were filled with hot water and used not only within the home, but on cold sleigh and stagecoach rides as well.
4. Braided rag chair pad: made from fabric scraps; could be the remaining center of a larger, out-worn rug.
5. Wooden blocks: A set such as this would have cost approximately .45 if ordered from Montgomery Ward and Co. catalog, 1894-5.
6. Toy sad iron: in 1900, children could duplicate just about anything in miniature that mother had in her kitchen.
7. Bisque figurine- "Little Red Riding Hood".

5.4 BEDROOM

A. Interoretive Themes

1. The Bedchamber: The bedroom of yesteryear accommodated family members from birth to the grave. Babies were born here, the sick nursed and the dying comforted. Hospitalization was a rarity in those days. In fact, almost every bedroom contained a pharmacopoeia, or book of home remedies such as Plain Home Talk and Medical Common Sense, by E.B.Foote, M.D. This was the golden age of patent medicines, many of which could have been obtained from Sears, Wards and other mail-order houses. They were dubious remedies, but often the only thing available to isolated families where doctors were scarce, and expensive.
 2. Furnishings:
 - a. Trundle Bed- low enough to be pushed under the master bed when not in use in order to provide more space.
 - b, Wardrobe - Clothes were commonly hung on pegs and hooks or placed in freestanding closets. These are sometimes called “armoires” because centuries ago similar cupboards were used to store arms and armor.¹
 - c. Commode or Washstand – Before water was piped throughout the house, bedrooms had bowls and pitchers. Though the Moriarity family did most of their washing in the kitchen where it was warm, water in the bedroom provided privacy for those who wanted it. Commodes, or washstands with a door, housed the necessary chamber pot. Otherwise, this was kept under the bed. A shelf in open washstands provided a place for the slop pail. The Moriarty’s had a "two-seater" outhouse near the lean-to for daytime winter toilet use and a smaller outhouse farther away for summer use. At night, chamber pots or slop pails (upon which one could sit) were used.
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1. Robert and Harriett Swedberg, Country Pine Furniture, p.114

d. Trunks and Blanket Chests- The earliest bedroom storage pieces were the low chests or trunks which accompanied the pioneers and immigrants to their new homes. Eventually drawers and mirrors were added to become our familiar "chest of drawers" Often a lucky wife or daughter would have a chest built for her that was just the length of her turn-of-the-century long skirts. The chest was perfect for seasonal clothing as well, such as woolen underwear and winter scarves.

B. Subthemes

1. Patent Medicines
2. Beauty Aids
3. Mail Delivery (postcards MR 4-20/stamp purse MH 4-49)
4. Post-1909:Discussion of the Moriarity Family
Births, deaths, work in Virginia City, move to Alameda.
Advent of electricity, railroad, decline in mining.

C. Bedroom Furnishings of special interest

1. Quilts :: The quilts remembered by Edna Moriarity Louis were not elaborately patterned, but were made of simple fabric squares. Also on display is a "crazy quilt" which was a popular way to use fancier scraps and show off one's embroidery skills as well.
2. Child's shoe: "Fat baby shoe" could be ordered by mail for approximately .75 a pair from Sears.
3. Leather stamp purse
4. Metal bonnet box: handy for carrying on stage coaches

5.6 LEAN-TO

A. Interpretive Themes

The lean-to was a common attachment to early-day residences. Photos of Echo Flat suggest that many of the houses had a lean-to constructed during the same time period.* The numerous items required, and desired, by the generally large families would have taken up too much space in their tiny homes.

Long board skis, winter stores of food, clothes washing gear and repair kits would have been stored here, along with the numerous gardening and husbandry necessities.

Many of the items on view in the Moriarity lean-to represent the forerunners of our "modern conveniences" such as washing machines. Our supermarkets have taken care of the need to store large amounts of food for winter. And, of course, the automobile would have had a major impact on these isolated families' needs.

Of particular interest in the Moriarity lean-to is the two-seater outhouse. This outhouse was renovated and placed in the lean-to according to Edna Moriarity Louis's recollections. She does not remember that it was painted, or even white-washed. Odors from the outhouse were kept at a minimum by dumping the ashes from their woodburning stove in the pit. This was the family's winter facility, in the summer the outhouse beyond the front yard fence was used. Edna recalls that for Halloween fun, neighborhood boys would tip the summer outhouse over.

Just opposite the lean-to door is the site of the Moriarty's chicken coop. During the winter the children had to tunnel from the lean-to to the coop and feed the chickens hot mash prepared by Maggie. Edna recalls shooing off hawks that would swoop down on the chickens as they drank from the reservoir to the left of the coop.

B. Lean-to Subthemes

1. **Hunting and fishing:** Edna recalls brother Bill hunting rabbits, but having to cook them in an old pot reserved for **this** purpose because Mrs. Moriarity felt rabbits carried worms. She also recalls making willow fishing rods with pin hooks.

2. **Camping:** equipment on display suggests that this was a very popular "vacation" for families at the time.

3. **Washday Procedures:** boilers, washboards, rapid washer

C. Lean-To Furnishings of special interest

1. Sock stretchers

2. Bird catcher: original green paint

3. Lard bucket: Edna and her sister Elva, often were sent out to collect gooseberries so that her mother could make jam; Edna did not enjoy this chore.

4. Hog hanger (boomerang-shaped stick)

5. Home shoe repair stand and molds: "Every Family Should Have One" according to Sears catalog, 1900

6. Metal Immigrant's trunk

7. Miner's lamps (2)

8. Long board skis, red, and pole (see 2.3 Snowshoe Races)

9. Burlap and bowl: Edna recalls a collie named "Sport"

2.2

Howland Flat

Howland Flat was one of the largest of the early mining towns in the Northern Sierra. It was located at the base of Table Rock, a prominent landmark for thousands of miners in those early years. In fact, Howland Flat, founded in 1852, was originally called Table Rock. It was part of a large mining area known as the Slate Creek empire which also encompassed La Porte, St. Louis, Port Wine, Gibsonville, Whiskey Diggings and many other camps.

Miners in the Slate Creek empire employed great hydraulic nozzles to wash away debris and expose the gold. They "performed some gigantic feats that helped revolutionize the mining industry. They built, for instance, a flume that was 1,500 feet long and ran completely through the flat. It served 180 sluices and provided water for 250 ¹¹heads¹¹ or nozzles."¹ It is reported that the La Porte area produced \$60 million in gold during the period from 1855 to 1871. ² In 1866, the area was taken from Sierra County and annexed to Plumas County. A wagon road was built to Quincy, about 35 miles away, and trade was established with the farmers of American Valley. Transportation into the Slate Creek empire was provided by a stage line that operated between La Porte and Marysville. Another stage ran between La Porte and Quincy over the Nelson Point Grade.³

Within the Slate Creek empire Howland Flat was second in size to La Porte. Little is written about Howland Flat, but in the 1860's La Porte contained three hotels, six stores, a ten-pin alley, 14 saloons, several shops, stables, two churches, two balls, and many residences and cabins. In addition, there were two physicians, four fraternal societies, one surveyor, and one attorney.

1. Bill Talbitzer, Echoes of the old Rush, P. 29.
2. Ibid., p. 10.
3. Publication #6, Plumas County Historical Society, p. 18.

2.3

Snowshoe Races: Slate creek Empire and Johnsville

During their first winters in the Northern Sierra, miners turned their ingenuity toward the development of "snowshoes" These were skis which "evolved from barrel staves in the winter of 1850 into 8 foot traveling and 10-12 racing models two years later."¹ Although they were called snowshoes, they were not like the Canadian web, or the Sierra "trapper" we know today. Instead, they

were modeled after Norwegian "long boards", or "Norway skates".

Without them winter travel would have been almost impossible in the early mining towns where snow was reported to reach the level of a two-story building so that people had to escape through attic windows or be dug out by their neighbors. In fact, it was also in the La Porte area that webbed snowshoe-type wear was fashioned for horses allowing winter stage and freight deliveries. And it was here that Snowshoe Thompson, a native of Norway, became legend. In 1856, Thompson established a mountain ski express over the Sierra Nevada and delivered mail between Genoa and Placerville, a distance of eighty miles, or fifteen hours in skiing time.²

By 1859, skis were very common in Sierra and Plumas Counties. Men and women alike enjoyed the sport and skied from mining camp to mining camp just for the pleasure of it.

"The first snowshoe races recorded were in 'Onion Valley and LaPorte in 1855."³ Gamblers would raise hundred dollars in prizes for skiers making the best time down tracks designated by special committees. "By early 1863 many of the mining towns had their champion snowshoers and races were scheduled for nearly every week of the ski season."⁴

"On February 12, 1867, the world's first ski club was formed and the world's first ski tourney was held at Lexington Hill near La Porte. The club was named The Alturas Snow Shoe Club. Alturas means heights and La Porte is

1. Plumas County Historical Society, Publication 6, p.17.

2. Robert H. Power, Pioneer Skiing In California, p.1.

3. Sierra County Historical Society, Pub. Vol. 2, No. 1, p.9.

4. Power, op.cit., p. 3.

situated at a height of 4500 feet." ⁵ The Club was organized as an adjunct to the Odd Fellows Lodge. ⁶ By 1869, Howland Flat boasted its own Table Rock Snow-Shoe Club and in March of that year sponsored four days of snow-shoe racing. There were free dances during the week and a Grand Ball on the night of St. Patrick's Day.

A list of well-known La Porte area skiers includes Bill and Ed Hayes, brothers of Maggie Moriarity. And, according to his daughter, Edna Louis, John Moriarity was also quite accomplished on the long boards. She remembers his skis drying behind the kitchen stove and their preparation for the "Dope Try-Outs" held in Johnsville.

"Dope" was the material used to lubricate the bottom of the skis. Different kinds of dopes were required for each different type of snow, and every family had its own collection of secret recipes. "The finer dopes were 'double-distilled, extra-refined' and given such colorful names as 'Skedaddle, greased lightning, slip easy, catch 'em quick, breakneck, slip up, etc.'" ⁷

"The following is Frank Steward's recipe for Old Black Dope, first used at La Porte in 1861:

2 oz. spermaceti
1/4 oz. pitch pine pitch 1/8 oz. camphor
1 tbs. balsam
1 tba. oil of spruce

This should all be cooked together, but the cooking time was a well kept secret. Seven or eight coats of the resulting wax were painted on the bottoms of the skis, with the result that the racer really did go like "Sierra Lightning." ⁸

Skiing became a way of life in the Johnsville area as well, both for sport and travel. From Eureka Peak a ski course of 1,676 feet was constructed. According to legend, the ore buckets which went up the mountain near Plumas Eureka

Stamp Mill served as the world's first ski lift

5. Sierra County Historical Society, op.cit., p. 9.
6. Plumas County Historical Society op.cit., p. 17.
7. Power, op. cit. p.4.
8. Sierra County Historical Society op.cit., p.8.

Plumas Eureka and Jamison Mines

Mining began in the Plumas Eureka area in the spring of 1851. A rich quartz outcropping was found by nine prospectors who were camped at the foot of Gold Mountain, now Eureka Peak. They combined efforts with friends and formed the original

36-member Eureka Company to mine and process the gold.

"In 1871 a group of British investors that had already formed a company to mine the Sierra Buttes founded the Plumas

Eureka Company to consolidate the small claims and begin mining on a business-like basis. During the first two years of operations, the British owners poured money for development into their new enterprise. They built a new mill to replace two old mills, enlarged and improved tunnels, and bought new extraction machinery. And their investments paid off; by 1881 the mine had more than repaid their original investment, and it continued to operate profitably for another 20 years. However, by 1890 the quality and quantity of ore had begun to decline, and in the early 1900's the company

sold the property. When mining in this area ceased for good in the 1940's, over eight million dollars' worth of gold had been taken from the 65 miles of tunnels in Eureka Peak." ¹

"Between 1897-1901, the Plumas Eureka mining properties were worked by tributors. A lease was obtained by F. F. Vanzini and his associates, Mrssrs. Passetta and Tressider whereby they commenced work early in 1898. During the months of July and August twelve men were at work all of whom were making "good returns for their labors," according to reports. The next summer from fifteen to twenty men were working on tribute•• In November, 1899, Vanzini and his associates had twenty men employed at the mine and mill." ²

Between 1905-1909 the Johnston Graham Mining Company operated the Plumas Eureka Mine. Then, in 1909, the mine changed hands again when George Phillips of New York purchased a controlling interest in the property. ³

1. Plumas Eureka State Park brochure, Dept. of Parks and Recreation

2. W. Turrentine Jackson, A History of Mining in the Plumas Eureka State Park Area 1890 - 1943, p. 22.

3. Ibid, p. 26

About two miles south of Johnsville was the Jamison Mine, an encouraging new mining operation in the 1890's. Both placer and tunnel mining were pursued, and expensive shaftwork and drifts were employed to remove the quartz gold.⁴ During the summer of 1897, the number of men working at Jamison Mine and mill increased from thirty to forty men. "William Passetta, Johnsville miner and hotel owner, made an agreement with the Jamison Mining Company to process the tailings from the mill. During the summer of 1898 he had twelve men employed building two miles of flume to transport the residue from the millsite to a point on Jamison Creek below Johnsville where arastras were installed." 5

From 1905-1908, the Jamison Mine was considered the leading producer of gold in Plumas County. Between fifty and sixty men were paid regular dividends by the company. George S. Redstreak was superintendent. After 1910, the Jamison Mine was in business only part of the year, however, due to a shortage of water for power. From this time on, operations at both mines continued only in a sporadic way.⁶

4. Howard N. Sloane, Pictorial History of American Mining, p.125.

5. Jackson, op.cit., p. 8

6. Ibid., pp. 13-27.

2.5

Johnsville

"When William Johns became general manager of the Plumas Eureka Mine he decided to locate a new village on a level stretch of land between Jamison Creek and Eureka Peak. In 1876 John Banks filed a land claim to twenty acres on the townsite and erected the first hotel. By popular agreement the new settlement was named Johnstown, after the popular manager, and soon thereafter changed to Johnsville."¹

At that time there were two other settlements in the area. The oldest, Jamison City, grew up along Jamison Creek in 1853. It has been described as a "lively camp," where drinks flowed freely. It was preferred by miners without families. The other settlement, Eureka Mills, was built by the British owned Sierra Buttes Company. It was located on the hill above Johnsville and favored by employees with families.

By 1890, the days of excitement and prosperity in Jamison City had passed, and Johnsville, which was more accessible than Eureka Mills, was a thriving community. It boasted two first-class hotels, three general merchandise stores, a meat market, shoemaker, express office, brewery and four saloons.² There was a Methodist Church, and in 1901, St. John's Catholic Church was dedicated by Bishop Grace of Sacramento. Christmas and Fourth of July were celebrated with events for the whole community. Baseball was a favorite fair-weather sport, with snow-shoe races staged in the winter.

Thus, when the Moriarity family arrived in the area in 1895, Johnsville was a bustling community, the social center of which was the Eureka Hotel, owned by John's brother-in-law, William Passetta.

Economic conditions were looking up in 1896. The Plumas Eureka and Jamison Mines were in operation, as was the quartz ledge owned by Passetta on Squirrel Creek, the Four Hills Mine, and those being started at the head of Nelson and Bluenose creeks. "The business section of Johnsville

1. Plumas County Historical Society, Publication 3, p. 30.

2. W. Turrentine Jackson, A History of Mining in the Plumas Eureka State Park Area 1890-1943, p. 31.

experienced both growth and prosperity between 1898-1901 as a result of the improvement in mining. The Johnsville school, conducted by M. P. Donnelley, had between sixty and seventy pupils." 3 The schoolhouse was located at the far end of town which, Edna recalls, was quite a distance for the Moriarity children to ski during the winter. The classroom was on the lower floor of an I.O.O.F. building, while the Lodge meetings were held upstairs. Children of all ages and capabilities were taught in one room, seated in rows according to grade.

The Moriarity's were Catholic and were most likely involved in the soliciting of funds to build a church in Johnsville. In the spring of 1901, "the Catholics of Johnsville" sponsored a fund-raising social for the benefit of St. John's Church, including a farce entitled, "John Smith," the raffling of a gold brooch, and dancing "until broad day light."⁴

Another social event which the Moriarty's probably attended was during the Christmas holiday of 1899:

"•••The people of Johnsville and vicinity indulged, not only in the usual Christmas festivities, family 'trees,' turkey dinners, etc. but they celebrated the event with a grand masquerade ball at the Sorocco Hall. This occasion was a success **both** from the social and the financial point of view. It was attended by all of the people of Johnsville who delight in dancing, and Mohawk and Sierra Valleys were also well represented. Four **pieces** of music discoursed for the merry masqueraders, among whom were those dressed in elegant costumes, while others were amusing. Sociability and good cheer were kept up till 5:30 next morning. An unusually fine ball supper was spread at the Eureka Hotel by Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Passetta. About sixty tickets were sold enough to cover all expenses of the evenings festivities." 5

The community of Johnsville was closely tied to the success of mining in the area. By 1902, the mines were in a state of decline. "Operations of the Jamison Mining Company were slowing down; the annual water supply needed for power was uncertain. The tributors on the Plumas Eureka property had given

3. Ibid., p. 38.

4. Ibid., p. 39.

5. Ibid.

up, and the British were having difficulty disposing of their claims.⁶ However, in 1905, William Passetta was managing the profitable Bluenose Mining Company. It is quite possible John Moriarity found work in this successful gravel washing operation.

Then, in 1906, a fire swept through Johnsville, destroying twenty buildings. The blaze broke out in Passetta's Eureka Hotel and was believed to be the work of a "fire bug". Louis Grandona and his sister-in-law were arrested for arson, but the case was dismissed without a trial. Grandona had been one of Passetta's partners in working the tailings of the Jamison Mine some years back. A dispute over profits arose and was never resolved.

The town of Johnsville did not fully recover after the fire of 1906. This was partly due to the community's low morale - the fire was the fourth blaze to destroy a major part of the town since 1884. Another reason, of course, was the decline in mining activity. After the Sierra Buttes Mining Company sold out, the mines were worked by a succession of smaller operators. There were some periods of mining excitement, but generally activity dwindled until it was completely discontinued in 1943.

6. Ibid., p. 45.

BACKGROUND

Ownership: "The only deed of record is one dated April 10, 1947 from 1947 from Mardoth Marilyn Quinlisk to Nell B. Brown for ou e and 'house and lot located south of the town of Johnsville, formerly known as the Rogers House, the Moriarity house, the Arcant house and the Frank house'. This was for a one-half interest.

In addition to the above it is understood Col. Lundy deeded additional land to Nell Brown Thomas.

The building was originally built with square nails in the late 1800's, although the kitchen and dining room were added in 1949." (exerpted from "PARCEL NO. 12-NELL BROWN THOMAS ROPERTY" on file at Plumas Eureka State Park)

Restoration: The house was returned to its presumed original exterior state in 1983 by crews from the Office of State Architect. This restoration was based on photographs and archeological surveys.

Interior restoration was completed by Plumas Eureka State Park docents in the summer of 1987. Memo from Frank Lortie, dated March 31, 1987, to Don Murphy: "This is to confirm that we agree that the name 'Moriarity House' be assigned to the historic residence containing the house museum representing the historic period when the Moriarity family occupation (sic), from the late 1890's to 1910. Besides depicting some of the aspects of the Moriarity's life-style, the house museum also demonstrates in a general way what a typical miner's household looked like in this period when the average miner was a wage earner and maintained a family in a relatively stable community."

Johnsville

By SCOTT RASMUSSEN

Special to The Union

They say there was so much saffron shipped through the mail to the wives of Cornish miners in Johnsville, that the post office was scented with the aroma:

The post office no longer remains, and only a handful of inhabitants live here now. Located 30 miles southeast of Quincy and 17 miles north of Sierra City, Johnsville remains one of the best preserved mining towns in the Northern Sierra largely due to the efforts of the California State Park system which' created Plumas Eureka State Park in 1959.

Quartz mining began in the summer of 1851; operations were small and crude, and what gold was mined was used to keep the mines operating.

It wasn't until 1873 when the Sierra Buttes Company, based in London, England, purchased the Plumas Eureka Mine and several smaller mines and consolidated operations.

Johnsville was built adjacent to the mine as a company town. Scores of Cornish miners and their families settled in the area and Johnsville evolved as a company town, complete with churches, school, hotel, saloons and stores.

Mining continued until the late 1930s when the veins played out.

Mining isn't the reason Johnsville is remembered however. The first ski competitions in the United States took place there in the 1860s.

Norwegian miners isolated by winter snows made long wooden skis called "snowshoes" after old country fashion to transport themselves.

Eventually friendly races were held between neighboring mining camps and full-fledged teams from remote areas such as Poker Flat, Whiskey Diggin's and La Porte would converge upon Johnsville for races where the betting was steep and competition fierce. Skiers on snowshoes, measuring up to 12 feet long would race downhill reaching speeds of up to 80 miles-per-hour.

To prevent snow from sticking to the snowshoes skiers would treat the wood with specially concocted mixtures known as "dope." Each skier had his own special formula and the ingredients were a closely-guarded secret. The base was usually one of several waxes, oils, or pitches, but to gain the competitive edge, a dash of tobacco juice, stomach bitters or horse manure was added.

There's still a small ski run maintained by the Plumas Ski Club, and the town remains much as it did 80 years ago, without the commercial activity

As dusk settles over the

Sierra as the wood smoke from the chimneys of the remaining dwellings hangs heavy in the air, you can almost hear the clatter of the stamp mill and the jangle of harness chains as the stage pulls in from Howland Flat on a winter evening long ago.

