



Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass

Ice Lakes •

History

Before 1850 you drank your root beer or sarsaparilla warm in California. Then ice began to be imported from Alaska. No one realized there was a closer supply in the Sierra. Ice Lakes got its name from the ice industry that arrived here in 1868, headed by B.B. Redding, who once fly fished 200 trout out of the American River in a day. He was also the Secretary of State of California, State printer, and RR land agent, among other things. When the ice was thick enough it was incised, sawn into blocks, and floated to the ice houses on the lake shore. There it was stored pending transport to the railroad and then San Francisco. The industry didn't last long though. Although the ice in Ice Lakes gets to be five feet thick, the climate, snowfall and snow depth were just too much on Donner Summit (400 inches or so of snow a year). The Summit Ice Co. moved to Prosser in 1870. Note the 1866 map to the left shows 3 Ice Lakes which was true until the dam was built in the 1940's.



When Surveyed
1866
October 11th 1866

Serene Lakes 1866
from the first government survey map
source: Bureau of Land Management

A Good Story

The Dreams he had.

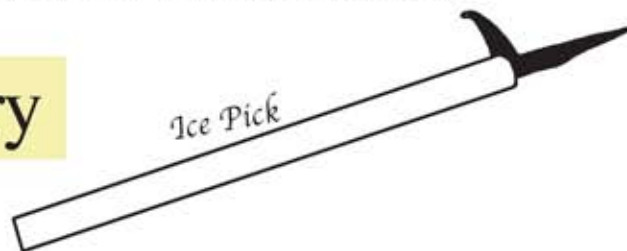
In 1866 Fitz William Redding Jr., from Nova Scotia, became the first settler here at Ice Lakes. He built a small 12 X 12 plank cabin on the edge of the lakes just across from here. He was all alone, but over the hill the railroad was coming and there was lots of activity. Fitz William must have had big plans for the 160 acres that he was aiming to patent (buy) from the government for \$2.50 an acre. He cut trees and readied his land for grazing. He even stocked the first fish in the lakes by planting 300 fish. He probably was surprised by the snow and he left for Sacramento spending most of the winter there. He returned in the spring but he might have had trouble finding his cabin under the drifts of snow. He got sick, went back to Sacramento, and died - age 20.

Things to do right here

- Eat at Ice Lakes Lodge. The food is really good and the view is spectacular.
- Read more about the ice industry on the wall there or at www.DonnerSummitHistoricalSociety.org
- Walk around the lakes.



Ice Saw



Ice Pick



Ice Gaff



Ice Tongs

