

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

September, 2014 issue #73



What's in Your Closet?



Hart Corbett Photo
December 29, 1960

Hart Corbett came in to the DSHS one nice Spring day this year and then a couple of hours later he departed. Hart left behind a million stories of the old days, some of which took place on Donner Summit.

Hart later followed up with a couple of emails that had pictures attached. Those are always good to get and we've included a few here with a view to advertising that the DSHS is always looking for history. It's our job to preserve the history of Donner Summit.

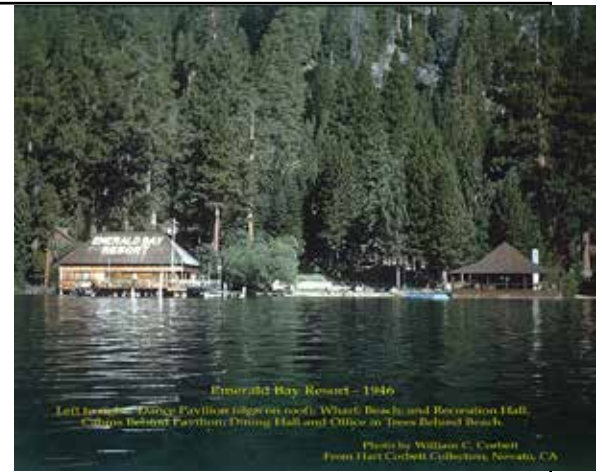
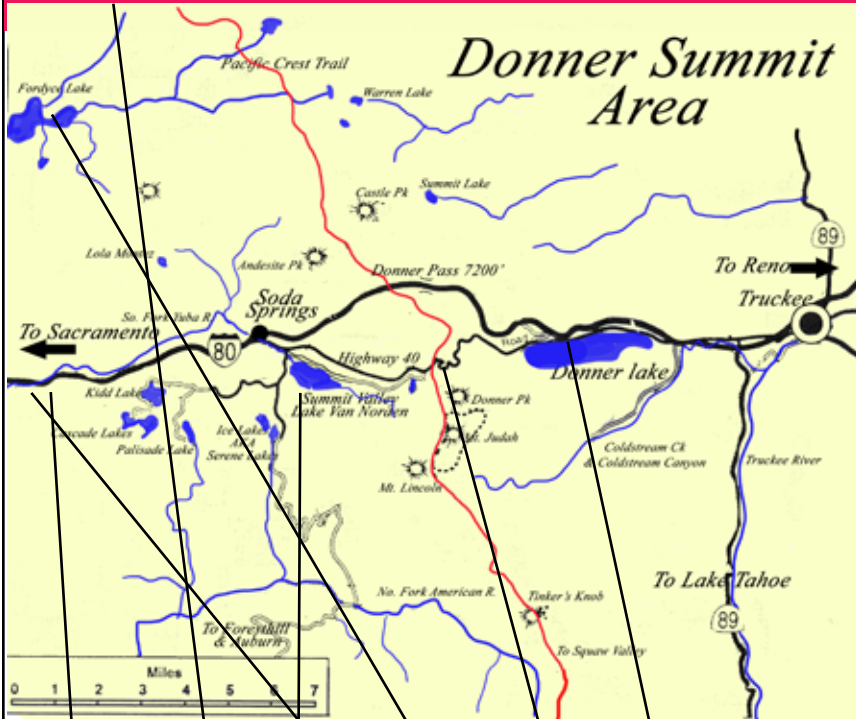
If you come across some old pictures that you've had stored away for years and think we might be interested, bring them. We don't even need to keep your pictures, although we're happy

for donations. We can easily scan what you have and then return them to you forthwith. You can also save us the work like Hart did, and scan them yourself (high resolution please) and then just give us digital copies.

"Here is a copy of my single color photo of the Commissary, [Fong's restaurant in the Norden snowsheds - see the 2/11 [Heirloom](#)] as the SP called it, just after my wife and I, and another couple (friends of ours) finished eating there at the end of a day of skiing at Sugar Bowl. The dishes on the counter are ours." The date is 12/29/1960

What's in Your Closet?

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More Hart Corbett Photos (above)

Hart went annually for two weeks to Lake Tahoe to the Emerald Bay Resort in the late 1940's. The pictures above illustrate that. Top is the resort in 1946 with the dance hall on the left the beach in the center and the rec hall to the right.

Center is Wes Stetson's second plane used for sightseeing in 1948

Bottom is Wes Stetson (right) Hart Corbett (center), and Sandy Corbett (left) in 1953

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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

A Visit to Meadow Lake Hike PT I.

First of all, this story was supposed to run in the [Heirloom](#) months ago. Unfortunately, or fortunately, there is just so much history waiting to come out, this story has waited until this month. There's still plenty of time to visit this season though. If you want to wait until next season you will have the joy of anticipation over the winter. There'll be more next month, but read on.

There are just no lengths your [Heirloom](#) Historical Mobile Research Team (HMRT) will not go for the readers. If you are familiar with Donner Summit history you are familiar with Meadow Lake or Summit City. Gold was discovered there in the 1860's. A rush or stampede started and a large town of hundreds of houses, many mines, stamping mills, and businesses was constructed on the edge of Meadow Lake (go back and read Mark Twain's description in our July '14 [Heirloom](#) and read the book review of Meadow Lake Gold Town in last month's [Heirloom](#)). The lake itself was a result of the South Yuba Canal Company's damming of the Yuba River there. They had dammed it to supply water for hydraulic mining downstream. The South Yuba Canal Co. was also the company that built an early version of Van Norden Dam and other other dams on Summit lakes. That's a story for a different [Heirloom](#) though.

Meadow Lake became such a busy town that there were stage roads approaching it from all four directions. Meadow Lake was at its height while "end of track" of the CPRR was at Cisco Grove and passengers could disembark from the train and take the stage to Meadow Lake, routes you can trace today. Stagecoach from Cisco was probably the quickest access. People could also take mules, walk, or take stages from other directions. Mark Twain took the stage from the west to Meadow Lake in 1867 on his way to Virginia City. He then went through Cisco. See July's [Heirloom](#). Twain's brother, Orion Clemens, had lived in Meadow Lake for some months at least up until 1867. Twain had originally come west with Orion who was secretary to the governor of Nevada Territory. You can read about that in Twain's book, [Roughing It](#) and read the story about how he started a forest fire on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

That's a little preliminary.

Knowing that Meadow Lake is up from Cisco, a trip there had a place on the [Heirloom](#)'s Historical Mobile Research Team's list of places to visit. In August, 2013 the team decided it was time. To start the journey you leave Old 40 at the dirt road just north of the campground at Cisco. That road parallels Rattlesnake Creek and heads for Fordyce Summit. Parenthetically, it passes the trailhead for going up to Red Mtn. from the north, but that's also a different [Heirloom](#) story... see our July, '10 [Heirloom](#). It's a great visit.

We took the road all the way to the top and then down the other side and then went as far as we dared, closing in on Fordyce Lake and Dam. The road gets a bit, or a lot, bumpy and we parked at the last bridge which left about two miles to the dam.

We crossed over the top of the dam and then up a ladder at the other end. From there it's a hike of about 4 miles along an old mining road to the Meadow Lake townsite. You'll have to explore around to find it but you can see from the map here what to do. You will travel through some nice forests and come across old mining gear and pipes. Who knows what else is buried



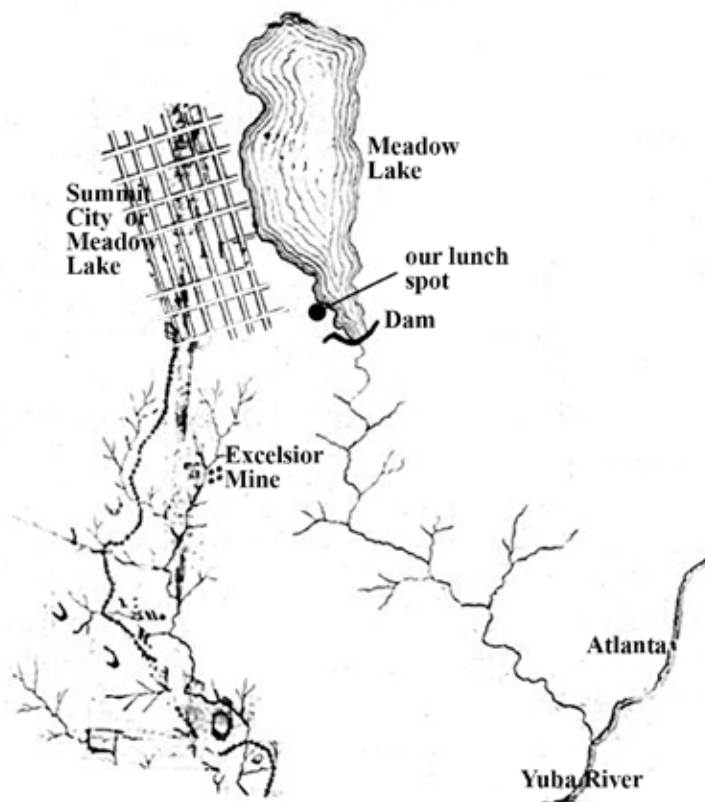
map by Art Clark and his Garmin GPS

under the vegetation. We also found a mine and possibly the old town of Ossaville which today is a collection of decaying cabins. Four miles up the old road you come to the town site of Meadow Lake or Summit City. You can admire the large dam and the beautiful lake. There are old mines all over the area. There is nothing left of Meadow Lake the town, however.

We ate lunch on the shores of Meadow Lake having gone four miles or so.

That was our approach from the south. You can also get to Meadow Lake by car or truck and then you have access to many lakes and many historical sites. Next month, the approach from the north and then to Phoenix Lake.

Next month: how to get to Meadow Lake without walking and then a hike to Phoenix Lake which is nearby and what we found there - keep up your subscription.



Forest Finds

Walking through the forest, tracing the old mining road from Fordyce Dam to Meadow Lake was an adventure.

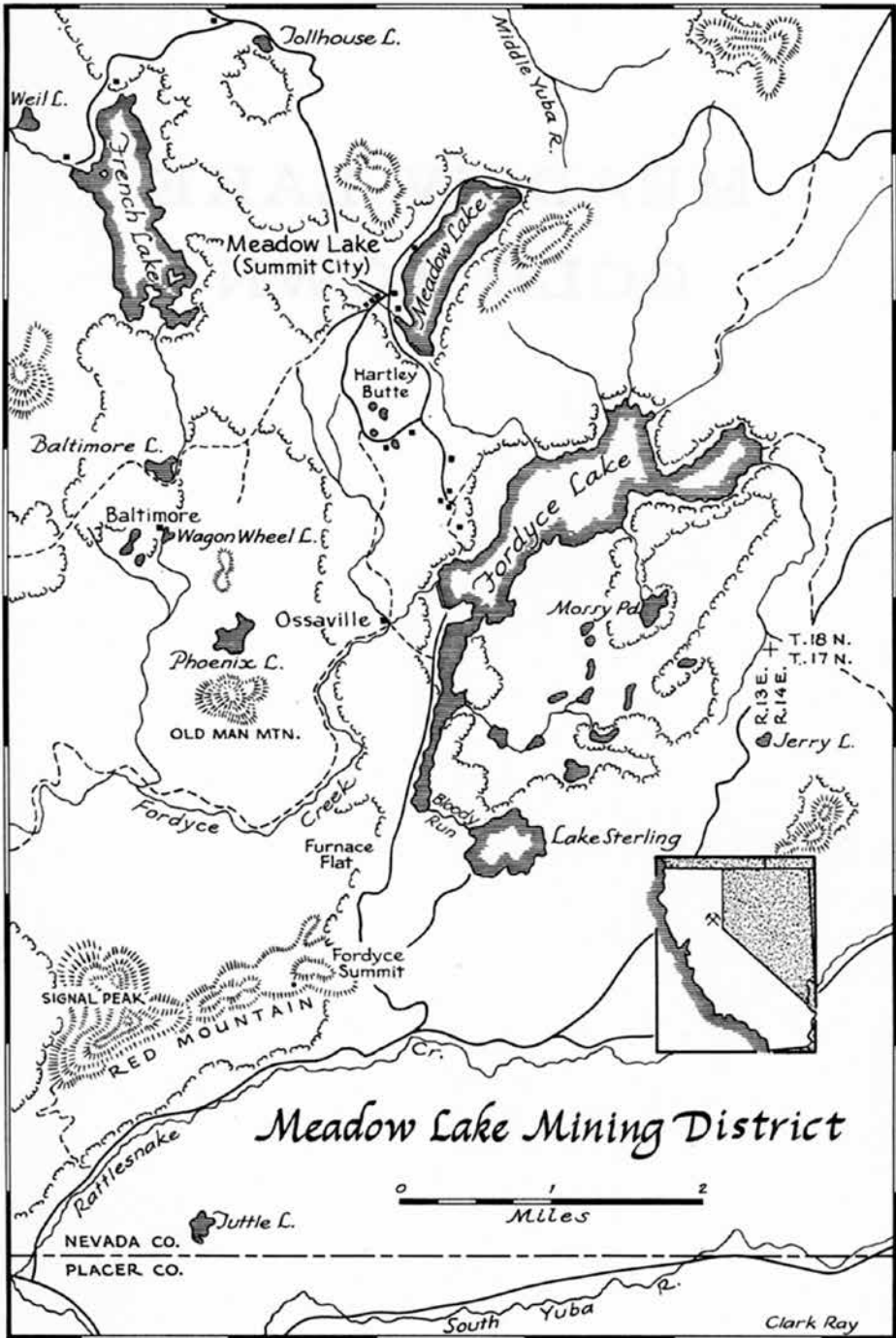
We had to work hard at times to decipher the route since the road was much overgrown and there were other old roads leading off who knows where. We came across old cabins, ruins of cabins, mine sites and filled in mine shafts, and possibly the old town of Ossaville. The forest is mostly pretty dense with, in spots, a lot of low plant growth. In among the plants were all kinds of old mining detritus: pipes, cans, nozzles, indecipherable objects and rails. Finding rails, our hike was interrupted as we traced the rails back to their sources, old mines.

Here is part of a structure to deliver water to an old mine, photo by Art Clark.



The maps here are from [Meadow Lake Gold Town](#), reviewed in last month's Heirloom. The one above was improved quite a bit and shows the town plan of Summit City or Meadow Lake,

The map on the next page puts Meadow Lake in context.



Meadow Lake and environs. See also the old map on page 15.

The HMRT approached from the lower left, up the road next to Rattlesnake Ck. to Fordyce Summit and then Fordyce Dam.

Mark Twain telegram from Coburn's [Truckee]

I am doing well. Have crossed one divide without getting robbed anyway. Mark Twain

4/23/68
Coburn Station, California to Joseph T. Goodman Virginia City Territorial Enterprise 24 Apr. 68

"getting robbed" refers to when "friends" disguised as highwaymen waylaid and "robbed" the stage on which Twain was traveling between Gold Hill and Virginia City in 1866

Letter on May 1 to his mother from San Francisco after returning from Virginia City

".... I have had the hardest trip over the sierra. Steamboat to Sacramento (balmy summer weather & the peaches & roses all in bloom) – railway to the summit (snow thirty feet deep on level ground & 100 in the drifts) 6-horse sleighs to Donner Lake – mail coaches to Coburn's – railway to Hunter's [near the Nevada State line] – stage-coaches to Virginia all in the space of 24 hours. Distance 150 miles. Coming back last night in a snowstorm, the two & a half hours' sleighing (part of the time clear weather & superb moonlight,) was something magnificent – we made ten miles an hour straight along."

When the transcontinental railroad was completed over the Summit Twain's 24 hour trip became 10 hours.

See also I rather dread the trip in the July '14 newsletter where he talks about shifting from cars to stages. Twain used to go by stages all the way "and never mind it at all, save that we had to ride thirty hours without stopping." from newspaper dispatch to Chicago Tribune 5/1/1868

For more on Meadow Lake see the review of Meadow Lake Gold Town in last month's Heirloom and see our 20 Mile Museum sign for Meadow Lake either at its location at the Eagle Lakes turnoff from I-80, or on our website.

From the DSHS Archives



postcard sent to Miss Carmel Drele in SF at 1898 Vallejo St. June 16, 1908 from Truckee Ca

Overland Monthly Magazine

Mountain Lake and Valley

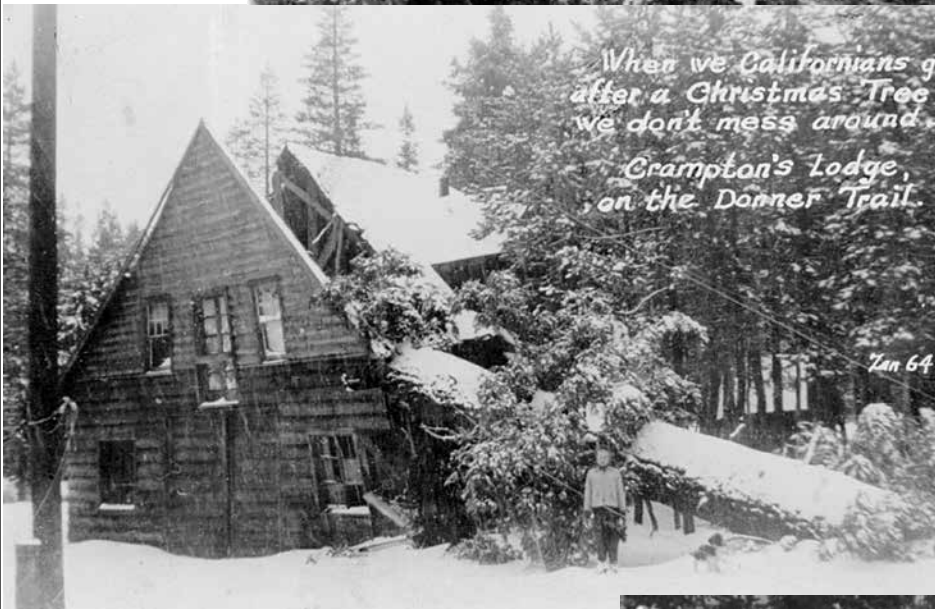
B. P. Avery Dec. 1868

Donner Lake is some three miles long by about a mile wide. It lies in sight from the eastern end of the summit tunnel of the Central Pacific Railroad 1,500 below that point and 5,500 feet above the sea. A small stream pours from it into the Truckee River, only three miles eastward, watering a narrow valley. Here, late in October, 1846, a party of eighty overland immigrants, under the lead of Capt. Donner, and including over thirty women and children, were overtaken by a snowstorm, which prevented them from proceeding. They suffered terribly in their winter camp or while wandering blindly searching for an outlet, until found by relief parties from the western side of the mountains in February. In the sequel, thirty-seven perished of exposure and hunger, and some of the party were only sustained by the last dreadful resort of starving humanity. The locomotive now almost hourly passes the scene of this tragedy, awaking clanging echoes among the dizzy cliffs of bare granite through which its way is cut [at this time the Summit tunnels had just been completed and trains could run from Sacramento all the way to the Nevada border; the railroad would be completed the next year, in 1869]. Hundreds of people live in or about the valley the year round; and hard by, thirty saw mills are busy thinning out the noble forests that deck the steep slopes on every side.

A congress of small lakes is found to the southward of the Pacific Railroad where it crosses the summit, each of which has its peculiar charms and its special friends among the numerous tourists who begin to seek these sylvan sheets through the warm season. They lie from 6,000 to 7,000 feet above the level of the sea, where the snow falls commonly ten feet deep, and stays from November or December until July, with lingering patches sometimes on the peaks above until the next winter. Some of these lakes are appropriated for ice supplies to the lower country. Rude hotels have been erected near a few, to accommodate the visitors who go there to fish, sail, sketch, and recuperate.



*Crampton's Lodge on U.S. Hy. 40
7mi. West of Soda Springs, Calif.*



*When we Californians go
after a Christmas Tree
we don't mess around
Crampton's Lodge,
on the Donner Trail.*

Here are three views of Crampton's Lodge. The lodge sat where today Donner Pass Rd. crosses under I-80 just east of Rainbow Tavern.



*WINTERTIME ON U.S. HY. 40
CRAMPTON'S LODGE SODA SPRINGS, CALIF.*

Found in Summit Valley, 2013



Summit Valley is really interesting. There are all the wildflowers, the birds, butterflies, etc. If you are reading this you are interested in the history though.

There are the remains of an old hotel, old cabins, Native American grinding rocks and metates up to four thousand years old. There are the flakes from Native Americans knapping basalt to make projectile points. There is the old dam, the first version of which has been there since 1874 at least. There is the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. and the Lincoln Highway as well as a well preserved section of the Emigrant Trail.

Here are pictures from the forest showing a line of rocks, above, placed for some unknown reason. In the trees nearby are interesting carvings or sculptures into the trees.

The trees have grown around the wounds but the interiors of the wounds look like squared timbers. Apparently people long ago sculpted trees into

useful shapes, such as fence posts, but the trees continued to grow and grew around the squared timbers.

There are also square nails, spikes, and hooks embedded in trees, and in some places old timbers affixed to trees, if you look carefully.

Who did the work and why? Who knows. People did not write records of every day activities.



Book Review

The Emigrants' Guide to California

Joseph Ware

1849 64 pages reproduction edited by John Caughey

The Emigrants' Guide is a very useful little book in case you ever decide to head for California overland. It was the first guide for emigrants, it is full of practical information and won't take up much space. What's really interesting about the book, besides how to get to California, is that it was written by someone who never did get to California. You'll have to read on to find out more about that.

There are four routes to California from the east: around Cape Horn by ship, by ship to Panama, across the isthmus and then by ship to San Francisco; the same but across Mexico; or overland across the continent. The first alternatives take months and cost up to \$600 per person. The overland route, by comparison, might take only 100 days and cost \$50-60 per person if one is part of a group. Clearly, if you want to beat everyone to California it behooves you to go overland. The "cheapest and best [route] is across the plains and Rocky Mountains."

Today one hops on the Interstate and travels thousands of miles in just a few days following a GPS guide. The GPS tells us where off ramps, fast food and gas stations are. In 1850 emigrants setting out bravely to cross thousands of miles of continent, and trying to do it before the snows closed the Sierra, had little to help them. What should they take? How should they travel? Which route was best? Where could water and grass be found? How many days to cross the desert and much grass and water should they take? What should they do if...? Ware's guide was useful then and maybe now too, if you are planning an authentic cross-country trip by wagon and oxen traveling at about 10 miles a day.

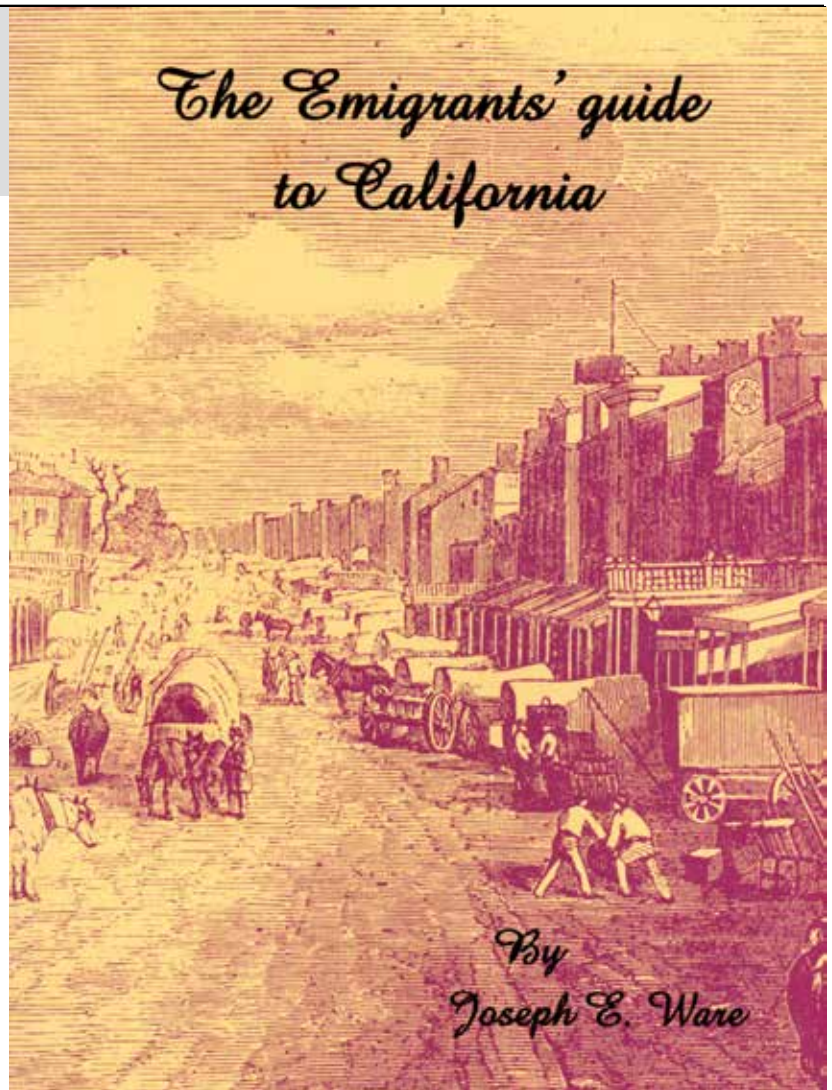
Ware's booklet can be broken into a couple of parts. The first part is advice for the trip, the second is a list of landmarks and waypoints with information, then information about "how to detect gold," and information crossing the Isthmus of Panama. The modern edition includes explanatory footnotes that enhance the reading. Those are by John Caughey and give good explanations as well as tell what other authors and emigrants said. The booklet also comes with a nice map in a pocket in the back. To protect it on the trip it should have been laminated but Kinko's can do that for you.

The advice is interesting and might be made into flash cards for your journey so that you can organize them all.

Advice for traveling:

Head for Chicago and buy wagons and teams there. Then head for St. Louis by canal or river, then up the Missouri River by steamboat to Independence which can be a jumping off point for the wilderness. Ware lists the costs expected for various legs of the journey so you don't overspend.

You need to start by May 1 to get across in time so plan accordingly. Use oxen or mules. Horses can't cut it and be sure your oxen are less than six years old. Oxen are good because they will eat anything. Don't take more than 2,500 pounds (emigrants tend to overpack). Take at least four yoke of oxen (one yoke is two oxen).



Be sure your iron tires are riveted to the wood wheels otherwise you will have to daily wet the wood to swell it and keep it in contact with the tires. Be sure your wagon covers are well painted.

Don't travel on the Sabbath. This is not a religious stricture but rather a practical piece of advice. You and your teams need some rest. If you rest one day out of seven you will get to California 20 days sooner than others who don't.

Get started each day by 4 A.M., rest during the heat of the day and then continue on until dark. Advice is given for how to make camp. Be careful with guns and do not allow them to be cocked in camp. Keep the animals well staked or inside the wagon corral at night. Post sentinels.

"Cleanliness and frequent bathing, are our best preventatives of sickness." Don't "bathe if you feel fatigued." "The best time for bathing is about 9 or 10 in the morning."

The bulk of the text is about the journey: landmarks and waypoints, distances, where to cross rivers, where to get grass, and when to build up supplies of wood and grass.

Ware's preferred route is over Donner Pass and by page 39 the reader has gotten to Truckie's Lake and then to the pass. At the top, "You may consider yourselves victorious over the mountains..." Then it's on to the Bear River, Johnston's, Sutter's, San Francisco, and the gold fields.

Finally there is some parting advice, "you are in a country different from that which you left. Recollect that you are a component of that country. Take no steps that will not reflect honor, not only upon yourself but your country. Oppose all violations of order... Unite with the well disposed to sustain the rights of individuals... Introduce... those institutions which have conspired to raise our beloved country to the highest elevation of Nations:- Let schools, churches, beneficial societies, courts &c., be established... Make provisions for the forthcoming millions... righteousness exalteth a nation."

Ware's demise.

Interestingly, and amazingly, Ware had not made the overland journey when he put his guide booklet together. Instead he relied on John Fremont's reports who had made the journey and "information from various sources" including books such as Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California*. His booklet was the first guide for emigrants and it was accurate. More interestingly, Lansford Hastings, who gave the Donners a bum steer, had advice for emigrants which was bad and he'd made the trip.

Later Mr. Ware did attempt to make the trip to California and his experience was reported by Alonzo Delano who was later a columnist in California after having made his own journey and wrote, "Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings." Delano, or Old Block which was his pen name, wrote that Ware took sick while a member of a wagon train and was "barbarously laid... by the roadside, without water, provisions, covering or medicines, to die. Suffering with thirst he contrived to crawl off the road about a mile, to a pond, where he lay two days, exposed to burning sun by day and cold winds by night." Delano's group found and nursed Ware but "Nature, over-powered by exposure as well as disease, gave way, and he sank under his sufferings." He never got to see California or the accuracy of his guidebook.

THE EMIGRANTS' GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA,

CONTAINING EVERY POINT OF INFORMATION FOR
THE EMIGRANT—INCLUDING ROUTES, DISTANCES,
WATER, GRASS, TIMBER, CROSSING OF RIVERS,
PASSES, ALTITUDES, WITH A LARGE MAP OF
ROUTES, AND PROFILE OF COUNTRY, &C.—
WITH FULL DIRECTIONS FOR TESTING AND
ASSAYING GOLD AND OTHER ORES.

BY JOSEPH E. WARE.



PUBLISHED BY J. HALSALL,
No. 124 MAIN STREET,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

FACSIMILE OF ORIGINAL TITLE PAGE

Crossing Donner Pass –

The pass is a distance of 5 miles from Truckie’s [sic] Lake. “You then reach the foot of the steep, over which you have to force your way...you will be tried to the utmost... but never despair, others have over triumphantly, you can! Commence and unload, at once pack everything over the summit,... then haul your wagons up the precipieces [sic] with ropes. By adopting this course you will certainly save time, and perhaps hundreds of dollars, from breakage of wagon, if not total loss of some of your teams.... Once on the summit, you can camp a while to rest.” The pass is 9338 [sic] feet high with mountains around another several thousand feet higher. This is higher than the Rockies and deserves the name, in English, “Snowy Mountains.”

A mile from the pass you come to a small lake [Lake Mary, or in those days Lakes Mary and John]. From there water flows to Sacramento. Then, four miles further on you will come to “ a beautiful [Summit] valley, having a stream passing through it. Grass of the most luxuriant growth abounds here. This stream is called YUBA, from a tribe of Indians, inhabiting the valley lower down. It is a tributary of the Feather River...”

Right: What to take on the trip across country from The Emigrants' Guide.

For one year for 3 persons, with Ox teams :

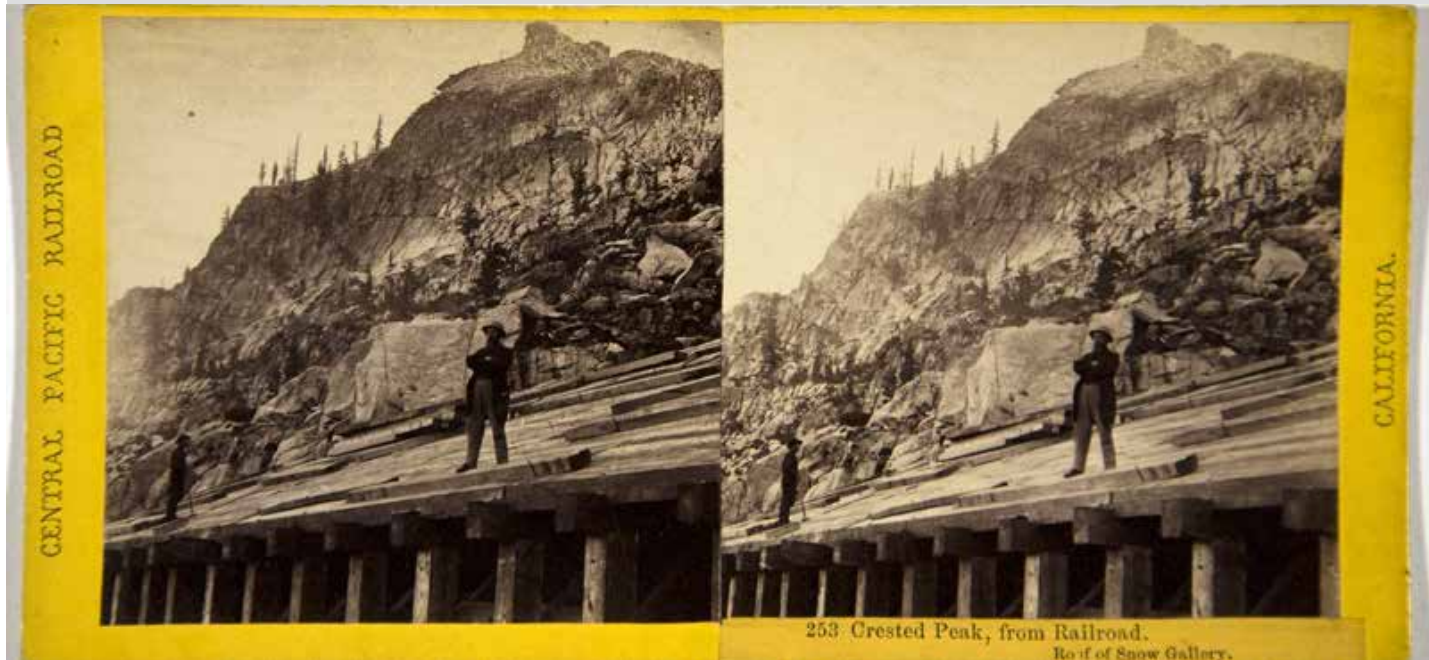
Four yoke of oxen,	at \$50,	\$200,00
One wagon cover, &c.,		100,00
Three rifles,	at \$20,	60,00
Three pair pistols,	at \$15,	45,00
Five barrels flour,	1080 lbs,	20,00
Bacon,	600 “	30,00
Coffee,	100 “	8,00
Tea,	5 “	2,75
Sugar,	150 “	7,00
Rice,	75 “	3,75
Fruit, dried	50 “	3,00
Salt, pepper, &c.,	50 “	3,00
Saleratus,	10 “	1,00
Lead,	30 “	1,20
Powder,	25 “	5,50
Tools, &c.,	25 “	7,50
Mining tools,	36 “	12,00
Tent,	30 “	5,00
Bedding,	45 “	22,50
Cooking utensils,	30 “	4,00
Lard,	50 “	2,50
Private baggage,	150 “	
Matches,		1,00
One mule,		50,00
Candles and soap,	50 “	5,30
	<hr/>	
	2,583	\$600,00

Cost to one man, \$200,00.

For 4 persons, with Mule teams. Wagon, harness, and 6 good Mules.

Wagon,	- - - - -	\$85,00
3 sett of harness, \$8 each, \$24; Mules, \$75 each, \$450; wagon cover painted with two coats, \$8. Total for team,	- -	\$567,00
Flour for 4 persons,—824 lbs. at \$2 per 100 lbs.		16,48
Bacon, do. do. 725 “ 5 “ “ “		36,25
Coffee, do. do. 75 “ 7c “ lb.		5,25
Sugar, do. do. 160 “ 5c “ “		8,00
Lard and suet, do. do. 200 “ 6c “ “		12,00
Beans, do. do. 200 “ 40c “ bu.		1,60
Peaches and apples, 135 “ 80c “ “		3,20
Salt, pepper, saleratus, &c. 25 lbs.		1,00
	<hr/>	\$650,78
Cooking utensils, including tin plates, spoons, coffee pot, camp kettle, knives, and extras,		20,00
	<hr/>	\$670,78
Making the cost to each one of the party,		167,69
From which deduct value of wagon, teams, &c., at journeys end,	- - - -	450,00
Leaving cost of travel,	- - - -	220,78
Cost to each individual,-	- - - -	55,19

Then & Now with Art Clark



Crested Peak (Donner Peak) from Railroad

Two versions of the original Stereocard have survived. This one is the original by Alfred A. Hart. Carleton Watkins later obtained the negatives and reprinted it, cropping out the top of Donner Peak. The composition changed entirely, and the symbolism between the standing figures and the peaks above was gone.

If you want to go see this view, you're lucky. There is an opening in the current concrete snowsheds that allows you to walk through the tunnel and step outside. Not only can you admire the mountains, but just turn around for great views of Donner Lake, Mt. Stephens and Stewart Peak.

Photo location 39° 18.919'N 120° 18.974'W



Then & Now with Art Clark

Cisco, California. 187.



Cisco, CA 187 - This view of Cisco shows two things. First, there was quite a thriving community there at one time. Second, that that there's not much there now. Actually, there are a few cabins in the area today, but they are hidden by the trees that have taken over.

While the summit tunnels were being blasted out, Cisco was the end of the railroad line for goods and materials. After being transferred to wagons, things were transported on the Dutch Flat - Donner Lake Wagon Road.

The community must have lasted quite a while, since there is a car visible parked in front of one of the large buildings.

Photo location 39°
18.114'N 120°
32.628'W



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.

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.

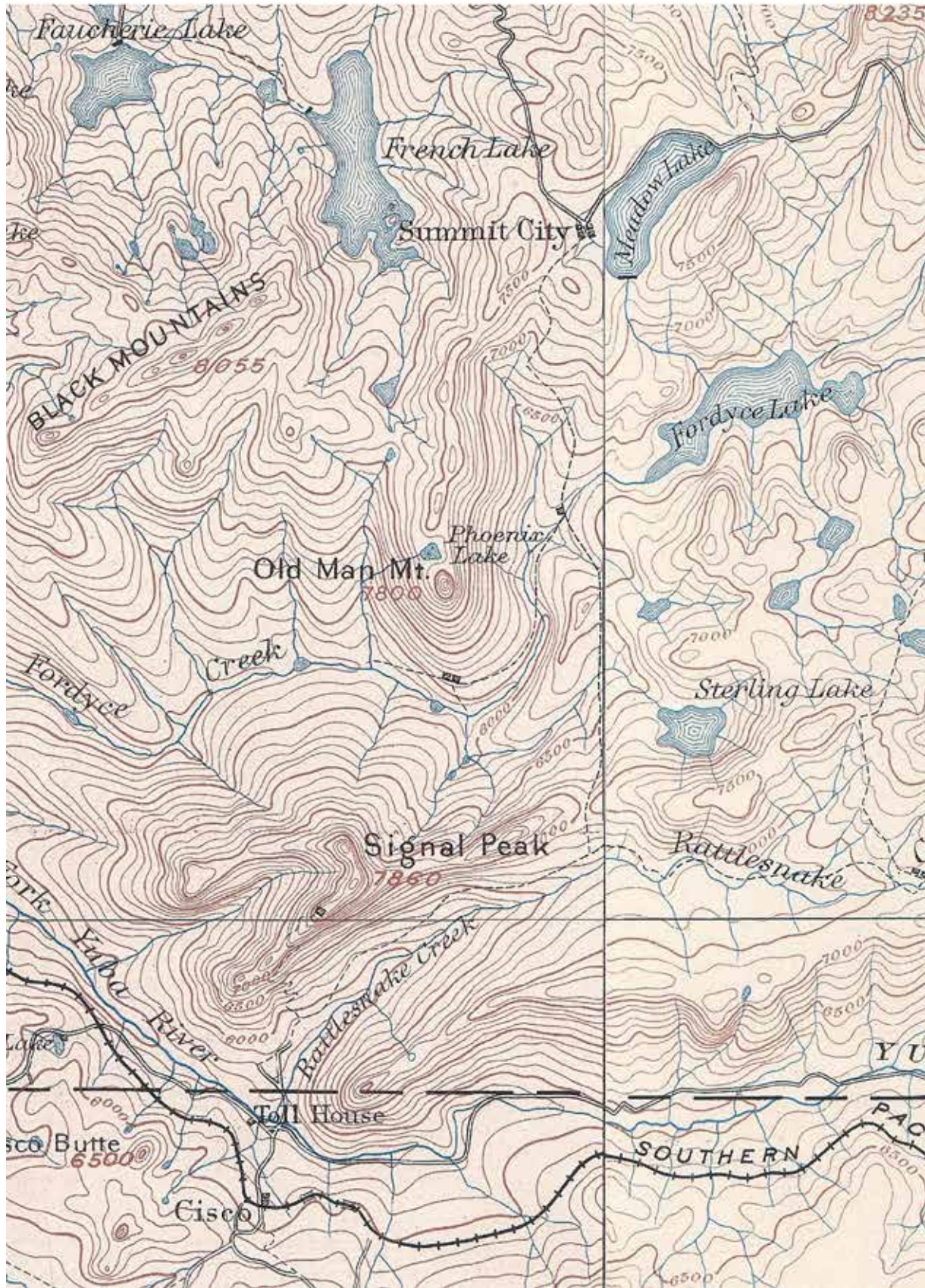
Donner Party Hikes

For 21 years the Truckee Chamber of Commerce has been sponsoring the Donner Party Hikes. It's a very popular event drawing hundreds of people who choose among six different history focused hikes around Donner Summit. A lunch follows the hikes and there is always a good speaker. Last year Ethan Rarick, author of *Desperate Passage* (reviewed in the May, '14 [Heirloom](#)), spoke about his new treatment of the Donner Party. It was a wonderful talk.

The Chamber of Commerce decided that it did not want to sponsor the Donner Party Hikes again and offered the event to Kathy Hess of Just Imagine Marketing & Design. Kathy has been organizing and conducting the event for years. The DSHS offered to help and Kathy accepted. So this year there will be Donner Party hikes again - something to mark on your calendar for October 4 and 5. Above you can see Kathy's initial publicity. For more information you can go to donnerpartyhike.com. You can also go to the DSHS website where we have some information but then the link there will just take you to donnerpartyhike.com.

See the circulars on page 16.

This map is a composite of two maps from Craig Crouch's "Geologic Atlas of the US." The left side is from the 1900 edition and the right side from the 1897 edition. The map was found by Art Clark and put together by the DSHS graphics department. The map is 24 inches tall.





DONNER PARTY HIKE

OCTOBER 4 & 5, 2014



Learn secrets of the Sierras
as you hike with local historians.



Erskine Creative Photography



Explore scenic Donner Summit with local historians on interpretive walks and hikes. As you trace the steps of the emigrants, imagine the clip-clop of oxen and the rumble of wagons of the countless pioneers who scaled the mighty Sierra Nevada in search of a better life.

Learn about the success of the Stephens Party; the tragic events the Donner Party endured; and the importance of the transcontinental railroad. It's a day of vistas, history and camaraderie as you trace the steps of the past.

SATURDAY HIKES

Choose from one of 5 hikes ranging from 3.5 to 6 miles with varying degree of difficulty. Explore the trails, see petroglyphs or the China Wall. Stroll through meadows or discover hidden Sierra lakes.

SUNDAY WALKING TOUR

Learn about the grueling mishaps of the Donner Party and the archeological finds that remain. Then, it's on to Donner Memorial State Park to view the Murphy Cabin Site and Pioneer Monument.

LODGING PACKAGES

Area lodging packages are available for participants.

REGISTER TO SECURE YOUR SPOT IN TIME


Tour size is limited.
Reserve your spot on the trail by September 26 for early savings.

For more information:
info@donnerpartyhike.com
donnerpartyhike.com



Produced by Just Imagine Marketing & Design

Two Years in the Making



Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass Pioneer Monument

History

Charles McGlashan, local luminary, historian, and author of the *History of the Donner Party* (1879) wanted a monument to the Donner Party. He wanted to commemorate their suffering, determination, and heroism during their isolation at Donner Lake in the winter of 1846. It took decades for his wish to come true and even then the resulting monument was not for the Donner Party alone.

The effort started in 1898 but fund raising was disappointing.

In 1910 ground breaking was done for the concrete foundation to a monument but there the project stopped again. By the mid 1910's fund raising had been more successful for a monument to the "pioneers who crossed the plains." A sculptor, John McQuarrie, was chosen in 1913. The sculpting and casting took years, but in 1918 the parts of the 18 ton statue were assembled on the pedestal which had been completed the year before. Thousands of people came to the dedication of the statue, dedicated as an inspiration to determination and endurance and to show the "conqueror's soul." The monument had been funded by the State legislature, the County of Nevada, individuals, and the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West.






The pedestal is 22 1/2 feet tall, the height of the snow in 1846. The monument sits near the site of the Breen cabin. That cabin had been occupied two years before the Donner Party, by 17 year old Moses Schallenburg who was a member of the Stephens Party, the first wagon train to reach California with wagons. Moses spent the winter alone at Donner Lake in 1844. Schallenburg Ridge, just to the south, was named after him. Splinters of wood from the Breen cabin were placed in glass vials and 5,000 were sold as souvenirs to help fund the monument.

A Good Story

Almost immediately after the monument's completion, tourists began removing rock from the pedestal for souvenirs. T.C. Wohlbruck had a novel idea he thought would serve the public in two ways. He offered to lease the site for \$1 a year. In return he would supply a caretaker, a fence and landscaping. He would also build a "souvenir and refreshment station." He would sell souvenirs and refreshments to tourists and Red Cross gas for their automobiles. That "canteen service station" was forerunner of today's convenience markets and was the forerunner of the State Park museum that is here now.

Things to do right here

You must go inside the museum here and then walk outside and take the interpretive trail around the area. After you've enjoyed the history, go and enjoy Donner Lake. Go for a bike ride. Take a boat ride, or go for a hike to the top of Schallenburg Ridge.



This sign sponsored by the Old 40 Riders & Grill, The McGlashan Family, and the memory of Kater Saylor by Nancy Saylor, Mimi Saylor-Bodger, Lacey Saylor, Colleen Bodger, Cherylene Bivens, and Mitch Bivens

Altoona & Gruff

photos courtesy the Nancy Saylor Collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society copyright 2014 Donner Summit Historical Society www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

If you are reading this page we were finally successful. Norma Saylor, DSHS president, wanted to put a 20 Mile Museum sign in the State Park commemorating the building of the Emigrant Monument and T.C. Wohlbruck's Canteen and Service Station, the forerunner of the current visitors' center (see our October and November, '12 [Heirlooms](#)).

First the State Park was approached. One supervisor said yes and another, no. Over months no progress was made. We approached the Town of Truckee for whom we'd placed the McIver Dairy 20 Mile Museum sign (see the Heirloom in June, '13). It took a year to get proper contacts. With those names, Mike Vaughan and Matt Clark, progress was made in July of this year. They thought the new sign (above) would be an asset. Mike was very helpful with the paperwork. Then the chief ranger at the State Park, Mike Rominger, was contacted. He had no objections to a sign on Town of Truckee property.

It seemed like we were home free, but then the underground utility inspectors had to be contacted. 10 utilities have some interest in the spot the Town of Truckee had okayed. They marked up the ground for the sewer line, the water line, the fiber optic cable, the Kinder Morgan petroleum line, etc.

At the end of July we were finally able to dig the 18" deep hole and order the sign from the manufacturer. The manufacturing takes more than a month - hence the announcement in the September [Heirloom](#). Go take a look. The sign is east of the State Park entrance a couple of hundred yards on Old 40. If you can't take a look in person take a look at our website on the 20 Mile Museum page.

Margie Powell Hike, 2014

pictures by George Lamson



On August 2 & 3 we held the third annual Margie Powell Hike. This year it went down Summit Canyon. On Saturday about 50 participants and on Sunday about 30 participants heard stories about the transcontinental air route, how Highway 40 came to be plowed in winter, petroglyphs, turkeys, not wearing new shoes on the Lincoln Highway, etc.



Upper left: at the petroglyphs - thousands of years old. Above on the Lincoln Highway. Left, On the Lincoln Highway where the bridge washed out. Below, at the 1913/14 underpass which solved the problem of crossing the RR tracks by driving in the snowshed.

We've been reconsidering next year's hike - so stay tuned. It also will be illustrated with lots of old pictures.

