

The Donner Summit

Heirloom



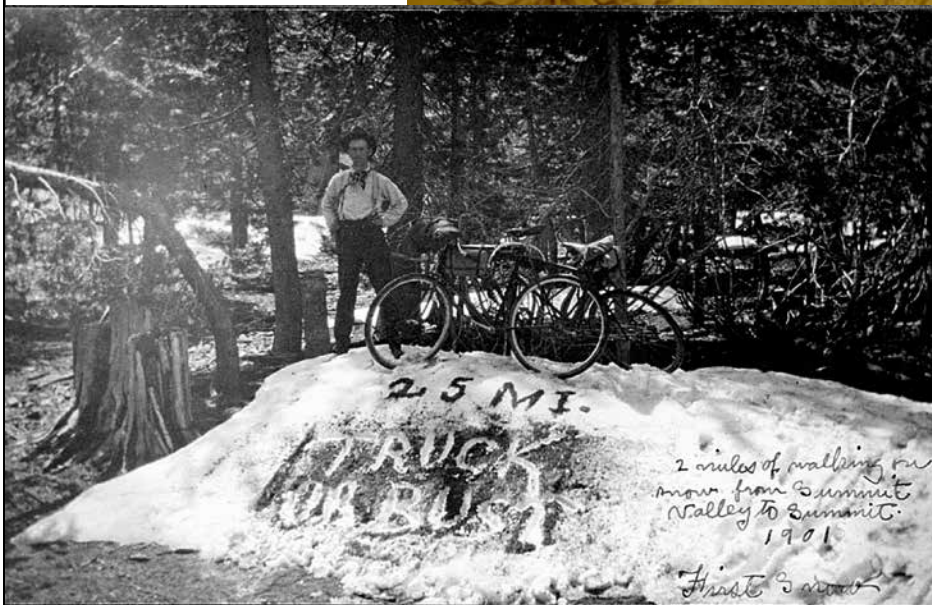
History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

March, 2014 issue #67

Nice Math Problem

Serendipity
+ Good Intentions

= DSHS Acquisition



That's the first arithmetic we've used in the Heirloom but our headline staff thought it was pretty clever.

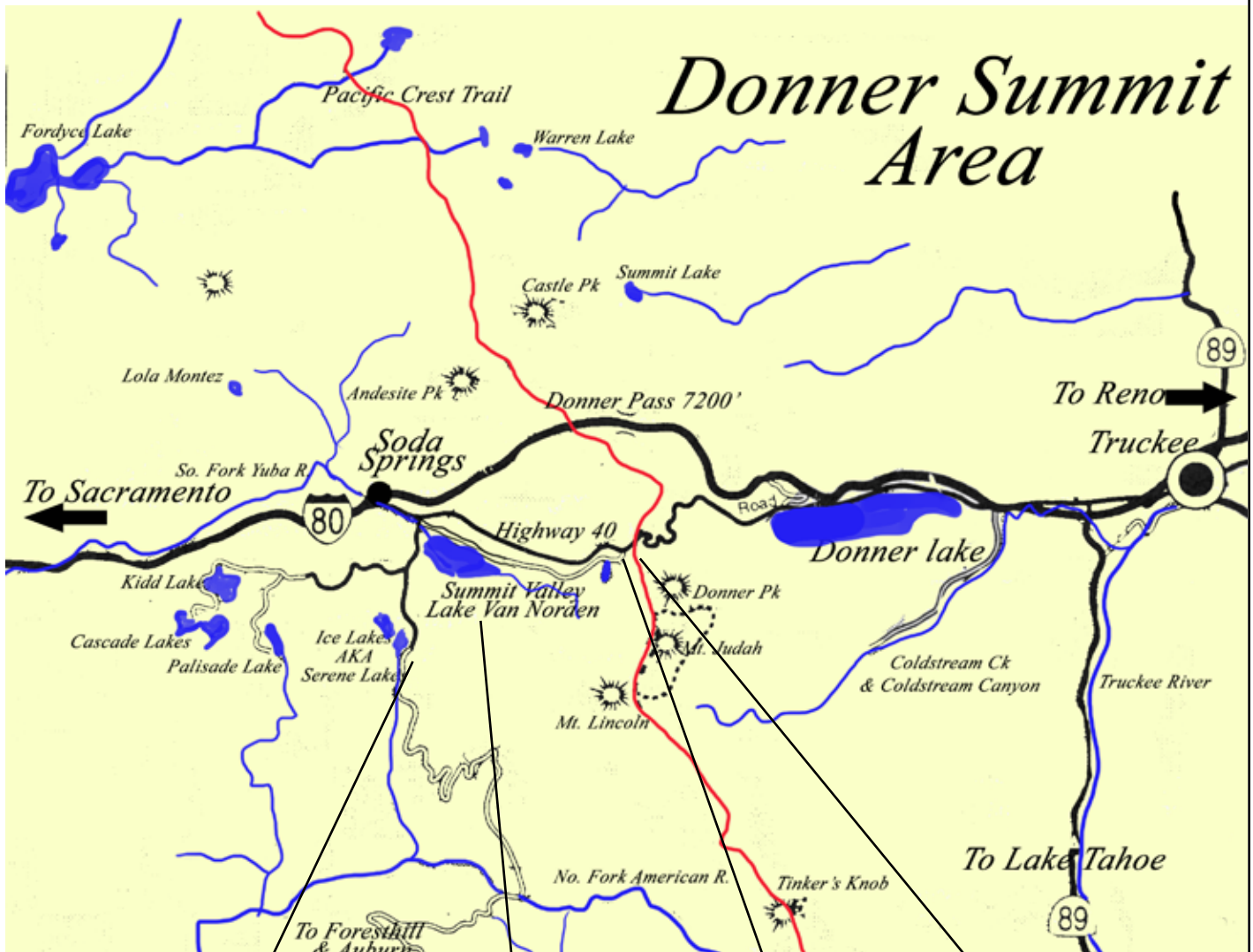
Scott Wall was patrolling EBay when he came across a picture album dating from

1901. The seller has acquired the album at a garage sale in Ukiah in 1965. Scott's bid won and then he went from person to person until he brought the album in to the DSHS for Norm Saylor, DSHS president, to see. Norm was excited as you can imagine.

The album is apparently all about about a bicycle trip from Sacramento to Truckee in 1901 ("Truck or Bust" above). Who were the bicyclists? What led them to do it? What was the trip like and what were the road like? We have only the pictures and a few captions. The trip and the cyclists have faded into history.

All of the pictures here are from the album and are presumably dated 1901. There are more in the album of course. Interestingly a number of the labeled pictures were first labeled "1899" which was crossed out. "1901" was then written in. Did the dating happen some years after he album was assembled? Take a look through your family trees and see if any of the pictured riders look familiar.

Story Locations in this Issue



In This Issue

New Mountain Club pg 9

Summit Valley pg 11

Summit Hotel site pg 13

Dutch Flat Rd. pg 14

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

1901 Bicyclist's Album



The young fellows apparently had a grand time on their bicycle camping adventure to Truckee, presuming they liked uphill bicycling.

Once they arrived in Truckee they set up camp at Donner Lake and then availed themselves of what the local area had to offer. They went sledding, fishing, hiking, mountain climbing, sight seeing, photographing obviously, and they did some flapjack flipping.

Above: Donner Lake from Summit road; above, Coldstream Valley.

Right: Castle Peak from Donner Peak.

Below: Coldstream Valley

Below right: Coldstream Valley





Above: labeled "near (Diamond) lake west of Cisco. This at what is now the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80 a bit east of Crystal Lake. "Diamond" Lake is no doubt Crystal Lake. The view above appears to be on what is a now a dirt section of the old Lincoln Highway just uphill of the south side of I-80.

Top Right: near Cape Horn

Right: near Colfax

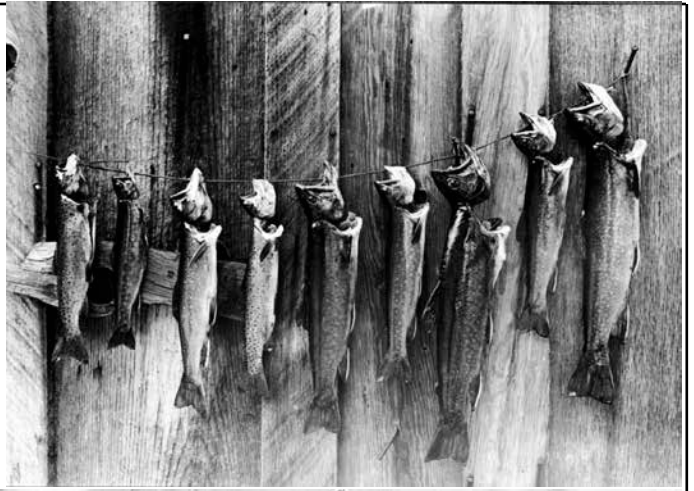
Right lower: soup stop near Gold Run

Bottom Left: first meal at Newcastle

Bottom Center: undetermined location but the photo is labeled to show what the cyclists were carrying e.g. tool kit, frying pan, food, coat, and pistol.

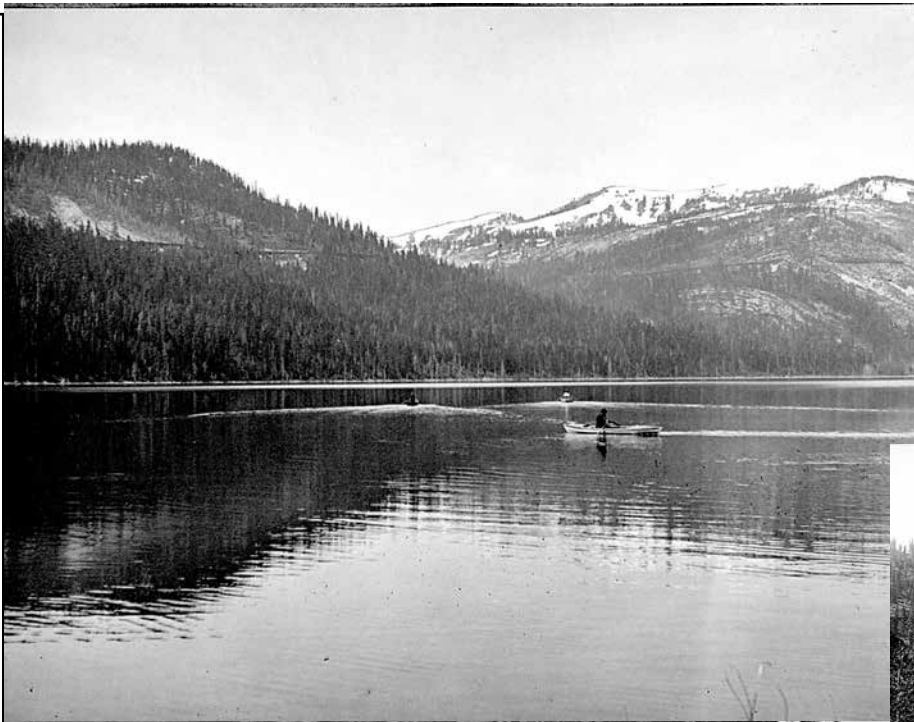
Bottom Right: "Emigrant road west of Horseshoe Bend" which would be in Coldstream Valley below Donner and Judah Peaks.





Donner Stream

Camping at Donner Lake, fishing in the Truckee, sledding.
The fish came from Carpenter Valley

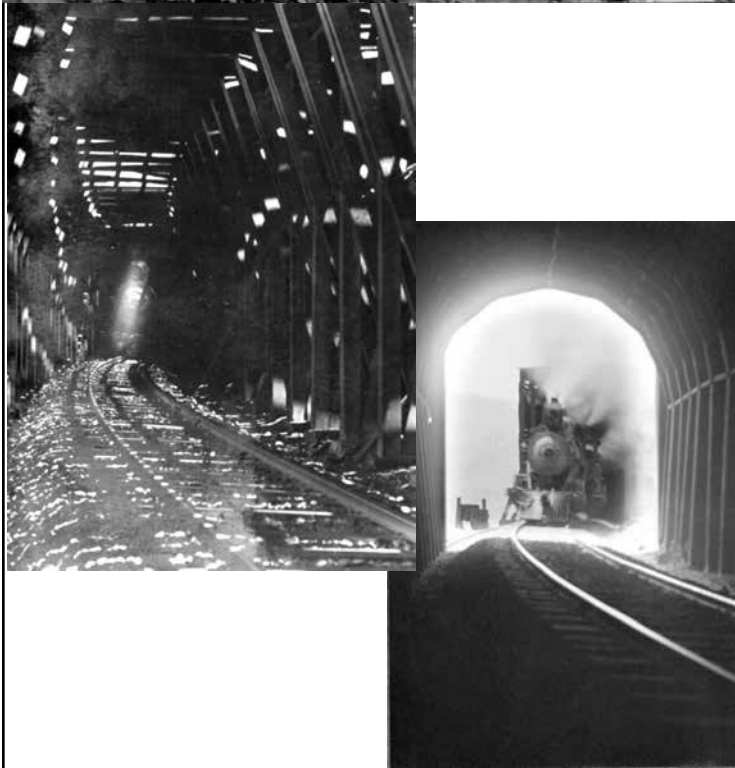
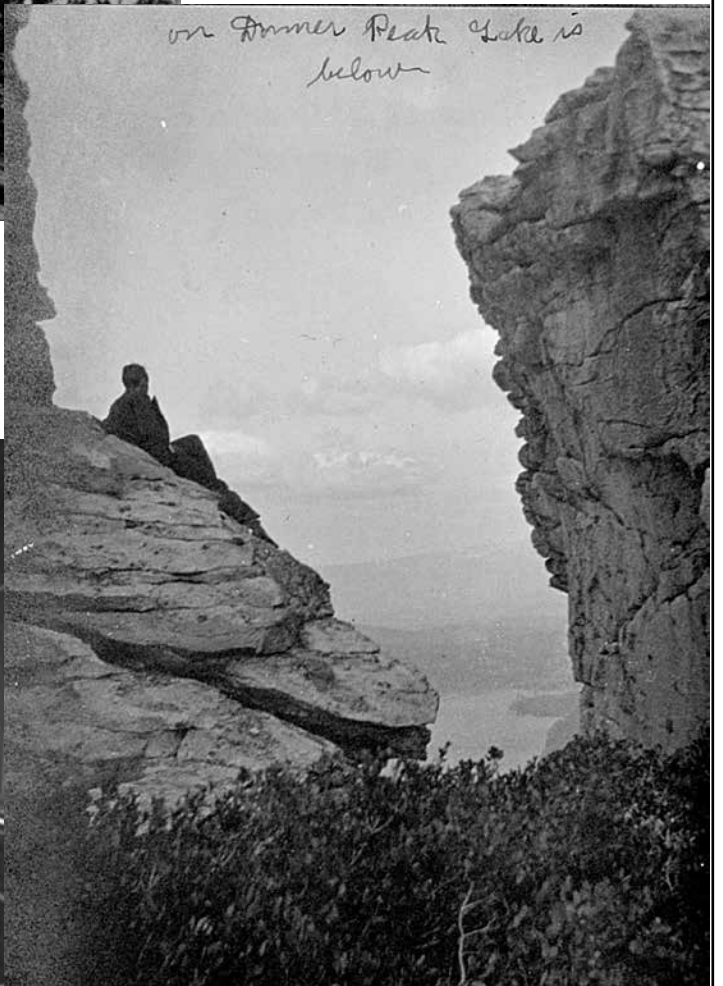


Old C

Top left: Donner Lake looking west.
Top right: Truckee
Below top right: snowsheds on the distant ridge
Center Left: Donner Lake Camp and "Old Corey."
Right: horseteam in Truckee
Bottom Left: the road into Truckee maybe near Gateway and McIver's Dairy. Maybe those are McIver's cows.

Top: Juniper on Mt. Lincoln
Below: view from Donner Peak
Bottom Left: snowshed
Bottom Center: Tunnel 13

Bottom Right: People in the past were just like us. Anyone who has been up Donner Peak has taken a shot like this. Donner Lakes sits 1,000 feet straight down from the notch.



Book Your Reservations Now

Summit Soda Springs

Last month [The Heirloom](#) ran a story by Nick Chickering about the history of Summit Soda Springs, the original Soda Springs. This month we return to the subject with an article, an ad, and a photograph of and about Summit Soda Springs. It's not too soon to book your reservation for summer, 1895. [The Heirloom](#) will run more photographs and stories in future issues.

THE SACRAMENTO, SATURDAY, JULY T6, 1898. THE SUMMIT SODA SPRINGS. LIFE AT THE HIGHEST OF ALL THE RESORTS. A Veritable Summer Paradise in the Very Heart of the Sierra Nevada. A correspondent of the "Record- Union," writing from the Summit Soda Springs, says:

"This delightful resort, in the very heart of the Sierra Nevada is again the scene of a large gathering of health and pleasure seeders from the cities and valleys who have come here to escape the heat of summer, drink the health-giving mineral waters and by rational recreation counteract the effects of a long season of close application to business or the demands of society.

"The weather here is simply perfect, and the guests are enjoying life as it can only be enjoyed in a delightful retreat like the Summit Soda Springs, at an elevation of many thousand feet above the valley.

"In no former year have the arrangements for the accommodation and comfort of guests been better than they are this season, and somehow the people that come to this Alpine paradise seem to get along better with one another than is usually the case at summer resorts. A sort of fellow-feeling seems to animate all the guests. Everyone enjoys himself individually, and all enjoy themselves together.

"The fishing is excellent, and many well filled creels are brought in daily by the devotees of the rod. Every day parties are formed to go fishing down the picturesque stream that dashes and splashes past the hotel and through the pine-covered mountains to the gorge some miles below, where the biggest and sauciest of the trout are found. Other parties go mountain climbing and old bald-headed "Tinker's Knob" is frequently visited.

"These daily outings, with lunches in the woods, and never a care about business or other sordid considerations, are better than 'poppy or mandragora or all the drowsy syrups of this world' to bring health and buoyancy of spirit to those whose energies have become impaired in the long chase after the nimble and elusive dollar. There is none of 'that tired feeling' here.

"Then there are all sorts of outdoor pastimes for those who are not able to climb mountains or go a-fishing, so that never a day nor an hour drags. Many of the guests drive back and forth between the springs and the Summit Hotel, twelve miles distant and others still engage saddle horses and explore the regions for miles about. ...

July 16 1898 [Sacramento Record Union](#)

Left: the Summit Soda Springs Hotel - date unknown

THE SUMMIT SODA SPRINGS.

LIFE AT THE HIGHEST OF ALL THE RESORTS.

A Veritable Summer Paradise in the Very Heart of the Sierra Nevada.

SUMMIT SODA SPRINGS HOTEL.

Situated on the American River, in the
HIGH SIERRAS,

THIRTEEN MILES FROM SUMMIT
Station, C. P. R. R. Various improvements recently made, including a
LARGE NEW LOG CABIN.

This well-known Summer Resort will be open to guests **JUNE 20TH,**
GOULDEN & JACOBS, Proprietors,
DONNER P. O.

[Sacramento Daily Union](#) July 16, 1895



1939 - New Mountain Club Formed.

At the Historical Society we have a stable of capable researchers continually perusing historical documents related to Donner Summit. You can imagine the fun that is had as new discoveries are chanced upon and then shared. You can imagine too that there must be a lot of new discoveries given the rich and varied history of Donner Summit. Phil Sexton, who used to be the ranger at Big Bend, described Donner Pass as the most important square mile in California because it is the site of Native American crossings for centuries, the first wagon trains to reach California, the first transcontinental railroad, the first transcontinental highway, the first transcontinental air route (a station and beacons were on Donner Summit – hence for example, Beacon Hill), the first transcontinental telephone, the first motorized transcontinental trip, etc. It's also the Sierra Divide and the source of three California rivers: the Truckee, the American, and the Yuba. Parenthetically, the first transcontinental telegraph did not go across Donner Summit but after the railroad was built, the telegraph came to join the other firsts. Presumably it was happy.

There are stories that go with each of the above and then a thousand more stories, about ice harvesting on the Summit, the first hotels, a spy at Sugar Bowl, the first chair lift, stagecoaches, Soda Springs, etc.

Having studied all kinds of sources and built up quite a compendium of stories about Donner Summit history, imagine our staff's surprise to come across something entirely new!

Serene Lakes, on Donner Summit, has an interesting history. The lakes used to be called Ice Lakes because there was ice harvesting there for a few years. Fitz William Redding Jr. arrived in 1867 and he was the first settler. The original three lakes are now two due to a dam built in the mid 1940's. The road and stage coaches to Summit Soda Springs used to go between the two largest lakes and over a bridge. There was even talk, before San Francisco decided on Hetch Hetchy, of making the valley part of the water source for San Francisco (along with other Donner Summit area valleys). Those are all future Heirloom stories though.

Ski Heil was a short lived California ski magazine that published issues in 1939 and 1940 from Modesto. Their March, 1939 issue had an intriguing article, "New Mountain Club Formed."

The article starts, "The Ice Lakes Club has been organized for the purpose of affording its members an ideal recreational playground, a sportsman's paradise. Situated on the shore of the Ice Lakes, at the 6900 foot altitude..."

That's definitely Serene Lakes, a location that many before and since have thought about developing (see "What Might Have Been" August, '09).

No one had heard of the Ice Lakes Club mentioned in the Ski Heil magazine. The club was to be patterned after the Lake Placid Club. It was sponsored by thirty "prominent business and professional sports lovers" and was intended to be the answer "to the desires of Northern California outdoor enthusiasts." It was to be a limited venture of 500 Life members and another 500 regular members. There were going to build a 97 foot long club house containing hotel rooms, lobby, lounge, and bar overlooking the lakes. Membership was by application but you could be blackballed.

The list of initial subscribers is a rich list of Californians both from the area and from wider California and Nevada. Roy Mikkelson, Olympic team member and local ski jumping celebrity was on the list as were the Klein brothers (Bill ran Sugar Bowl's ski school and store for decades - see the Heirloom for Nov. '09). Various ski club presidents were also included.

The article closed saying there were many clubs, but "no exclusive mountain club...where the devotees of the High Sierra Sports can sojourn to spend the week ends...in our beautiful Mountains. The Ice Lakes Club will fill this long felt need."

We don't know why the Ice Lakes Club never actually formed. By the mid-40's the first subdivision had appeared, Ice Lakes 1, the dam had been built on Serena Creek, and the Serene lakes Lodge, cabins and campsites had been built. There would be various iterations of Sierra Lakes Clubs and Serene Lakes over the years and eventually there would be 8 subdivisions and (currently) 815 houses would be built.

more on the next page

Ice Lakes Club cont'd

After the [Ski Heil](#) article was found another turned up on the same subject, this one from the [Berkeley Gazette](#) on January 31, 1939:

California's greatest need today, according to the Winter Sports Committee of the State Chamber of Commerce, is more good overnight accommodations for skiers at prices which the average skier can afford. It then mentioned the Ice Lakes Club on Donner Summit. It would have 500 life and regular members (not, as noted in [Ski Heil](#), 500 of each). "The two beautiful Ice Lakes..." "will be used for skating in winter and for aquatics in summer."

"According to M. Corey, secretary of the Ice Lakes Club, such a club will fill a real need. ...we will be able to offer first class accommodations at greatly reduced rates to members." Members "may later desire to build their own cabins."

At that time, the newspaper said, Charles Van Evern had just completed "one of the finest ski tows in the west, on the slopes of Beacon Hill facing the railroad tracks" It was a J bar. "A new rope tow has been added to take skiers from the tracks to the start of the J-bar type tow, and was put in operation the past weekend."

From the DSHS Archives

AUTOS NOT ALLOWED TO USE S.P. TUNNELS

In addition to "Private Property – No Thoroughfares" and "Look Out for the Cars" the Southern Pacific will add a new sign to the system through the mountain country.

Extra freight train No. 4,047, in tunnel No. 6 near Summit, last night ran down an automobile in which B.J. Maupin and R.L. Douglas of Talon, Idaho [sic] were riding.

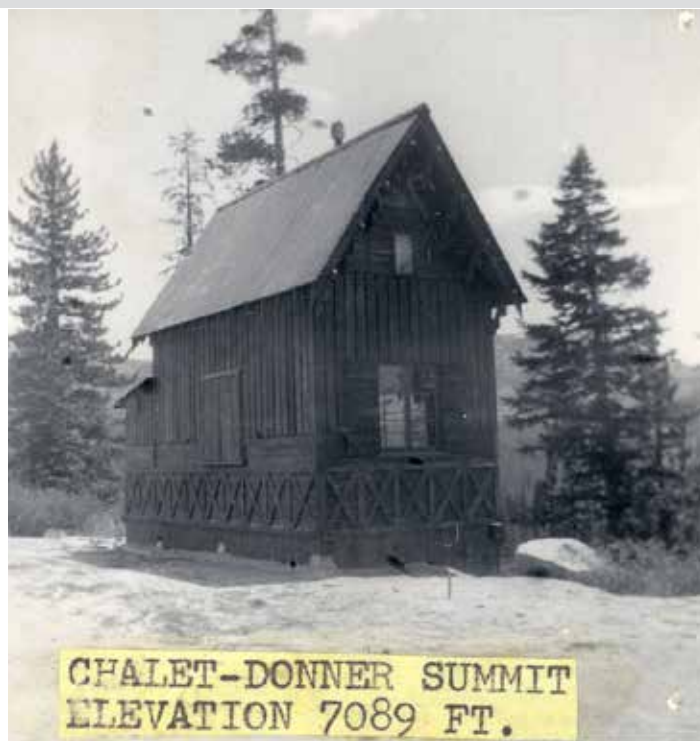
Maupin was severely hurt. The auto was splintered. The tourists found the road impassable and decided to take a chance in the tunnel, which is four miles long.

[San Francisco Call](#) November 17, 1913

AUTO STRUCK BY TRAIN IN 3 MILE SNOWSHED

B.J. Maupin and R.L. Douglas of Fallon, Nev., took a chance in short cutting with their machine through a three mile snowshed on the Souther Pacific at the summit of the Sierras last night and as a result were struck by a freight train. Maupin was probably fatally injured, but Douglas escaped with a few minor bruises

[San Francisco Call](#) November 18, 1913



More Modern Version of the Story

The behavior of the motorist to the left was not an isolated case. In the summer of 2013 someone drove through Summit Tunnel 6 (the tracks were removed in 1995) and drove all the way to Coldstream Canyon where he (it had to be a he don't you think?) got stuck on the tracks and delayed Amtrak. Within a day or two the railroad erected a gate at the entrance to Tunnel 6 to prevent future vehicular incursions.

From the DSHS Archives



From Theodore Judah's general engineering survey of the route of the CPRR, 1863

Summit Valley is a beautiful valley, near the source of the Yuba, about two and a half miles long and three-quarters of mile wide, yielding excellent pasturage for cattle hundreds of which are driven there each summer. From the summit, looking easterly, you appear standing upon a nearly perpendicular rocky wall of one thousand feet in height.

Immediately below is seen a valley, from one to two mile wide, extending up from the Truckee river to nearly beneath your feet. Donner lake about three and a half miles long by one mile in width occupies the upper portion of this valley, and its outlet is seen pursuing its course down to a junction with the Truckee. Two long ranges or spurs are seen on either side, parallel with, and enclosing the lake, reaching from the summit to Truckee river. Immediately beyond the river is seen the second summit of Sierra Nevada; while still further in the distance, the Washoe mountains are plainly visible.

Respectfully submitted
THEO. D. JUDAH,
Chief Engineer, C.P.R.R. Co.

Right: the original Nyack Lodge built by Herstle Jones, brother of Soda Springs Hotel founder, Oscar Jones. The lodge sat where the Emigrant Gap highway overlook is now. When the freeway was built most of the lodge was picked up and wheeled up to the Nyack exit where it exists in a different form. Today it is the Emigrant Gap post office, store, Burger King, gas station and offices.



Book Review

Arcadiapublishing.com is a publisher of small format books of local history. For example there is a picture book about Donner Summit by Art Somers. He used pictures from the Donner Summit Historical Society and the Placer County Archives. We also helped with the text.

Images of America Wells Fargo Dr. Robert Chandler Arcadia Publishing

The Serene Lakes Property Owners' Association hosts movie nights in August on their homeowners' beach. Many of those nights include presentations by different people or groups. In August, 2013 Dr. Robert Chandler, retired senior research historian for Wells Fargo, gave a talk about stage coaches.

Dr. Chandler left behind some historical materials including this book, Wells Fargo, which you can find in some bookstores and at arcadiapublishing.com (see the sidebar).

This small format book is a picture book chock full of pictures about the history of Wells Fargo. Accompanying each picture is a long caption. The combination of pictures and captions tells the history and covers: founders, stage coaches and "stagecoaching", U.S. Mail, Gold Rush, letter delivery, and the growth of the company into the modern banking age. The historical pictures and reproduced documents are fun to page through. There are pictures of old towns, coin making, famous people, stage coach drivers, ships, Pony Express, stage stops, building interiors, advertisements and stock certificates, documents, etc.

The captions explain the pictures and tell the story but they also pass on little facts about 19th century life. For example we see stagecoaches in the movies but do not recognize how hard travel was. In one caption we learn that fancier coaches were used on the ends and beginnings of lines but that in the middle canvas topped mud wagons were used. People were crammed in with three people on each bench facing each other, their legs intertwined. "The interior of the wagon could only contain ten of twelve legs." that means two legs hung outside. Besides the cramped traveling accommodations, travelers had to put up with road dust, "a thick coating of alkali dust" and they could go wild from "prickly heat." They ate a diet of "boiled black beans and coffee." For traveling in this manner, tickets were expensive, on a par with today's airline flights.

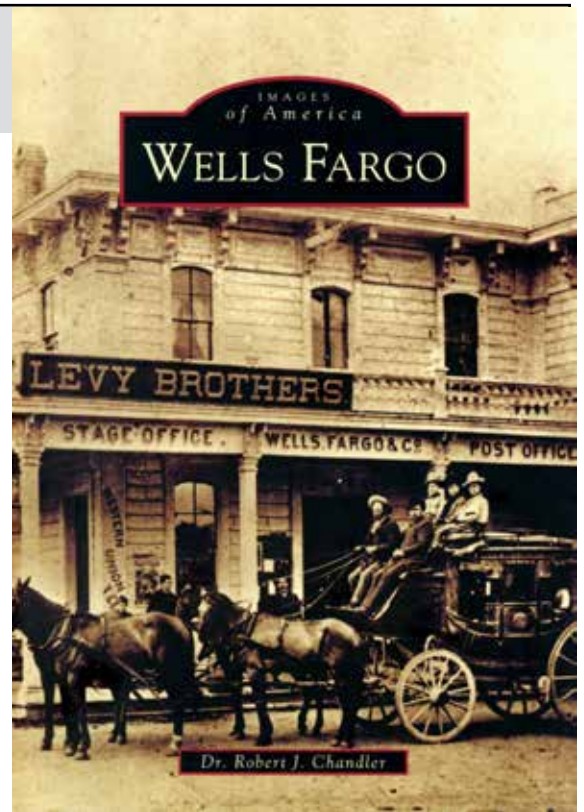
There are also stories. A famous driver, Hank Monk, drove Horace Greeley to Placerville. Greeley was concerned about getting there in time for a lecture he was to give but Monk promised they'd arrive in time. There followed a wild ride over the Sierra and a cartoon accompanies the story showing Greeley bounced through the coach's roof.

Horses were changed every twelve miles and passengers could stretch their legs and eat every 45 miles. At 5-12 mph that was a long time between leg stretches after being packed so tightly and bounced so hard. "The coaches rolled along 24 hours, day after day, making 125 miles daily." Imagine traveling like that, hour after hour. We complain about being caught behind a slow truck on an uphill stretch.

There is only one picture directly related to Donner Summit and that's a picture of Cisco. Wells Fargo though, was part of the history of Donner Summit with mail, passengers, and gold being transported over it by Wells Fargo stages or stages contracted to Wells Fargo.

In our August, 2012 Heirloom we included an article about explosives used on the railroad build the Sierra tunnels. Black powder was used mostly but so was nitroglycerine which was manufactured at Donner Lake. We reported an explosion in San Francisco from a box of leaking and unstable nitroglycerine to explain why the explosive was produced at Donner Lake and why it was not used so much. Wells Fargo includes a picture of the aftermath of the April, 1866 explosion. That should make up for our lapse last August of having no picture.

Wells Fargo is enjoyable to page through multiple times.



Then & Now with Art Clark



Old Summit Hotel V2. The first Summit Hotel Opened in 1870 and served crews and passengers of the newly-finished transcontinental railroad. A map of the area from 1884 showed an addition to the hotel, a telegraph office, freight house, engine house and a 67 foot turntable, visible as the octagonal peak roof to the right of the snowshed. Unfortunately, the hotel burned down in early 1893.

Photo location:
39° 19.006'N 120°
19.739'W - near West
Portal Tunnel 6



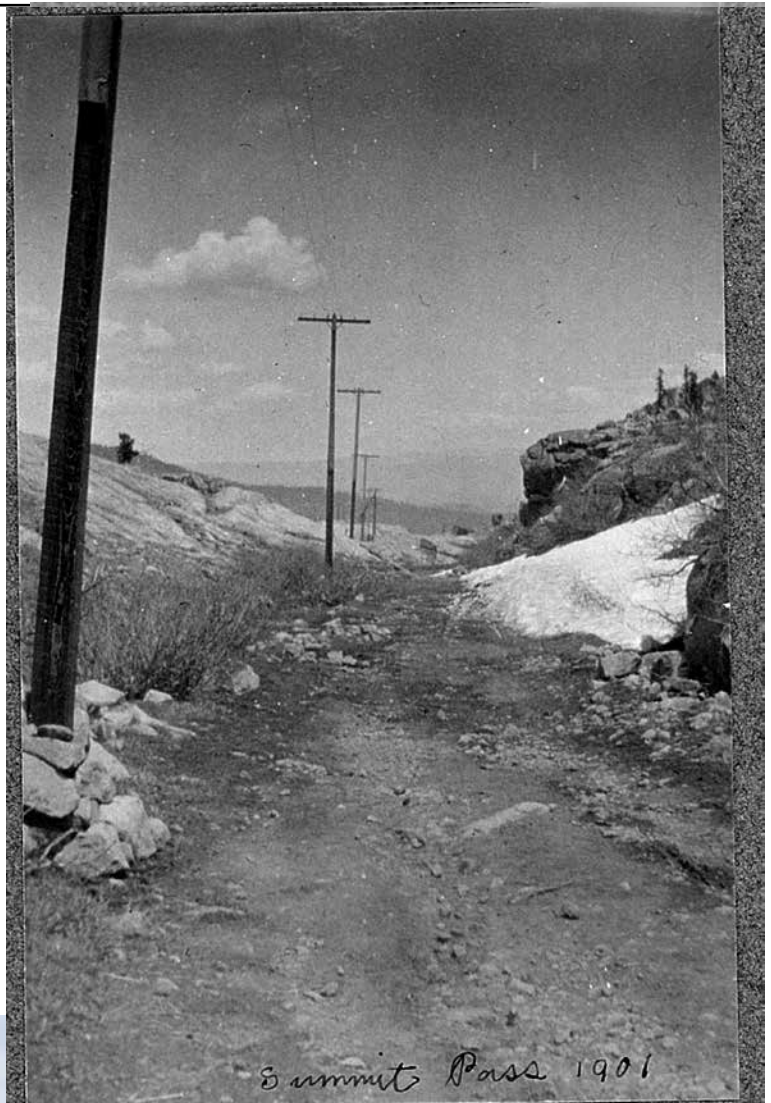
Then & Now with Art Clark

Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road in 1901. Just east of the PCT trailhead near Lake Mary, this old road starts its path to Donner Lake. The brush is doing its best to obscure the scene, but the distinctive rock on the right remains.

A lot of history has gone by here: the Emigrant Trail, the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road, the Victory Highway, the Lincoln Highway, and more recently a fiber optic cable and petroleum pipeline.

Now its just a path again as it was when the Native Americans crossed the Summit for thousands of years.

To the right is one of the pictures from the bicyclist's photo album from earlier in this [Heirloom](#).



DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.donnersummithistricalsociety.org

Membership

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) non-profit organization

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

Summit Petroglyphs

If you are interested in Native American rock art on Donner Summit, you might want to take a look at this USFS research.

<http://www.donnersummithistricalsociety.org/PDFs/RockArtDonnerSummitUSFS.pdf>