

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

February, 2013 issue #54



History Preserved

In December the Truckee Donner Land Trust closed escrow on almost 3000 acres of Donner Summit magnificence. It is called the Royal Gorge Acquisition because it includes the Royal Gorge cross country ski area. The red in the map below shows the acquisition. The blue is Forest Service land so you can see the extent of what is now contiguous public open space. The darker red area shows land owned by Sugar Bowl which is being traded for Summit Station, the cross country headquarters. Sugar Bowl is now running Royal Gorge.

The area is rich. Recreational opportunities abound. There is mountain biking, lepidoptery, bird watching, hiking, kayaking, cross country skiing, and photography. But that's not our story in this edition of the [Heirloom](#).

The area is also biologically rich. More than a hundred species of birds visit. There are 115 species of butterflies, 16 species of amphibians, 500 species of plants, and dozens of species of mammals (including a beaver that just took up residence in 2012). But that's not our story either.

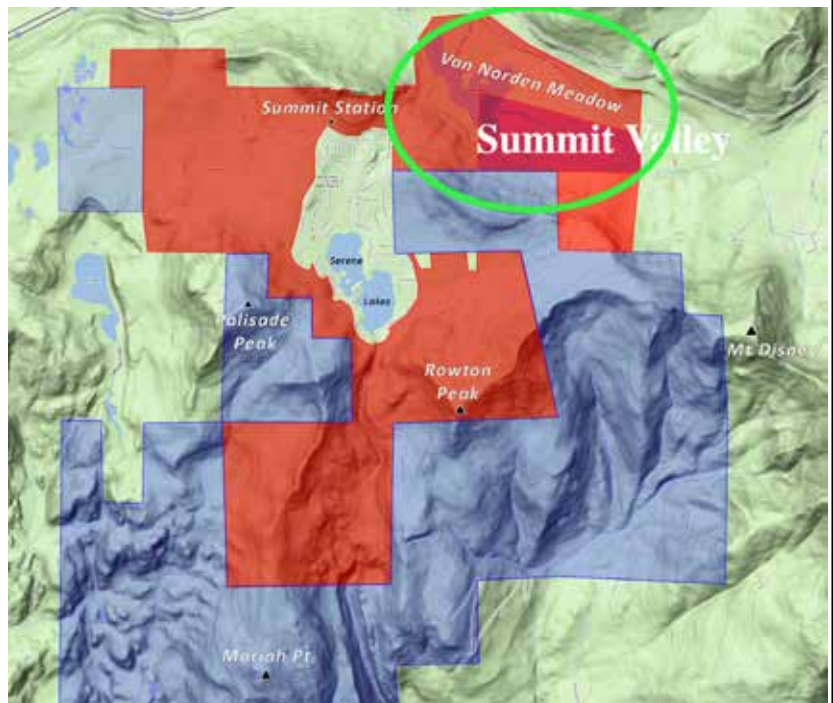
It's the History

The land includes the most important historical area on Donner Summit and maybe the entire Western United States, Summit Valley, or Van Norden Meadow. That is our story for this edition of the [Heirloom](#) and that is what is within the green oval on the map.

Native Americans visited Summit Valley for thousands of years leaving behind their grinding rocks, metates (large grinding slicks), cupules (small depressions in rock possibly of mystical significance), stone flakes, and petroglyphs.

The first wagon trains to reach California with wagons came through Summit Valley as did the survivors of the Donner Party. Then came the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd., the first transcontinental railroad, the first transcontinental highway, the first transcontinental telephone line, and the first transcontinental air route.

Having faith that the local communities and the Land Trust would acquire the lands our historical exploration department spent





Most of the Summit Valley Native American mortars are on the meadow edges, just inside the tree line but there are some out in the valley where they were covered by Lake Van Norden for more than a hundred years.

The rock in the foreground here has five mortars and a metate on it.

a lot of time in Summit Valley during the past summer and fall. We found the remains of the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. which had been covered by Lake Van Norden until the dam was breached in 1976. We found the site of the Summit Valley Ice Co. which produced ice around 1870 but did not use ponds and lakes like everyone else. We found what appears to be the remains of the Emigrant Trail as it winds its way through the current forest. We found an old hotel site, an old cabin site, dozens of grinding rocks, and more.

Those will be Heirloom stories in the coming months along with some historical hikes you might like to take when summer arrives.

This month we cover the Native Americans.

Native Americans occupied Summit Valley in summers for thousands of years. They came to escape the Nevada heat and to trade with California Indians. The evidence of their presence is in many places.



Above: communal kitchen? Multiple mortars each about 4 inches across. Below: cupules. Each is about 1.5 inches in diameter. The collection was perhaps used in mystical ways.



Dozens of mortars dot the valley, each ground over centuries into the Sierra granite. There are also metates, cupules, and petroglyphs. There are thousands of basalt flakes left over from the fashioning of atlatl and spear heads.

The Martis culture (2000 B.C or earlier to 600 A.D.) lived all around the valley for thousands of years grinding seeds and hunting. The Kings Beach culture (A.D. 1000-1850) was a fishing culture and occupied only a small portion of the valley much later.



As you think about these sites or actually go exploring, imagine the time it must have taken with only the daily grinding during summers, to develop the mortars in the rock. Imagine the groups of women and girls passing on one generation's wisdom to another in the same places, summer after summer, century after century. In many places there are many mortars in groups and one can imagine busy communal kitchens with many women grinding seeds. In other places there are only single mortars. Why did some of the Native Americans live and work in large groups and others in small groups? Were they different clans? Were the single grinding rock users outcasts?

Nearby many of the mortar sites are thousands of basalt stone chips which are not native to the immediate area. We can imagine the men and boys knapping the rocks into useful tools. The chips are the leftovers. The basalt was carried to the valley from miles away. Devil's Peak is a possible source. At the knapping sites lessons too were imparted and learned summer after summer, generation after generation and the basalt flakes grew in number. In one heavily used spot there are cupules, a group of small depressions ground into granite (above right). No one knows what they mean but they may have mystical significance. We can imagine the



women in the communal kitchens, the men knapping their basalt, and nearby some mystical practices occurring at the cupule site.

We don't know the population of Native Americans in Summit Valley during summers but it must have been relatively large given the many mortar sites.

Archeologists visiting the area decades ago reported that the area had been pretty well scavenged for spear heads and manos (the pestles). They also reported finding obsidian flakes which are also not native to the Summit Valley area. That would mean that there was trading going on between the various tribes. The nearest

obsidian is in the Mammoth Lakes region and the Lake County area of California.

Donner Summit also has hundreds of Native American petroglyphs. Some are very accessible such as the ones right next to Old 40 below Rainbow Bridge. We have not written about petroglyphs in the [Heirloom](#) but you can see a 20 Mile Museum sign about petroglyphs and a display about petroglyphs on our website.



The metates below and above, with the mano, are each about 1.5 feet long. Imagine the grinding it took to wear those depressions. The Native Americans must have been way more patient than the white men



"While the Sierra was not the constant home of the Indians, they resorted thither regularly in the summer season, from June or July to November, except when they were denizens of the great lower valleys, which supplied them with all they needed in every season; these were, moreover, occupied by the less warlike tribes, who were seldom able to cope with their hereditary foemen of the mountains. The summit region of the Sierra Nevada furnished good fishing in its lakes and some of its streams; deer and mountain quail and grouse abounded; huckleberries, thimbleberries, wild plums, chokecherries, gooseberries, and various edible roots were tolerably plentiful; the furry marten, weasel-like animals, woodchucks, and squirrels were tempting prey; the water was better, and the climate cooler, than at a less elevation; hence this region was the summer resort of Indians from both slopes of the range."

Pictured here: top - Art Clark and George Lamson of the DSHS Corps of Discovery (members have badges and everything); arrowheads; metate and mano; basalt flake; single mortar and basalt flakes; single mortar; metate.

[Californian Pictures in Prose and Verse](#), by Benjamin Parke Avery, 1885

20 Mile Museum

Which Signs for Summit Valley?

Sponsors needed!

Faithful readers or visitors to Donner Summit know about the 20 Mile Museum, historical interpretive signs from Nyack to below Rainbow Bridge.

With the acquisition of Summit Valley, the most historically important land on the Summit, by the Land Trust, we have an opportunity to add to people's enjoyment and understanding of the local history.

Our interpretive department has been thinking about some 20 Mile Museum signs for Summit Valley. Possibilities include the Summit Hotel (with its two story outhouse), Native Americans in the Valley (grinding rocks), the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd. (a very clear remnant remains that was under the lake), the sheep pens and the shepherd's shack (Soda Springs was one of the nation's top sheep shipping centers), the dam (first built about 1867), The Lytton Hotel site, and the Summit Valley Ice Co. (they made ice without the ponds and lakes everyone else used in 1870). Maybe our readership has other ideas? We're thinking of doing four signs in Summit

Valley.

Our board decided to stock up on steel for signs because the steel costs less in quantity and has lined up a welder who will weld our sign stands for free (BJ Pierce of Rio Linda who is a nephew of the Ruffners of Serene Lakes).

Then our sign department can do the sign layouts and send them off for production. There is some talk too of some signs down Truckee way but that's for another story.

Now we are looking for sponsors for our signs to cover the cost of the steel, sign production, painting, and installation. The Land Trust has agreed to sponsor one sign. Sponsorships are \$500. Maybe you'd like to sponsor one? Your name will appear at the bottom of the sign as a sponsor. Sponsorships are tax-deductible.

Advice Needed

We also need some advice about which signs to work on. Please weigh in on the question or to sponsor. Email: bill@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org or use the phone number below.

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

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

Sled Dog Races

Return

Summit Valley

(Van Norden Meadow)

March 2-3, 2013

They used to hold annual sled dog races in the Truckee area but for the last 16 years there have been none. This year, not only will there be sled dog races but they will be on the Royal Gorge Acquisition during the Jack London Commemorative Sled Dog Derby.

There will be many different classes with teams of from three to eight dogs but all the races will start at Soda Springs, head up Summit Valley to the Village at Sugar Bowl and back.

The first dog races at Truckee were held in 1915 and were a celebration of the dogs' contribution to the local economy. During the 19th Century they had delivered mail, worked with law enforcement search and rescue, and provided transportation.

Proceeds go to animal welfare organizations. If you would like to volunteer to help: pspringston@hughes.net.

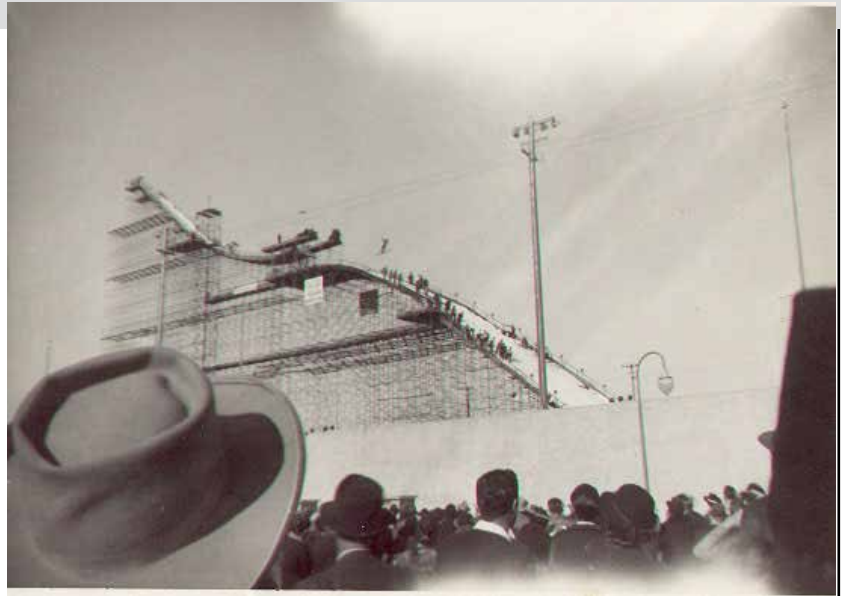
To learn more about this event, please contact Preston Springston, Vice-President Sierra Nevada Dog Drivers
16410 Dog Valley Rd, Truckee CA 96161
(530) 587-2160 pspringston@hughes.net

The article on the next page would not have been possible without the help of Bill Clark, executive director of the Auburn Ski Club and the Western Ski Sport Museum at Boreal.

Ski Jumping at Treasure Island

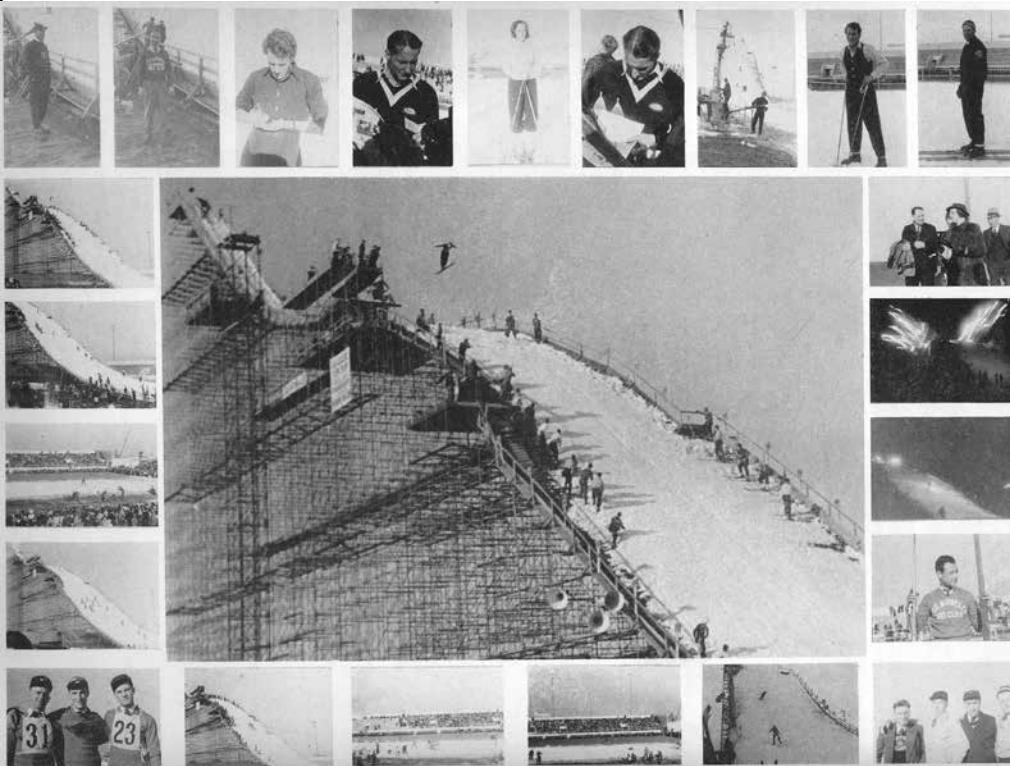
By 1939 The Auburn Ski Club was one of the pre-eminent ski clubs in America. Their ski teams won awards nationally and members were on the U.S. Olympic teams. They had some of the best facilities for skiing and ski jumping at Cisco Grove (much of the area now covered by I-80). They had ski jump hills, cross country skiing terrain, a slalom course and a toboggan run along with their lodge. They drew professionals and the amateur public.

As part of the club's effort to popularize winter sports for the general public's participation instead of just spectating the club decided to put on an international ski jumping exhibition at Treasure Island during the opening days of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exhibition. They had already put on two ski jumping exhibitions in Berkeley in 1934 and 1935 (see our December, '12 and January '13 issues). Thousands of people watched jumpers at those events but the events lost money and were discontinued.



Snow had been taken by train from Donner Summit for the earlier exhibitions but this time "ice pulverizing" machines were used. The tower in 1939 was much larger rising 182 feet into the air and had a run of 460 feet. The judges sat 130 feet high and there was room for 12,000 spectators.

Headlines trumpeted, "An Artificial Island! An Artificial Ski Jump! On Artificial Snow!" "Human Birds" flew through the air with "wings" on their feet. 10,000 people watched from inside the arena and "Ten times this number stood outside the gates...others watched from battleships and pleasure yachts...from ferry boats...and from airplane encircling in the darkness above."



Fireworks accompanied the event as international jumpers flew over the island.

Besides the ski jumpers, visitors could watch the "undulating dances of the maidens of Bali... wander through a South American coffee plantation...see-gratis-American Indians holding the mightiest powwow ever assembled, ...see crude oil refined, a model home fashioned from steel,...garbage being converted into fabrics...see...folk pageants of all nations...see air frozen hard as nails, the insides of a robot woman, [and] General Electric's House of Magic...electrical wizardry that would make Alladin's lamp look like small potatoes."

information from [Ski Heil](#), 1939

From the DSHS Archives



Left is the Big Bend Inn with "Home Cooking" in the 1930's.

Until recently Big Bend hosted a USFS museum. The bad winter two years ago broke a roof beam. There was no money to repair the building so it was torn down and a USFS firehouse was installed in its place.

Big Bend is a good place to look for rust marks left from emigrant wagon trains. It is named for the "big bend" in the Yuba River and it is the spot where the first white baby was born in California. Named Elizabeth Yuba Murphy, she was part of the Stephen Party which was the first wagon train (1844) to reach California with wagons.

The Auburn Ski Club's [California Ski News](#) for January 21, 1936 notes a story titled,

"Two Sacramentans Were Old Time Skiers."

By 1936 the Auburn Ski Club says that skiing had become very popular, the most popular winter sport in California. Indeed, more than 2000 people had just visited the Club's Cisco site the week before. There they tobogganed; cross country skied to Mt. McIntosh, the ridge above Huysink Lake, the Cisco Buttes and the ridge from Troy back to the club; and watched ski jumping.

Everyone presumed that prior to ten years before 1936, the only people who skied were telephone and railroad maintenance men on heavy twelve foot long skis using a single long pole for balance and braking (when placed between the legs and sat upon).

That was not true the paper said. In 1905 "two young Sacramento women on the day after Christmas boarded the train for the summit for a winter vacation in the snow. They were Miss Lucy Hinkson, well known and long time member of the Sacramento City School Dept. and Miss McKeown. Those two brave and wise ones caused much tongue wagging and head shaking, but nevertheless enjoyed a full week of skiing on those [long]... skis. They stayed at the Summit Hotel...."

That year the ski enthusiasts who ushered in the new year on that great playground numbered two compared to the thousands of this year."

Mountain Poetry of Donner Summit

TUNNELS OF THE PACIFIC RAILROAD.

A Paper read before the Society Jan. 5, 1870, by John Gilliss, Civil Engineer, Member of the Society.

Mr. Gilliss describes the winter scene on Donner Summit during the construction of the summit railroad tunnels.

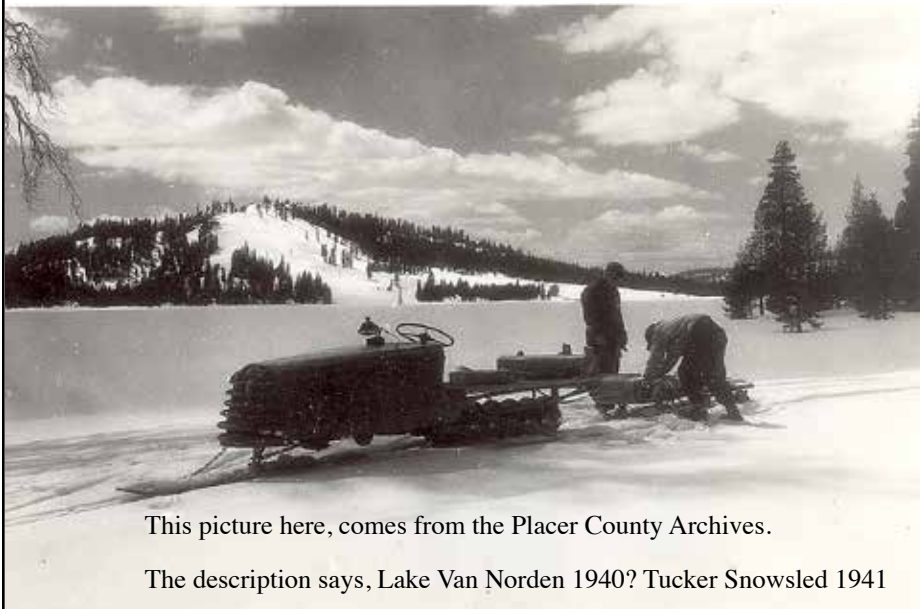
"From this road the scene was strangely beautiful at night. The tall firs, though drooping under their heavy burdens, pointed to the mountains that overhung them, where the fires that lit seven tunnels shone like stars on their snowy aides. The only sound that came down to break the stillness of the winter night was the sharp ring of hammer on steel, or the heavy reports of the blasts."

From the DSHS Archives



This picture above comes from the Placer County Archives.

The description says, "Dasmann, Williamson, Givson, Hadley, &? enroute from Donner Summit to Mt. Lincoln Basin on Sierra Crest Ski Trail. Lake Van Norden is in the background. 1947 March 23



This picture here, comes from the Placer County Archives.

The description says, Lake Van Norden 1940? Tucker Snowsled 1941

CASTLE PEAK EXCURSION

Truckee Ice Palace Visitors Will View a Magnificent Panorama

Trip to be Made to an Elevation 10,000 Feet Above the Level of the Sea

Truckee, Cal. Feb. 22 [1896] - The weather is just cold enough to keep the ice palace and toboggan slide in good condition, and although there is no snow on the streets, where travel is heavy, a short distance from town the ground is covered with a white mantle.

An excursion is announced for next Friday, and the objective point will be Castle Peak, a mountain nine miles above Truckee, which is perpetually covered with snow.

From this elevation may be seen seven lakes and a grand view of the surrounding valleys is obtained. The public schools will have a holiday on that day, to allow children the advantage of making the trip.

Excursionists who come on Saturday and Sunday will be given the advantage of an especially low rate to Castle Peak where the snow is always from twenty to 100 feet deep. The mountain is 10,000 feet above seal level. The snow is hard enough to hold horses, and no road-breaking is necessary.

San Francisco Call February 12, 1896

Skier freezes to death on Mt. Lincoln Peak – California Ski News January 1, 1935.

Blair Shuman of San Francisco was sent near the top of Lincoln but did not return on time. When he had not returned by 8 PM Dennis Jones, manager of the Soda Springs ski area, Beacon Hill (and son of Oscar Jones who built the Soda Springs Hotel) went out with Thor Ellingsen. Using flashlights they went up Lincoln calling for Mr. Shuman. Near the top he was found. The rescuers gave him hot coffee and left him propped up against a tree. They returned to the valley for a doctor and more help. On their return they found Mr. Shuman dead. This was the third time Dennis Jones had been called out to look for Blair Shuman.

Then & Now with Art Clark

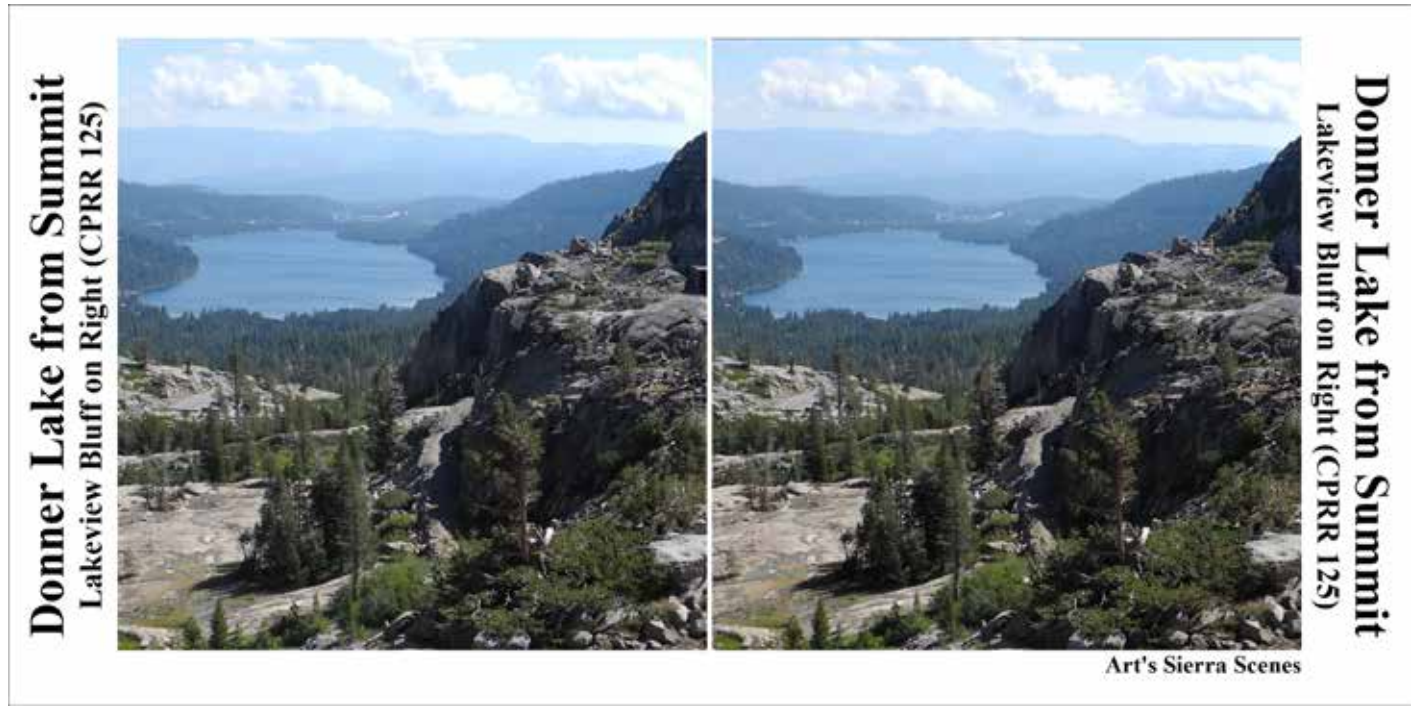


Alfred A Hart #125

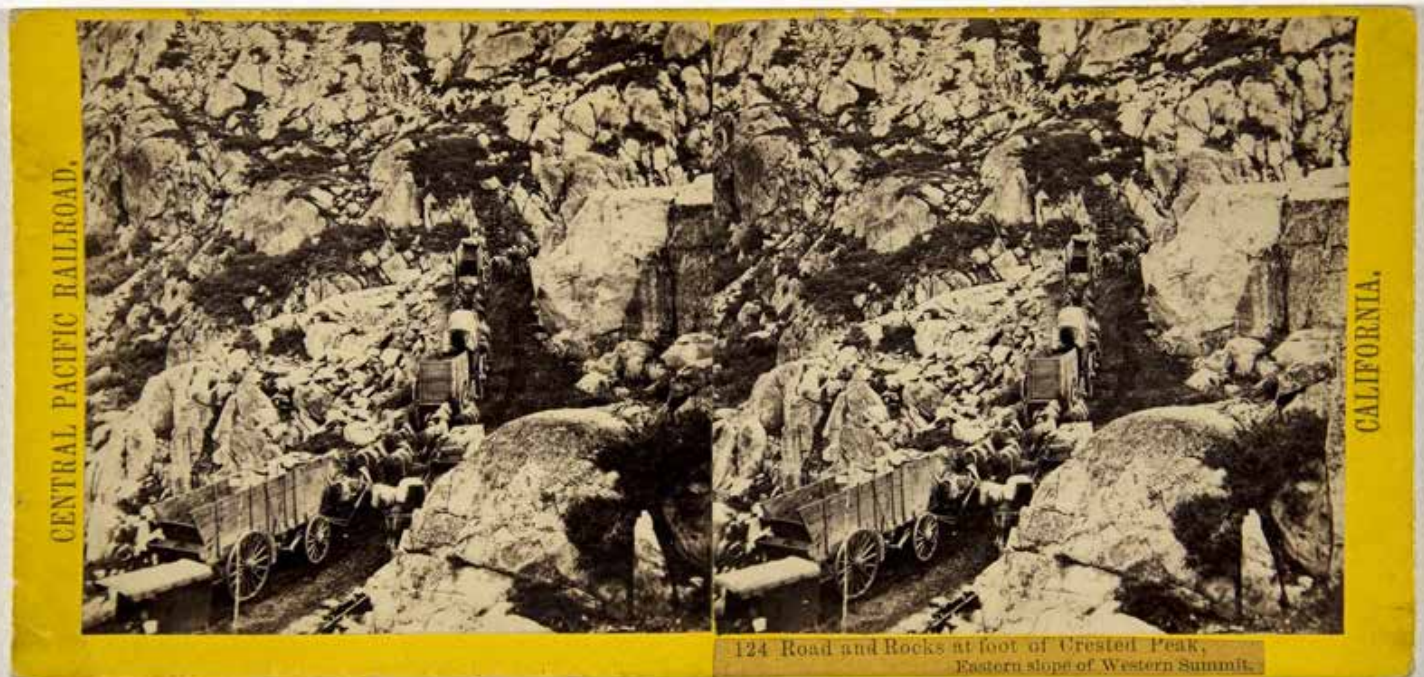
Donner Lake from Summit. Lakeview Bluff on the right.

In the 1860's the story of the Donner Party was well known, and seeing the lake was a high point of the train trips over the mountains. It is said that Eliza Houghton, daughter of George and Tamson Donner, rode the first train from Reno to Sacramento in the summer of 1868, some 21 years after the family had been trapped in the snow.

Photo location: 39° 18.971'N 120° 19.468'W



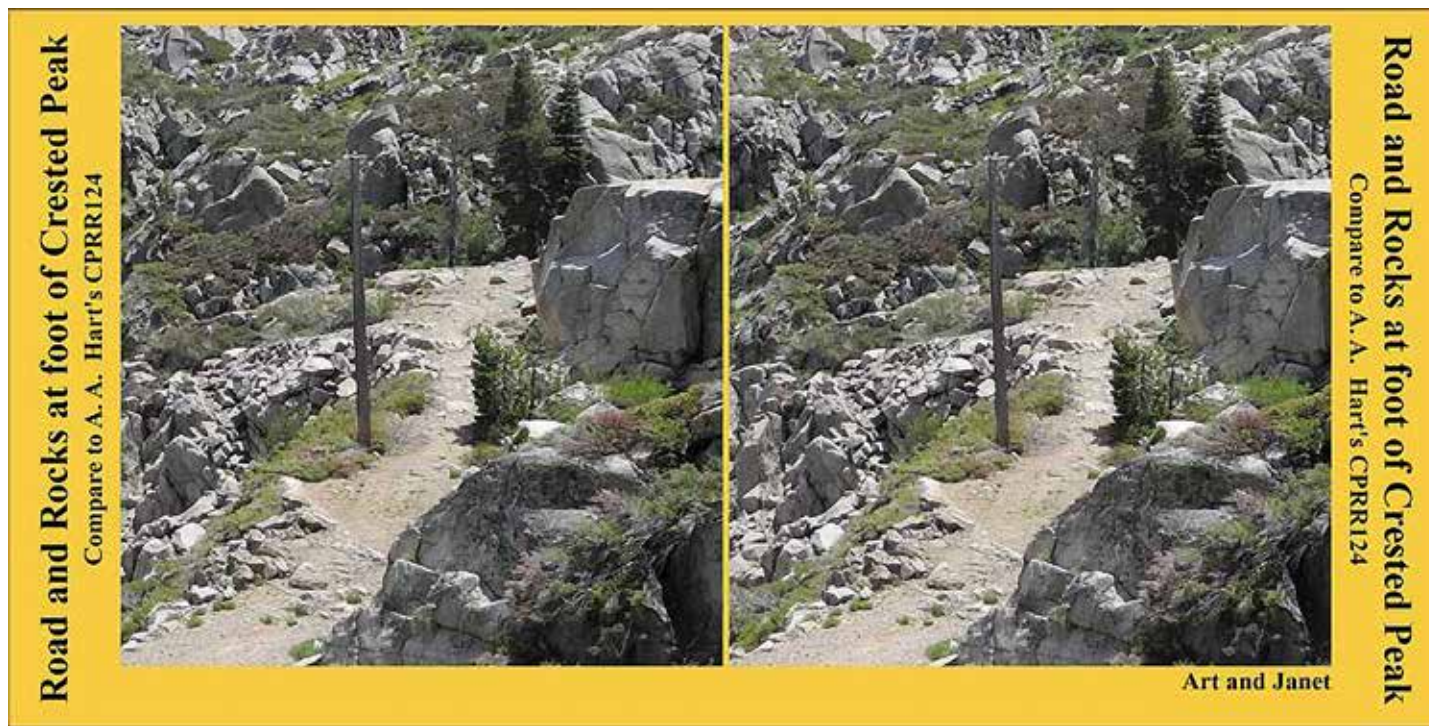
Then & Now with Art Clark



At this point on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road, travelers still had a mile to go to cross Donner Summit. The wagon of the photographer, Alfred A. Hart, is visible in the lower left corner. His description reads "Road and Rocks at Foot of Crested Peak," now named Donner Peak.

Wonder why he didn't mention the wagons and animals?

Photo location 39° 19.063'N 120° 19.040'W



Undercover at Sugar Bowl

By Jim L White

UNDERCOVER AT SUGAR BOWL

By Jim L White

The huge explosion was deafening. I grabbed my rucksack to feel the hardness of the .357 magnum Smith & Wesson revolver hidden inside, just to make sure it was there. I looked down at my chest to see dust fly out of my vest from the concussion that hit me like a hammer. Thru the ringing in my ears I yelled at my companion, Hugh. "What the hell was that?" "These drunken crazies are setting off avalanche charges near the top of the chairlift" Hugh yelled. We were sitting on the floor of the Ski Patrol "Block House" on the summit of Mt. Lincoln, at the Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, near Donner Summit, California. We rushed outside to see what had happened. In the dark we could hear laughter and my flashlight revealed the remains of the handle of a shovel they had stuck in the snow. "They taped a charge to the handle of the shovel" yelled Hugh. This party was getting rough and we still had not identified our suspect. A Federal parolee out of Texas wanted for felony illegal possession of a firearm and deer poaching in California. We were California Fish and Game Wardens working undercover that March night back in 1960. What we needed right now was some luck in trying to find our suspect and to sort out what the heck was going on?



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It all started with a phone call from my Patrol Captain, Ken Hooker in Sacramento. Ken explained that they had reliable information that this Federal parolee was killing deer somewhere in Nevada County and was supposed to furnish some of his deer meat for a "Buck Stew" at the Sugar Bowl employee's closing of the season party. Since Ken had remembered that I had once worked on the Ski Patrol at Sugar Bowl back in my college days, he thought I should pick another Warden to go with me and to make an arrest of this suspect at the employee's party. He also explained that the suspect had done time in the Federal prison in Texas, was on parole on an attempted murder charge, and would be in violation of his parole. His illegal possession of a firearm by a parolee and the deer poaching charge would put him back in prison for a long time. He suggested I contact Bill Scott, the Sheriff of Placer Co. and arrange for his officers to take charge of the subject after an arrest was made.



Sugar Bowl's Disney lift in 1956 with the lodge in the background.

I only knew one warden in northern California that was a skier and that was Hugh Thomas, the warden in Georgetown. Hugh was about 6 foot 4 inches tall, weighs about 225 lbs. and was an ex California Highway Patrolman. Just what I needed, I hoped. I thought it was a long way from our undercover vehicles on Donner Summit to the Block House on top of Mt. Lincoln and it was going to be a real challenge to get into this party without being detected. After all it was only 12 years since I had worked there and Sugar Bowl's manager, Swartz, would recognize me in a minute. I also knew Bradley Board, their mountain manager and had hired him on occasion to use his war surplus army weasel on some over-the-snow needs we had in the past. We just had to take a chance and hope we could get up the mountain and into that party without being recognized

We boarded the "Magic Carpet" tramway from Highway 40 into Sugar Bowl at about 5:30 P.M., wearing regular ski clothing and as I shoved my Head Standard skies into the outside pocket holder on the tram car, I hoped the lift attendant did not look at my skis too closely. The Business Manager at the DFG region 2 offices in Sacramento had had "State of California" engraved into the top of the skis using white paint. I had filled the grooves in with black paste shoe polish but if you looked real close you could still see the engraving. We got out of the tram car at the Bowl and I ran right

into the manager Swartz walking towards me near the Chalet. I smiled and walked on. I think he thought he knew me but was not sure. We just kept walking towards the bottom of the Mt. Lincoln lift. There were employees mingling around and we just mingled in the group too. No one said a thing unusual and we rode to the top and entered the Blockhouse for the party. I brought a ½ gallon of Apple Juice, with the label torn mostly off and I think many thought it was white wine. After the excitement of the explosion going off, we joined right in drinking and waiting for the stew and our suspect to show up. Someone started the propane stove and poured the stew out of a large plastic bucket into a pot on the stove. Hugh said something to the cook about “can’t wait to get a bowl of that venison stew” and the cook said sorry, the guy bringing the venison could not make it tonight. We asked why not and he said something about him out hunting late and just could not make it. Too bad we said. Hugh and I said “what a waste!” But that is the way undercover goes sometimes.

The trip off Mt. Lincoln was wild that black night. One girl was too drunk to ski down so we tied her into a chair and sent her down, telling the bottom operator to go slowly. Two more gals could not ski down and had to lie down in sleds and were sledged down in the dark. There were at least 20 of us holding road flares in our hands so it was quite a spectacle going down the mountain that dark night, like a torch- light parade.

Our suspect was stopped on a traffic violation in Yuba County a few nights later and was booked on carrying a concealed weapon charge. He got a free ride back to Texas and Hugh and I went back to the best job in California.

Jim White started skiing, fishing and hiking the high Placer County backcountry in 1944 when he lived in Sacramento. He started to learn to ski at the Soda Springs Ski Hill with lift ticket checker Carl Buek (Dick Buek’s father) often letting Jim’s girlfriend Shirley (now Jim’s wife) ride for free.

Jim became the Fish and Game Warden for the area in 1957. He later was promoted to Patrol Captain and in 1970 was put in charge of all Fish and Game training and safety statewide.

Jim conducted cold weather survival training, wilderness horse use and snow avalanche programs in the Donner Summit area for various State and Federal agencies, private hydro- electric companies and various colleges. Jim worked on the Ski Patrol at all the ski resorts in the Donner Summit and N. Tahoe ski areas retiring from the Alpine Meadows Patrol after working there for 12 years in the 1970’s. Jim retired from Dept. of Fish and Game after 36 years of service in 1990.

Jim now works as a freelance photographer and writer for several West Coast magazines. Jim (83) and Shirley (81) live in Auburn and still ski, hike, fish and camp the high backcountry of Nevada and Placer Counties. He can be contacted at padhorski@wavecable.com.

ad from Western Skiing November, 1945

*Look Peasant, Please
...in the "Maquis"*



A picturesque jacket whose peasant design is inspired by the dauntless spirit of the French Maquis. Suede finished Zelan treated Poplin. Yoke traced with contrasting piping. Detachable belt and pouch, **\$8.95***
Fine Wool Gabardine Downhill Ski Pants **\$11.95 to \$18.95***

AT SMART STORES

White Stag
SKI TOGS
HIASCH-WEIS MFG. CO. PORTLAND, OREGON

"Out of the Top Drawer"

Book Review: Railroaded

Upon the completion of the transcontinental railroad, at the very moment the sledge would have hit the spike (Governor Stanford missed), the nation was notified via telegraph and celebrations broke out. The “genius of the American people” was being celebrated.

Alfred Richardson in *Beyond the Mississippi*, published in 1869, said, “...this magic key [the transcontinental railroad] will unlock our Golden Gate, and send surging through its rocky portals a world-encircling tide of travel, commerce, and Christian civilization.”

That was the common sentiment in 1869 at the completion of the transcontinental railroad and it was what we learned in school. The railroad opened the continent and kept California in the Union. It brought progress, national union, and civilization.

Railroaded, by Richard White, turns that notion on its head and contradicts all of the transcontinental literature. White says the transcontinentals were unnecessary, almost all were economic failures, they were all social failures, and they were political failures. They contributed to economic dislocation and depression, encouraged corruption, and destroyed local economies and communities. The builders were inept and built shoddy products. There was abuse of labor and destruction of the labor movement. The transcontinentals harmed Native Americans, and hastened the destruction of the buffalo. They opened lands to farming before the production was needed leading to oversupply and economic collapse. They brought in open range cattle a poorly run industry.

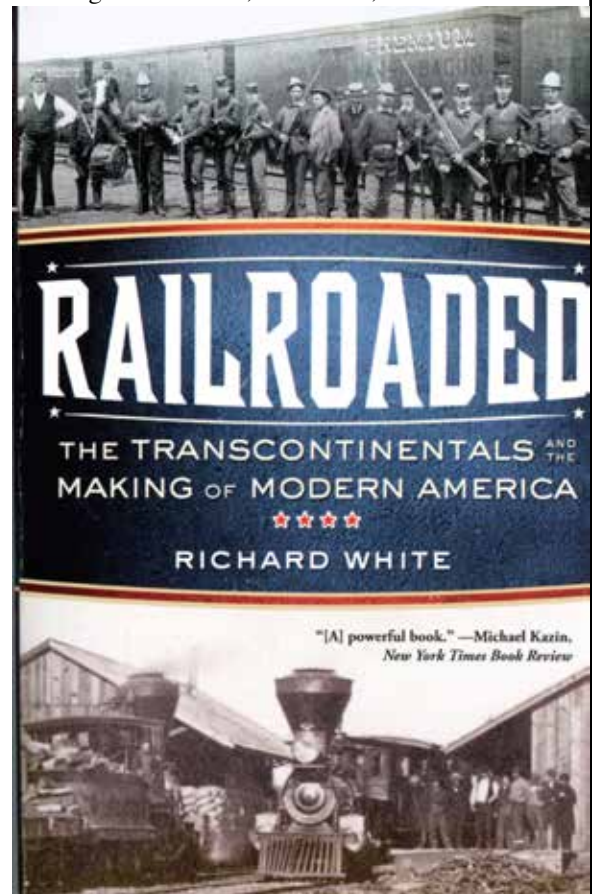
The transcontinentals may have been okay a generation later but were certainly not okay when they were built.

The railroads were seen as sources of wealth but only to the builders who manipulated the building so they were paid but the railroads were saddled with debt. The owners were not “devoted to the efficient sale of transportation” but only to financial manipulation. The only way the railroads made money was through governmental subsidies, the sale of questionable financial instruments, insider manipulation, and financial and land speculation. Instead of adding to the economy they were a drain. The investments in transcontinental railroads would have been much better elsewhere without government subsidies and government encouragement.

Almost all of that indictment is in the introduction, which is White’s thesis. The body of the book’s 500 pages is a litany of abuses and negative effects. Most of the space is taken up with descriptions of the corruption of which there seemed to be an inexhaustible supply. Mr. White did exhaustive research reading letters, legislation, newspaper accounts, Congressional testimony, etc. to validate his thesis.

Richard White is not just reporting but he is also analyzing deeply railroading’s effects. For example he focuses on the manipulation of space by railroads. Railroad travelers lost any connection with the land through which they traveled. Travelers on horseback became intimately familiar with the land. Railroad travelers had no conception of anything between the start and the destination. The railroads then manipulated the destinations. The placement of railroad stations, often not where towns were due to attempts to capitalize on real estate, “imposed unnatural patterns of organization and economic growth.” Successful towns became unviable as the railroad bypassed what existed to connect to what did not exist.

The manipulation of rates was not based on cost but by railroad advantage. For example, the railroad put steamboats on the



Sacramento River out of business by charging high transfer fees. That then affected the river communities.

Without the railroads there would have been less waste; less suffering; less environmental degradation; fewer economic busts in mining cattle and agriculture; more time for the Native Americans to adjust to the coming of civilization; and fewer booms and busts.

Railroaded has everything to make a cynic happy and validate his beliefs about human nature: political and economic skullduggery and chicanery, incompetence, misfeasance and malfeasance, misappropriation, insider benefits to public detriment, and cheating and theft.

When I first heard of Railroaded I was intrigued by the author's divergent and creative analysis at odds with what I'd heard before. I wanted to read it. It's interesting to consider new points of view. One could read just the introduction to get the point and then skim through the 500 pages of proof quickly. But for this esteemed journal (or website if you are reading this on the web) I slogged through all 500 pages and then spent time with the long footnote list.

Mr. White makes good points. There was corruption and manipulation. Clearly there were negative effects of the transcontinental railroads but does that mean they should not have been built? Did the negative effects outweigh the positive over the long term?

It took months to get to California before the railroad, or weeks on a stage. The railroad opened California to settlement and provided opportunity to many. With that settlement and the railroad California produce and products could get to the rest of the country. That started industries in California and filled needs in the rest of the country. The products of Asia could more easily get to the rest of the country as well.

A main part of Mr. White's thesis is that the railroads came too early. The West didn't have the population to support them but that's a "chicken and the egg" argument. Mr. White expects economic development to bring the railroads but the railroads brought economic development. They brought people, opened markets, and developed raw material sources for the rest of the country.

Then there are the non-quantitative effects on the psyche of the American people. The railroads were a technological expression of manifest destiny. They were a symbol that American know how and expertise could conquer anything. They were a symbol of American optimism and the Americans' conquering of the continent. It would have taken a whole different kind of people to consider and NOT build the railroads across the continent. Perhaps we should not have gone to the moon because there is a no ready application for the landing. The American spirit has always demanded innovation, exploration, and control. To argue against the railroads is to argue against American History because one does not like some of the results. That can be a good argument to make. Certainly America did not always do the best things but the railroad building was part of the American character.

That there was corruption is hardly a surprise. It was not only in the railroad industry, it was in all industries. The excesses of the "Gilded Age" are legion. That is why, starting with the progressives, that we have laws and regulations, to keep our baser natures in check. We sometimes learn from the

2nd Edition

Longboards to Olympics

This month see the release of Mark McLaughlin's second edition of his award-winning book Longboards to Olympics: A Century of Tahoe Winter Sports. The book was a finalist for the prestigious Skade Award from the International Skiing Heritage Association. It also earned "First Place and Best Non-fiction book" awards from the Northern California Publishers & Authors association. The new edition features an index, endorsement page, and minor factual corrections. The book also has a new retail price of \$19.95 and will be available at local stores or at www.thestormking.com



Longboards to Olympics — A Century of Tahoe Winter Sports



Award-winning, nationally published Tahoe historian Mark McLaughlin presents another bestseller: *Longboards to Olympics: A Century of Tahoe Winter Sports*

Longboards to Olympics is the only book that tells the fascinating story of how winter sports took Northern California by storm and captured the imagination of a nation. From the early exploits of the skiing mailman Snowshoe Thompson, through the 1930s, a breakout decade for Skisport when thousands attended ski jumps in Berkeley and San Francisco. These well-illustrated stories conclude with the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, the seminal event that launched Lake Tahoe into the international spotlight for world class winter sports.



California's 19th century speed demons exceeded 90 mph on 14-foot long skis. Fueled by ego, money, and alcohol, these skiers were the fastest humans on the planet.

The 1960 Squaw Valley Olympics arrived on a wing and a prayer, but today are regarded as among the best Winter Games ever held. These Games embraced the hopes and dreams of the world's top athletes; while America's best amateurs proved that they too could perform miracles on ice and snow.



These uplifting and entertaining stories pay tribute to the character and accomplishments of the early pioneers who fired up western winter sports.

Visit www.thestormking.com for more stories, photographs, and information about Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevada.



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Soda Springs, California

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100 accommodations, American or European plan.

Reached by bus, car, or train

Ski equipment for rent.

Write early for reservations
ART and FRAN COUILLARD
CO-MANAGERS

above: an ad from Western Skiing magazine, November, 1945. Beacon Hill Lodge burned in the mid 1970's. It was named for the Beacon Hill across the river where the airway beacon sat to guide transcontinental air traffic in the early to mid-decades of the 20th Century

past. Railroads may have had bad effects and may have been built for the wrong reasons but they did build the country and California and to argue against them is to argue against American dynamism of the time. The character of the nation at the time demanded railroad building.

For the first time since the dawn of Creation, this grand chain of mountains was now penetrated by the railway car, carrying into its very fastnesses [sic], and even through to the eastern slope, hundreds of residents of a rich and populous State, itself scarcely inhabited but twenty years ago. No wonder, then, that the occasion was one of enthusiastic rejoicing. No wonder that cheers, deafening and prolonged, echoed and re-echoed along that subterranean granite chamber - cheers heard even above the screeching of the iron pilots of the train." (Daily Alta California December 10, 1867

...the completion of a railroad across the Sierras [sic] removes the only obstacle which has been regarded as insuperable to a vital connection between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. For California it means much, but it means more for the country at large and for mankind. The people of this continent are no longer severed by mountain barriers which would make of them two nations, diverse and hostile. We may now make certain of a common national life that shall secure not only our own best interests, but the largest and noblest influence upon the nations, from whom, on either hand, we are parted by an ocean, and whose destinies we must seriously affect.

On Completing the Sierra Tunnels for the Transcontinental RR in 1867

... The company have great reason to congratulate themselves upon the monument of American engineering, energy and enterprise which their road undoubtedly is. No other great public work has met with obstacles apparently more insuperable, and none has overcome its difficulties of various kinds, with more determined perseverance. ... in the East and in Europe they will fill the public mind with added respect for the practical genius of the American people.
The Mountains Overcome

(Sacramento Daily Union December 2, 1867).

Fun Websites:

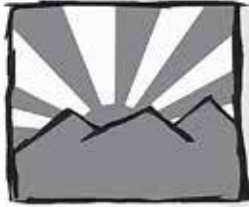
Alfred A. Hart Images of the Transcontinental RR's building ca. 1867

This site has hundreds of wonderful images of Sierra scenery, locomotives, railroad construction, etc. The address here is for image 1. Then you can click through the other 300+ images.

<http://purl.stanford.edu/nj339gb1246#image/1/thumb>

Westerly Journeys which includes pictures of Cascade (Donner Summit) by Marilou Ficklin

<http://www.westerly-journeys.com/goldrush/goldmain.html>



SUMMIT RESTAURANT AND BAR

Phone: 530-426-3904

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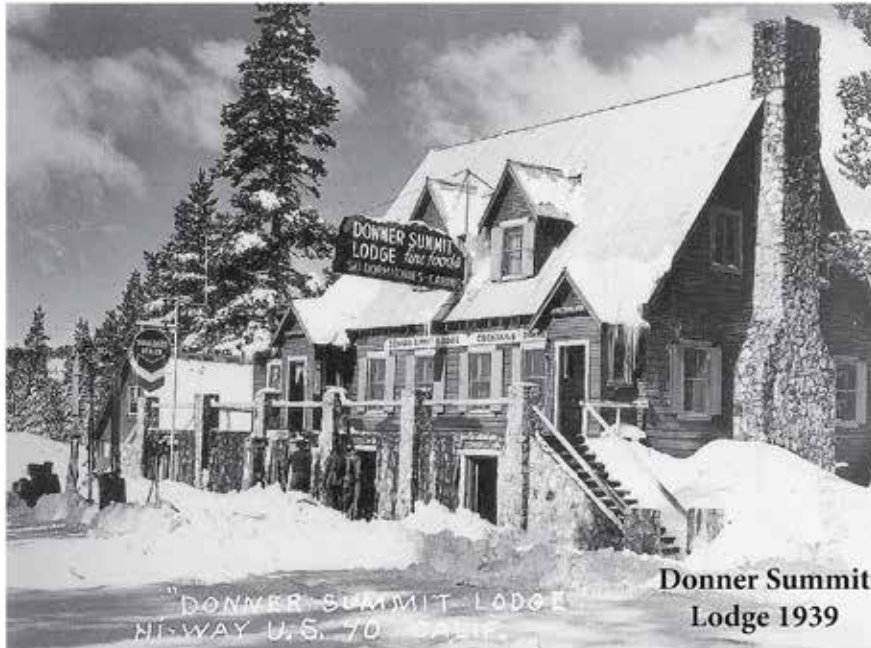
email: maria_at_the_summit@yahoo.com

Established - 2001

Soda Springs, CA

Volume I Issue 1

Winter, 2013



Extraordinary Donner Summit

Donner Summit or Donner Pass is extraordinarily rich and historically it is the most important location in California and perhaps the entire Western United States.

Recreational opportunities abound: rock climbing, downhill skiing, road biking, snowboarding, mountain biking, hiking, lepidoptery, photography, bird watching, plein-air painting, and cross-country skiing.

The area is amazingly diverse biologically. There are over a hundred species of birds that visit Donner Summit. There are 115 species of butterflies, 16 species of amphibians, 500 species of plants, and many dozens of species of mammals. Some of those species are "special Status."

Donner Summit is the Sierra Divide and the source of three major rivers: the Truckee, the Yuba, and The American.

It is the history that really sets the area apart. Native Americans have been traversing Donner Pass and Summit Valley (Van Norden) for thousands of years. They came to spend their summers away from the Nevada heat and to trade with California Indians. In Summit Valley there are over a dozen mortar sites, some with many mortars. The Native Americans ground the mortars into the Sierra granite over many generations as they ground their seeds. There are many metates (larger grinding surfaces) scattered around as well. In one location there are also cupules (small depressions ground into the granite possibly for mystical reasons). Petroglyphs, which are thousands of years old, are in many locations.

The first wagons to reach California came through Summit Valley after the emigrants had conquered the hardest obstacle on their journey: the Sierra and Donner Pass. The first transcontinental railroad goes through Summit Valley as does the first transcontinental highway and the first transcontinental telephone line. Overhead, the first transcontinental air route crossed the Summit, the route marked by beacons on the surrounding peaks. Soda Springs Ski Hill is called Beacon Hill because a beacon was located there.

In Summit Valley there is a piece of the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. that was hidden for almost a hundred years by Lake Van Norden. There is also a beautiful remnant of the Emigrant Trail as it winds through the forest on the edge of the meadow.

Donner Summit Lodge Open Every Day

Winter Hours: Sat/Sun 8 A.M. - 8:30 P.M. MWTHF Noon-8:30 P.M.
Taco Tuesday: 4 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. The bar is open until the crowd is gone.

Short History of Donner Summit Lodge

Ever since the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. was built in the early 1860's to service the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, there have been hostelrys along the route over Donner Pass.

The first auto to cross Donner Pass crossed in 1901 and the first motorcycle in 1903. The first successful "transcontinentalists" crossed the country using Donner Pass in 1903. With the arrival of the automobile, lodges began to spring up to service automobiles and provide relief for the "autoists".

By 1913 the first transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway, was in operation and auto traffic increased considerably. Small lodges and service stations were built along the route and early automobiles would have gone right past what is now Donner Summit Lodge. Once the highway was open in winter the lodges offered accommodations for snow sport enthusiasts.

In the first decades of skiing people stayed in the small lodges and the night life after skiing was vibrant. Since many of the accommodations and dining were communal, people socialized in the common areas.

Donner Summit Lodge was built in 1938 to take advantage of the growth of traffic over the, by then, year-round Highway 40. The lodge was expanded twice from the picture above, first just after World War II and then in the 1970's.

Read about local history while you dine at the Summit Restaurant with the restaurant's new menus.

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Membership 2012

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

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

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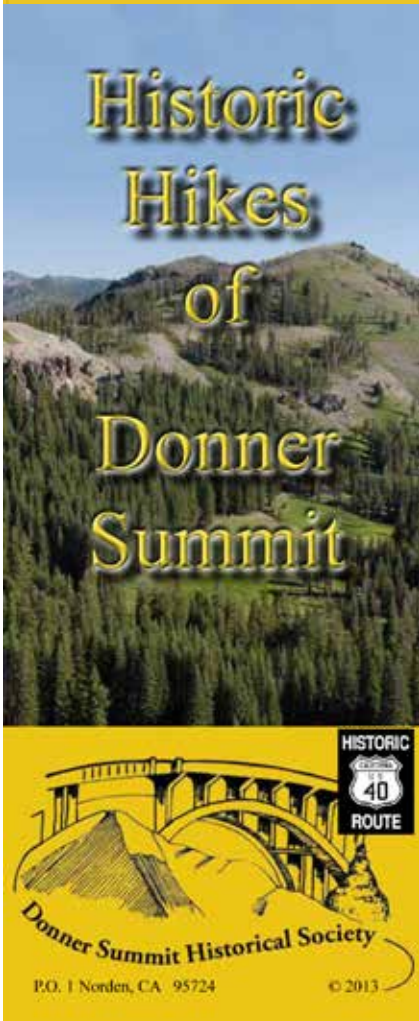
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Donner Summit Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

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



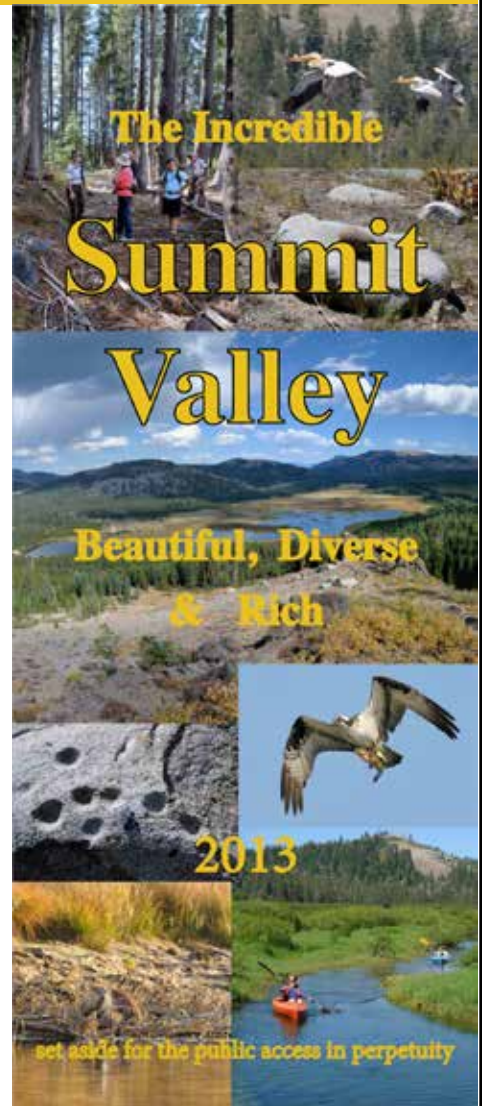
New Brochures

With the coming of the new year there are two new brochures on the Summit. The first is "Historic Hikes of Donner Summit." It includes maps descriptions, and pictures of a number of historical hikes: Donner Pass hikes, the Catfish Pond and Beyond, Crater Lake and Rhino Rock, Circumambulation of Van Norden, and Summit Canyon.

The second celebrates the purchase of the Royal Gorge Acquisition by the Land Trust last month. It includes geology, birds, butterflies, wildflowers, history, and Native Americans of Summit Valley. It's an "Owner's Manual" for Summit Valley.

You won't want to print them since they are both very large. The PDF's are on the the DSHS website though, on the "Brochure" page and you can scroll around them.

They will also be available starting this spring on Donner Summit at the DSHS, the general store and the restaurant.



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We thank our donors for their help.

Although we are a volunteer organization we do use money. We have two new brochures, see the previous page, which cost a few thousand dollars. We will be adding four 20 Mile Museum signs in Summit Valley this summer and we have rent to pay. Those are just a few examples. Feel free to use the form on page 16 to add to the above list. More than 600 people subscribe to our The Heirloom. There on not 600 names on the above list.