

The Donner Summit Heritloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society



March, 2012 issue #43

Introduction

We have been working on a project for some time, researching the Art of Donner Summit. Because Donner Summit is so scenic and because so much has happened there. The first transcontinental railroad, highway, air route, and telephone crossed Donner Summit. The first wagon trains crossed the Sierra at Donner Summit. Native Americans have been crossing for millennia leaving behind their petroglyphs and grinding rocks. It is the source of three major California rivers and is the Sierra Divide. Artists have been coming to Donner Summit for a century and a half recording the scenes on film and on canvas. Art Clark's "Then and Now" this month, comparing Albert Bierstadt's views of Donner Lake to today's scene is an opportunity to share one of the famous artists who came to Donner Summit.

Albert Bierstadt At Donner Summit

California was a sleepy province until the Gold Rush. With the Gold Rush came modern 19th century society with all its accoutrements. San Francisco exploded from a little village of adobe huts into a city.

Along with the prospectors came store keepers and other small businessmen, bankers, industrialists, lawyers, craftsmen,



mechanics, farmers, and artists.

The rest of the nation was hungry for information about life in California and artists provided visual depiction of the wonders of California: the Spanish lifestyle, the Gold Rush, huge redwoods, the mountains, lakes, forests, and the ocean.

One of the subjects was Donner Summit. Many of the major artists traveled to Donner Summit to record the beauty.

Artists set up shop in San Francisco and Sacramento.

They gave instruction, did portraits, and held exhibitions of their landscapes. Art was sent across the country so the admission paying public in the rest of the U.S. could see the wonders of California and live the adventure of California vicariously. With the coming of the transcontinental railroad, the trip to California might take only ten days (see page 7) which was certainly reasonable for amazing new subjects from California: grandeur, beauty, old forests, snowy mountain peaks, picturesque coast, mountain lakes, Yosemite and the Sierra, it was all now in reach.

As California became richer there was more interest in art. Art schools popped up and many well-off Californians began buying and commissioning art.

Albert Bierstadt was one of many famous American artists who made their way to California. He spent time traveling the state and the Sierra. He made his first trip to Donner Summit in July, 1871 with Collis P. Huntington, one of the "Big Four." Bierstadt had been commissioned to do a painting of the Summit area, where construction of the transcontinental railroad had been the hardest. It had taken two years, for example, to bore Tunnel 6, the longest of the fifteen tunnels through the solid granite. Granite wasn't the only difficulty. There were avalanches, fire, huge snowfalls, and cold to deal with. The Summit so slowed work that the railroad hauled an engine, cars and forty miles of track over the Summit, so they could build on the other side while the tunnel was being bored. Huntington wanted a painting to celebrate the achievement. Bierstadt worked on his renditions for at least the next year.

Bierstadt's "Donner Lake from the Summit" was unveiled in San Francisco in 1873 and probably was not what Mr. Huntington had in mind. The railroad is in the painting, but the celebration puts Nature at center stage rather than man's achievement.

Even if Mr. Huntington was not so pleased, the public was both by the subject and its 10 by 6 foot size. The exhibition drew an average daily attendance of 600 people. On Saturdays it would draw 1200 (1/25/73 S.F. Evening Bulletin).

Because of admission fees and new memberships associated with the Bierstadt exhibition of Donner Lake, the San Francisco Art Association could afford to fund an art school which became the California School of Design founded in 1874 by Virgil Williams

Originally Bierstadt's Donner Lake from the Summit was titled, Sunrise on the Sierras. Bierstadt was a savvy businessman and knew that people would more likely be drawn to see his painting if the title evoked the Donner Party which of course included cannibalism – a sure draw.

BIERSTADT.—The world-renowned artist, Albert Bierstadt, has returned hither from his flying trip to the Sierras. In company with O. P. Huntington, of the Central Pacific Railroad Co., he paid a visit to the camp of Col. Von Schmidt, near Lake Tahoe, and returned with our Pioneer President to this city. Yesterday he visited the rooms of the Association, and afterward spent some time in inspecting the great painting of "Samson and Delilah," and other pictures in the Bank Exchange. We are pleased to learn that Mr. Bierstadt contemplates sojourning for some weeks on the Pacific coast.

alta 8/1/71

Daily Alta California 8/1/1871

Bierstadt's latest work, "Donner Lake from the Summit," will be on exhibition during the coming week at the rooms of the Art Association. The effect represented is early morning, and the arial effect and wonderful distance are worthy of Turner himself. The foreground of rock, pines and moss have been carefully studied, and the whole composition is that of a master. In comparing Bierstadt to Turner, we do so with this difference: While the great English artist sought out always the higher forms of nature and endeavored to represent them, he was not unfrequently eccentric, and the results of his work were often not up to the standard of his aspirations. Mr. Bierstadt has much of the same talent and as much or more of the same industry and never "runs wild." This work is evenly painted, has all the attributes of a great work, and would be noticeable in any gallery in the world.

It has been painted for C. P. Huntington, Esq., and will be forwarded to him in New York, immediately after it leaves the rooms of the Art Association, where it will remain for one week only.

Daily Alta California 1/12/1873

You may think, looking at the painting, that "Donner Lake from the Summit" doesn't look quite like that. Bierstadt believed in adding drama to a scene and even adding elements to make a painting more dramatic. "Throughout his career Bierstadt painted in the Germanic academic style of his Dusseldorf training... which encouraged exaggeration of atmosphere for purposes of drama..." page 80 Alfred Harrison in *Albert Bierstadt and the Emerging San Francisco Art World of the 1860's and 1870s in California History Spring*, 1992

So in his Donner Lake paintings we have drama and celebration of Nature as the central element. Secondly to make his patron happy, there is also the celebration of America's most important technological achievement, the crossing of the continent by rail. No longer did the journey take weeks; it only took days at an unheard of speed of 15-20 miles an hour. Combining the two elements of Nature and man's achievement and calling it "Donner Lake", it was sure to draw the public. The public wanted to see California; the public wanted to see grand nature which they'd heard about and seen in photographs, and they wanted to enjoy American achievement. This was such a grand land, who but grand people could have wanted to inhabit it? And those grand people should have made grand achievements. All of that validated Manifest Destiny – the destiny of the American Nation for greatness and its right to conquer the continent. To cement the themes, it seemed appropriate to Bierstadt to add to the compositions. In calling the painting Donner Lake he emphasized even more the tremendous achievements of Americans. After all, it had only been 25 years before that members of the Donner Party were starving at Donner Lake. Now people could travel past the site in relative comfort and safety. The rising sun, the beginning of a new day and age, just cemented the idea. Could anything stop Americans?

Albert Bierstadt was not the only artist to add to his scenes but the idea was dying in popularity. Modern (late 19th century artists) were adopting another school of painting thought, the Barbizon School, which recorded Nature in broader strokes with less detail and less drama. Bierstadt would not change and his popularity would wane, so much so that when his death was announced one artist said, "I did not know he was alive until I saw he had died."

Donner Lake was so successful that it started a rush by other artists on Donner Lake paintings such as Gilbert Munger, William Keith, and Thomas Hill.

Right: View of Donner Lake by Albert Bierstadt from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco with permission.

Donner Lake from the Summit on page 1 from the New York Historical Society, with permission, Collection of the New York Historical Society



Then & Now with Art Clark



For this month's "Then and Now" Art Clark chose to take 2 famous paintings, Donner Lake from the Summit and View of Donner Lake, painted by Albert Bierstadt and match them to today's views.

Compare these contemporary views to the paintings on the previous pages. Remember that Albert Bierstadt liked adding to his scenes for dramatic effect.

From the Truckee Republican November, 7, 1868

Men frozen to death – Three men were found near the summit yesterday morning frozen to death. It is thought that they must have been under the influence of liquor as they were but a short distance from shelter.

Exploring the Emigrant Trail

Fall, 2011

Recently I read with GREAT interest the article about Roller Pass in the DSHS newsletter [November, '11].

Almost in anticipation of the article, I recently completed two hikes along the Pacific Crest Trail / Donner Summit area, and -- as a full-fledged member of DSHS -- I would like to propose some CHANGES !

1.) The Three Passes Hike: maybe someone has already done this, but I propose to see it become an Annual hike, like the Sierra Club's annual Donner Summit Hikes out of Sugar Bowl. One day, eight hours, 8-9 miles, 1200-1500 feet up and down altitude change, FREE !

It can be done by anyone in reasonably good shape, and can provide immense historical, physical, emotional, and viewing experiences for members of Donner Summit Historical Society !

Start with a daypack, water and trail mix, boots and hiking poles, and meet at Lake Mary trailhead. Then, ascend the PCT, straight to Roller Pass, NOT turning up to Mount Judah. When you get to Roller, look for the hard-to-read sign, take your photos, imagine how it was, and then slowly and carefully bushwhack down to the bottom, right into the forest. When you get there, you will see LOTS of wagon ruts, and see a white sign on a tree that is almost illegible, but does say "Emigrant Trail " if you squint really hard.

Then, bushwhack to the northeast, around the southeast slope of Mt. Judah, keeping about 7400 feet altitude on your GPS, and you eventually hit Coldstream Pass Trail. You can tell it is the right one when you see mountain bike tracks in the soft dirt! You can see just why this trail was so much easier than having to take apart your wagons and winch them up Roller Pass. Coldstream is a pleasant series of meadows and light forested areas, all the while keeping Mount Judah on your left side.

Finally, you arrive at the top, right between the Mt. Judah Loop Trail and the short trail up Mount Donner. There is a very tiny sign there denoting that it is the top of Coldstream pass.

Then down the Judah loop, turn right on the PCT, and carefully make your way through that rocky trail down to Lake Mary Trailhead again.

At THAT point, instead of getting in your car, turn right and you are INSTANTLY in the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Pass (some call it "Donner" pass), and in a few minutes of descending, you walk through the archway in the China Wall, and you can then do one of three treks to finish your hiking:

a. Go up to the railroad bed, and turn left through the two tunnels that get you right back to the Sugar Bowl road, and then it is a 5-minute walk back to your car !

b.) Continue on downhill to the Petroglyphs, read them intently, and then have someone meet you there at the parking lot above.

c.) Continue on down to Donner Lake and have someone meet you there.

2.) If you want to do a more lengthy hike, and one that actually retraces what the emigrant pioneers did when they left Donner Lake's east end, especially after they heard of the Donner group's disaster, consider the following:

a.) Park your vehicle outside the Donner Memorial State Park, then head up Coldstream Canyon, prepared for a two-

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Unless otherwise noted, the photographs and other historical ephemera in The Heirloom's pages come from the Norm Saylor collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society

day hike, but not carrying camping gear or extra food.

b.) Three miles in, you walk cross the Southern Pacific's rail tracks as they bend to continue uphill around the Schallenberger Ridge.

c.) At this point, do NOT turn downhill and left toward Lost Lake Lodge, but turn RIGHT, UPHILL slightly, as if to ascend to the rail line above. Very shortly, the trail turns directly west, right toward Roller. If you use a topo map or aerial photo, you should end up at Roller Pass after about 8-9 miles of hiking. Then, using your bushwhack UP Roller Pass like the pioneers (the distance is about 50 yards, UP), turn right on the PCT, and head to Old Highway 40 to find a lodge, where you stay overnight in comfort.

d.) Next day, descend through Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Trail, right down to Donner Lake, and then hike around it to the Museum.

Total distance is about 16-18 miles, two days, up and down about 3600 feet, HUGE history, little discomfort, a true test for a DSHS member !

A PERSONAL NOTE: I have hiked trails all over the world, and the signage on all the trails along the PCT is really poor. For minimal investment, the DSHS could do itself proud with just five signs, starting with a separate sign at Lake Mary Trailhead, at both ends of Mt. Judah Loop, at the turnoff from the Loop to Coldstream Pass (the existing sign is so small that most passersby likely never read it), and at the top of Roller Pass. The Society's image would be massively burnished.

Who knows, it might even DRASTICALLY increase paying membership !

Sincerely, Richard Fuller Lincoln, California DSHS Member since 2011

Last Donner Summit Blacksmith Shop

The subject of the last blacksmith shop on Donner Summit came up one day as Norm (Sayler, president of the DSHS) was talking about Donner Summit stories.

Norm mentioned that for a couple of years in the 1950's there was a guy living on Donner Summit in a box. What?! Ears perked up at that because it gets cold on Donner Summit, especially in the winter. Besides with an average fall of 34 feet of snow, how long would a box survive let alone a couple of years?

According to Norm, the old guy looked like Santa Claus and lived in a cardboard box with his donkey near the Oakland Ski Club (the Mt. Judah Lodge road into Sugar Bowl). In winter the box was in the form of a snow cave.

The fellow lived there two years and turned out to be a former Dartmouth professor (The Dartmouth Outing Club is on the Lake Mary road nearby). He used to hang about across the road where the last operating blacksmith shop on Donner Summit was which was Tony Girard's. Mr. Girard also had a shop in Truckee near the jail.

The building still stands, here just after the first snowfall. It's right across the road from Donner Ski Ranch at the east end of the parking lot.



From the DSHS Archives



As people applied engines to the problem of snow they came up with interesting solutions as the snowblowers in our last issue showed. Here we have a snow motor propelled not by wheels or tracks but by screws.

There were two in the Truckee area. At least one was run by Old Man McGiver who had a dairy in Truckee. He used his snow-motor to take the mail from Truckee to Tahoe City. This one is pictured on Donner Summit near Sugar Bowl in about 1940 (see the snowsheds in the background) and is apparently pulling a sleigh. The machine had a hauling capacity of five tons and each screw could be operated separately via a clutch. It could travel on bare ground as well as snow. A snow-motor is on display at the Heidrick Ag History Center in Woodland, just outside Sacramento.

Before refrigeration, ice was cut and saved from ice ponds. On Donner Summit, "Ice Lakes" now Serene Lakes, comes from ice harvesting for a couple of years up to 1872 (see the website below for the full story). Here is another ice company, this one in Summit Valley (Van Norden meadow today)

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See <http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/Stories.html> for "The Ice in ice Lakes."

Transcontinental Travel Times

We take cars and planes and go hundreds of miles quickly. We pick up a cell phone on the spur of the moment to call someone a thousand miles away. With the internet we can see what is happening on the other side of the world as it's happening. Life goes really fast. It's easy to forget that life was not always like this.

150 years ago life went at a much slower pace. It went three or five miles an hour, the speed of a horse or what people could do on foot. A trip to San Francisco from the Central Valley in California was a days long affair where now it's an hour or two. Once people left their friends and relatives back east, they probably never saw them again.

People's relationships and expectations must have been very different from today. So imagine how amazing it must have been to experience the rapid change in travel in the 19th century. Imagine how the world opened up.

19th-20th Century Travel Times: chart below from <http://donsnotes.com/hist/calif/i80-hist.html>

Mode	Destination	Speed	year
Sailboat. (via Cape Horn)	New York to Calif.	3-4 mos.	(1840)
Wagon Train 10-15 mi./day	Missouri to Calif.	4-5 mos.	(1845)
	New York to Missouri	3 weeks.	
Steamship-overland (via Panama)	New York to Calif.	30 days.	(1848)
Steamship-Rail (via Panama)	New York to Calif.	21 days.	(1855)
Stage Coach 6-15 MPH	Missouri to Calif.	25 days.	(1858)
Pony Express 200 mi./day	Missouri to Calif.	10 1/2 days.	(1860)
Train 25-40 MPH	New York to Calif.	10 days	(1869)
Train 50 MPH	New York to Calif.	3 days	(1920)
	New York to Calif is still 3 days 1 1/2 hrs.		
Airmail (De Havilland)	New York to Calif.	1 1/2 days	(1921)
Airline (Ford Trimotor)	New York to Calif	1 1/2 days	(1930)
	(11 refueling stops)		
Airline (DC-2)	New York to Calif	18 hrs.	(1934)
Airline (Lockheed Super Constellation)	New York to Calif.	8 1/4 hrs.	(1953)
Airline (jet)	New York to Calif.	6 1/4 hrs.	(1959)

All of the advances above annihilated time and must have changed people's thinking and perspectives. The ultimate 19th century annihilator of distance was the first transcontinental telephone which went over Donner Summit in 1914. According to the Telephone Review's Triumph of Science edition in 1915, the transcontinental telephone enabled "every man who can talk to talk over the telephone with every man who can hear..." It was the "highwater mark of a science that was created and has been developed entirely by American genius and enterprise...no other nation has produced anything like it., nor could any other nation. It is...gigantic-and it is entirely American." "Talking from the Atlantic to the Pacific gives one a thrill. It appeals to the imagination- it is a theme for poets."

"It means the end to sectionalism...there is no longer an East and West, North and South. Not even the railroads...have done or can do so much toward bring the States closer together...."

And then the publication highlighted Donner Summit in a section called, "Linemen in a Blizzard." "...nothing can better suggest the difficulties which telephone men have to encounter...than...shelter houses - one a mile west of Crystal Lake, Cal [just south of I-80 at the Eagle Lakes exit] Those houses are built along the Transcontinental Line and isolated mountainous regions and are frequently occupied with linemen as they maintain the telephone line during the cold and storms of winter months. The houses contain a couch, a small stove, cord-wood, and canned provisions....blizzards last, on an aveage, from two to three days, the snow fequently drifting to depths of from 15 to 20 feet."

The San Francisco Call on January 17, 1913, noted that transcontinental "hello" will cost about \$18 a minute.

The Telephone Unites the Nation



Book Review - Hard Road West

"I wish California has sunk into the ocean before I had ever heard of it" (pg 251)

Here is another Version of They Were Tougher than We Are: Hard Road West by Keith Meldahl (2007)

Hard Road West is subtitled, "History and Geology along the Gold Rush Trail" and that's an apt description. The book is a unique treatment of the emigrant experience because although it talks about the history and the emigrants' travel experience, it also talks about the geology of the route the travelers traveled en route to California.

In books about the emigrant experience it is the quotes of the emigrants that make the best reading because they bring to the reader the personal experience of the human element. Hard Road West has lots of good quotes though the "library" of quotes is nowhere near as lavish as in other books like Emigrant Trails or Plains Across.

If you like geology, the ancient history of the planet, and the more modern history of Manifest Destiny and the Western migration, then you will like this exploration of the geology along the emigrant route. Mr. Meldahl does not just talk about the structures of the earth along the route, he also goes into the ancient history of how the structures were formed.

Geologically you will learn about the "exhumation" of the Rockies which used to be buried and were uncovered over millennia by rivers. You learn about granite, "Walk on granite, and you walk on rock that formed perhaps 10 or more miles underground. An astonishing fact, but no more so than what has to happen next. For you to touch granite, a stunning amount of geologic work must be done. The granite must be uplifted from miles down, where it formed, and the intervening rock overhead removed. This is why you find granite in the uplifted cores of so many mountains.... The granite decompresses as erosion scrapes away the overlying rock. The release of pressure produces distinct expansion cracks called joints. Joints in granite often come in sets of concentric, curving planes. The broken rock peels away from these cracks like the layers of an onion..." (pg 99) Although he was talking about the Rockies here, the Sierra, their fractured and exfoliating granite work the same way.

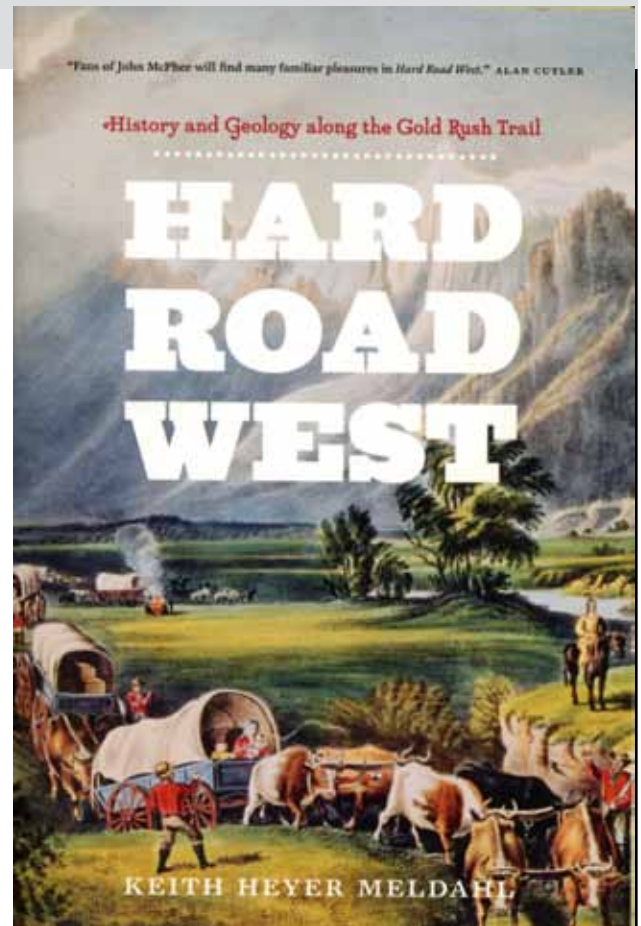
To illustrate both the modern emigrant history and the ancient geologic history, there are maps and nice illustrative pictures both of the geology and of the emigrant experience.

The book became more interesting the closer to California and Donner Summit the route got. The emigrant experience got much harder the closer to California they got too as these quotes show.

The Humboldt River in Nevada

"The Humboldt River, the most miserable river on earth" (pg 214) is the title of one chapter prefaced with an emigrant's quote, "Perhaps the Devil himself having cast his eyes over the world concluded to try his hand at making a river. He made it in the night and laid it down so crooked and ragged that just at break of day when he stopped to look back at it, he got ashamed of himself and ran it into the ground (the Humboldt disappears into the Nevada desert rather than ending in a lake or the ocean).

The emigrants had to walk along the 350 mile length of the Humboldt at the hottest time of year. It's hard to imagine



was we fly along I-80 in air conditioned comfort.

That geography caused misery. "I see at least a dozen men daily with their packs on their backs and the number is constantly increasing." They had lost their wagons and animals. "We have been no little troubled today with the starving emigrants begging for provisions. There is some that is tetotelly out;... God only [k]nows what they are to do." (pg 221)

page 16

To enjoy such a trip...a man must be able to endure heat like a Salamander, mud and water like a muskrat, dust like a toad, and labor like a jackass. He must learn to eat with his unwashed fingers, drink out of the same vessel with his mules sleep on the ground when it rains, an share his blanket with vermin....He must cease to think, except as to where he may find grass and water and a good campinOng places. It is hardship without glory, to be sick without a home, and to die and be buried like a dog."

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The roughness and aridity of the West poured out a world of rock to emigrant eyes. Rock – naked, broken, mountainous rock – is the West. Water is sparse in much of the West, Soils are thin, plants few. Rock rises to view with rare clarity, revealing its intricacy and structure.

oxen and horses. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that we could have walked the forty miles an set our feet on a bone at every step! The desert was one prodigious graveyard. And the log chains, wagon tires, and rotting wrecks of vehicles were almost as thick as the bones..." Mark Twain in *Roughing It* quoted in *Hard Road West*.

The Truckee Dunes

And If the desert were not enough of a test, then came miles of sand dunes. "The suffering that unfolded in the Truckee Dunes scorched every memory." It was "lined with dead cattle, horses and mules with piles of provision burned and whole wagons left for want of cattle to pull them though." "The dust flew in clouds, and we plodded wearily on, stopping every few minutes to bestow a half a dozen blows on our poor tired animals...some of them reeling as they went." "Countless animals sank down in the sand and never got up. Exhausted and whipped beyond caring, they lay with glazed and puzzled eyes, ... The stench of decomposing flesh rose in appalling clouds. California-bound emigrants were no strangers to animal suffering and death – but never on a scale like this." (pg 239)

"The whole environment as far as the eye could reach was simply an abomination of desolation...More than half the wells [emigrants had dug along the route] were unavailable as they were filled with the carcasses of cattle which had perished in trying to get water. To add to the natural horrors of the scene, about the wells were scattered the bodies of cattle, horses, and mules which had died here from overwork, hunger, and thirst; broken and abandoned wagons, boxes, bundles of clothing, guns, harness, or yokes,..."

More humorously another emigrant said of the Humboldt, "Farewell to thee! thou Stinking turbid stream /Amid who water frogs and Serpents gleam/Thou putrid mass of filth farewell forever./For her again I'll tempt my fortunes never." (pg 214)

Still another said, "Meanest and muddiest, filthiest stream, most cordially I hate you;/Meaner and muddier still you seem since the first day I met you./ Your namesake better was no doubt, a truth, the scriptures tell./Her seven devils were cast out, but yours are in you still."

And then the Desert

From the miserable Humboldt, on to the "worst desert you ever saw." (pg 229) "Fortunately you couldn't lose your way because "the route was clearly marked by dead and dying animals, and by abandoned wagons and their disgorged contents." The desert crossing was hard not just because it was a desert and hot and dry but because the emigrants were almost at their lowest points. They were stressed beyond belief having been traveling for months and more than a thousand miles. Their food was almost gone and the animals almost totally spent. They had just finished the Humboldt's 350 miles of "heat, dust, and foul water." There was just the promise of California a few weeks away.

"From one extremity of this desert to the other, the road was white with bones o

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Deliverance

Then deliverance, "If ever I saw heaven, I saw it then [the Truckee River]...Skidding down the final dunes, the emigrants came at last to the river. 'It is wonderful to see cattle rush into the water...O how delicious! I know it was to me.'" "Towering cottonwoods line the banks, catching the wind with a sigh and casting a corridor of cool shade through summer's heat. These were the first tall, shady trees most emigrants had seen since the Green River some 800 miles back."

And Finally the Sierra

Arrival at the Truckee River was just a short respite. If the sand dunes were not enough, now they were confronted with the Sierra. "Rolling up the escarpment 'was exactly like marching up to some immense wall built directly across our path.' The view, though intimidating, was incomparably grand. The ragged teeth of the range, flossed by Ice Age glaciers and whitened by eternal snows, soared magnificently overhead. ..."one of the grandest and most sublimely picturesque Seeneries [sic] that I ever beheld." "We never tire of looking at the great mountains we are soon to climb over."

The emigrant experience through their quotes develops the human story. Mr. Meldahl make the experience richer with the geographic commentary. He explains that the horrible Nevada desert is caused by the rain shadow of the Sierra which now confronted the emigrants.

The Sierra is a "mere babe among world mountains." which began to rise about 5 million years ago although there is argument about that. There may have been some Sierra some 50 million years ago but lava flows from what is now the eastern Sierra, show the entire range cannot be that old.

The book ends with gold in California which is why most of the emigrants came.

from the Summit Hotel, 1883

This comes from the chapter "Incidents" in Tourists Guide and Directory of the Truckee Basin 1883.... pge 108

A wedding in the snow. – On the evening of May 5, 1874, George P. McConkey was married to Miss Sadie P. Gordon, at the Summit House, the hotel at the time being covered with twenty feet of snow. This was the first wedding on record that ever transpired literally in the bowels of a snow drift.

The Summit Hotel sat opposite what is now Donner Ski Ranch. Below is a picture about 1911. The Summit Hotel burned down twice, once in 1895 and finally in 1925. It operated under a few different names. One day we'll cover its history and amenities in The Heirloom.



DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Membership 2011

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

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If you would like monthly newsletter announcements, please write your email address below VERY neatly.

Historical Topographic Map Release

Art Clark notified us of this YubaNet article.

Nov. 7, 2011 - The release of more than 13,688 historical topographic maps covering California highlights the rapid pace of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Historical Topographic Map Collection. Nearly 124,000 high resolution scans of the more than 200,000 historical USGS topographic maps, some dating as far back as 1884, are now available online. The Historical Topographic Map Collection includes published U.S. maps of all scales and editions, and are offered as a georeferenced digital download or as a scanned print from the USGS Store.

Coming beginning in May, 2012

**The Most Interesting Unknown
Historical Spot in California:
Tunnel 6**

**One of the most amazing
engineering achievements of the
19th Century:**

The Great Sierra Tunnel

We'll be looking at granite, engineering, Chinese immigrants, avalanche, rock fall, star drills, the first locomotive in California (used on Donner Summit but not as you'd expect), the first locomotives over the summit (but not in the way you'd expect) and so much more.

Don't let your subscription expire.

From the San Francisco Evening Bulletin January 11, 1873. "Downer" is a newspaper error.

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It INCLUDES ALL – THE LATENT WORKS
by our local artists;

Brandner's Columbus in Chains;
Bierstadt's Downer Lake from the Summit;

Large collection of Water Color Drawing and Paintings;
The Entire Pioche Collection!
And a large number of Pictures contributed by Connoisseurs and Art Collectors.

Admission25 Cents

Catalogues ready Open daily (Sundays excepted)
from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. and from 7 to 9 P.M.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Art Association Exhibition, 313 Pine St.,
Bierstadt's Latest Work.

DONNER LAKE FROM THE SUMMIT

Will be on view FOR ONE WEEK ONLY, from the 12th
to the 18th instant, inclusive

Admission to the Gallery, 25 cents.