

The Donner Summit



Collector's Edition
Issue #100

Historical Society of the Donner Summit
December, 2016 issue #100

100 Heirloom Issues!

One hundred issues of the Heirloom! No doubt this issue will become even more valuable as time goes by. Once #100 had been "put to bed," to use a journalist term since the Heirloom is now a venerable periodical, the staff jumped up and danced around the table.

Unfortunately the video feed from the security camera was off so we can't put any stills in here.

Eight years ago when the Donner Summit Historical Society was founded one of our goals was to spread the stories of Donner Summit history and we thought we had a pretty good idea of what those stories were - but really, we had no idea.

Margie Powell was the founding energy and inspiration behind the DSHS. She wanted a newsletter - which became the Heirloom - but she didn't want the issues to be too long. Ten pages was stretching it she thought. We'd run out of history and then what would we do?

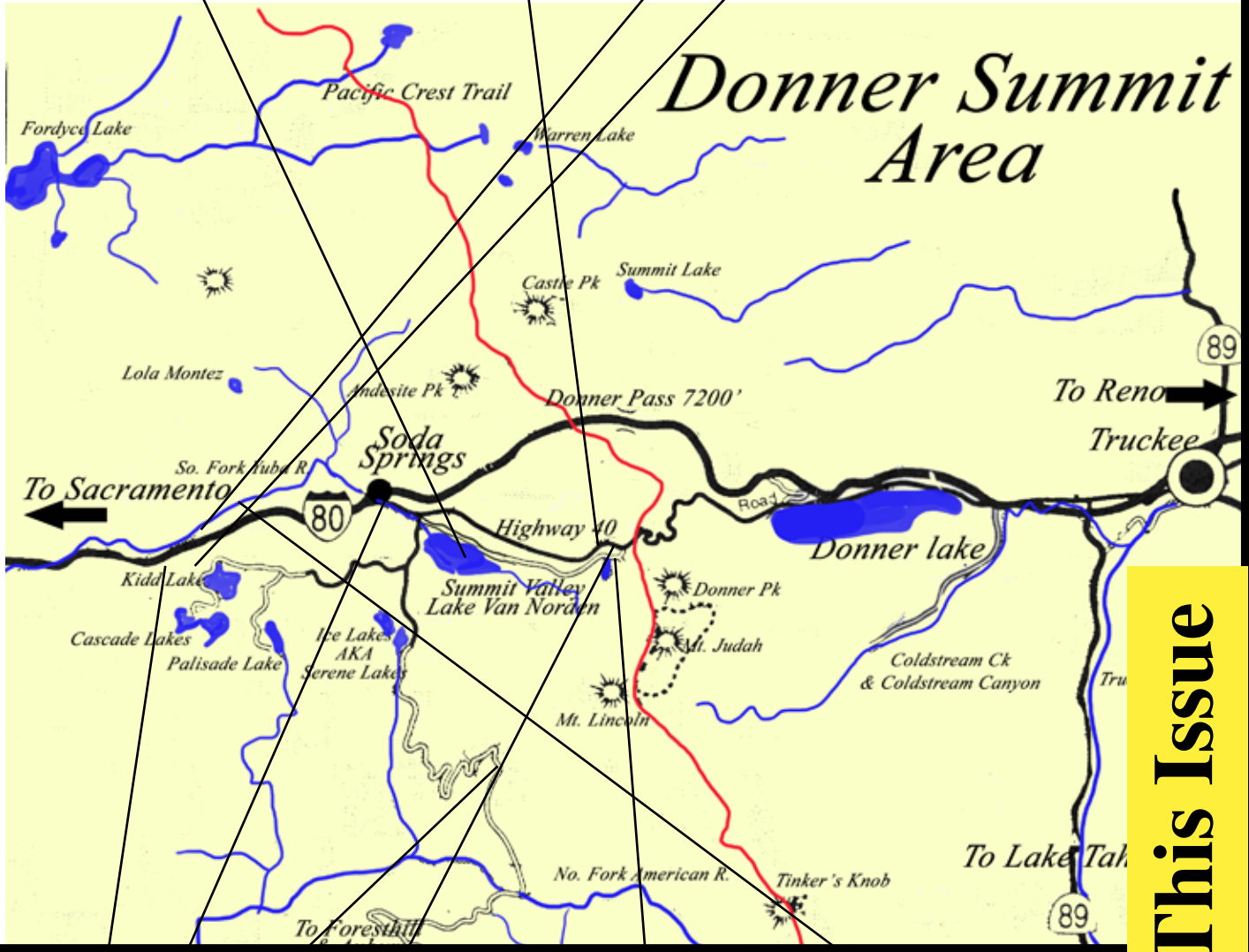
It turns out there is a lot of history on Donner Summit and in 100 issues we have only covered some of it. We've covered the obvious categories: skiing, the railroad, roads and cars, the Donner Summit Bridge, some famous people, wagon trains, etc. but as we got into it we found more big stories than we'd ever thought in those categories and then more: the air route, plane crashes, Native Americans, the Lincoln Highway, the Chinese, etc.

The advent of the Internet made lots of history accessible and that has given us a lot of small stories such as the first auto over Donner Summit, first motorized trip over Donner Summit and across the country, and first bicycle over the summit; the

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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

fellow who drove over Coldstream Pass on the old road in 1915 and saw stumps in Summit Valley cut by the Donner Party as they escaped the lake; and a lot of stories about others who crossed Donner Summit. Take a look at our [Heirloom](#) indices on our website.

That's not even close to all the history. There is a large backlog of stories just waiting exposure in future [Heirlooms](#): under Donner Summit, Piracy on Donner Summit, the first locomotive over Donner Summit, famous artists who visited Donner Summit, the Cedars and original Soda Springs, a guy going over Donner Summit on a horse wearing snowshoes, seasonal first autos, the opening of Highway 40 for winter travel, the Donner Party and Donner Summit, the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. etc. There's so much more to come.

So keep up your subscriptions and if you like what we're doing think about contributing so we can continue to pay rent, pay for insurance, publish brochures, maintain 20 Mile Museum signs, add to our library, and do the other things that cost money. You can go on line or use the handy form at the end of this [Heirloom](#). Meanwhile the [Heirloom](#) continues to be free.

With this issue we almost inaugurated two new features: "Odds & Ends of Donner Summit" and "In the Museum." Then the issue got too big and "In the Museum" will have to wait for issue #101 for its debut. Stay tuned. If you have suggestions please pass them along, use the e-mail address in the bottom corner of page two.

The Donner Party & Donner Summit - Part I

We don't cover the Donner Party on Donner Summit for reasons we'll get into more completely next month (that's what we in the literary game call foreshadowing - giving something for the reader to look forward to and think about. That's kind of ironic in this context since history is about looking back, but I digress).

There is some Donner Party to cover this month because this is a 170th anniversary of their tragedy and some of that tragedy has to do with Donner Summit. Beyond the obvious connection, which is the name Donner Summit, the relevance is that all of the escapees from Donner Lake and all of the rescuers and rescuees went over Donner Summit. The stumps cut off at snow level in the old photo were in Summit Valley but we'll get there next month too (more foreshadowing).

In the history of the Donner Party (lower case "h" history since this is not referring to McGlashan's book, [The History of the Donner Party](#)), December, 1846 was important. Most of the party had arrived at what would be called Donner Lake on October 31 (the rest of the party including the Donners was at Alder Creek seven miles away). Some members of the party tried to get over the pass right away but failed. The snow was too much and people were dispirited and exhausted. On November 3, 13, and 22 there were more escape attempts but they all failed.

What was going through the minds of the members of the people trapped at the lake? Were there recriminations? If only we'd gone faster. If only (name the person) had not been so slow. If only we had not taken the short cut. What'll we do to Lansford Hastings when we get hold of him? If

only the snow would melt - we'd get over the Sierra quickly - we won't dawdle, we promise. Will it ever stop snowing? Will there be enough food? Will we have to stay here all winter? Can we survive? Was there anger at the family that appropriated the little cabin Moses Schallenberger (see [Heirlooms](#) in November, '11, August, '13, December, '15, and January, '16) and his friends had built two years before leaving everyone else to scramble to build something? For the Reed Family, having lost their wagons, cattle, and father they must have wondered additionally, where was Papa? (James Reed had been banished from the party weeks earlier). Could they survive on the kindness of others? For Charles Stanton and the two Indians Sutter had sent back with him to bring food and hope to the party, they must have thought, why'd we come back? Maybe too, they thought, "These people are worthless." We'll never get out of here.

If you put your mind to it you can come up with any number of thoughts or conversations. They must have been depressed at their prospects. They must have been frightened. They must have been uncomfortable crammed together without privacy into shelters hurriedly thrown together. Those shelters must have offered little protection against the storms, the cold, and the accumulating snow. As the winds howled before the snow fell and almost buried the shelters, the sides must have shaken. All the people inside could do was bury themselves in filthy blankets and pray. The actual Donners, at Alder Creek, were only in tents. There'd been no time to build anything less insubstantial. Little could any of them know that in a few weeks they'd be trying to eat the cow hides they'd thrown over their shelters.



That sets the stage for Pt I of "The Donner Party and Donner Summit." On December 16, 1846, 170 years ago this month (and maybe 170 years ago today if you've refrained from reading this until the 16th of December) the Forlorn Hope left Donner Lake in another escape attempt. Seventeen members left the camp, fifteen wearing snowshoes. The snow was deep and even though the two without snowshoes stepped in the tracks of those in front, it was too much. They went back leaving fifteen to try to conquer the pass and get to California.

What about them? What were they thinking? Four were fathers and three were mothers. They'd left their families behind. How far was it to Sutter's Fort? They'd been living in the snow for one and a half months and had little shelter and little protection. Now they'd be out in the open with only a few blankets. Walking the snow had been hard at the camp at Donner Lake. Now they would have to fight the snow for miles each day for days with little rest and little food. What about those left back at camp? Would they live? Would they be cared for? Could the Forlorn Hope bring back help?

How does a parent make that choice to leave children behind? How can one bear to leave children to face starvation? How could one bear not to try to escape and get help in California? Was there a way to survive?

Climbing Donner Pass must have been excruciating. Walking in snow is hard. You sink with each step. Some of the pressure of the foot stepping off is lost as the foot goes into the snow. Snowshoes make sinking less of a problem but those were amateur made snowshoes. They probably didn't fit well. As one walks in snowshoes the snowshoes pick up snow making them heavier with each step. In addition the Forlorn Hope was going uphill, sometimes very steeply. They had to climb 1,000 feet to the pass. They were cold and wet. They were tired. They were full of hope too. And they were worried.

Above, the view back down 1,000' to Donner Lake. Mary Ann Graves would have seen this view with more snow and no highways, December 17, 1846

Even considering all that, Mary Ann Graves remarked afterwards, "The scenery was too grand for me to pass without notice." Donner Pass is grand - see above. Mary Ann also noted that someone else had said, "We were as near to heaven as we could get." That's touching but also full of dramatic irony because we know some of the unbelievable horror to come.

On the 17th the Forlorn Hope got to the top of Donner Pass and they camped just west building a log fire. The snow was twelve feet deep. Coffee and a few strips of beef were all they had after their exhausting climb.

They went only six miles the next day. There were snow flurries and high winds but at least it wasn't snowing - yet.

On December 20 they were still in the vicinity. They struggled on through the snow. There was only a day of food rations left. Charles Stanton went snow blind. On the fifth day out from Donner Lake they again awoke

**CASCADE LAKES
CHARLES T. STANTON,
WHILE ATTEMPTING TO LEAD SEVERAL
MEMBERS OF THE DONNER PARTY
TO SUTTER'S FORT,
DIED OF EXHAUSTION NEAR HERE
DECEMBER 21, 1846**

in the snow wrapped in blankets. As the group got ready to move on Charles Stanton sat back against a tree and lit his pipe. He was so worn out. He said he'd be along shortly. He didn't want to hold them up. Charles Stanton died somewhere below Cascade Lakes on Donner Summit where there is a sign. He'd left the Donner Party somewhere in what is now Utah, gone ahead to California, gotten supplies from John Sutter, and returned to the Donner Party near today's Reno. He may have saved the Donner Party. He had no family. He

had no ties in the Party. Besides human decency and heroism he had no reason to come back.

On December 22 another storm struck the Forlorn Hope but by then they'd left Donner Summit and our story for this month. Next month we'll introduce the story of the Donner Party and Donner Summit better. Stay tuned.

Further Adventures of the MHRT*

Part I Signal Hill

The MHRT has had a lot of adventures related to the history of Donner Summit including even the "Death-Defying Re-enactment" in our July, '15 [Heirloom](#). That adventure really showed the lengths to which the MHRT will go in order to bring the best of history to our subscribers. The adventure in this [Heirloom](#) was not death-defying or even uncomfortable but it brought a little more Donner Summit history to the fore.

The adventure started when Linda Cashion, of Serene Lakes, contacted the DSHS about a fellow she'd met who was documenting the "Arrows Across America." The arrows are the concrete arrows the Federal Government placed along the transcontinental air route once transcontinental flying became possible in the early 20th Century. The arrows guided pilots since flying in those days was only by what you could see. (To read more about the first transcontinental air route and Donner Summit see the July, '11 [Heirloom](#)). Since the air route went over Donner Summit the "Arrows Across America" fellow was searching for arrows in the vicinity including at Donner Ski Ranch and at Troy.

You can find out more about the project by searching for Arrows Across America or going to the fellow's website, dreamsmithphotos.com. You'll see a link there to the arrows. We're focused on Donner Summit in our [Heirlooms](#) so we'll only deal with arrows in our vicinity.

Naturally the MHRT's curiosity was aroused by Linda. How much or many of those almost hundred- year-old arrows are still there? Some years ago we'd searched the top of Beacon Hill which is today's Soda Springs Ski Area. The hill was called Beacon Hill because there was an airway beacon up

there and supposedly an arrow. Any arrow that was there is long gone perhaps due to the construction of various ski lifts. That there might be arrows on Donner Ski Ranch, which was called Signal Hill, and at Troy, just below Kingvale on Old 40, made visits imperative. Art Clark, pre-eminent MHRT



The transcontinental airway arrow on Signal Hill at Donner Ski Ranch. Photo by George Lamson's drone

member, hiked up to both locations. Kicking aside dirt and rocks at Donner Ski Ranch, it looked like the arrow was indeed there but some excavation, or in MHRT parlance, archeological work, would be in order.

*Mobile Historical Research Team



Panorama in three pictures taken from the top of Signal Hill, Donner Ski Ranch.

Photos by George Lamson

The MHRT prides itself in using appropriate technology and modern technology despite the “Historical” part of the MHRT name. We use digital maps, GOOGLE, GPS, digital cameras, etc. In this case the MHRT needed a drone. Drones have been used by the MHRT before (see the May, '15 [Heirloom](#) for example) but this time the drone (and the operator) would be tested severely. Just wait.

Shovels and brooms were also needed for the adventure so you can see we use traditional tools as well.

We received permission from Janet Tuttle who, with her husband Marshall, owns Donner Ski Ranch. We could drive up carrying the drone, shovels, brooms, and investigative personnel (MHRT technical term). We'd chosen a day when wind was forecast to be negligible. Indeed, it was non-existent on Old 40 at the Pass level, but by the time we'd reached the top of Signal Hill it was blowing strongly. Could the drone gain an appropriate altitude and not be blown away? Could the pilot fight the wind to get a good hover and good pictures? Could we memorialize the arrow? Running through our minds was that the weather station that used to be on the small peak immediately east of Signal Hill, and which was part of the transcontinental air route, was held to the rock by steel cables to prevent the winds from carrying it away. (You can get all kinds of interesting historical tidbits by reading the [Heirloom](#), in this case the July, '11 issue).

There is an arrow on Donner Ski Ranch's peak, Signal Hill. It sits directly under the old beacon as you can see on the previous page. Excavation began, right, and the arrow took shape. The drone pilot, George Lamson, launched the machine. The little drone fought valiantly against the buffeting wind. It rose and was blown away.

George brought it down, then back to the arrow and up again but the gusts were against the drone and the pilot. Again George and the drone tried and again winds prevailed. Finally, urging the drone on and putting on full power, the little drone rose until the peak, the arrow, and the MHRT could be recorded.

Part II Troy

With one arrow “in the bag” (and cleaned off in case a passing pilot wants to use it on the way to Salt Lake City) the MHRT headed off to Troy where the adventure got better.

Troy used to be a stop on the railroad route. You take Troy Rd. which is about 100 yards west of Donner Trail School in Kingvale. Go up the road and turn right at the second turn. It's a dirt road but passable. When you get close to the tracks, park. You are aiming for all of the antennas (or antennae for purists) on the rocky peak. You'll be going cross-country and doing a little bushwacking unless you find one of the trails that antenna maintenance people use. On the top of the knoll you'll find a lot of modern equipment and the arrow. Part of the arrow's slab now supports some antenna equipment. See page 8.

That was not the end of the story though. As we were scrambling over rocks, Art Clark mentioned that, oh yeah, there's an abandoned railroad tunnel nearby. That was easy to find as you can see in our new [Heirloom](#) feature, "Odds & Ends of Donner Summit" on page 13. At some point the





Left: On Signal Hill Bill Oudegeest and George Lamson crane their necks to follow the drone (very top of the picture). The red tower is one of the airway beacons that used to guide pilots traveling on the transcontinental air route.

Photo by Art Clark.



The various antennae on Signal Hill. The beacon is the red one at the left.

Photo by George Lamson

railroad decided to bypass the tunnel, probably when they double tracked the road. Graffiti artists have discovered this “lost” tunnel but why they’d waste paint on it, since it gets no attention, is a mystery.

Having found the tunnel, dating from 1867, the question arises of course for Art Clark: what other things have you forgotten about or forgotten to mention? He doesn’t remember anything else just now.

George Lamson and the drone (at arrow's point) on Signal Hill. Photo by Linda Cashion

GPS coordinates of the Troy arrow: 39° 18.654N 120° 27.942W

Coordinates of where the Cisco arrow used to be: 39° 18.510N 120° 33.743W

The arrow on Signal Hill at Donner Ski Ranch is on private property but if you are in the parking lot at the bottom and looking up, the red tower is the airway beacon and it sits on the arrow.





Panorama view. The Troy antenna installation is to the left. Castle Pk. is in the distance. Janet McMartin, Art Clark's hiking companion, is at the right. Photo by Art Clark



Right, the Troy airway arrow in excellent shape and serving as foundation for modern antennae.

Photo by George Lamson's drone.



Below, where the Cisco arrow used to be with Crystal Lake and Grouse Ridge in the background looking northeast. Parts of the arrow are still there but most has disappeared due to construction. Photo by Art Clark.

Above: Linda Cashion and George Lamson at the antenna installation at Troy. Photo by Art Clark.



Hilda's Camp

Along the line of the CPRR during the building of the transcontinental railroad there were Chinese railroad worker camps.* In the August issue of the Heirloom we covered Summit Camp, the longest lasting of the railroad worker camps. In October we covered China Kitchen and in November we covered Camp 5 or Windmill Tree Camp towards the eastern end of Coldstream Valley within the railroad curve. There were many more camps and that being the case it should be fairly easy to find them. Archeologists say that worker camps were on flat areas within a few hundred yards of the railroad route. Unfortunately it's not easy to find Chinese worker camps.

The camps were occupied only for short amounts of time and they did not amount to much if we can rely on Bret Harte's reporting.** That would mean there would not be much left to find after 150 years. The area of the camps, along the railroad across Donner Summit, is heavily forested with the detritus that goes with forests. Go anywhere along the railroad line to a likely spot and find pine needles, pinecones, branches, organic material, etc. Anything left behind by the Chinese would be well-covered and without an archeological effort to excavate whatever may have been left, is going to stay hidden.

When one comes across or hears of evidence of a Chinese railroad worker camp there is a quickening of the pulse and, "Let's see!"

Sue Ellen Benson has had a cabin at Big Bend since the late 70's and her in-laws first came

*"These camps are generally built about one mile apart and consist of store houses, power houses, blacksmith shops, kitchen, eating and sleeping rooms, and stables for mules, horses and oxen. These, with the small buildings erected by the Chinese laborers for their own use, make quite a village."

Report to the Secretary of Interior October 7, 1867
Donner Summit Heirloom August, 2016

** [Chinese railroad workers camp] resembling a collection of dog-kennels, which, in fact, it is—each hut hastily made of 'shakes,' about four feet high by six feet broad, and eight feet long."

to the area a decade before. She has explored the area thoroughly. She even used to lead hikes for the Forest Service museum that used to be at Big Bend. That museum was a nice resource for visitors until the Government decided that they could not repair a little snow damage but could build a whole new building without a museum – but I digress.

Sue Ellen donated to the Donner Summit Historical Society a wok she found above Big Bend at what we'll call Hilda's Camp because Hilda, a friend of Sue Ellen's, found the camp. Besides the wok, lots of other artifacts have been found – a broken tea cup, shards of pottery and porcelain, a soy pot, Chinese coins, etc. Clearly here was a Chinese railroad workers' camp.



It doesn't look like much today, nor does any other former Chinese worker camp. 150 years ago, though, this site was teeming with Chinese workers going about their daily business.

Sue Ellen invited the MHRT (Mobile Historical Research Team) to come to Big Bend and visit the camp site. That invitation was, of course, taken up with alacrity and so, on a nice June day, we headed out on our expedition. It was not long after reaching the site that the team found evidence of the Chinese occupation as you can see here. The site is perfect. It's almost flat, near the tracks, and there is a good water supply. One can almost see through the brush and trees to the train tracks and hear passing trains as they travel the transcontinental route, a few hundred yards to the south.

Having explored the site the team then headed east between the creek and the petroleum pipeline that crosses the summit. Passing some beautiful cascades and then hacking through brush the team found one of the lost Magic Carpet gondola cars from Sugar Bowl (that will have to wait until next month given the size of this month's Heirloom, so stay tuned). The walk back along the pipeline route was a lot easier and to be recommended rather than bushwacking.



There are still artifacts to be found and which we left on site. Below a broken Chinese tea cup



Below: Sue Ellen Benson, Katherine Keefer (neighbor and daughter of Hilda), Art Clark, Bill Oudegeest.



Right: Katherine Keefer (Hilda's daughter), Sue Ellen Benson, Roufous, Bill Oudegeest.
Photos by George Lamson



The Wok that Got Us to Hilda's Camp

At first look it's just a pile of heavy gauge rusty cast iron. Looking closer one can see that it just might all fit together and so maybe is some forerunner of Ikea merchandise.

This wok was found by Hilda Keefer at what was a Chinese railroad worker's camp up above Big Bend. Frost heave and tree roots had pushed it to the surface so it was just visible.



The wok as it came out of the box in which it was donated.



Sue Ellen Benson and Hilda Keefer with their wok. Picture taken in the 1990's.

How does one go about reconstructing a Chinese wok that's 150 years old? When Sue Ellen Benson handed over the artifact to the DSHS in 2012 it came with numbering on some of the pieces from her attempt to put the pieces into their original shape. That was helpful as was Donner Summit snow. Our DSHS artifact reconstruction team (the ART) formed a two foot depression in the snow and then laid out the cast iron jigsaw puzzle. There were only a few extra pieces which either means it didn't quite get completely together or there are other artifacts awaiting resurrection of which the extra pieces are a part. Stay tuned.

Chinese railroad workers divided themselves into gangs. Each had a leader, who took care of money, and a cook. We can imagine it was a bad day when the wok was lost or broken. How did the cook feel? What led up to its remaining near Big Bend? Were there other woks to take its place?

Woks were one of the many goods imported from China. Along with familiar foods and other kitchen tools, they were imported by entrepreneurs to supply Chinese in California. So the wok was probably valuable and not easily replaced.

Was the wok left behind whole by accident when a particular Chinese railroad worker gang moved up the hill? Did subsequent earth movement break it up? Was it broken and that's why it was left behind? If it was broken, had it been dropped? Was there an argument about cooking resulting in the wok becoming a projectile? Did it crash and break? We just don't know but if someone knows of any "wok whisperers" who can unlock the secrets, please let us know.

A piece of Hilda's wok with a number which helped in the "reconstruction" below - the pieces all embedded in snow.



You can travel Donner Summit much without noticing all kinds of remnants of the past, petroglyphs, projectile points, abandoned machinery, timber from old buildings, crockery pieces, old signs, out of use dams, arboglyphs, commemorative plaques and signs, rust marks from wagons, grooves in granite, etc. We are starting this month a new feature in the Heirloom "Odds and Ends of Donner Summit." In the monthly articles we'll see the "leftovers" of Donner Summit history. We've been building quite a collection so keep your subscription up.

Odds & Ends of Donner Summit

As the MHRT was discovering long lost transcontinental air route arrows and scrambling up the bluff at Troy, I stumbled across the ridge that's at the right side of the photo below. My view was the photo at the right (but of course Art Clark wasn't in the view yet). "A tunnel," I shouted. The others came up behind and Art noted that he'd forgotten the tunnel was here.

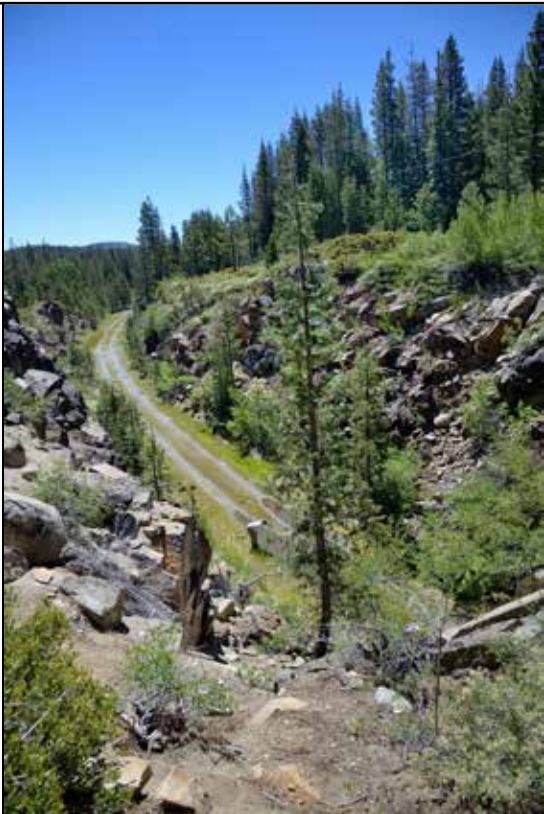
This is a big "odd and end" but it is a remnant of history past. Who knows when the tunnel was abandoned? We think it's Tunnel 4 of the Transcontinental Railroad and built of course in 1868.



Looking carefully around there are lots of drill holes and drill marks. That's Linda Cashion in the photo to the left along with some modern graffiti.

Photos by George Lamson





A view from above Tunnel 4 along the abandoned railroad line looking east. The current track is to the left and over the small ridge. Below another drill hole in granite.



From the DSHS Archives



Donner Ski Ranch, 1956. That's Rudi Talso and his team above. The chairlift in the background is the "Sky Chair Ride. Tickets cost \$2.50 for all day in those days according to Norm Sayler.

Book Review

Carleton Watkins The Complete Mammoth Photographs

Weston Naef and Christine Hall-Lewis
2011 published by the Getty Trust 572 pages large format

Carleton Watkins The Complete Mammoth Photographs is about Carleton Watkins' large photographs, not his stereo views. The photos are not the only mammoth thing here. The book is mammoth. Its dimensions are 13" x 10" x 2" and weighs in at almost nine pounds. This book will attract attention not just as a coffee table book but as the whole coffee table. Its price is mammoth too, so finding it in a library may be the best way to enjoy it, or maybe you have a few Amazon gift certificates lying around.

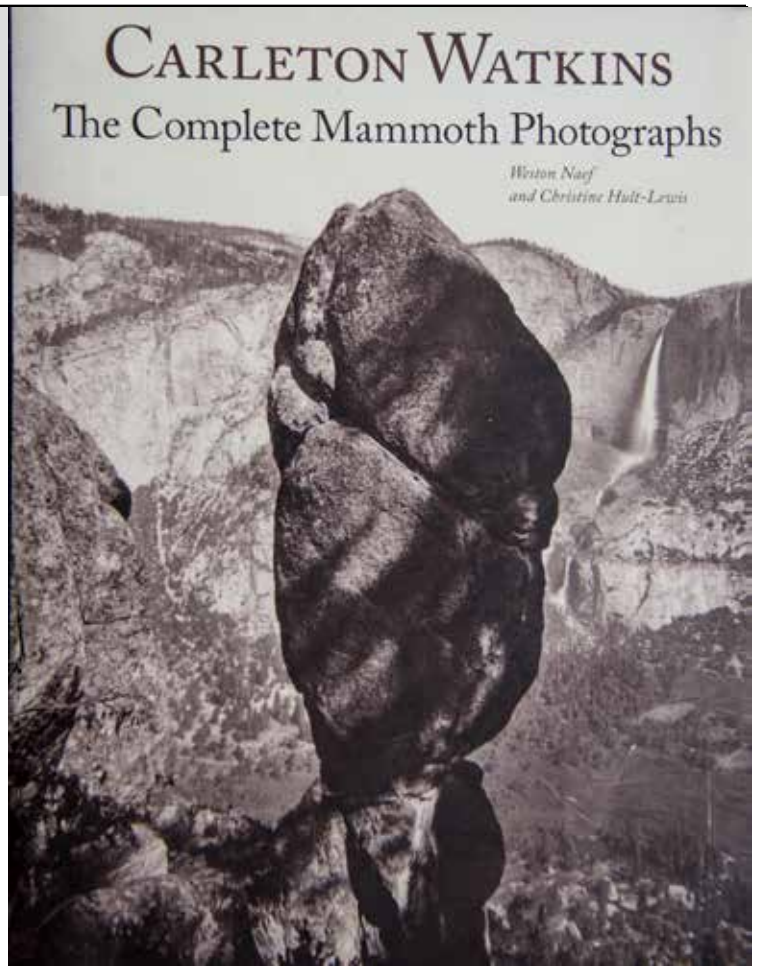
This book is a tome, but if you like history, old photographs, including some from Donner Summit and environs, it's worth the effort to get hold of it. There are hundreds of historic photographs beautifully reproduced.. Some are full page. Each comes with good information. This book is really a catalog of the mammoth photographs and so is about those and not Watkins per se.

The Donner Summit photographs are of prime importance of course but there are a lot more, particularly of a place called Yosemite, long before Ansel Adams, which looks as if it would be a good visit.

Even though Carleton Watkins was an accomplished and prolific photographer in early California, his work had almost disappeared by the latter part of the 20th Century and would have disappeared completely had not some collections surfaced. As photographs and albums appeared more attention was garnered which brought out other photographs as people began searching. The photographs are beautiful



and have wonderful detail because of the large format cameras* Watkins used. Watkins' fame and artistry eventually got Mt. Watkins in Yosemite named for



him, a gold medal at the 1867 Paris Exhibition, and the only California artist up to that time to have gotten a one-man show in New York. His fame enabled him to become a charter member of the Bohemian Club and the San Francisco Art Association.

Watkins came to California with Collis P. Huntington of the CPRR's Big Four. His first photographs were done to serve as evidence in court cases about John C. Fremont's vast holdings in Mariposa. The Gold Rush had created a lot of wealth and with that a demand and economic climate for photography, which Watkins met. As he became known he got more commissions and began to travel the state taking pictures of California scenery, mining activities, and missions. One category of his photographs was recording the wealth of rich Californians. The wealthy were building estates on the San Francisco Peninsula and hired Watkins to photograph the estates and some contents. Those photographs serve as a record of what was, since most of those estates have been replaced by shopping centers, large buildings, and housing tracts.

His Yosemite pictures were at least partially responsible for President Lincoln granting Yosemite to California with a mandate to be "forever public domain." His photos had been exhibited in New York and Senator John Conness (of



succeeded Hart as official photographer in 1869 and "inherited" Hart's photographs. So many of Hart's pictures were re-labeled Watkins. According to Meade Kibby, author of the Railroad Photographs... "by 1870 Carleton E. Watkins was at work publishing most of the Hart CPRR negatives, with Hart's original numbers and nearly identical titles, but without credit to Hart..." identified as "Watkins Pacific Coast, and after 1876 Watkins New Series..."

If you don't want to get the book you can go to the Library of Congress online (loc.gov) and look for Carleton Watkins (www.loc.gov/pictures - enter Watkins in the search window)

California and who introduced the bill to protect Yosemite) showed them to Lincoln. The Yosemite pictures were also what brought Watkins popular fame. He displayed pictures in his Yosemite gallery in San Francisco.

*for his Yosemite pictures, taken on his first trip, Watkins hauled in 2,000 pounds of camera and other equipment and used an 18" x 22" camera.

Financial problems hurt Watkins during the panic of 1875 and he lost his gallery and all of his negatives to his creditors. That sent Watkins out again throughout the state to redo his photographs. It also put him in the position of competing against himself as he sold his "Watkins New Series" while his creditors sold his originals.

Watkins' studio and negatives were destroyed during the San Francisco Earthquake.

For those of usx focused on Donner Summit there are a number of pictures of the old Soda Springs, the Mark Hopkins Estate; Summit Valley; Summit Station; Mt. Lola; and Lake Tahoe hotels of the time. Beyond our immediate area there are also a lot of railroad and mining pictures. The detail of San Francisco pictures is interesting too.



There is an interesting aside to Carleton Watkins. Some time ago we reviewed the Railroad Photographs of Alfred A. Hart (January, '14 Heirloom). Hart was the first official photographer of the CPRR and is responsible for many or most of the photographs showing the construction of the transcontinental railroad's western half. Carleton Watkins

Top photo: the original Soda Springs where the Mark Hopkins Estate and the Summit Soda Springs Hotel used to be. Above: Summit Station on Donner Summit. The white building is the first Summit Hotel. The peaked cupola roof covered the turn table and the snowshed coming to the center of the photo leads to Tunnel 6.

Summit Station, Central Pacific Railroad, Placer County

ca. 1876

INSCRIPTIONS: Recto mount imprinted in black ink on pasted paper label at center below image: *Weston Engine at Summit Valley, / C.P.R.R. / 1121 Watkins, Photographer, San Francisco*

IMAGE: 36.2 x 52.6 cm (14 3/4 x 20 1/4 in.)

MOUNT: 48.3 x 66.1 cm (19 x 26 in.)

PROVENANCE TO 1900: Collis P. Huntington; Henry E. Huntington

REPRODUCED: Myrick 1968, p. 26; Myrick 1975, p. 35

NOTES: By the 1880s, locomotives that had been in service for ten or more years were being rebuilt and upgraded to better handle steam power. These upgrades were designed by Andrew J. Stevens, who was the general master mechanic in charge of the Sacramento repair shop. We see here the leaner funnel-shaped stack in place of the classic diamond-shaped ones. See Dunscomb 1963, pp. 22-23.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California, RB137501:18



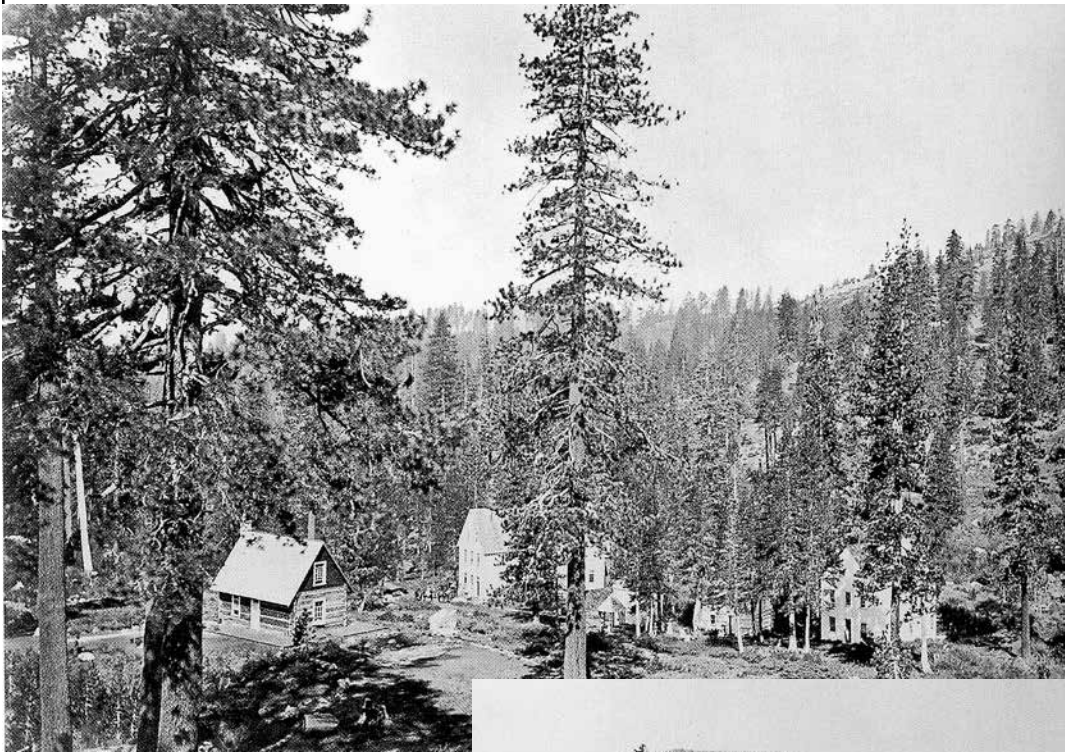
Above an example of the information that comes with each photograph in the book. Left: Carleton Watkins and his traveling wagon. Below: the original Soda Springs for which Soda Springs is named. The man and two women are unidentified.



Carleton Watkins “the most skilled [photographer] in America”

Clarence King
King Survey of the 40th Parallel for the U.S. Geological
Explorations by the U.S. Gov’t in 1870





The Mark Hopkins Estate
at Summit Soda Springs.



Lake Mary on Donner
Summit. Turret Mtn. (then
American Pk. and now Mt.
Lincoln) in the distance.

Note:

You have noticed our monthly book reviews. You might want to do some reading of your own.

Stop in at the DSHS. Norm Sayler has a large collection of books for perusing, buying, or checking out.

You might even want to do a review for us.

Book Review

Strangers from a Different Shore

Strangers from a Different Shore by Ronald Takaki
Penguin Books, 1990

The past few Heirlooms have documented much of the Chinese contribution to the construction of the railway through Donner Summit, which reminded me of this book. Mr. Takaki puts the history in a little different perspective, perhaps a bit harsher, utilizing a narrative history and personal reflections.

He sets the stage describing his upbringing among the sugar cane fields of Hawaii, grandson of Japanese immigrants, who joined Chinese and Puerto Ricans in the early 1800's to work those fields. The history moves from there.

The Chinese came to work the gold fields of California, by the 1860's 24,000 of them worked those grounds as independent prospectors. They worked and organized in small groups, mainly placer mines. They were a common sight along the Yuba River, wearing blue cotton blouses, broad trousers, wooden shoes and wide-brimmed hats. They were subject to much legislation to limit citizenship, (i.e. Federal 1790 whites only citizenship law) and taxes. The miners paid California a \$3.00 per month tax, because they would not, could not become citizens. During the mid 1860's profits in gold mining decreased and many Chinese took on paying jobs, especially in quartz mines. One local paper noted their talents were a great benefit to the State of California because they were also ploughmen, laundrymen, placer miners, woolen spinners and weavers, domestic servants, cigar makers, shoemakers and railroad builders. (pg. 82- 84)

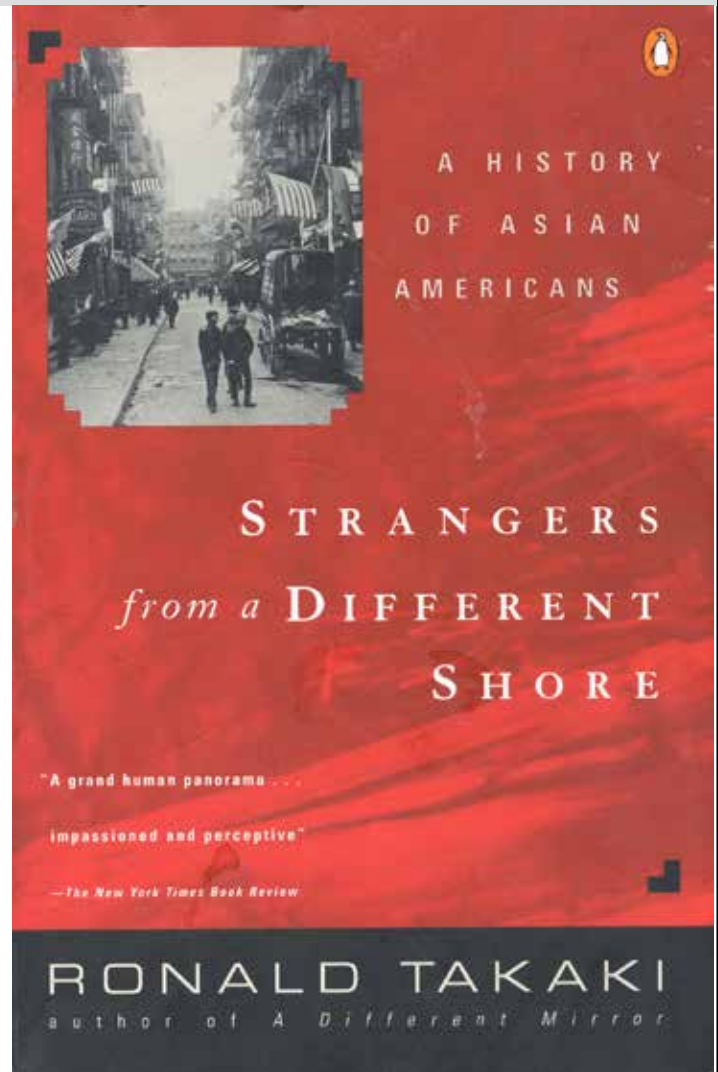
“One of the most important areas of Chinese industrial employment was railroad construction. In February of 1865, fifty Chinese workers were hired by the Central Pacific Railroad to help lay the tracks for the transcontinental line leading east from Sacramento; shortly afterward fifty more Chinese were hired.”

“Company President Leland Stanford praised the new employees as quiet, peaceable, industrious, economical, and nearly equal to white men, and much more reliable.”

“Company Superintendent Charles Crocker reported, there was no danger of strikes among them. We are training them to all kinds of labor: blasting, driving horses, handling rock as well as pick and shovel”

Within two years, 12,000 Chinese were employed by the Central Pacific Railroad, representing 90 percent of the entire work force. The Chinese offered a considerable cost savings, as they were paid thirty one dollars per month, whites were paid the same plus board and lodging, a savings to the railroad of 1/3rd in labor costs. (Pg. 84-85)

The construction of the Central Pacific Railroad line was a Chinese achievement. Not only clearing trees and laying track, they were skilled at operating power drills and handling explosives for boring tunnels through Donner Summit. Superintendent Crocker tells the story of cutting a shaft, from both the eastern and western ends hiring some Cornish miners from Virginia City and paying them extra wages to work from one end. Chinese workers worked from the other end. The Chinese, without fail,



always out-measured the Cornish miners. (pg. 85)

“The Chinese workers were, in one observer’s description, “a great army laying siege to Nature in her strongest citadel. The rugged mountains looked like stupendous ant-hills. They swarmed with Celestials, shoveling, wheeling, carting, drilling, and blasting rocks and earth.”

Time was critical to the CPRR. It was paid in land and bonds by the federal government based on the miles of track it built. Determined to accelerate construction, the Central Pacific managers forced the Chinese laborers to work through the winter of 1866. The snowdrifts, over sixty feet in height, covered construction operations.

The Chinese workers lived and worked in tunnels under the snow, with shafts to give them air and lanterns to light the way. Snow slides occasionally buried camps and crews; in the spring, workers found the thawing corpses, still upright, their cold hands gripping shovels and picks, and their mouths twisted in frozen terror.” (pg. 85 – 86)

The Chinese workers went on strike the following spring, demanding an 8 hour work day and wages of 45 dollars a month. The company offered to raise them from 31 dollars a month to 35, but the Chinese said no. Local news sources said it was a conspiracy, fomented by a circular in Chinese and backed by the competing rail line, the Union Pacific. The Central Pacific cut off all food to the laborers, who were isolated in their Sierra camps. Within a week the strike ended and the workers all went back to work. They completed the crossing of Donner Summit and the Sierra. It was widely acknowledged that the Chinese labor was crucial to that success.

Once that work was done, most of the Chinese were let go, and went to San Francisco. The Chinese population there rose tremendously, to nearly one fourth of California Chinese population.

The book continues with the history of immigrants also from the Philippines, India and more recently Southeast Asians. To understand the tribulations they endured, it is a book worth reading.

By Milli Martin, Homer, Alaska

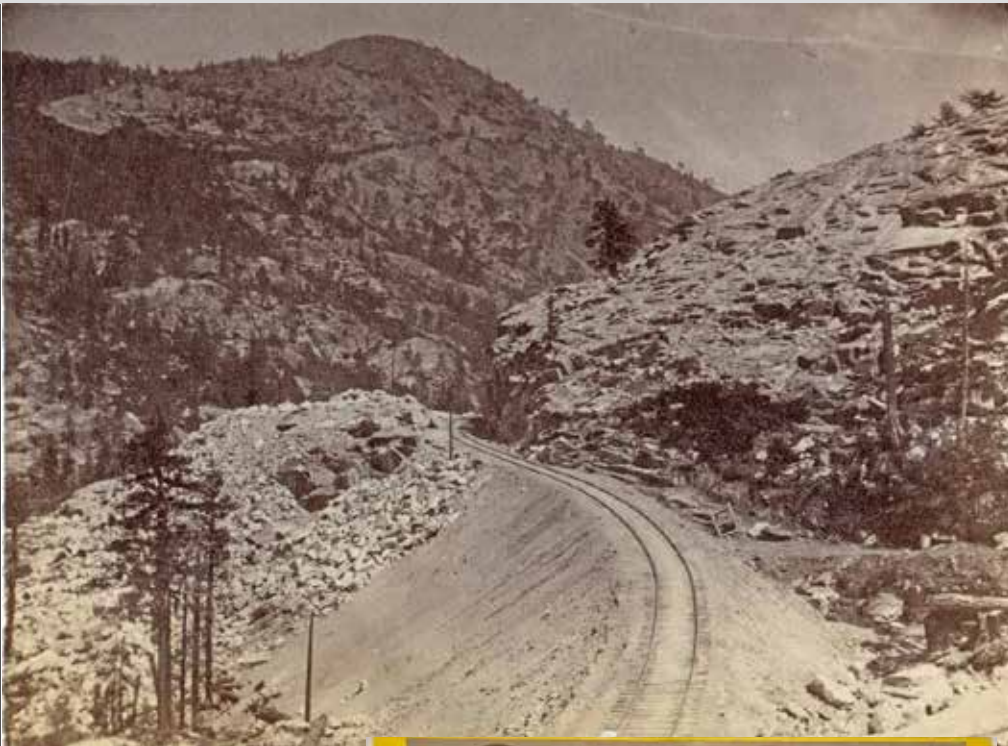
Milli Martin now lives in Homer, Alaska but she spent summers with her aunt and uncle, Herb and Lena Frederick who ran the Norden Store on Donner Summit. Herb was also the Norden postmaster from 1938 until 1970. That post office is now at the end of the hall in the Soda Springs post office. The DSHS has Herb’s old P.O. Box (1, Norden, Ca 95724 in case you want to send us a card).

From the DSHS Archives



Look at the traffic on Donner Summit Bridge in 1960.

Then & Now with Art Clark

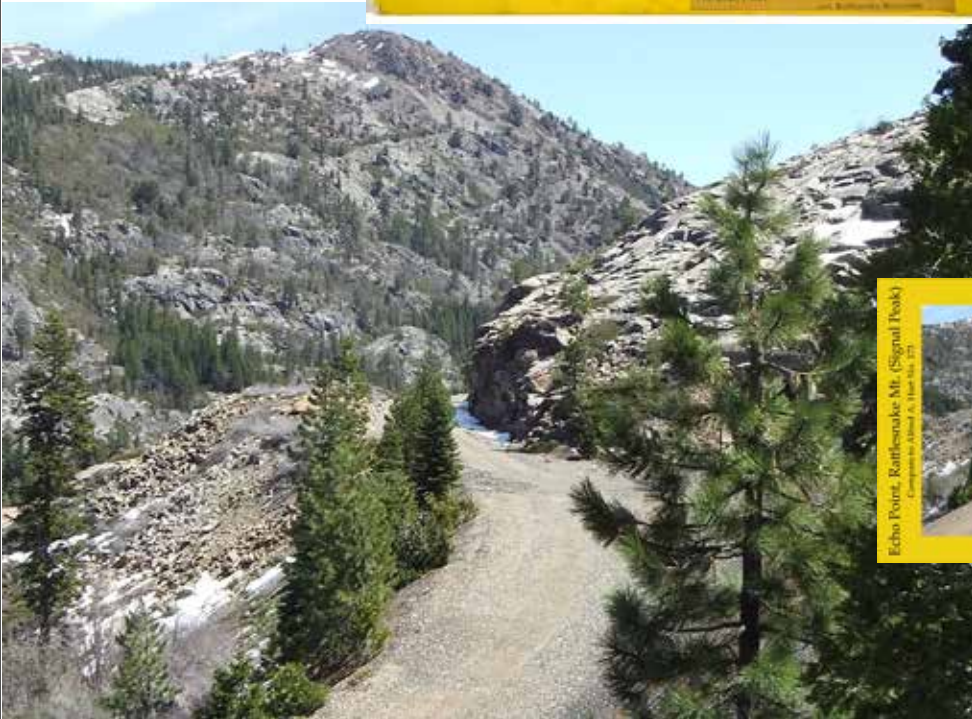


Alfred A Hart 173 - Echo Point and Rattlesnake Mountain -

Located between Emigrant Gap and Cisco, Echo Point overlooks the South Yuba River and affords a great view of what is now called Signal Peak (Red Mountain). Near the top of the peak is a lookout where men were stationed to watch for fires in the wooden snowsheds.

Barely visible through the closest tree is a tunnel blasted through the rock in 1925 when a second line of tracks was laid. The original line of tracks has since been removed.

Photo location 39° 19.557'N 120° 34.601'W



Behind the Scenes @ the DSHS



SUMMIT RESTAURANT AND BAR

Phone: 530-426-3904

http://summitrestaurantandbar.com

email: maria_at_the_summit@yahoo.com

Established - 2001

Soda Springs, CA

Volume I Issue 7

2016-17

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



1941

Donner Summit Lodge, A Short History

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 hostleries along the route over Donner Pass.

The first auto to cross Donner Pass crossed in 1901. The first successful motorized "transcontinentalist" crossed the country using Donner Pass in 1903 on a motor bicycle. With the arrival of the automobile, lodges began to spring up to service automobiles and provide relief for the "autotists".

By 1913 the first transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway, was in operation and auto traffic increased considerably. In 1913 there were 150 "transcontinentalists" and by 1923 the number had increased to 25,000. 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.

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

The picture above is from the Norm Saylor Collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society - at the blinking light in downtown Soda Springs.

Heroism and Pathos on Donner Summit

We think of the "Donner" in Donner Summit and we think of the Donner Party; the wrong turn two times, bad luck, bad decisions made in ignorance, dietary issues, dissension, mendacity, evil, horror-filled, and unbelievable hardship. That's a lot but there's more. It's also about tenacity, heroism, and the very best of the human spirit. Whereas most of the first list didn't take place on Donner Summit, a lot of the second list did. Clearly, given that second list, Donner Summit is an elevated sort of place.

Half of the Donner Party wintered at Donner Lake. The actual Donners were seven miles away at Alder Creek. There is a connection to Donner Summit though. Half of the party either escaped Donner Lake or were rescued from Donner Lake and the way out for both was over Donner Summit. Some of the most dramatic episodes of the tragedy took place on Donner Summit: the escape of the Forlorn Hope, Starved Camp, the heroism of John Stark, and the selflessness of Charles Stanton.

Charles Stanton

We'll start with Charles Stanton who was a single man and member of the Donner Party. The party was running low on food after they'd traveled the Hastings Cutoff and crossed the desert so Stanton and another fellow went ahead and crossed the Sierra to Sutter's Fort for help. The other fellow took sick and had to stay behind in Sacramento. Stanton, though, even though he had no family on the wagon train, rode all the way back over the Sierra with two Indians, finding the wagon train at the Truckee River. Then Stanton became part of the Forlorn Hope (next paragraph) but he fell behind. One morning he was too tired to go on and sat back against a tree and lit his pipe. He told the others to



Summit Restaurant does catering too.

Call 426-3904

One of the ancillary duties of the Heirloom staff is the production of the Summit Restaurant (at the Soda Springs exit on I-80) menu. The menu has food items in it of course, but more importantly, it has stories of Donner Summit history. There are a number of editions of the menu. They have stories titled, "Snow Is Not a Problem on Donner Summit" (snowsheds), "The Lincoln Highway," "It Was Not Always Easy Getting Over Donner Summit," and "Summit Valley, Sierra Jewel." This season's stories are: "Heroism and Pathos on Donner Summit," "Automobiles and Snowsheds" and some railroad pictures of Mike Pechner's (Bay Area meteorological personality). You'll want to stop in at the Summit Restaurant for the food but also for the history.

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.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.

Fan Mail

I just recently started to explore the Donner area. You have done a great job in preserving the history of this land.

Thanks, Rick Lawin
Roseville, CA

Thank you so much for all of the hard and time consuming work you obviously put into these newsletters. I typically print them out to read them and pass them on to be available at our Donner Lake cabin, there since 1951.

Many thanks, Art Honegger

Then on the website, <http://georgerstewart.com> there is a mention of the DSHS:

"Fine illustrated article on Stewart and the Donner Summit (as in Ordeal by Hunger) at the website of the Donner Summit Historical Society." That was a page one article by Don Scott in our October, '15 Heirloom called, "Creating Something Where Nothing Was - George R. Stewart on Donner Pass."

And then we received a note from a member of the Lincoln Highway Association passing on an email from a member asking if they (Lincoln Highway Assoc.) were aware that the Donner Summit Bridge sign (he included a picture of the 20 Mile Museum sign there) was gone. It was "missing" he said. He also included a picture of people where the sign would normally be. He must like the sign and presumably others like the Lincoln Highway sign at Big Bend. It's nice to be missed.

We take the most of the 46 signs down for winter to avoid destruction by snow removal machines. Even so, the receptacles that site below ground level are sometimes scraped up. The sign stand left at Roller Pass (we take the sign down) was torn apart by snow/ice and it's heavy gauge welded steel. After snow melt all 46 signs will be up and ready for visitors.



Donner Summit Historical Society



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A Letter to our 761 Heirloom subscribers.

People who read the Heirloom have to know what a treasure it is and that there is a lot of work and research that goes into the content. We certainly get a lot of compliments. Many readers have shown their appreciation of the value the Heirloom and the Historical Society bring to Donner Summit by sending in a donation or a membership fee. If you enjoy the newsletter (and the brochures, and the society's Museum and the 20-Mile Museum, and the hikes and tours that the Historical Society offers) and want to be sure the benefits continue to be available, please consider making a generous donation or becoming a member. You will not be disappointed.

For the first time this year our June fund raising letter did not raise money enough to equal our expenditures. Since we are not the Federal Government that cannot continue.

We spend money on only a few things during the year: rent for the museum, reprinting some brochures to spread Donner Summit history, and liability insurance. That's it.

This year we ended up about \$1200 short.

Maybe the Heirloom, or the brochures, or a visit to the museum is worth a little donation.

For your convenience there is a form on the previous page which you can mail in. There is also a PayPal option on our website's membership page.

We hope to hear from you.

The Donner Summit Historical Society