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Wednesday, August 19, 2020

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A Cal Fire firefighter initiates a firing procedure where fire fuel is ignited to back burn vegetation down the Yuba River Canyon toward the flames of the Jones Fire Tuesday morning.

NEVADA CITY

Tree clearing an obstacle for microgrid

By John Orona
Staff Writer

With wildfires and potential power outages already bearing down on Nevada County, almost a year after PG&E Public Safety Power Shut-offs left nearly 50,000 residents without electricity, it's still unclear whether Grass Valley and Nevada City will have power this fire season.

During last autumn's

shut-offs, parts of the county's critical infrastructure like Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital were able to operate thanks to generators hooked up to Grass Valley's Glenbrook Basin substation.

While PG&E has committed to once again reenergizing the area during a PSPS event, according to PG&E spokesperson Brandon Sanders, the

MICROGRID, A10

A waiting game

Evacuations continue as firefighters battle Jones Fire

By Liz Kellar
Staff Writer

As evacuations from the Jones Fire stretched into a second day, many residents forced to flee from the path of the fire still had no idea as of late Tuesday if their homes still stood.

Amy and Chamba Cooke, who live on Tasha Road next to the Woolman School property, were ready to go even before they heard the high-low warning siren at 5:30 a.m. Monday.

"We woke up at 4:30 and smelled smoke," Amy said. "We got right up."

Unable to access the internet, the couple decided to start packing.

"We had pretty much everything ready," Amy said, adding it was mostly a matter of rounding up their cats, adding a few items and getting everything into the car.

Safely out of town, the Cookes have been left to wait and worry.

Amy Cooke said she had tried unsuccessfully throughout the day to get word on her home, getting referred from place to place with no luck.

"There are so many rumors out there," she said. "There's just no way to know. ... It's like waiting for a biopsy result. It's very hard."

Michael Habig, who evacuated from Nishinam Gulch Road late Monday, said he left with his cats and little else.

"I'm praying that the structure is there," he said. "I stayed to the very last second."

Habig said he was in Camptonville Sunday night



The flames from a firing procedure make their way down the Yuba River Canyon Tuesday morning along Highway 49. The back burn was intended to reduce fire fuels in the path of the Jones Fire.

and rushed home as soon as he heard about the fire, around 8 a.m.

Even his road was under mandatory evacuation, Habig said at the time everything seemed under control and so he stayed.

"About 3 p.m. the wind started spinning, the fire started moving toward me," he said. "I grabbed everything and vacated. It was two properties away when I left."

Habig said that other than his cats, he took some photos, adding, "I don't have one dollar. I wasn't able to leave with anything I need."

He gave thanks to family who took him in, and to Incredible Pets in Grass Valley, where employees told him to take what he needed so he could take care of his animals.

"I'm alive, I'm healthy, I'm in good spirits," Habig said. "This is an opportunity to be more kind and loving to



Cal Fire firefighters watch over the Jones Fire from Highway 49 near Rush Creek after initiating a firing procedure early Tuesday morning. The procedure helped reduce fire fuels before a full day of fighting the blaze.

everybody."

Damage assessment on homes in the burn area had not yet been completed and no information was available, Nevada County Public Information Officer Taylor Wolfe said Tuesday afternoon.

FIRE

The fire was first reported before 3 a.m. Monday in the South Yuba Canyon,

according to the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services. Residents of Jones Bar Road north of Woolman and the connecting roads were the first to be ordered to evacuate by the Nevada County Sheriff's Office, while the area to the south — including downtown Grass Valley — was under an evacuation warning.

FIRE, A6



SEARLS HISTORICAL LIBRARY

Much less is known about Ellen Clark Sargent, one of the most prominent daughters of Nevada County, than her husband, Aaron Sargent, the former U.S. senator. This is Ellen's story.

RIGHT TO VOTE

In the hands of women

'The ballot, in the hands of women, would help to redeem the world'

By Bernard Zimmerman
Special to The Union

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

Nevada County was the birthplace of the amendment, as its parents were Aaron and Ellen Sargent. Much is known about Aaron, one of the most prominent sons of Nevada County: publisher, politician,

congressman, senator and ambassador.

Much less is known about Ellen, one of the most prominent daughters of Nevada County. This is her story.

Ellen Clark was born in Massachusetts in 1826. As a teenager in Newburyport, Massachusetts, she fell in love with Aaron Augustus Sargent, one year her junior, an aspiring journalist and politician. Both taught

ZIMMERMAN, A10

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VOLUME 155 ISSUE 238



8 52722 00100 7

WEATHER



H: 94° L: 63°
See full forecast, Page A9

Sunny

INDEX

Advice	A7
Blotter	A2
Comics	B2
Cryptoquote	A7
Lottery	A7
Opinion	A4
Photo Page	A8
Lifestyles	B1
Sudoku	A7

IN BRIEF

Cases climb to 392

Nevada County reached a total of 392 coronavirus cases on Tuesday, an increase of seven from the prior day.

Western county had 223 cases, and eastern county had 169. There were 58 active cases on Tuesday, a rise of two from the day before. There have been 332 recoveries, and two deaths.

Cases have continued to climb in the

county. There were 231 cases on July 21, growing to 285 by July 28. Aug. 4 had 316 cases. By Aug. 11 they had grown to 357.

One person was hospitalized locally Tuesday with COVID-19, records show.

Of the 15,644 tests performed locally, 2.5% of people have tested positive.

Nationwide, there were 5,422,242 total cases, and 169,870 deaths, the CDC states.

— The Union staff

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FROM PAGE ONE

ZIMMERMAN

From page A1

Sunday school in the local Methodist Church.

In 1847 Aaron left Ellen to begin the journey, which in 1849 brought him to Nevada City to search for gold. He built a four-room house on Broad Street and in early 1852 returned to Newburyport where he and Ellen were married on March 15. They arrived in Nevada City that October. Ellen wrote of her arrival:

"My good husband had before my arrival provided for me a one-story house of four rooms including a good-sized pantry where he had already stored a bag of flour, a couple of pumpkins and various other edibles ready for use."

While Aaron prospered in business, politics and the law, Ellen raised three children, daughters Ellen (born 1854) and Elizabeth (1857) and son George (1860). She was always an advocate of women's rights and in 1869 founded the Nevada County Woman's Suffrage Association. Soon afterward, she became president of the California Woman Suffrage Association. In 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the

National Woman Suffrage Association, to advocate for a constitutional amendment granted women the right to vote. Ellen soon became its treasurer.

KINDRED SPIRITS

Susan B. Anthony was a close friend of Ellen's, and a frequent guest in the Sargent homes in California and Washington, D.C. A sense of the depth of their relationship can be gleaned from the over 30 years of correspondence between them.

For example, in 1872, Aaron was elected to the United States Senate and the Sargent family moved to Washington. Susan accompanied the Sargent family on their trip across the country. In Wyoming, the train stalled in a snowstorm. Wrote Susan:

"... young Georgie Sargent got out to explore, slipped on the snow and broke his arm. Watching the painful bone-setting of her little son's arm, Ellen fainted."

Ellen lived in Washington on and off, for 12 years. When Aaron was appointed minister to Germany, she accompanied him to Berlin. She enjoyed her time in Europe, and the ministerial life, though she candidly wrote George:

"... I expect to go to the Court Entertainment of January 19. Your mother will appear in a dress décolleté, without sleeves, such is the tyranny of court fashion, but still, it seems best that I should go. Of course, I can stay away, but if I go I must conform to the custom".

Upon her return to the U.S., she wrote Susan:

"I assure you it seems great to be once more on American soil, and I believe myself to have a more just appreciation of my country since my sojourn in foreign lands. We are far from being a perfect people or a perfect government, but it seems to me there is more hope of our growing to the full stature of men and women here, than of those who are under the conditions of the old world".

Aaron died in 1887. Susan immediately sent her condolences:

"Where is the man who will do publicly — what your noble husband did so bravely for the cause of women during the terms of his congressional life."

Ellen replied:

"I have thought often of you, but a multiplicity of cares and my depression of spirits at the loss of my dear husband has prevented me from writing to you. We are

gradually returning to our normal tone of feeling and to the duties of everyday life, for we must go on with living however dearest friends may drop from our sight. It seems to me like a fearful dream all the time. I don't know that I want any more of life for myself, but my family and friends still hold me, and I am always hoping that I may still do a little for the world that it may be some better for my having lived in it."

Ellen returned to San Francisco, where the Sargents had bought a home before he was elected to the Senate. She continued her activities with the California Woman Suffrage Association and the National American Women Suffrage Association. She also helped found the Century Club, San Francisco's first woman's club, still in existence.

Ellen and Susan continued to correspond. Over the years, Ellen shared some of her doubts and concerns:

"How is it with our countrywomen? Have we any influence at all in shaping the legislature of this country? Have we any power hidden or acknowledged? In short have women anything to do with the present campaign? Will anybody do anything for us? Will we do anything

for ourselves?"

Somewhat later, Ellen wrote:

"I wish Mr. S. could go to Washington and do for the woman what Sumner did for the colored man. Oh it seems to me we must come to our time soon. 'Watch-woman what of the night?' What of the dawn?"

Susan often gave advice:

"You need a score of good organizers ... in as many different counties every single day — but while you may not find organizers — you must be able to find good canvassers with the petitions — it needs intelligent women — who can give the reasons for our position — paid agents as a rule — aren't good for much — because they do not understand the great principles upon which our claim rests."

When Ellen was preparing a suffrage petition, Susan cautioned:

"I think it's stronger not to say 'woman' or 'sex' — just Equal suffrage — and 'Citizenship the basis of suffrage.'"

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

At the age of 74, Ellen became a tax protester. Her position was simple: why should she have to

pay taxes to a government that wouldn't let her vote. She lost her court case, but continued to file tax protests. Her actions caused other wealthy women taxpayers to also protest.

Finally in 1911, she led the campaign for a successful California referendum which amended the California constitution to give women the right to vote.

Ellen died during the referendum campaign. The city of San Francisco held its first public memorial for a woman, during which it was said: "It was her strong conviction that the ballot, in the hands of women, would help to redeem the world." State flags were flown at half staff.

In 1878, Aaron while a U.S. Senator had proposed a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote; it got nowhere for 40 years. It was reintroduced in 1919 and enacted in 1920 as the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is Ellen's eternal memorial.

This story was first published in the April 2020 edition of the Nevada County Historical Society Bulletin. Visit www.nevadacountyhistory.org or more information on the historical society.

MICROGRID

From page A1

substation will need to be reconfigured before it can be used this year.

The company said it's made efforts to make any shutoffs this year shorter, smaller, and smarter through new technology like fire cams, increased aerial inspection, infrared equipment, and increasing its website capacity. It's also installed sectionalizing devices along the county's

grid to decrease the amount of customers affected by an outage, with plans to install more by the end of the month, and are increasing its Community Resource Center locations, if needed.

"While PSPS is an important wildfire safety tool, we know that losing power disrupts lives, especially for those with medical needs and customers sheltering at home in response to novel coronavirus (COVID-19)," PG&E spokesperson Brandi Merlo said in an email.

"We have placed temporary generation at the Brunswick Substation, installed sectionalizing devices and continue to work on vegetation management in the area in collaboration with Nevada County, Nevada City, Caltrans and Cal Fire. PG&E continues to explore potential solutions for mitigating PSPS impacts in Nevada City."

While these measures are supposed to make shutoffs shorter and more targeted, Nevada City officials are

hoping to have a local, temporary microgrid setup that would allow them to retain power, similar to the Glenbrook Basin. After the Grass Valley substation is reconfigured, crews will need to clear vegetation along transmission lines that carry that power to Nevada City.

If the vegetation is not cleared, it could be too dangerous to have the lines energized during a high wind event.

While some vegetation has already been worked on,

a plan to remove more than 260 trees along West Broad and Orchard streets will go Thursday before the Nevada City Planning Commission. Typically tree removal work done by utility contractors does not require a permit, but due to the size and historic nature of the project, PG&E will seek approval for those trees, City Engineer Bryan McAlister said.

According to Planning Commission documents, 103 trees are within city property, including Pioneer

Cemetery, while 160 are on private property.

PG&E also stated it was looking into a temporary microgrid for Soda Springs in eastern Nevada County.

According to Merlo, PG&E will discuss its Public Safety Power Shut-off plans in more depth at next week's Board of Supervisors meeting.

To contact Staff Writer John Orona, email jorona@theunion.com or call 530-477-4229.



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