

Ranch wins \$350,000 Caltrans grant

Mohawk Valley Stewardship Council (MVSC), the nonprofit corporation that is overseeing the rescue and restoration of the White Sulphur Springs Ranch (WSSR) house and grounds, has scored another grant. The council received a grant for \$350,000 from the Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program for renovation of the White Sulphur Springs pool, decking and bathhouse.

Grant writer Alice Berg, with the help of fellow MVSC board member Marnie Malpas, has managed to successfully fund yet another large piece of the White Sulphur Springs project.

Malpas, an attorney who now lives in Seattle, has historic ties to the ranch. She's the grandniece of Mava Machomich who, with her husband, owned Gold Lake Lodge. Machomich lived at the ranch starting in the 1950s to help care for George McLear Jr. and Isabelle. McLear's father had

built the house that is the focal point of restoration efforts. Malpas has fond memories of her frequent visits to the ranch to visit family and swim in the warm springs pool.

The council planned that the first phase of property restoration at the ranch would be the pool (the hub of community activity in times past) and property landscaping, so the grant comes at the perfect time to get the restoration effort off the ground.

The council is currently working on plans and permits to meet state and county requirements for the pool. Members are also conducting water resource investigations in order to determine and follow the necessary protection measures. They hope to maintain the pool in its natural, spring-fed, flow-through state, so that the public can benefit from its healing mineral waters, as residents and weary travelers have for more than 150 years.

One such traveler, Lydia Milner Walters, wrote about her 1855 experience in "Account of a Trip Across the Plains."

"We reached Mohawk Valley over fearful ground, as we made our own road. September 8th, the next day, moved about two miles up among the large pines. Here we stayed a month and had fine times, although surrounded by grizzly bears and large wolves. Two miles above us was a Bathhouse with water from a warm sulphur spring. Harris and Groves, who owned it, gave us liberty to use it, and we did — every day.

"The water had an exhilarating effect, made one feel as lively as champagne. Harris and Groves did treat us handsomely. They always had a houseful and finally ruined themselves by their hospitality.

"Among other things, they gave a ball for us, inviting the Jamison City and Eureka people. Most of their supplies they had sent from

Marysville, and they sent to Jamison City to borrow all the dishes the town could spare. The dishes were packed up on a mule, which stumbled as it got to the top of the trail, and down went dishes and mule for a couple of hundred feet. The music was good and we danced until daylight."

The council has launched a capital campaign to fund the renovation of the original snack shack and picnic shed that stand near the front of the property.

The building will provide a food preparation area for community events and picnics once White Sulphur Springs is back in action.

The group hopes to raise enough funds to purchase building materials for the shack and shed renovation project, and will be looking for local community volunteers to help rebuild it.

To donate, volunteer or get more information, check the MVSC website, mohawkvalley.us or call Alice Berg at 836-1201.