

Memorial Park

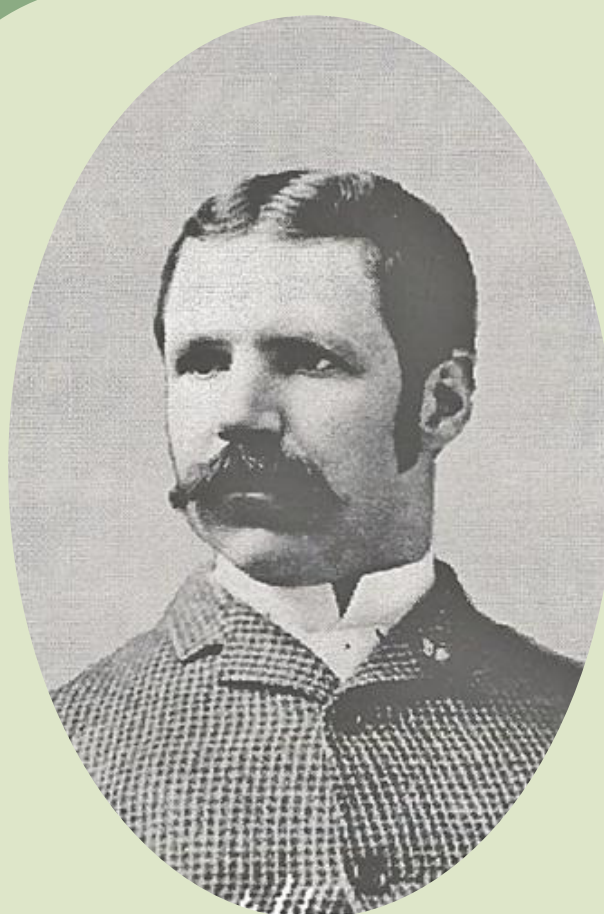
A Community Collaboration



Following the ending of the first World War, many communities were establishing memorials dedicated to their local fallen soldiers. Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce secretary, James C. “Jim” Tyrrell, wanted the same for Grass Valley and started working to set the project in motion.



James C. "Jim" Tyrrell



William Bourn



George W. Starr

Tyrrell approached long-time friend and managing director of the Empire Gold Mine, George W. Starr, about a seven-acre property known as the Barker Track between Race Street and Colfax Avenue. Tyrrell proposed to develop this property into a memorial park and an auto-camp, which was ultimately passed by Starr to Empire gold mine president William Bourn and the Empire Mine Board of Directors who embraced the idea.

On January 23, 1921, the *Morning Union* newspaper published an article detailing the proposed features of the new park which included a bronze memorial naming fallen soldiers from the district, a playground, trees and gardens, an auto camp, a public pool, a baseball diamond, and bridges over the creek.

Under the slogan “Give A Shift for the Park”, the community rallied together to encourage involvement from local individuals and businesses in the form of fundraising, donating materials, and volunteering labor. The creation of Memorial Park became a model for other towns and cities; a park built by the community without using taxpayers’ money.



Community Members volunteering labor towards the creation of the park in 1921
Courtesy Grass Valley Union Newspaper

In Memory of the Past We Build for the Future

Grass Valley's Memorial Park and Play Grounds

To be dedicated to the former service men of this city and the adjacent communities as a testimonial of appreciation on the part of the citizens of Grass Valley and vicinity.

Tract of eight acres to be given outright by the Empire Mines.

The land is situated on the easterly limits of the city and is partially bounded by the Empire road and Race streets. A stream of clear water runs through the plot the year around.

Shelter houses will be built for auto tourists and it will be the Mecca for touring parties to this part of the state.

When the plans are finally completed the park will be equipped with a swimming pool and bath houses.

It is planned to enclose the park with a well built attractive fence, and to plant trees and shrubbery to make it a beauty spot. There will be a memorial grove in which trees will be dedicated as living memorials to Gold Star service men.

A service house equipped with lavatories, shower baths, and a writing room, also

A bronze tablet with names of former service men who lost their lives as a result of the great war. A list of all the men who entered the service from this city and vicinity.

There will be a soccer field, baseball diamond, tennis court and cinder path for foot races.

For the children there will be a sand plot, slide, swings, rings, horizontal bar and other equipment.

All of these improvements and additions will depend upon the manner in which the project is financed, and from present indications the people will respond most generously.

A list of the subscribers to date will be published within the next few days. It is to be for all the people of the community all the time.

Memorial Park Committee Of the Chamber of Commerce

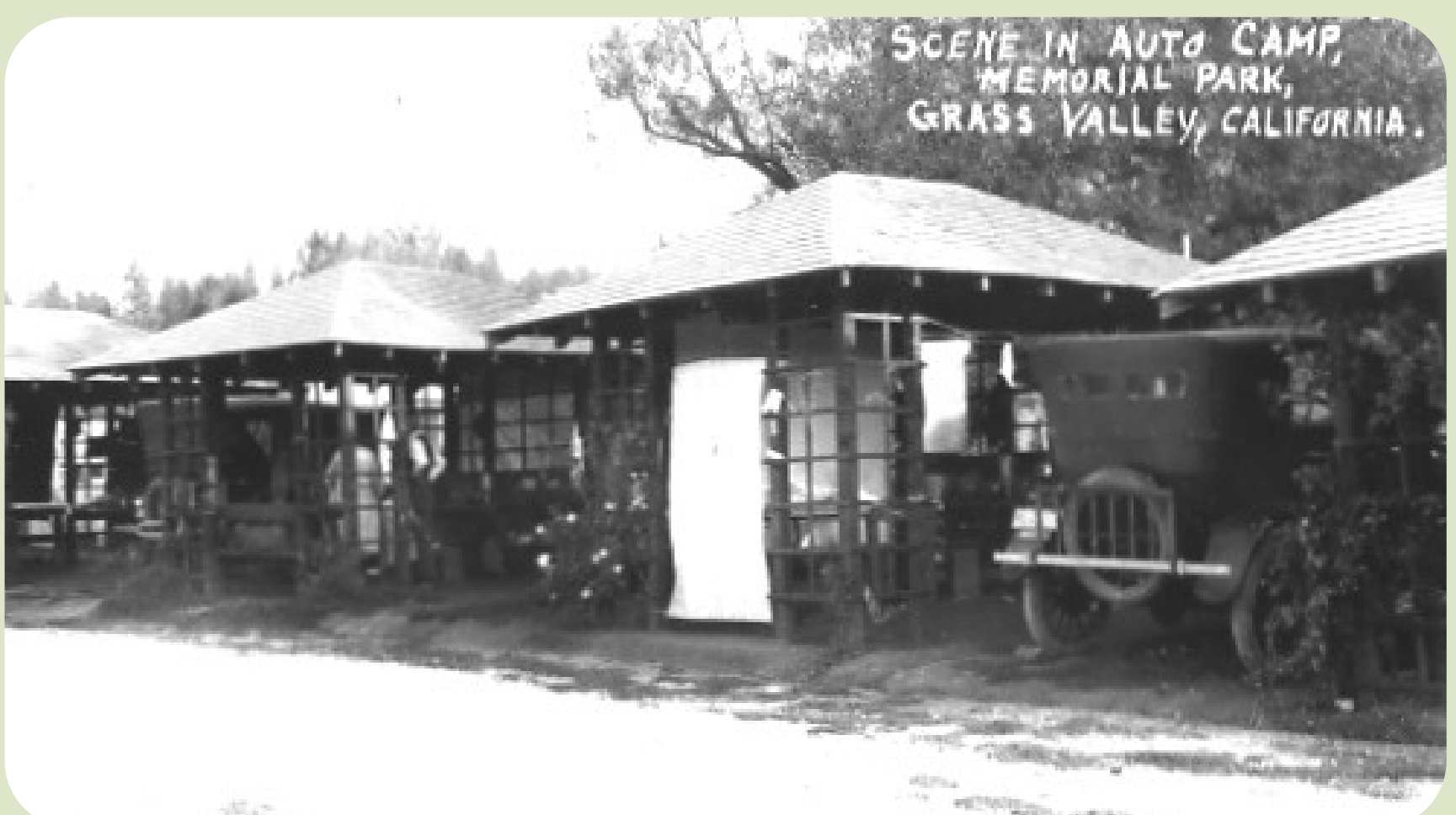
In Memory of the Past We Build for the Future,
announcement in the *Morning Union* March 11, 1920



**Morning Union article dated
May 31, 1992**

Memorial Park

The Best in the West



Following the trend of “Car Camping” made popular by President Harding, towns across America started to create auto camps. These camps were usually equipped with shelters houses, washrooms, and fuel stations, and opened the door for small rural areas to accommodate travelers, boosting tourism. After seeing the success of the auto camp in nearby Nevada City, Chamber of Commerce secretary James “Jim” Tyrrell knew that one needed to be included in Memorial Park.

In addition to the 8 houses, a smaller building with toilets, washbasins, showers and dressing rooms was built exclusively for the auto camp visitors. Anita B. Fulton, wife of a mine manager, designed the communal facilities at the auto camp and the Farm Bureau contributed materials and expertise.



**Local Tourists
Praise Memorial
Park Best in West**

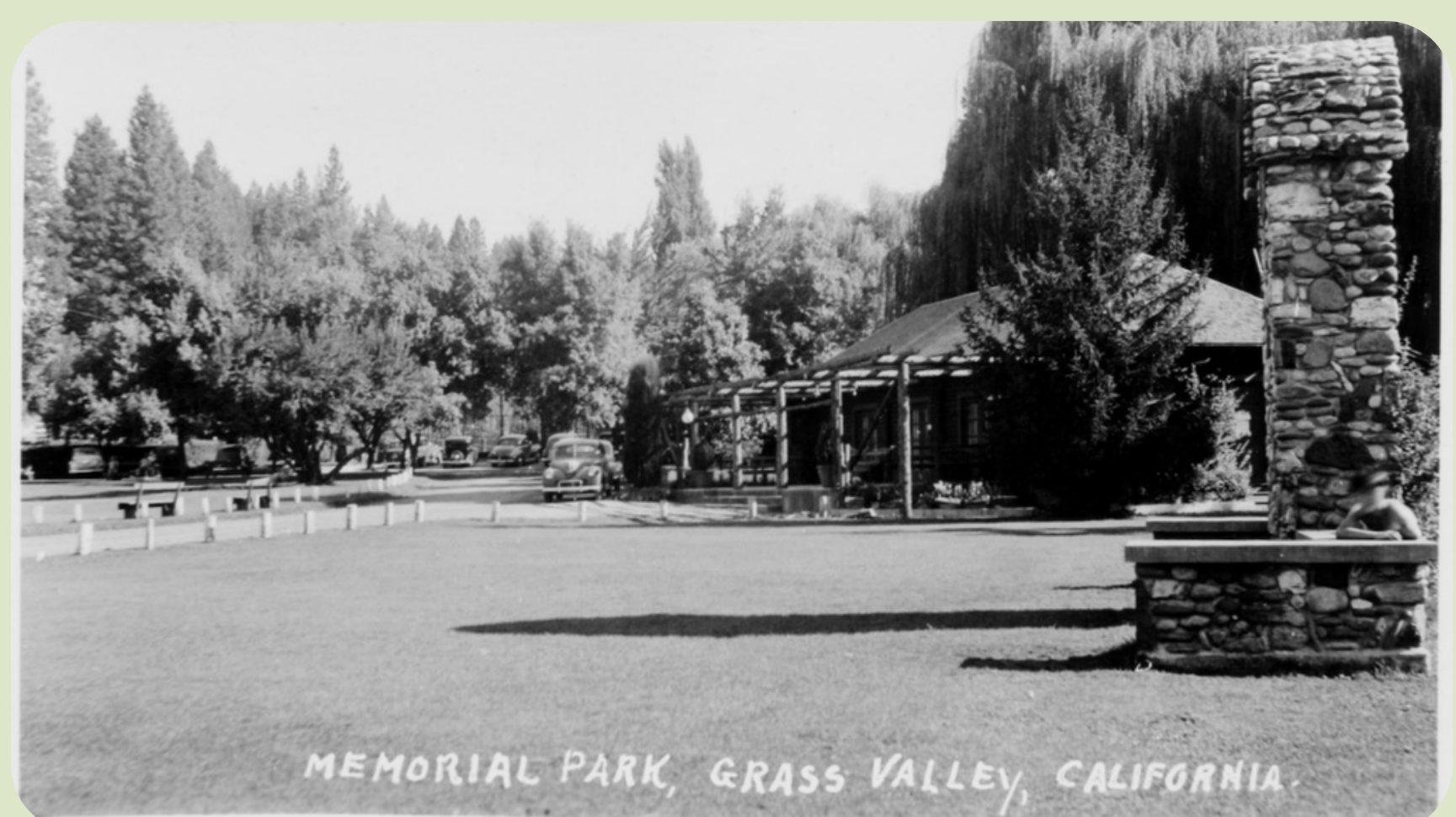
Grass Valley Memorial Park has been given much publicity during the past few weeks by Messrs. J. D. Tupper, W. T. George and Oscar Moorhouse, who recently returned from a three weeks trip by auto. The local business men visited parks in many towns and cities in California and Nevada and found nothing that would in any way compare with the local park.

Morning Union
August 25, 1922



All photos courtesy Searls Historical Society

As a gift from the mine, the Idaho Maryland Mines Company staff built a community building for the park. This building was designed for the public use, providing a large central room, bathrooms as well as additional storage rooms for City use.



Per the *Morning Union*, the Community House was used for a multitude of events such as club meetings, school events, concerts and private parties.



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Memorial Park

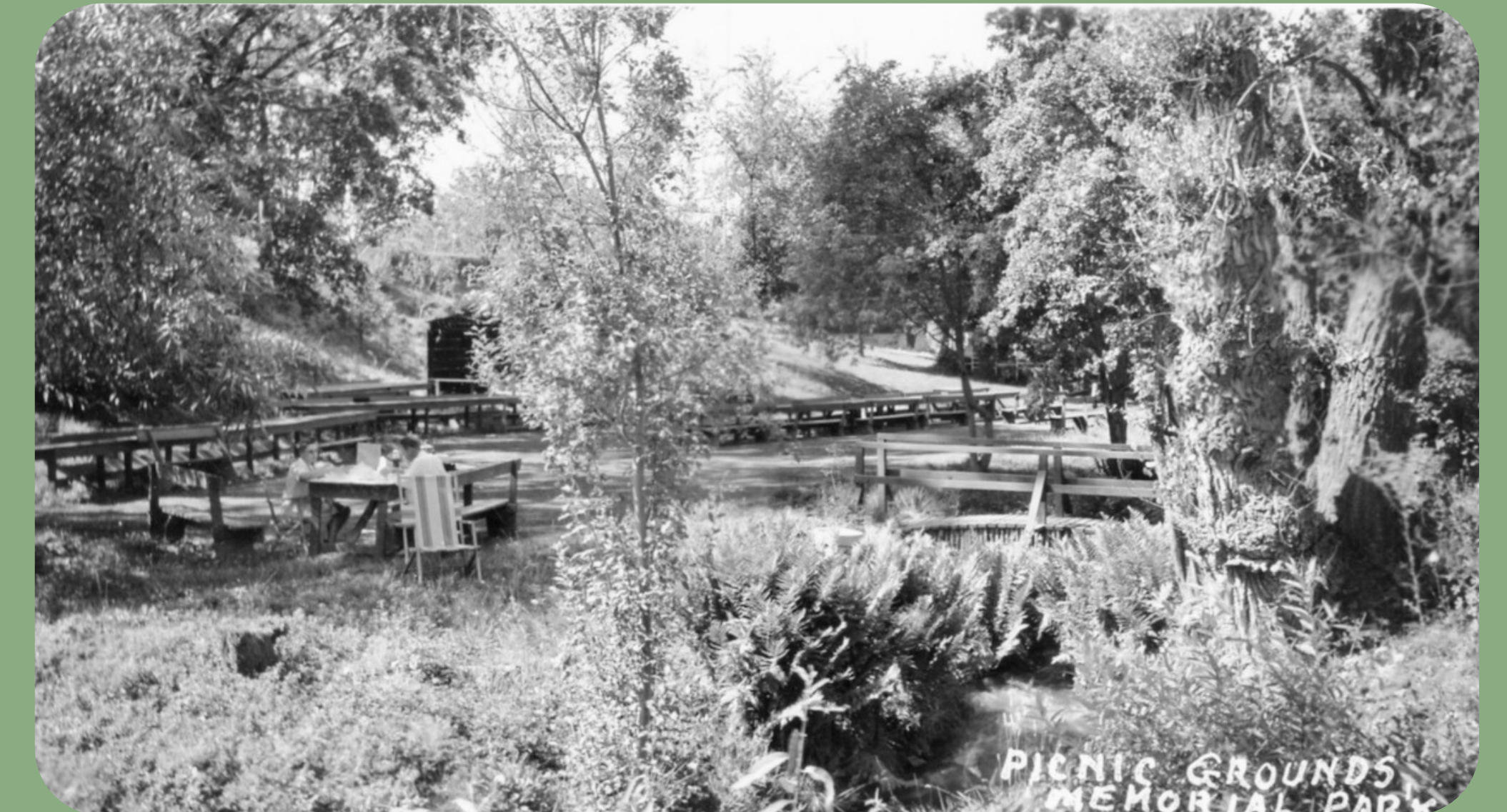
Grass Valley's Greatest Asset



The pool was donated by Elizabeth "Libby" Starr, wife of Empire mine managing director, George Starr and the pool house was given to the city by the mine. George Starr directed the construction of both the 130'x40' pool and house and selected his crew, including locals John Collins and his son Clarence. The father and son duo helped build the forms and pour the concrete for the original swimming pool and they built the pool house. By late September 1921, the pool and structures were complete.



Bennet "Ben" Penhall designed and supervised the construction of a stone bridge over the creek which was filled with 10,000 trout by the California Fish and Game Department and ran through the property. Members of the community and the Nevada County Farm Bureau donated their time and material towards landscaping the Park



Edmund Kinyon, the editor of the *Morning Union*, stated that children played from morning to night and that Memorial Park was Grass Valley's greatest asset.

