



Donner Summit Historical Society

March, 2011 issue #31

Newsletter

REMEMBER THESE?

Donner Summit & Skiing - 1941

Our newsletter staff was intending on using the material here in our January issue, but the issue got to its preferred size and there was no room. So it went into the February folder. The same thing happened. Since it's about skiing which is about snow and winter, we put it at the top of the list for March. As it was being assembled though it became clear that one intended story for this month, Summit Hotel II, a continuation from last month, would get put off until the April issue. There's just so much Donner Summit history and you should see the list of stories being working on or ready to use.

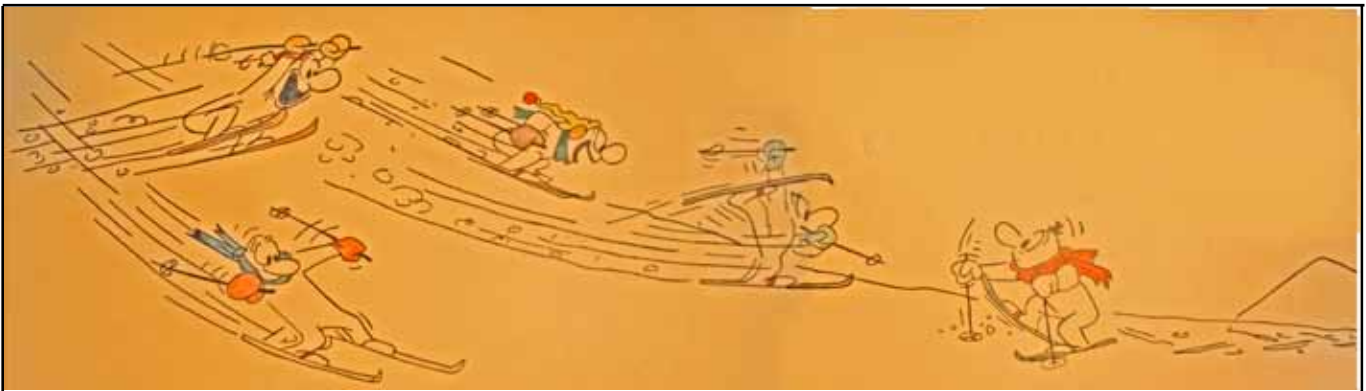
The California Magazine arrived at the Historical society as part of a lot of material donated by Starr Walton Hurley, who has a house across from the Historical Society and who is on the Historical Society's board. A story about her house and the other stone house at the blinking light in Soda Springs will be coming next summer. You may remember too, "Starr's Story," her description of the Sugar Bowl Silver Belt race which ran in our 12/09 issue. It's a good story about raindrops, dancing with the mountain, and going downhill very fast. The December, 2009 newsletter is available on our website. The story is also available on the www.exploredonnersummit.com website at <http://www.exploredonnersummit.com/pages/starrsstory.html>



As the suspender is to the pants, the boot is to the skier—a great deal depends on it. Above, a good quality Chippewa ski boot.

We thought the following material would be fun to share from the point of view of skiing and Donner Summit in 1941. So you will find here a map of Donner Summit Winter Sports areas. There are two URL's below it. The one ending in PDF takes you to a version of the map 8 inches wide in PDF form. We enlarged the original to make the jpg version, the second URL, for easier viewing. You can also get to them by going to the historical society's "maps" page. Look at all the ski areas in those days along Old 40 and look at the ski trails, which as we've reported, were built by the USFS.

cont'd to page 5



South Bay Ski Club Shares a Find

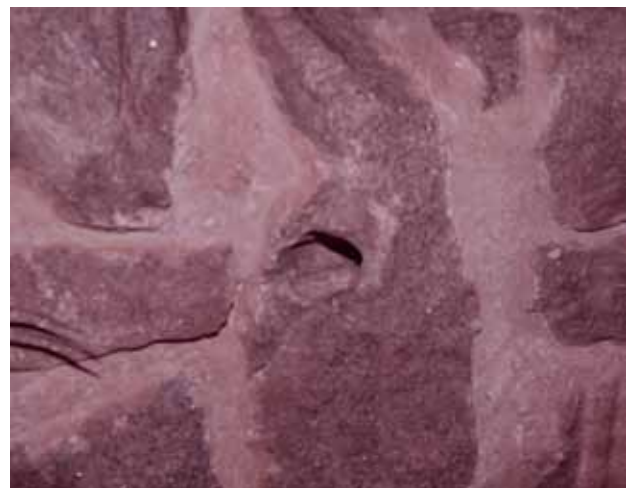
Our January issue carried a story about cartoonists on the Summit which picqued the interest of a couple of member's of the Southbay Ski Club (the club is pictured on page 4) which is in downtown Soda Springs. Helen Conway contacted the Historical Society saying she thought the club had a Snuffy O'Neil cartoon. Not wanting to leave a historical Donner Summit artifact undocumented, the Society sent over the photography staff. That results in the small depiction of the 24" poster above.

Is it a "Snuffy O'Neil" original? Our staff is not experienced in art attribution and there is no signature. It is old, however judging from the paper. The only clue is that someone wrote "Saturday Evening Post" in the lower right corner.

While our staff was at the club, meeting Helen and fellow club member Bill Zschaler, the conversation turned to the history of the club and its building. The building is clearly old, dating from perhaps before the forties. It has a marvelous old plank floor. The outstanding detail is the stone fireplace, built out of cut granite and which is about eight feet wide and four feet deep. It extends from bedrock to the roof and above. It was built in the days of real fireplaces. That might not be unusual. There is lots of granite on the Summit. The major quarrying and shaping of granite was done by the Chinese working on the Transcontinental railroad. One would not necessarily assume the granite came from the railroad but look at the picture here to the right. There is clearly a drill hole, like the ones into which black powder was inserted to break up granite. You can see many drill holes, that were never used of course, in the Tunnel 6 (the long 1867 tunnel over the Summit across from Donner Ski Ranch), and in the face of China Wall, as well as in the occasional rock lying near the railroad bed.

Besides the fireplace, we asked about any secret panels or hidden rooms. Unfortunately Helen and Bill knew of none (or none they wanted to share).

editor:
Bill Oudegeest
209-606-6859
info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.com



Not wanting to leave the subject of the Southbay Ski Club, we will expect they will discover the history of their building so we can pass it on.



by
Margie
Powell

George Ripley Stewart

Author in Many Genres

My first encounter with the writings of George Ripley Stewart occurred when I was eleven years old. My mother had received the book *Storm* as the Book of the Month Club selection. It looked interesting, so I read it. I found it was possible to write a book about a storm and make it a real page turner. *Storm* also prompted the National Weather Service to hereafter name hurricanes and typhoons after women's names. It also inspired a song in the musical *Paint Your Wagon*: "They Call the Wind Maria".

In *Storm*'s front pages I noticed that Stewart had written other books. Our old ivy-covered library in Santa Rosa actually had one, *Ordeal by Hunger*. This was the first time I had heard of the Donner Party. Little did I know then how important this knowledge would be to me later in my life.

Years went by; graduation from college, marriage, love of California history. A book review in our local paper led me to another Stewart book, *Earth Abides*. It took place in Berkeley, where we were living, so my husband and I both read it. The book generated a lot of discussion between us. At this point I was on a quest to read all the George Stewart books that I could get my hands on. I found *Sheep Rock*, *Doctor's Oral*, *Man, An Autobiography*, *Donner Pass* and *Fire*. This was long before Amazon.com so I usually found such old books in old bookstores.

Earth Abides, by the way, won the first International Fantasy Award in 1951, and years later became required reading in a lot of high school English and Social Studies classes.

More years passed and we found ourselves building a little ski cabin near Donner Pass. By this time I was really into history, so I started reading everything I could find out about this wonderful area. There were more books about the Donner Party [In a later newsletter I will include a list of many of these and explain how each book has a unique spin.]

In addition to writing in many disciplines Stewart was an English professor at the University of California - Berkeley. His academic works that he became famous for were in toponymy: the study of names of a region and the etymology of names. Books in this genre include;

U.S. 40- Cross Section of the United States of America, which contains the photographic and narrative essays depicting life traveling the roads of America.

[go to the next page](#)

[A Concise Dictionary of American Place Names](#)
[Names on the Globe](#)
[American Given Names](#)
[Names on the Land](#)

Stewart's Ordeal by Hunger and Storm can still be found on the shelves of local bookstores. Recently he was finally honored for his love of Donner Pass by having a mountain peak on Old 40 named Stewart Peak. If you are standing on the Donner Summit Bridge lookout, turn around and look north. On the right is Stephens Peak (after Elisha Stephens of the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party) and on the left is Stewart Peak.

What We Have Here

I stopped in to see Norm at the Historical Society for something, but what has gotten lost with a lot else in my defective memory. On my way out the door I saw the rusted metal to the right. Naturally that occasioned a longer stay and conversation.

This is a "mash shovel" found long ago by Leroy Waddle of the Palisades when he and his father, "I think about 45-50 years ago," says Leroy, at the site of the old Boca Brewery.

Later an antique expert and friend of Leroy's identified it as a mash shovel, used for stirring the mash during the brewing process.

It's an interesting addition to the Society's collection and we thank Leroy. When we get to Summit art, some issues down the way, we'll talk about the Palisades' Muybridge.



Southbay Ski Club

Pictures of the Southbay Ski Club (from page 2) supplied by Helen Conway.



California Skiing, 1941

from page 1: Those are the ski trails that Art Clark has been looking to map out. Our last couple of issues have had pictures of some of his many "Sierra Ski Ways" markers.

You also see here an ad for "America's Finest Ski Area" along Old 40 on the Donner Trail, ads for the different lodging opportunities on the Summit (this was in the days before second homes and most people stayed in lodges and hotels), ads for ski equipment and fashion, and a picture of an "over the snow" vehicle.

According to the magazine, 1941 was seeing the birth of downhill skiing popularity. There was a lot of reason for optimism that the ski industry would continue to improve.



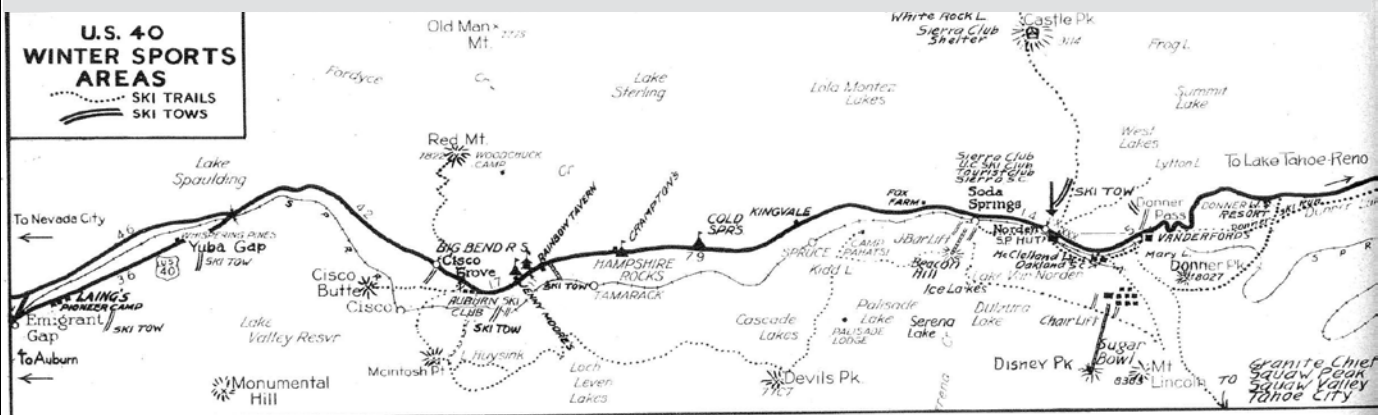
Although people complained that maintaining roads and ski trails by the government was a wasteful use of government money that benefitted just a few, the reality was that skiing and recreation were serious economic activities that paid their own ways. California's population was increasing in 1941 and there needed to be more opportunities. This was particularly true because of the migration due to defense workers. People were migrating to California to work in the defense industry and needed recreation opportunities.

Although skiing had a rich history in California, it became obvious more needed to be done to encourage the industry when California lost out to Lake Placid for the Olympics in 1932. In the years leading up to 1941 many people had been working in different ways to improve skiing.

Ski club and organizations to promote skiing were formed. They put on competitions that thrilled the public and drew attention to skiing, "these young men and women...provide the thrills in competition - jumping, slalom, down mountain, cross country - that make the spectator itch to try the sport. New organizations also did their part to make skiing more popular by putting on competitions and conducting ski tests to certify instructors, organize ski patrols for safety.

Access to predictable snow was important and so all weather highways were needed. The coming of all weather

Winter Sports Areas on Donner Summit -1941



<http://www.donnertsummithistoricalociety.org/PDFs/mapsoldtopetc/californiamagazinefoiur.pdf>
<http://www.donnertsummithistoricalociety.org/PDFs/mapsoldtopetc/californiamagazinefoiur.jpg>

Play

in America's Finest Ski Area

Along the Donner Trail

U. S. 40



From the snowline above Auburn to Truckee on U. S. Highway 40, and south to Tahoe, you will find the finest ski conditions in America. Numerous ski lifts, rope tows and warming shelters. Winter sports equipment and every type of accommodation available—from the dormitory style to the most modern hotel—at rates you can afford. Excellent road conditions at all times.

Information — Write:

Secretary, Donner Trail Association, Soda Springs, California

for winter sports

HIGHWAY 40

HOUSE OF VANDERFORD • *ATOP DONNER SUMMIT*

Comfortable Accommodations • Noted for Good Food, Popular Prices • Unsurpassed Ski Slopes and Slalom Runs • Excellent Ski Tows and Lifts in the Immediate Vicinity

For reservations write or wire:

HOUSE OF VANDERFORD, Norden P. O. (Telephone: Vanderford, Truckee) E. V. Mellvenna, Mgr.

Truckee

Original Winter Sports Area of California

invites you

To Spend Your Weekends in Real Snow Where Winter Sports Are at Their Best

Try Our New 1500-Foot Electrically-Operated

SKI TOW

Enjoy a Variety of Slopes, on Cleared Trails

FREE INSTRUCTION FOR BEGINNERS

Several Capable Teachers Under Direction of

SIG ULLAND, Skimeister

Warm Pavilion • Ample Accommodations

Truckee Outing Club, Inc.

Write or wire CHET MATSON, Sec.

LAING'S PIONEER CAMP

WINTER SPORTS

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

SKI TOW

Emigrant Gap Elevation, 5280 Feet

See the New

Constam Patented Ski Lift

At STRAWBERRY LODGE on Highway 50 or MT. ROSE, 20 miles from Reno

Write CHARLES VAN EVERA, Exclusive Representative, for Folder.

SODA SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

DONNER SUMMIT LODGE

SODA SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Fine Food • Cocktail Lounge Heated Cabins

Completely Renovated—New Management Write or Wire for Reservations. R. E. LEEFER, Manager

Come by Train, Bus, or Car to

Soda Springs Hotel

The ski and fun center of the High Sierra. Ski Lifts • Ski School • Rentals • Fine Food • Bar • Rooms • For Rich and Poor

Write, Wire or Phone for Reservations (New Management) Geo. H. Stiles, Prop. Herb and Ollie Bruck, Hosts Soda Springs, California

APPLE TREE INN

34 Miles East of Auburn on U. S. 40

A PLEASANT PLACE TO STOP

OPEN 24 HOURS

Food • Gas • Chains

DONNER WINTER RESORT

Under NEW Management

Three miles from the Sugar Bowl, motor service to Donner Summit and Truckee. Greyhound bus stop. Ski school; skating in season; instruction. Skis and skates for rent. Large parking area. Restaurant. Bar. Dancing. For reservations, address Donner Winter Resort, Truckee, California. Or phone Donner City No. 1. Oakland office, 3268 Lakeshore Avenue. Hlgate 1567.

Snow Forecast for 1941-42

Following are excerpts from a forecast by Dr. Irving P. Krick, Associate Professor of Meteorology at Caltech: "storms during the last week in December will be general enough to produce the first favorable conditions in both northern and southern areas. . . . In January, February, and March, conditions will improve with good snowfall in all the northern areas and in most of the southern parts of the State."



CHAMPIONS CHOOSE NORTHLANDS!

Top ranking skiing stars and record setters in the United States are almost unanimous in their selection of Northland Skis and accessories. They know that Northlands are the best that money can buy. The fine woods, the scientific, tested designing, and the marvelous precision with which Northlands are built produce consistently the kind of ski that expert skiers demand. Get the most out of your skiing by copying the experts . . . use NORTHLANDS!! Free folder on request or send 10c for Northlands new 48-page Ski Manual.

NORTHLAND

World's Largest Ski Manufacturers

97 Merriam Park

St. Paul, Minnesota

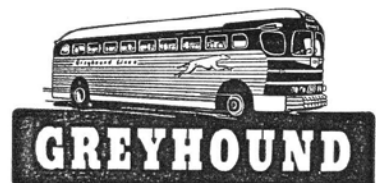
Here's How to GO



GREYHOUND is the happy way to winter sports areas. Frequent schedules get you there at the right time. You go in cozy warmth and luxurious comfort. Ask about Charter Service for a jolly party.

LOW FARES

See your local Greyhound Agent for Low Fares to all winter resort areas.



FOR MORE SKIING PLEASURE..

WEAR



Original
CHIPPEWA
SKI BOOTS
"America's Finest"

Many Styles for Men and Women Priced from \$5 to \$18

Made in the Nation's Ski-land Paradise, ORIGINAL CHIPPEWA boots have been famous for 40 years. Perfectly made of finest leather with every feature for added foot comfort, ORIGINAL CHIPPEWA Ski Boots are your best buy . . . Ask the man who owns a pair of ORIGINAL CHIPPEWA boots for skiing, hunting or fishing, and he'll tell you they're the last word in quality and boot-making craftsmanship.

See your dealer or write for illustrated catalog

Look for the ORIGINAL CHIPPEWA Label on Every Pair

"ORIGINAL" CHIPPEWA SHOES CHIPPENAW MFG CO. CHIPPEWA FALLS, WIS.



SLALOM
or
SCHUSS

You can depend on

GREGG SKIS

Whatever the course . . . whatever the conditions . . . strap on a pair of Gregg's and "let 'er go!" Quality craftsmanship plus selected air dried hickory and—amateur or expert—you have a real pair of skis. Models in pine and maple, too. Better ask for "Gregg" when buying skis, poles, bindings, wax.

GREGG

GREGG MFG. CO.
ST. PAUL, MINN.

Write for New Illustrated Catalog

FOR ALL OF US

White Stag
SKI TOGS



FEATURED BY FINE STORES

HIRSCH-WEIS MFG. CO.
White Stag Division
PORTLAND, OREGON, U. S. A.

Send for Style Portfolio "C"

SPEED, SMOOTHNESS AND CONTROL



Avalanche Waxes & Lacquers afford greater speed, smoothness & control in all snow conditions. Avalanche boot wax is the right kind of waterproofing to protect your ski boots this winter. These products, along with wax remover, ski seal & ski edge paste are the results of combined research of the best chemists and the best skiers. Use Avalanche products next time you go skiing.

Avalanche

PROFESSIONALLY APPROVED SKI PRODUCTS



Manufactured by the CHEMURGIC CORPORATION, Richmond, Calif.

highways increased access and businesses followed. Highway 40 had been all-weather since 1932 when the Auburn Ski Club convinced the State legislature to keep the road open (see the August, '10 issue page 11). 1941 saw Highway 50 become year-round.

Donner Summit Lodging, 1941

In 1941 the Donner Summit area was host to many lodges. Rates ranged from \$1 to \$4 per day and meals 25c to a dollar a day. Accommodations were in dormitories, cabins, and rooms.

You could find rooms on the way to Donner Summit at Baxter; Monte Vista Inn; Apple Tree Inn; Laing's Pioneer Camp at Emigrant Gap; and Yuba Gap at the Whispering Pines Inn, which was three miles off the highway. At Cisco the Auburn Ski Club had two lodges. There were rooms too at Big Bend, Rainbow, and Crampton's Lodge (where I-80 crosses Old 40 east of Rainbow). Soda Springs of course had many lodging opportunities such as the Donner Summit Lodge and the Soda Springs Hotel.

In 1941 the Soda Springs Hotel had been "remodeled and redecored," "completely revamped" and was under the new management of Herb and Ollie Bruck who were "real skiers" and who "should do wonders with Soda Springs." They had a Swiss beer cellar in the basement and lounging and observation porches off the bar. You could step out into a glassed in porch to "Watch the antics on the ski hills." There was a dining room in rear. Next door there was a new service station between the hotel and the garage. In those days it was possible to have covered parking for your car at that garage. The hotel could accommodate 75 in steam heated rooms with baths. They could accommodate another 30 in dormitories.

The Fox Farm had been remodeled and had its name changed to Donner Summit Lodge.

Southern Pacific had made numerous improvements to the Ski Hut and the "playground."

The Summit also had accommodations at the Sierra Club, Sierra Ski Club (now Hutchinson's Lodge), Tourist Club, and the U.C. Ski Club.

Donner Summit Skiing, 1941

There were rope tows at Laing's, Yuba Gap, Cisco (Auburn Ski Club), Rainbow, Soda Springs, and there were many on Donner Summit.

There was tobogganing, cross country skiing, and many places had skating ponds. At Cisco ski jumping and slalom were also available. Rainbow went the rope tow places one better. They had a J bar as did Soda Springs. Sugar Bowl had the only chair lift (see our October, November, and December, '09 newsletters).

Norden had the ski hut in the snow shed (see Fong's in our last newsletter) with lunch counter, rest room, and ski rental facilities. There was a covered passage to the highway and to Sugar Bowl. They had a toboggan slide, play area near Van Norden, and a ski school.



A tractor pulled sleigh took people to Sugar Bowl for 25c a ride. The chair lift at Sugar Bowl had a new cable and new motor. It was completely revamped which in interesting because it was only two years old. Under separate management at Sugar Bowl were also two rope tows run by Charlie Van Evera.

Sugar Bowl rented equipment and had a ski shop. They also had a new "warming shelter for one day guests". The lodge, run by Herstle Jones, could accommodate 35 in private rooms and 28 in dormitories. The rooms must have been high class since they cost \$7.50 a night with private baths. Baths down the hall instead of "en suite" dropped the rate to \$5. That was way more than the average being charged elsewhere. Of course at the Sugar Bowl Lodge you were right on the slopes and you might see Hannes Schroll come yodeling down from Mt. Disney (see our October, November, and December, '09 newsletters for Sugar Bowl's start).

The rope tows where Donner Ski Ranch would be had just been revamped too and were also run by Charlie Van Evera. Johnny Ellis had left for back east by then (see our April '09 issue).

There were a lot of ski clubs on the Summit: Sacramento, Stockton, Oakland, and McClellan which provided lodging.

Vanderford's Lodge (across from what is now Donner Ski Ranch) had new beds and a "beautiful new" and bigger coffee shop. "Ma' Vanderford has increased accommodations to take care of 180 boys and girls, and at rates almost absurdly low. Ma kind of looks out for her 'kids' as she calls them..... And she's relocated the two rope tows for more advantageous skiing."

Of course at Donner Lake and Truckee there was more lodging.

State of Skiing and ski fashion - 1941

1941 was also the year of great progress in skiing. "More progress has been made this year than at any time since the Southern Pacific, back in 1925, started the historic Dog Derbies at Lake Tahoe..." The industry "is a lucrative business that pays real dividends..." New ski territories had opened up; there was investment to keep highways open year-round; there were more resorts; and better equipment, clothes, and fashions.

In 1941 "ski togs" were "more practical, original, and possessing for more eye appeal than ever before" as you can see to the right. The "he-skier" and the "she-skier" are clad in "new Boy-and-Girl companions parkas." They are permanently waterproofed,



have draw strings, zippered pockets, and attached hoods. You could buy them in matching or "harmonizing" colors.

The latest accessory for fashionable skiers was the Shepherd's Serape. It was especially popular among the collegiate set. It was "jaunty" no matter how it was worn and could even be worn after skiing.

Modern chemistry had improved waterproofing. Treated with "Zelan" winter clothes were better water proofed and could withstand washing and dry cleaning.

Ski boots were improved in 1941. The Chippewa boots were moisture-proof, had laces in the back, a hard box toe, heavy double soles, and heel lifts. They cost \$5 to \$18

Other trends: Skiing was changing from just a weekend activity. Discounts were offered mid-week and people were demanding vacation time in winter as well as summer. More ski tows were being built to lessen the time it took to get "back up" the mountain. There were 64 tows in California in 1941. Ski clubs were important to popularizing skiing.

The December issue of California Magazine no doubt came out before December 7th, but still, in the background, were the preparations and worry about war. The preparations for defense figured into skiing in keeping the highways open and increasing the population of California through workers coming to join the defense industry. So the defense industry helped skiing but also provided inconveniences. The need to move defense workers to California and to move ammunition from Nevada storage sites to San Francisco provided the impetus to open Highway 50 year-round. At the same time, defense industry demands made anti-freeze less available. The advice, in the absence of anti-freeze, was to drain your radiator each evening.

Skiing Is Easy, 1941

It is not difficult to learn to ski well. Learn the fundamentals from some good instructor and skill comes rapidly. You cannot learn to ski from the following illustrations but they will give you the general idea and emphasize the necessity for instruction. Ski instructors at all areas. Attend the dry skiing courses, November-December, for physical conditioning.

A liberal use of the ski tows will aid in your progress.

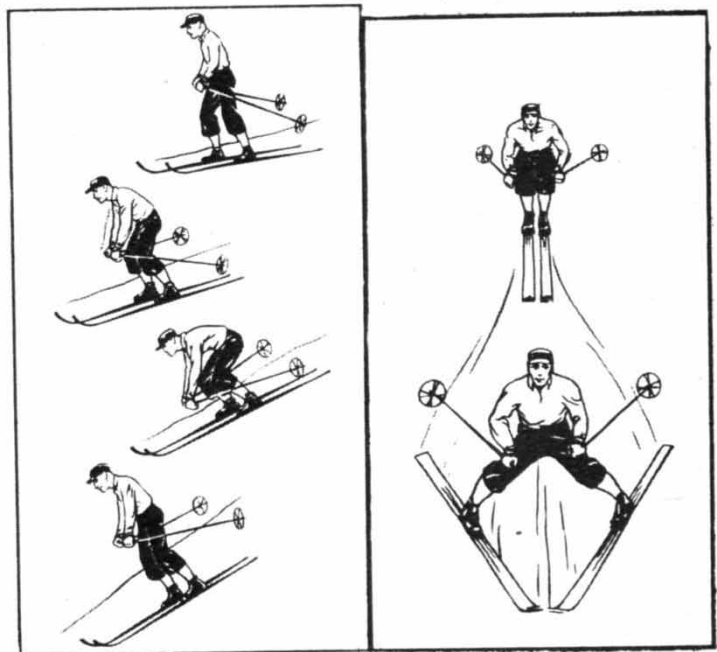
Illustrations from Chas. M. Dudley's book, "It's Easy to Ski."



THE KICK TURN: Place ski poles on the opposite side of skis to the direction in which you wish to turn. Lift up inside ski straight ahead, swing foot around and place it parallel to other ski but facing in opposite direction. Lift stationary ski and place beside first.



CLIMBING: On gentle slopes straight ahead walking is sufficient; as the grade steepens, the half sidestep is used; then the herringbone, and for steep slopes, the side step.



STRAIGHT DOWNHILL RUNNING: Keep the knees bent and flexible to compensate for uneven terrain, your weight forward and one ski slightly advanced.

SNOW PLOUGH OR STEM, to reduce speed or to stop: Crouch, stem by pressing heels and ski ends out, tips nearly together. The stem is the basis for nearly all turns.

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Membership 2011

I/we would like to join The Donner Summit Historical Society and share in the Summit's rich history.

DATE _____

NAME(S) _____

____ New Membership

MAILING ADDRESS _____

____ Renewing Membership

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

____ Individual Membership - \$30

(Please mail this card with your check payable to DSHS to Donner Summit Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, Norden, CA 95724)

____ Family Membership - \$50

____ Friend Membership - \$100

____ Sponsor - \$250

____ Patron - \$500

____ Benefactor - \$1000

____ Business - \$250

____ Business Sponsor - \$1000

Donner Summit Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

20 Mile Museum Expansion

We redid 22 of the 28 20 Mile Museum signs and you'll be impressed with the improved quality as well as the 10 year guarantee. Look for them to reappear as the snow melts.

Norden News, 1941

At the same time we decided to add five signs this year, assuming we can find sponsors.

This year's additions will be: Petroglyphs below Rainbow Bridge (sponsored partly by the Truckee Rotary Club and produced by the Brisbin Crew - see the January newsletter.

Nyack Lodge - to go at the Cal-Trans overlook on I-80 overlooking Lake Spaulding.

Forest Gift Shop - the stone buildings in Cisco Grove.

Donner Pass Weather Station and Airline Beacon - across from the Sugar Bowl Academy

Soda Springs Sheep Shipping Center - at the public travel way along Van Norden.

If you're interested in sponsoring, let us know. Sponsorships cost \$500, increased to cover the cost of the better production method for signs and County permits.

