

The Donner Summit

Heirlooms



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

January, 2014 issue #65

Readers Respond Stories Expand

No sooner than the October and November Heirlooms had "hit the stands" than readers responded. The front page story in October was the "Donner Summit Sentinels," the Sierra Junipers that have been living on Donner Summit for millenia. Some are even a millenia or two old. They grow in the harshest conditions imaginable buffeted and ice blasted by storms, growing from rocky crags, and bent and broken by ice and snow (example below overlooking Donner Lake). They have watched as the Native American carved the first petroglyphs, as the first European American explorers and emigrants crossed the Summit aiming for California, and as thousands of Chinese workers built a railroad across the country. They've seen a lot more: the first motorized crossing of the continent (a story which went over Donner Summit and we'll share soon), the first attempts to cross continent by motor car, and the first attempts to cross the continent on an aeroplane. You get the idea so we need not wax rhapsodically about the history that's gone by them.

No sooner than the newsletters had gone out than our editorial dept. received a phone call from Dick Fores who lives in Gold Run. He is a forester and used to live on Donner Summit. Like all good foresters he has a kit of forestry equipment and our editorial staff's fine reputation earned us the offer of the loan of an incremental borer, used by foresters to determine the age of trees. With that piece of expensive equipment we could sample some trees on Donner Summit and estimate their ages. That's story one - see page 3.



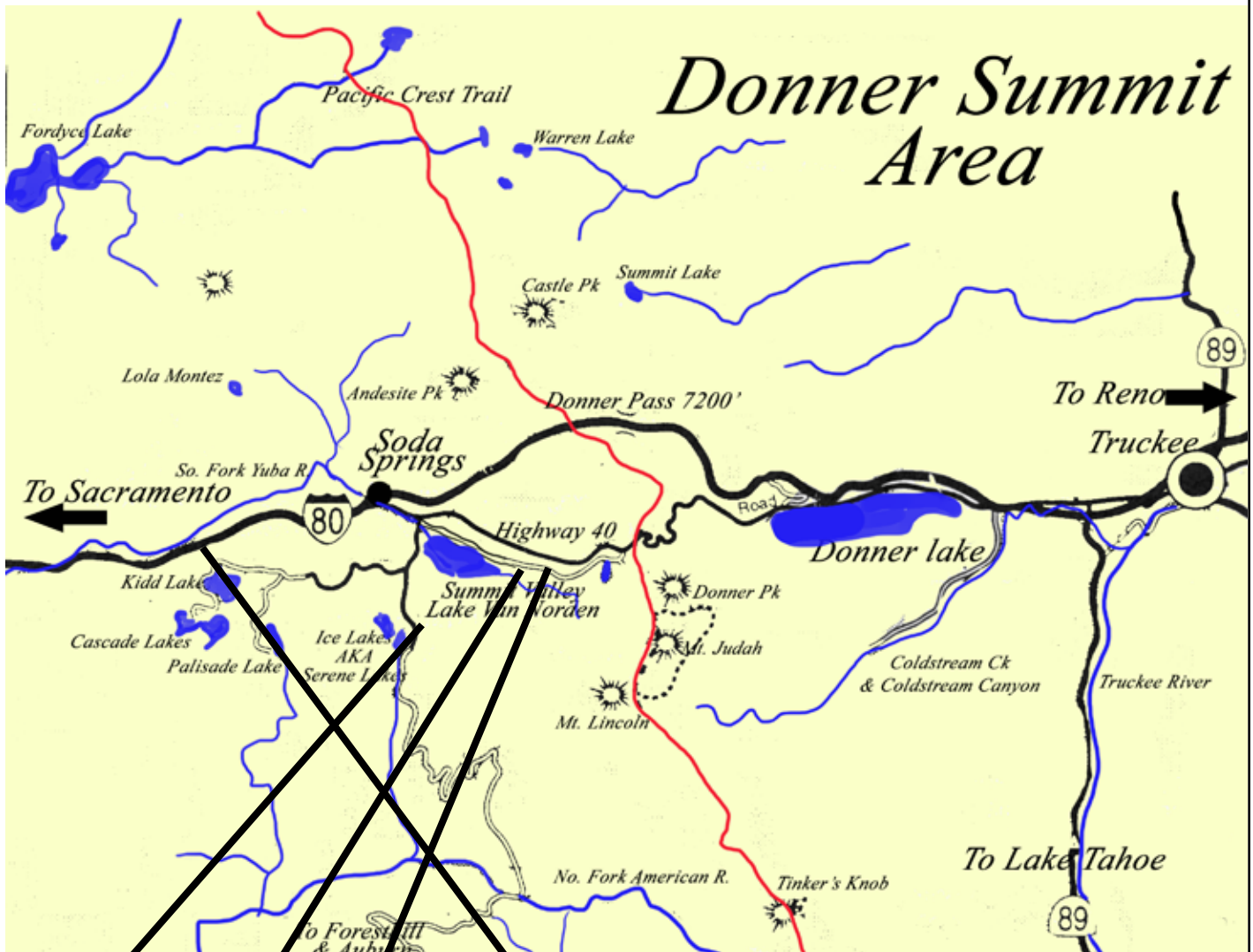
Juniper overlooking Donner Lake by Crystal Harling - see the Heirloom for September, '13 and then November, '13

No sooner than the November Heirloom had hit the stands than we received two emails regarding the story, on page two in that issue, which was about a postcard (see front and back above) in Norm Saylor's incomparable collection. The authors of the story had posed some questions about the writer and recipient of the postcard. Art Clark responded with a picture of the recipient's house in Alameda and Carol Guida followed almost immediately with the "rest of the story." See page 4.

Those are two stories in this issue along with all the other features. It's nice to know that at least some of our 630+ subscribers are reading and very gratifying to know that they enjoy the experience so much they are willing to contribute.

If you have knowledge, artifacts, expertise, ideas, or questions, send them in. The Heirloom can get better and better with our readers' help.

Story Locations in this Issue



In This Issue and on the map

Junipers pg 3

Clearing Old 40 pg 8

California Feasibility Study Emigrant Trail pg 11

Then/Now Yuba Cascades pgs 16-17

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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

Junipers of Donner Summit - Déjà Vu

The Sierra Junipers of Donner Summit are amazing. They have been sitting for millenia in the harshest conditions. They are our own Bristlecone Pines. When Theodore Judah laid out the route of the Transcontinental Railroad he confidently predicted that snow would not be a problem (which is also a story still to come in the [Heirloom](#)). He'd studied the trees on the Summit and he knew (That's really a story for another [Heirloom](#) and will be.). Judah did not ask the right trees though. The Summit receives an average of 34 feet of snow a year. The weight and movement of all that snow bends and twists what grows on the summit. Those Junipers may be a thousand years old or more and eleven feet in diameter but they do not stand tall. They stand proudly no doubt, but not tall. They have been bent and twisted and broken by centuries of snow fall. The top and bottom pictures here are of a Juniper on Donner Peak that is really ancient. Its top has been crushed over and over so that there are many tops now.

You will remember that in October we led with the story, "Donner Summit Sentinels." We thought it would be really interesting to not just estimate the age of the Junipers by looking at old stumps and extrapolating, but to get a more accurate picture by using an incremental borer, which is a tool foresters used to ascertain the age of trees. The tool is simple (see page 4). The forester bores into the tree and extracts a core. The core contains the tree rings. Counting the tree rings gives one the age of a tree.

Dick Fores, a forester living in Gold Run but who used to live on Donner Summit was happy to lend the DSHS his borer. With that in hand our dendrochronology department headed up Mt. Rowton to Razorback Ridge. That sits between Serene Lakes and Sugar Bowl. We were in search of Junipers and then other trees so we could compare.

It was an interesting experience as we cored six trees (you can see YouTube videos of the initial coring on Razorback Ridge done by Art Clark - see the next page).

Tree coring is not as easy as you'd expect. The trees hold tight to their wood. It requires work to get the borer started and then twist and twist to get the borer into the tree. The borer is not long enough to reach the center of old trees or the members of the dendrochronology dept. are old and cannot get the borer all the way to the center. Therefore our results are approximations.

You can use our approximations however to estimate the age of the various trees you may find on the summit during your explorations. Simply note the age of our trees and the diameters. For a tree about which you might be curious, compare the diameter. Match your species to ours because different species grow at different speeds.

Pictured here: Art Clark under Sierra Juniper on Donner Peak - 11 feet in circumference Center: Houseworth "Cedar Tree on the Summit Donner Peak. Bottom, the same tree as in the top photo but from above, Castle Peak in the distance.



Your estimates will just be that because conditions vary during trees' lives so the rings are not all the same size.

You can see, given the results below, that many trees on Donner Summit are quite old.

The idea to date the trees started last summer during a hike up Donner Peak for other reasons. We ate lunch under the tree on page one and noted that it was 11 feet in diameter. We considered and marveled at that. Just how old could that tree be? Our first attempts at dating are chronicled in the November, '11 Heirloom but those were very approximate. We thought a core would be more accurate. Hence this trip with Dick Fores' incremental borer.

Our "B" Juniper in the chart below is 54" in diameter and is about 412 years old. The tree on page one is 132" in diameter - or so. Doing a little algebra gives us an age of about 1000 years old. Our curiosity is satisfied and as we come across other large Junipers we will marvel even more. Wow.



Left top:
Dendrochronology team in action.

Middle: George Lamson boring

Bottom: the missing bore.

Dick Fores' incremental borer. Top picture shows the closed tool; bottom picture shows it ready for use. The borer is screwed into the tree and the thin "scoop" (the long thin metal thing below the borer) is inserted in then, pushed in and then the borer is rotated. The "scoop" is withdrawn pulling out a core. The core is then stored in a straw.



Sampled Trees

Tree	Diameter	Bore Lgth	approx age	Circum.
a Lodgepole	28"	13.2"	200	
B Juniper	54"	bore lost	412	14'
C Jeffrey Pine	38"	12.2"	254	10' 3"
D. Red Fir	26"	10.2"	160	7'
E. Juniper	31"	8.7"	236	8' 3"
F. White Pine	24"	12	162	6' 3"

YouTube Videos of the Dendrochronology Dept. in Action - courtesy of Art Clark

Here's a couple of videos from yesterday. If you have a fast internet connection, change the settings to 1080p.

http://youtu.be/SpH5bsRN_rE

<http://youtu.be/X2A6Hgtzmvw>

Postcard Déjà Vu

In January of 1913 Emil de Choudens wrote a postcard to a young woman he'd met in Truckee. That postcard ended up in Norm Saylor's collection which is part of the DSHS archives. The story was in our November, '13 [Heirloom](#). It was tantalizing. Who was he? Why did he wait a month after writing to mail the postcard? Was he nervous? Was he busy?

Who was the recipient, Miss Al Mitchell? Did she respond? Did they meet up again? Did he woo Al with a French accent? Did they fall in love? Did they live happily ever after?

Those are important questions to historians and the DSHS historical investigation department takes its responsibility seriously to uncover history. Apparently so do at least some of our readers. Art Clark responded to the story first with the picture below of Al. Mitchell's house in Alameda at 1031 San Antonio Ave. It's still there. He followed that up with some census data about Emil (see the next page).

Then Carol Guida followed up with a load (that's a technical historical term for a lot) of information and the story got better.

You can see the postcard, front back, and a closeup of the address and postmark, to the right. If you want to read the text, go to the November, '13 [Heirloom](#) which is on our website.

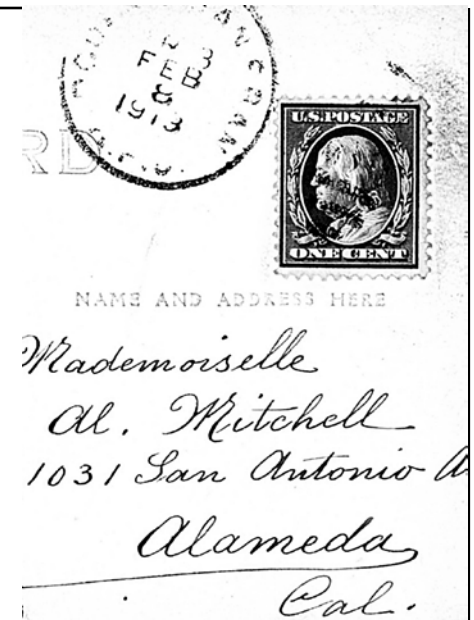
First Carol reported that the house had been built in 1890 so it was some years old when Al. Mitchell lived there. It's older now of course. Carol said the house was last sold in 1878 so we can imagine if the original family had owned it then, they do not now. Finishing with the real estate websites, Carol turned to the Truckee Donner Historical Society,

"1913: Over 700 attend each weekend's Winter Carnival. Swiss guide Emile De Choudens begins ski lessons on the upper hill. A new 500' long toboggan lift is built from the lower hill to the top of the upper hill. A 3/4 mile toboggan run is built, and a new wooden Ice Palace is constructed for ice skating at the bottom of the lift."

Then she found the [Tahoe Daily Tribune's](#) article that Mr. Choudens had been hired in 1913 to teach what would become downhill skiing in Truckee. His hiring had to do with the Truckee Chamber of Commerce attempting to capitalize on Truckee's winter and the easy access by train. That was the Winter Carnival. There were ice ponds for skating, dog sled races, toboggan runs and the annually constructed Ice Palace.

One can imagine the suave and sophisticated Mr. Emil Choudens, with his European manners, customs, and accent giving Miss Mitchell some ski lessons when she came visiting from the Bay Area.

Carol then reported on Miss Mitchell: Miss "Alexine Mitchell... was an alumna of Stanford, she served in the ARCAEF (American Red Cross American Expeditionary Force) in World War I as an ambulance driver at the front and then as a nurse in a French hospital. That comes from the Stanford Alumni Directory from 1891-1920 (thank you Google for scanning it and making it available).



That all makes the story even more interesting. Al (we'll take the liberty of calling her Al instead of Alexine) was an adventurous sort and must have been smart. She was a woman alumnus of Stanford (class of '07 and had graduated from Alameda high only three years before). She'd been to Truckee to taste winter sports. She was corresponding with a man. Interestingly, Al is also listed in U.C. Berkeley alumni and staff rosters reporting that she and her sister Marian were both ambulance drivers in France. Later Al went off to Vassar to teach French.

First Name: *Alexine*
 Last Name: *Mitchell*
 Ethnicity: *US Citizen*
 Last Place of Residence: *Alameda, California*
 Date of Arrival: *May 16, 1920*
 Age at Arrival: *33y* Gender: *F* Marital Status: *S*
 Ship of Travel: *Noordam*
 Port of Departure: *Boulogne-Sur-Mer*
 Manifest Line Number: *0002*

Al came from a prominent family that appeared in regularly in the society columns of the time. In 1912 the San Francisco Call reported that Al,

her sister and mother "are sailing next month on a tour of the Orient. They will be absent from California for six months." (3/1/1912) Other references to her in the newspapers report her attendance at parties, leading a discussion group for the Adelphus Club, a scorer for a whist and euchre "tourney", visiting Independence Lake for a few weeks, visiting Camp Curry in Yosemite, member of a new drama society, and traveling. The family must have been interesting. Al's step father was Charles Tilden (Tilden Park in Berkeley and who created the East Bay Park System), Another relative, a maternal grandfather, survived 43 days in a lifeboat at sea after his clipper ship burned. Mark Twain wrote of the adventure in "Longboat to Hawaii."

Instead of taking the normal early 20th Century route for a woman, of wife and mother, she went off to Europe during WWI to deliver medical supplies and then stayed to transport the wounded and help in the hospital.

Writing in the Literary Digest (our crack research team also joined in the investigation of other our sources our readers had not found) in 1919 Al describes coming to Europe, "...it was as if by progression of devastation we were finally to go out of the world entirely. Whole orchards cut down, banches in the mud, trunks still resting on the stumps;... eight hundred bridges blown up...town either blown right off he face of the earth, or with gaunt walls standing...the dirtiest refugees going back into that desolation, they only know why. One clutched at least eight umbrellas, tied in a bundle; otherwise they seemed to have no possessions but the rags on their backs and heads.

"We ran into forests of barbed wire... We pulled into something that had once been a station [in San Quentin] I have no words to make you realize the terrifying completeness of destruction in that town! Not one single house but what was literally shelled to pieces... [it] made us almost physically ill."

Ak went to work in a hospital there, "A more desolate installation I never hope to set foot in. Freezing. Filthy, leaking... The whole country as farsas the ey could see is a network of trenches, dugouts, lookouts..."

Al returned to America in 1920. She later married a doctor and had a son. She died in 1958.

The image shows a complex historical document, likely a census or immigration record. At the top, it reads "DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE-BUREAU OF THE CENSUS" and "POPULATION SCHEDULE". The document is organized into numerous columns and rows, containing names, dates, and other demographic information. The text is dense and difficult to read in detail, but it appears to be a comprehensive record of a population group.

Clearing Old 40

In the old days, when it snowed over Donner Summit, Summit the roads closed. Because an average of 34 feet of snow falls annually on Donner Summit, the roads over the pass closed in winter.

With the arrival of automobiles intrepid “autoists” piloted their vehicles where trains could not go and they could go on their own schedules. The closing of the roads each winter stopped the new flow of tourists. The commercial interests in Truckee were annually anxious to get the roads open each Spring. They sponsored snow shoveling bee’s and even spread soot on the snow to speed melting. For many years the Tahoe Tavern in Tahoe City sponsored contests for the first automobile to cross the summit each year. Those are stories for future [Heirlooms](#) though.

In 1927 Oscar Jones built the Soda Springs Hotel and although travelers could get to Soda Springs on the train he thought that open winter roads could increase his occupancy rates. So when he saw that Paul Wright had invented a snow removing machine in Medford, Oregon, he arranged to have a demonstration on Donner Summit and he invited the “hiway bosses” hoping to interest the State of California’s Highway Department in the idea.



Dennis Jones' automobile and the need for road clearing.

Old Highway 40 had already been improved with the completion of the Donner Summit or Rainbow Bridge in 1926. The new route reduced the severe inclines of the old route. Paving was finished on the highway in 1928. An open winter road would be a further improvement and an economic boon in Truckee.

Paul Wright arrived with his snow removal machine in the winter of 1930, according to Dennis Jones, Oscar’s son (see the remarkable Dennis Jones in the February ’09 issue of the [Heirloom](#)). The machine consisted of a caterpillar tractor with snow removal accoutrements. It had three engines: one to move the caterpillar, one for the centrifugal blower, and one for the “chopper” (which today we’d call the auger).

It was so cold when Wright arrived that it took three days to get the three motors running in concert.

It cost Oscar Jones \$7,000 in labor to have Mr. Wright clear the road from Donner Summit to Donner Lake. When the road was clear Oscar Jones was the first person “ever to negotiate the pass in winter over the summit that year.” ([Nevada Union](#)).

The “hiway bosses” were impressed. They started working on the idea of a clear highway year-round and eventually developed the two auger sno go machines.

In 1931 Wendell Robie of the Auburn Ski Club also thought that an open highway in winter was a good idea (see the [Heirloom](#) August, ’10). In January or 1931 the Club invited the State Legislature to the snow. The legislators were in a convoy of 65 cars but they were followed by thousands of citizens coming to the Ski Club’s snow events. The resulting traffic jam and crowd convinced the legislature that Highway 40 should be clear in winter to enable people to get to the snow. The next year Highway 40 was cleared.

Wright was never able to sell his machines and disappeared into the pages of history.



Above: pictures of the first snow removal attempts on Old 40, winter 1930.

Left: the Soda Springs service station in winter.

Since It's Winter - More Snow Removal

A collection of Donner Summit snow removal equipment from the 1930's.



two auger "SnoGo"



California Feasibility Studies of 1948, 1961 Confirm the Three Established Passes

Nevada Historical Society



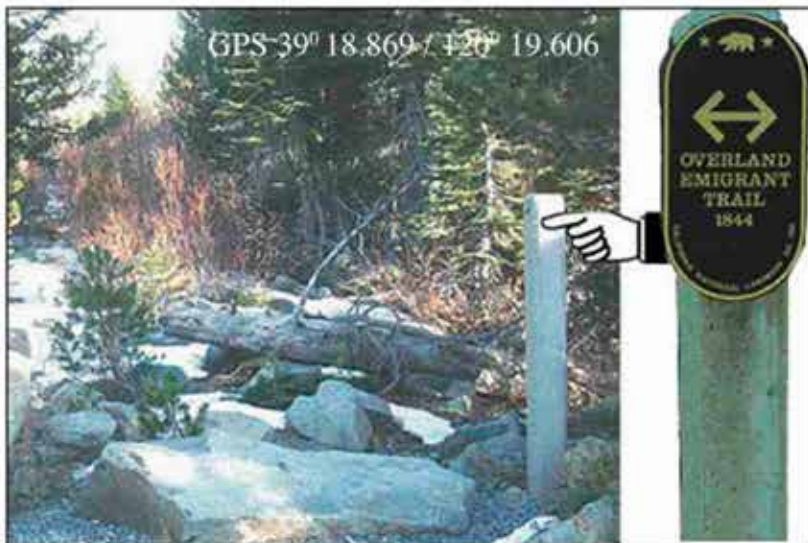
The above photo of the wooden cross is in the Nevada Historical Society's Photo Collection and is labeled, "First Monument on Donner Summit." Note the nearby trees.

There are two similar wooden crosses on the Donner Trail. One is located in Truckee and the other at Gravelly ford.



California State Parks Planning commission

The 1991 Feasibility Study's map included the Donner (Stephen's Pass), Middle Pass (Coldstream) and Roller Pass. The Pacific Crest Trail is also shown as all three passes are accessible from this popular hiking path. The 1948 Feasibility Study emigrant trail research was conducted by the ten leading trail authorities of that era, including two who had marked the trail with signs and Irene Paden noted author of *Wake of the Prairie Schooner*.



1976 Stephens Pass State Historic Landmark #799

The state placed three Overland Emigrant Trail 1844 markers (California Historical Landmark 799) to commemorate the Stephens Party's opening of first covered wagon road to California.

One of these, located on the Donner Trail near Alder Creek, is shown at the right of the photo at the left. The hand points to a an identical cement post at Stephens Pass that once held a similar sign. This section of the emigrant road is located just to the east of the Pacific Crest Trail Head located near Lake Mary.

Marshall Fey wrote a long article about the Stephens Party route in the November [Heirloom](#). Here he adds just a bit. Contact Marshallmfey@libertybellebooks.com

From the DSHS Archives



Beacon Hill and Dennis Jones, left, 1949
Dennis was the son of Oscar Jones who built the Soda Springs Hotel.

He founded Beacon Hill, today Soda Springs Ski Area and the California School of Skiing. See the February, '09 [Heirloom](#) for the whole really good story about the Amazing Dennis Jones.

Below left, Dennis' automobile.



From the DSHS Archives



Kingvale Gas and Kingvale Park, 1930's They had snow in the old days too.



Book Review

The Railroad Photographs of Alfred A. Hart, Artist
Meade Kibby 1996 231 pages

If you are a faithful reader of the Heirloom or even an infrequent reader, you have seen Alfred A. Hart photographs and stereographs. They are a marvelous source of mid 19th century Donner Summit and railroad images.

If you like paging through historic photographs then you'll like this book. It has hundreds of photographs taken in the 1860's and 70's. Since most are small you'll also be enticed to look up larger versions in the many online sources (many are listed in the appendix). Looking at enlarged versions will make detail visible which enhance their historical interest and importance. Viewed as stereographs in a proper viewer, given the original intended 3d view of the photographs, and you'll be even happier.

Alfred A. Hart took 364 photographs of the construction of the transcontinental railroad from 1864 to 1869 when the railroad was completed. Those photographs were then published over and over, many times with other photographers' names.

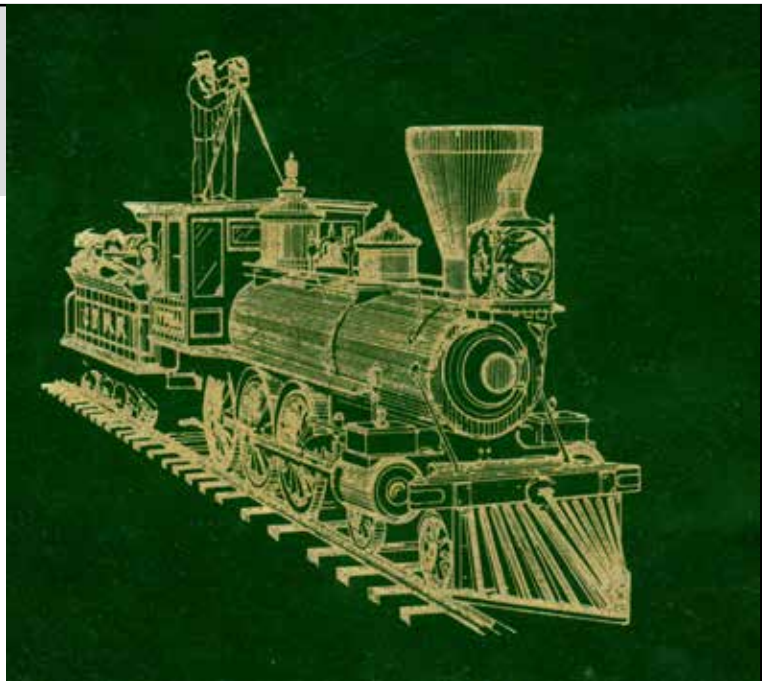
Hart was originally a portrait and panorama painter. In 1857 he turned to photography and by 1863 he was in California in La Porte (now Plumas Co.) plying his new trade. In 1865 he became the official photographer of the CPRR. His initial photographs were used as public relations and to help bond sales, which was how the CPRR got paid for miles of track laid.

Many of Hart's first photographs, and later ones not chosen by the CPRR, were sold by Lawrence and Houseworth. Most of the negatives were retained by the CPRR which later allowed others to reprint them. Hence many of Alfred Hart's scenes have others' names on them. In particular, Carleton Watkins republished many Hart photos as his own. The CPRR retained rights to the negatives although they were never copyrighted. In 1906 they were all destroyed in San Francisco.

After working for the CPRR, Hart became an author, inventor, photographic materials supplier, and painter. In 1872 he was back in California being presented with the gold medal in portraiture at the State Fair. In 1874 he was in New York selling photographic materials. In 1880 he was again back in California doing portraits and landscapes, In 1881 he was in New York patenting an invention and working as an artist. In 1907 he came back to California to Alameda and he died there in 1908 at age 92. His body was donated to U.C. Berkeley for dissection.

In addition to the photographs the book also has some history of the railroad, two indices of photographs sorted by number and distance from Sacramento, an article about Alfred A. Hart giving some more background, information about cameras and film processing, and some pages from his book, A Traveler's Own Book.

The Railroad Photographs... is available on the internet.



THE RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHS

OF

ALFRED A. HART, ARTIST

BY

MEAD B. KIBBEY

Edited by Peter E. Palmquist

THE CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY FOUNDATION
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA



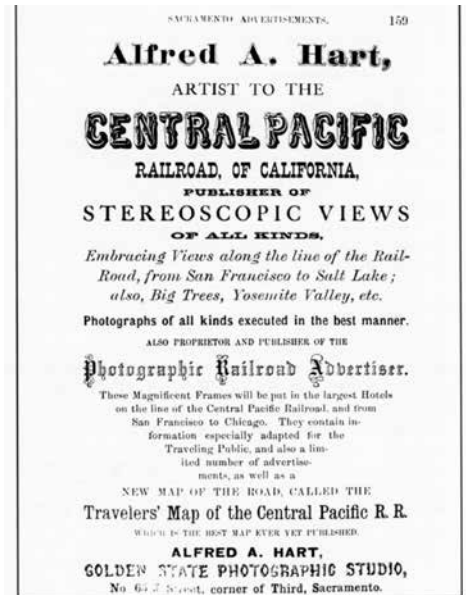
Then & Now at donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Be sure to see our Then/Now web pages. Art Clark has spent a lot of time with A.A. Hart's photographs, developing many Then & Now's that morph from the original Hart scenes to the same views today, and back.

Alfred A. Hart the Artist

Unless you are a railroad aficionado or an historian you have probably never heard of A.A. Hart (pictured left). He is unknown beside many other 19th century photographers like Muybridge, Brady, or Russell. He is also unknown beside modern photographic artists like Ansel Adams. That's a shame because Hart's subjects and eye for composition and

detail have left a remarkable body of work. His contemporaries also valued his photographic work. He received first prize at the California State Fair in 1869 for the best uncoloured [sic] photograph and it was his photographs, exhibited by Lawrence and Houseworth, that won the bronze medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1867. This was the first international recognition of Western landscape photography (pg 73 "Alfred Hart: Photographer of the Central Pacific Railroad" by Glenn G. Willumson).



Hart #185 Depots at Cisco. Cisco was end of track while the tunnels on the summit were being finished. Railroad cars were unloaded at Cisco and the freight put on freight wagons to travel on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd. Passengers also switched to stagecoaches at Cisco. The townsite sat up the hill from the current gas station.,

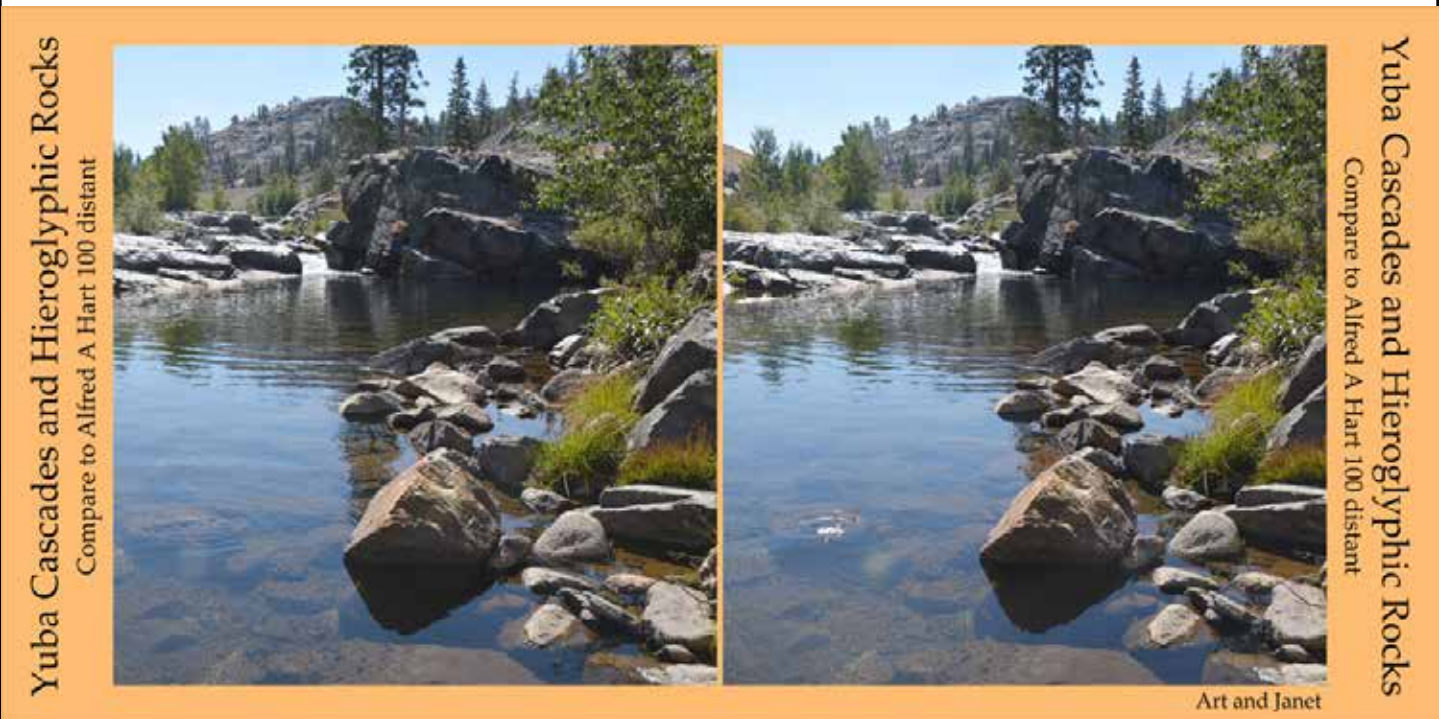
Then & Now with Art Clark



Alfred A Hart 100 - Yuba Cascades and Hieroglyphic Rocks - distant view.

Before the construction of I-80, the pool in the original view was quite large. Much of it was filled with debris in 1960 from blasting for the new highway. As a result, the original photo spot is buried under the rubble, and brush is taking over the view. In order to be able to see the falls, today's view is off to the side and closer.

Photo location 39° 19.069'N 120° 33.520'W



Then & Now with Art Clark



Alfred A Hart 100 - Yuba Cascades.

West of Cisco the Yuba River underwent major changes during the construction of I-80 (in the background below). The once-deep pool below these falls was nearly filled with rocks and its level was raised several feet. Piles of rock continue downstream for 100 yards.

Hart probably brought his camera and equipment here from the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Road, which parallels the river.

Photo location 39° 19.059'N 120° 33.521'W



Parenthetically



A Little Heroism in Service to the Historical Community

Readers, safe in their armchairs as they explore the monthly Heirlooms, have no idea of the risk undertaken by our intrepid historical reporters. Art Clark has previously been featured sitting on cliff edges. For the pictures on pages 16 and 17 he went the other way, following the Yuba River in search of A.A. Hart's picture locations. To get to just the right spot, Art had to go through the drainage pipe, above, which went under the north lanes of the freeway. He emerged between the lanes for his "Now." Isn't that worth your membership? Wouldn't you like to write Art Clark a fan letter - info@donnersummithistoricalociety.org

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Membership

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

____ New Membership

____ Renewing Membership

____ Individual Membership - \$30

____ Family Membership - \$50

____ Patron - \$500

DATE _____

NAME(S) _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

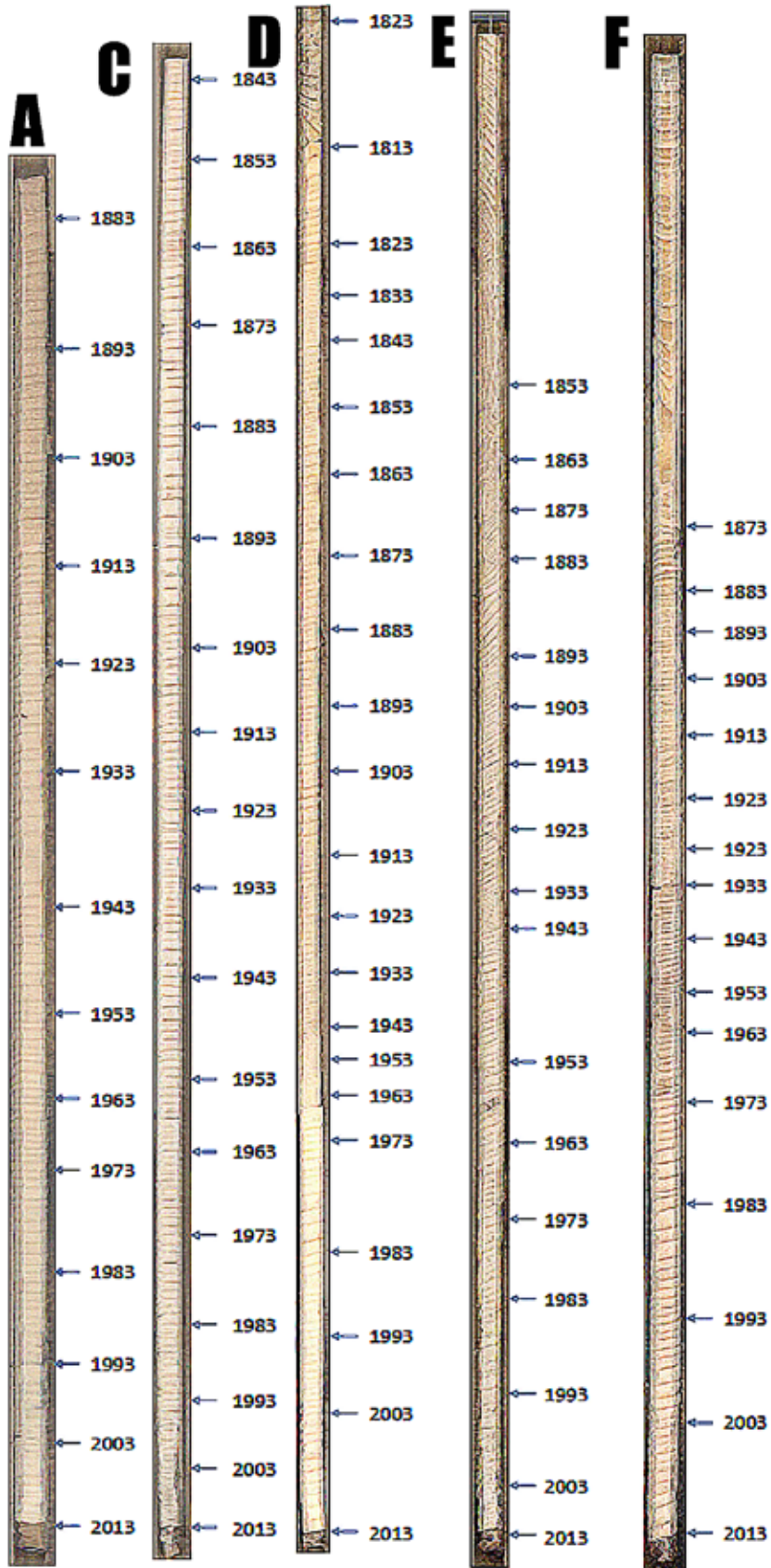
____ Friend Membership - \$100 ____ Sponsor - \$250

____ 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.

The tree cores talked about on pages three and four. Next time you see the large trees, imagine what they've seen during their lives.



New Menu

Last Winter the Summit Restaurant adopted a new format for their menus. Maria Montano, the owner, decided she wanted to highlight the Summit as well as the restaurant's offerings. The first new menu focused on Donner Summit and its history. The second, the Summer menu 2013, focused on Summit Valley (Van Norden) and its history, and the third one, just now out for Winter 2014 (page 1 is below), focuses on the Lincoln Highway and such things as the first motorized crossing of continent, which went over Donner Summit, and the first auto over Donner Summit. You won't want to miss the new menu, which makes a nice souvenir, or the food.

The menus were produced by the DSHS Menu Production Department.



Established - 2001 Soda Springs, CA Volume 1 Issue 3 Winter, 2013-14

The Lincoln Highway on Donner Summit

Donner Summit is the richest historical area in California and maybe the entire Western United States. Native Americans frequented on Donner Summit for thousands of years leaving behind the evidence of their presence in the many moccasins, moccasins, copes, and petroglyphs.

The first wagon trains to reach California with wagons came over Donner Pass in 1841 and the first transcontinental railroad, the Transcontinental Highway, first transcontinental telephone line, and the first transcontinental air route. Except for the highway, these are all areas for future menus.

The first transcontinental highway was the Lincoln Highway and it was the first national circumnavigation of Abraham Lincoln. That route went right past the window here from the west of the dirt road just across the street.

The first transcontinental highway was the Lincoln Highway and it was the first national circumnavigation of Abraham Lincoln. That route went right past the window here from the west of the dirt road just across the street.

Today highway are built from scratch but the first national highway was put together in 1913 from already existing stretches of roadway to create a route from coast to coast. It produced the first national standard for highways. It was a completely private endeavor using no public money. The money for the project was raised through subscriptions with the campaign aimed at the public's patriotism.

The new highway standards enabled automobiles to travel on the best spots, which were graded gravel, at the continental speed of 15 MPH. Trucks could travel at 10 MPH. Only half of the cross-country route was graded gravel. The 1913 effort made on the Lincoln Highway would take 14 days to cross the country traveling 24 hours a day at an average of 15 MPH. Imagine seeing the country with the wind whistling in your ears and your hair flying at the incredible speed of 15 MPH!

The highway was a success and not just the growing needs of the public, which having newly acquired automobiles, wanted to use them. The most adventurous "automobile" wanted to travel all the way across the country in their automobiles. In 1913 there were about 150 transcontinental road-trippers per year. By 1932 there were between 20 and 25,000 cross-country travelers.

Donner Summit Lodge Open Every Day

Summer Hours: Sat/Sun 8 A.M. - 8:30 P.M. MTHF Noon-8:30 P.M.
 Tues-Friday - 4 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. The bar is open until the crowd is gone.

Donner Summit Lodge, A Short History

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

The first auto to cross Donner Pass crossed in 1901 and the first motorcycle in 1903. The first one-wheeled "motorcyclist" 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 "automobile."

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 to winter the lodges offered accommodations for more quiet motorists.

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 1970s. Additions were made to both ends of the original lodge. The sign on the lodge above says, "Donner Summit Lodge Fine Food Ski Dismantlement Cabin."

Summit Restaurant does catering too. Call 426-3904