

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

February, 2016 issue #90



## In the Old Days

In the old days things weren't always better despite what we think we can remember.

Here is a view on Donner Summit of an automobile leaving the snowsheds at the east end of Tunnel 6. The year is 1911, two years before the underpass a few hundred yards east was opened.

Imagine you are the "autoist" attempting the cross the summit early in the season as this driver is doing. You take the Dutch Flat Rd. (no Lincoln Highway yet) down from the summit and turn towards the snowsheds. Stop. Turn off your motor so you can hear. Open the sliding barn door on the side of the snowshed. Listen for any approaching trains. If none are coming, walk about fifty yards inside the shed, cross the tracks, and open the sliding barn door on the other side. If there is no train coming, retrace your steps.

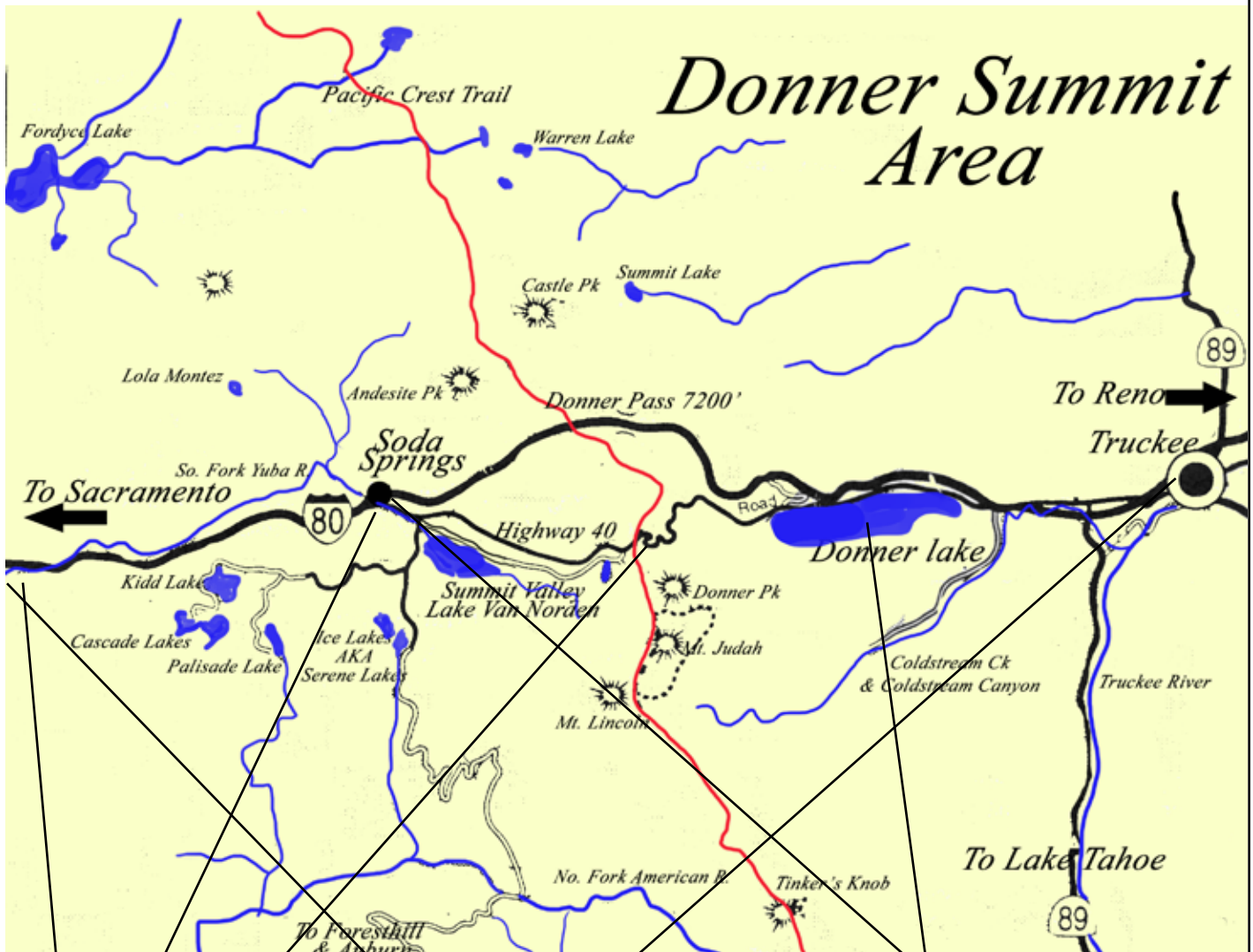
Start your engine, drive into the shed, and then inside about fifty yards. Cross the tracks and exit through the barn door.

Go back and shut the doors and be happy no trains were coming. Accidents did happen.

One day we'll do an article on the underpass, completed in 1914 to complement the new Lincoln Highway.



# Story Locations in this Issue



## In This Issue

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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



# Armstead Snow-Motor

In Norm's marvelous collection there are pictures of all kinds of things having to do with Donner Summit or snow. One is the unique vehicle pictured here and which Norm said is on exhibit at the California Agriculture Museum in Woodland where the Heidrick Tractor Collection is located. That sent us off to Woodland. That was in 2011. We took some pictures and did a little research thinking to get it all into the Heirloom some day. In 2013 we came across the machine again while putting together the McIver Dairy 20 Mile Museum sign in Truckee. Mr. McIver drove one delivering the mail. You can see an article about the sign's dedication in the June, '13 Heirloom and the sign itself at the dairy site in Truckee or on our website, link below.

The "Good Story" on the sign has to do with Mr. McIver and his Snow-Devil,

James McIver used to deliver mail on his "Snow Devil" (see below in downtown Truckee) which he had bought by mail order. Frequent rugged winter storms made the snow machine the only way to travel. On February 18, 1938, James McIver was called upon to deliver mail, food, and supplies to stranded residents in Tahoe City. They had received 17 feet of snow in 18 days. On his Snow Devil, James came to the rescue. It took the Snow Devil 15 hours to go 14 miles.

The Truckee postmistress complained to Washington D.C. that James had been late delivering the mail. They sent an inspector and he met James wearing a light suit and sandals. "Come on, I'll take

McIver's Snow-Devil.

Top: Snow-Devil on the road between Truckee and Tahoe City.

Middle: Mr. McIver on top in 1937

Bottom: Tahoe City





you with me,” said Jim. McIver followed his normal route along the Truckee River. The Inspector proclaimed “There will be no charges filed, Mr. McIver. This [the conditions] is awful.”

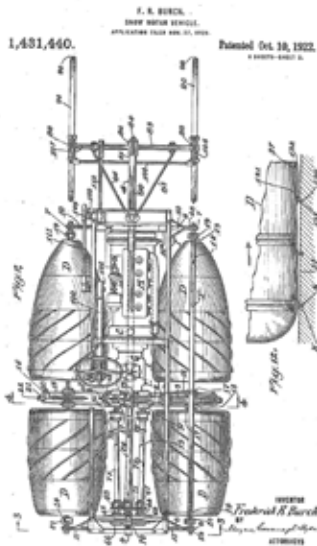
Still the Snow-Motor pictures sat in the computer awaiting exposure in an Heirloom. There were so many other stories competing for space (and still are – there’s one story that’s been waiting since 2008 and it’s a great one but you’ll have to be patient). There’s a lot of history on Donner Summit.

The Snow-Motor or Snow-Devil was actually a Fordson tractor. Fordsons were economical and so a cottage industry grew up modifying them for uses other than just agriculture (according to the Heidrick Museum) and the Snow-Devil was one of those uses. The machine was an add-on kit for the Fordson Tractor.

Each of the cylinders was controlled by a clutch. The drums were twelve feet long and the machine could go 5 mph in optimal conditions although Time Magazine reported in 1926 that the machine could go 6-8 mph in the deepest snow drifts. Contradicting that though was the fact that it did poorly in powder snow because there was nothing to grip to. Company publicity said the machine could haul 20 tons. It could go in four directions too. In the 1920’s a stage line in Oregon used the Snow-Motor for power.

If you want to see one for yourself, or see a huge number of tractors and military vehicles, head for Woodland and <http://www.californiaagmuseum.org>  
You can see one operating on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3NGCL-efRM>

McIver Dairy 20 Mile Museum Sign  
<http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/PDFs/20milemusemsigns/McIverDairy.pdf>



# Fire Trains

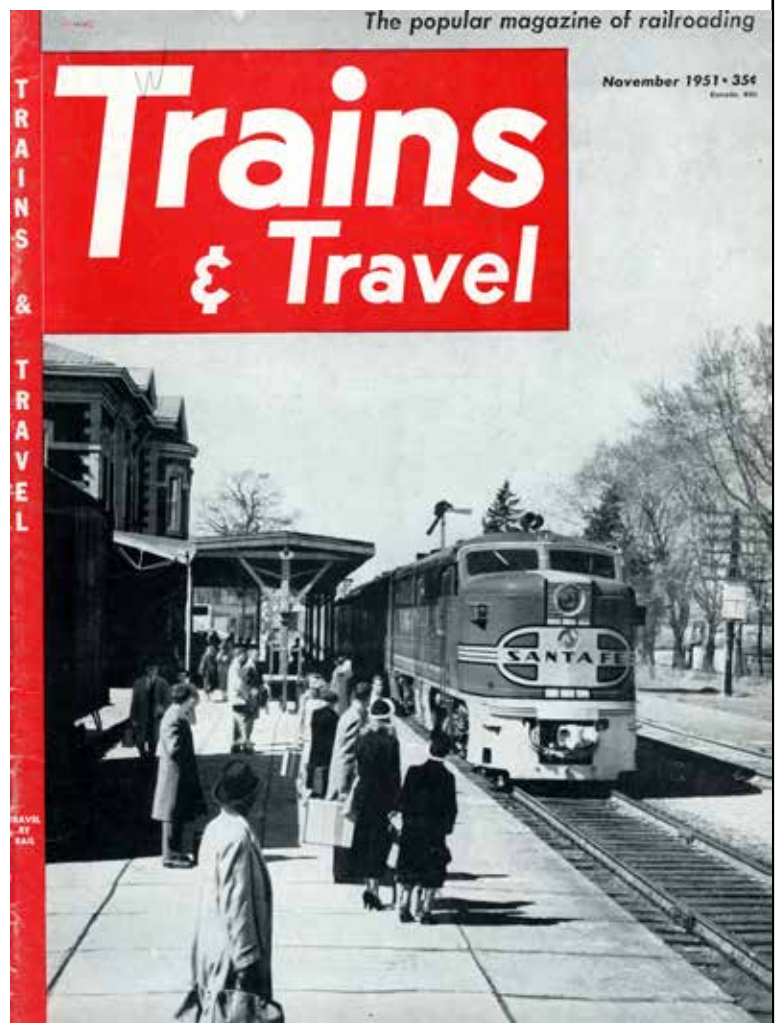
If one had a mind to, one could immerse oneself in Donner Summit history at the DSHS and never come up for air. Norm's amazing collection includes all kinds of things including lots of old magazines, one of which he turned over to the editorial staff because he'd found an article about "Big One at Shed 27!" It's an article about fighting snowshed fires on Donner Summit and comes from [Trains and Travel](#), November, 1951 "The popular magazine of railroading" (when trains were the preferred mode of transportation over long distances.) There are some good pictures in the article but the subject sounded familiar.

A quick look at our [Heirloom](#) article index (on each newsletter page on our website as is the picture index) it was quickly discovered that in August, '10 we did cover the subject. We started with sensational quotes (e.g. "Terrific Fire Rages... Brave and Skillful Crews Work to Save the Great Road"); gave a general introduction; talked about the cause and problem of snowshed fires, the solution; gave good quotes ("Work of the brave and skillful crews whose duty it is to save from flames the great covered way of the Southern Pacific over the Sierra Nevadas"); had some good pictures; talked about how fire trains worked and the workings of the fire train department; and mentioned, "The Watchmen of Red Mountain." It was, and still is, a pretty complete article given the space available. We should note that our July, '10 [Heirloom](#) also has an article about the fire lookout on Red Mountain which you should really visit, but that's a digression.

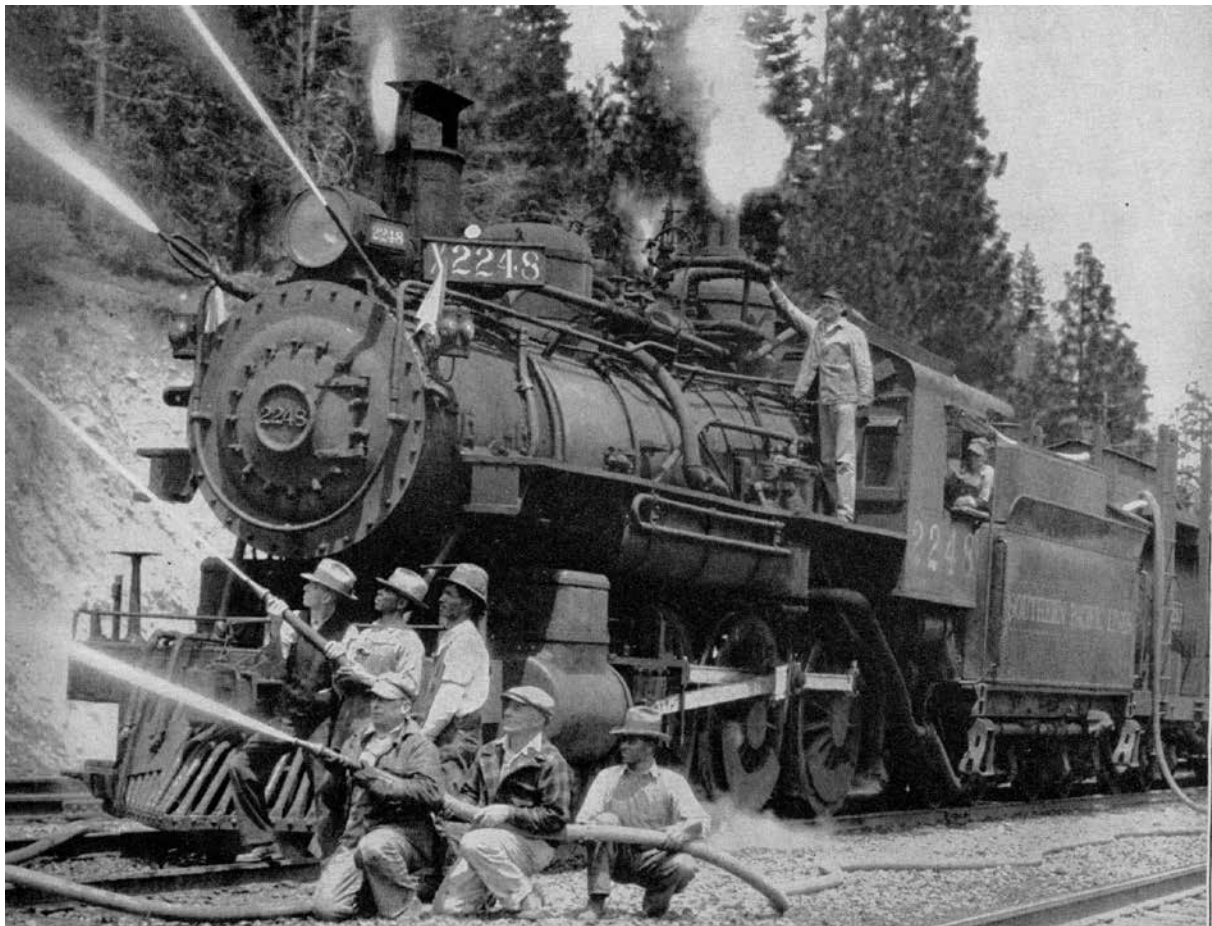
The article in [Trains and Travel](#) is really a repeat and given the amount of Donner Summit history still waiting to be presented in the pages of the [Heirloom](#) it does not make sense to revisit the subject and start from scratch. Still it's interesting reading if you cannot remember the August, '10 article and there is new information and there are some good pictures (see below and the next page). In the old days the author says there were more miles of track under the sheds "than there were miles out from under them." Modern rotary plows made the removal of miles of sheds possible but while the sheds were still there "fire trains... could be found softly steaming and purring..." just waiting to be called with full heads of steam so they were always ready. The sheds were taken out and the fire trains generally disappeared along with other pieces of Donner Summit History (until the coming of Norm Sayler and the DSHS).

Six blasts of the special whistle, which distinguished the fire train whistles, meant the train was off with its four man crew to a snowshed fire but not before the brakes are checked and the water supply hose is disconnected. The signals might be out due to the fire so nothing controls other trains. The fire train has to go regardless. You hope there's nothing in the way. Fire trains always faced west so if the fire was to the east the trains backed up with the water cars going first. The idea was to keep the fire from spreading in the tinder dry sheds.

On Donner Summit the fire train engineer had his own house. The other crew members, the conductor, the brakeman, and the engine watchman and their families, lived in a "two story edifice" called the "Woolworth Building." Workers could cook their own food or go to the "car" built in one of the sheds where Chinese cooks prepared food. They knew how to "satisfy the hungry crews of the freights that stop at Norden, as all westbounds do."

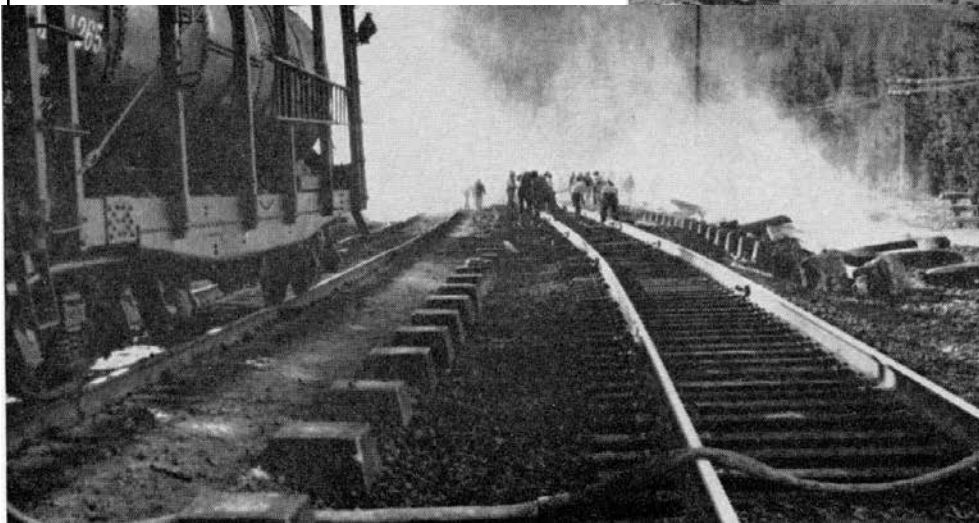
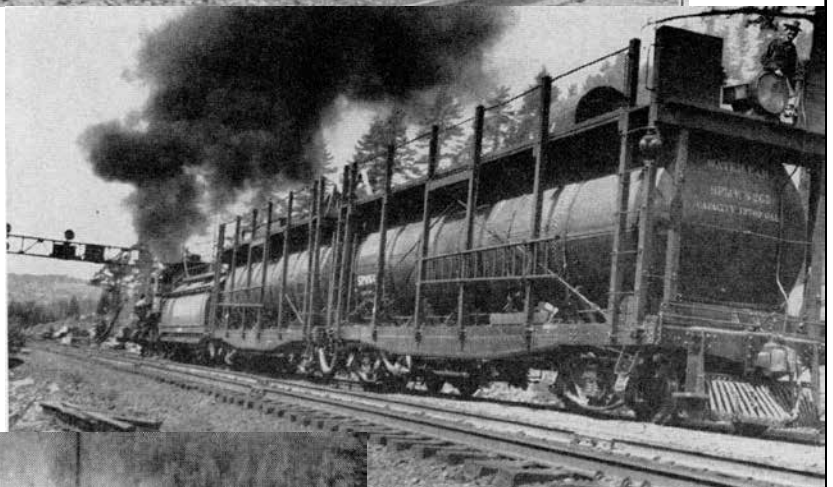






Above, Trains and Travel says that the fire train's 4-6-0 with its extra machinery and piping give it a "Rube Goldberg appearance"

The fire train always faces west - see right - and so must go in reverse to reach fires that are to the east.



The remains of a snowshed after a fire.

# The Proof Is in the Album

Here in the DSHS Heirloom offices we make every attempt to ascertain the truth of our stories or at least do such a good job of making up a story that the reader can't tell (just kidding - except maybe for our April 1<sup>st</sup> issues each year).

You will remember that we reported the turkey story in our April, '10 issue and then followed that in December, '10 with actual articles from the Reno papers proving that the incident really did happen and was not something Norm\* made up.

Here's another case of the proof coming along after Norm\* told the story. In our September, '08 Heirloom we included the accompanying story, "Good Story to go with Gas Stations." It's a good story but you never know. Then at the end of August this year Norm\* corralled the editor of this fine heirloom quality Heirloom, with a small album of photographs each date stamped, "Mar 56." Here were the pictures of the "Good Story..." and the evidence that the Heirloom prints not just quality history, but honest and true history. Parenthetically Norm\* discovered the small album in a desk where it had been hiding for decades which leads one to wonder, what else is hiding in Norm's house just waiting?

The following Fall Norm went into the Army. He's been saving the album for the decades since just for an occasion like this.

\*Norm Saylor, president of the DSHS

## Good story to go with Gas Stations:

"Hootin Scootin," Ralph Rowton, was the owner of gas station number seven, right at the corner of Soda Springs Rd. and Old 40.

Norm Saylor, as you know from our last issue [Sept. '08], worked the ski hill in Soda Springs. He was at the top using his binoculars one day and he saw a cattle truck go off the road on Old 40 about where the Snow Lab is today. The truck kept going but three cattle fell out.

Norm called Milt Hogle, Soda Springs Ski Hill owner, and told him to call "Hootin Scootin" at the Rowton Garage. Then, since there were no skiers on the hill, Norm skied down to the gas station.

"Hootin" took the tow truck up to where the cows had dropped off the truck. Two were dead and one "was still kind of hollerin'." Ralph took a .38 pistol out of his tow truck and asked the cattle truck driver, who'd returned, if he should shoot the beast. The driver agreed and the cow was soon dispatched. Then the driver asked, "Do you want the cows?"

Rowton said yes. "We picked up the first one with his tow truck" and took it to the service station where it was raised up on the old lift and hung. "Hootin" returned for the other two cows and all three were then hanging from the car lift in the gas station's garage. The next two days were spent butchering the cows in the gas station. Many people came to help and the meat was given to the community.

"Hootin' Scootin" was an old time cowboy who came from a ranch in Nevada to work on Donner Summit. [It is for him that Rowton Pk., above Serene Lakes, is named.]



Above, cattle truck damaged so the cattle could escape.

Below, cattle that didn't stray far.







Ralph Rowton's station at the corner of Old 40 and Soda Springs Rd. The Zorich Ski Shop, now the DSHS is in the background attached to the then Soda Springs Hotel.


**Soda Springs Service**  
 THE ONLY GAS STATION ON DONNER SUMMIT

● **Open 24 Hours** ●

GASOLINE - OIL - GARAGE SPACE  
 CHAIN SERVICE - TOWING SERVICE

\* \*  
 Next to Soda Springs Hotel  
 \* \*

**RALPH RAWTON, Proprietor**  
 SODA SPRINGS 2262



The above is an actual ad with an actual misspelling.



Left top of these three: cattle truck on Old 40 along Summit Valley. Below, left, cow waiting pick up.

Above, the damaged truck.

Because we are a family heirloom quality Heirloom historical publication, suitable for passing on to your heirs, we have left out some of the other pictures from Norm's album - for obvious reasons of good taste.



# From the DSHS Archives

## Hard Work Taken Out of Skiing by Electrical Device

### Motor-Driven "Pullback" Installed at Soda Springs To Haul Fans to Top of 2000-Foot Hill

One can imagine the excitement the "Pullback" generated when it was installed. Skiing would be so much easier for the "fans" but it would also usher in more business for the ski area operators. More people would come to enjoy rather than exert. Then add better skiing technology and new techniques, and the age of modern skiing was "nigh."

"Electricity has taken much of the hard work out of skiing at Soda Springs, popular resort near Donner Summit in the Sierra Nevada range.

"The proprietors of Soda Springs - Oscar Jones and his son, Dennis - have installed an electric "pullback" to haul skiers to the top of the 2000-foot course. Now patrons can ride up the hill in three minutes, whereas climbing it on skis meant 20 or 25 minutes of continuous effort for those of average ability and usually an hour or more for beginners. As a result, ski fans can have several times as many breath-taking down-hill glides during an outing.

"This pullback designed by Dennis, consists of hoisting machinery operated by an 80 horsepower electric motor, about 4500 feet of steel cable and two 1200-pound sleds. The sleds are attached to the cable so that one comes down as the other is hauled up - a plan that speeds up the schedule and also lessens the "drag" on the motor. Each sled holds twelve passengers and their skis. Power for the device is supplied by P. G. and E."

P. G. and E. Progress  
February, 1937

This article appeared in the February, 1937 P. G. and E. Progress and gives a good description of what was the first ski lift on Donner Summit. Unfortunately there were no pictures of the "pullback" in the article. That's just one problem.

We can solve the picture problem by going back to earlier Heirlooms (see page 10) because, of course, we've covered the first ski lift in the Heirloom. In the February, '09 Heirloom we focused on Dennis Jones, the founder of Beacon Hill (today Soda Springs Ski Area) in 1929 when he cleared a forty foot wide ski run, "We'd walk

### Hard Work Taken Out of Skiing by Electrical Device

Motor-Driven "Pullback" Installed at Soda Springs to Haul Fans to Top of 2000-Foot Hill



Skiing at Soda Springs—upper right, Miss Norma Barrie and Mrs. Dennis Jones; lower right, Dr. Herbert Groll, Berkeley, takes his daughter, Helga, out to ski; upper left, Alan Matzger, son of Dr. and Mrs. Edward Matzger, San Francisco, hits a snag; lower left, Dennis Jones doing a Haleson roll.



## CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF SKIING

Learn Skiing Properly  
From the Beginning

**HEAD INSTRUCTOR DENNIS JONES**  
Internationally Known Expert Skier.  
9 Years Experience Here and Abroad

### Soda Springs Hotel

WRITE FOR INFORMATION AND RATES SODA SPRINGS, CALIF.



# From the DSHS Archives

The pictures on these two pages come from the P. G. and E. Progress magazine, February, 1937.



The California Ski School was Dennis Jones' ski school. Dennis claimed it was the first ski school in California and maybe the entire U.S.

The Buek Ski School was run by Dick Buek (read about him in the May, '10 and August, '10 Heirlooms) and was headquartered in what is now the DSHS at the blinking light in Soda Springs.

Below Left are Norma Barrie and Mrs. Dennis Jones skiing on Van Norden apparently.

Below right is the Soda Springs Hotel built by Dennis' father, Oscar and opened in 1927.



In the top picture on the previous page Dennis Jones is the "hot dogger" performing a "Ruleson roll."

The fellow with the child on his back is Dr. Herbert Groll. The child is his daughter, Helga.



up it, tamp it down, and ski down it," he said. He claimed the first ski shop on the summit (across Soda Springs Rd. from Beacon Hill). He claimed the "first organized ski school in the State and probably in the country" as well as the first ski lift in California, his "up ski" which he built in 1935. That's the "Pullback" P. G. and E. is reporting on in the article.

That's another problem with this 1937 P. G. and E. article introducing the "pullback." They waited two years to print a story about it. By then Dennis had discovered that his "Up ski" did not work very well and was working on replacing it with a rope tow. In that he was copying others. Johnny Ellis had just installed what he called the first manilla rope tow on the summit and maybe in the Western U.S. in 1937 (see our April, '09 [Heirloom](#)).

The final problem is that Soda Springs Ski Hill is not 2,000 feet high.





The "Up ski", "Pullback," or "Boat Sled" at Beacon Hill was not the only one. The above picture from our March, '09 Heirloom may have been taken in Yosemite. The photos at right come from Bill Clark and the Auburn Ski Club. They used to have a "Pullback" when the Club was located at Cisco Grove. These pictures were in our February, '12 [Heirloom](#). In that issue and in the December, '11 issue you can learn about the ski lift and discover that one of the sleds is still there, see below.



# Book Review

## The California Trail

George R. Stewart

339 pages 1962

We've reviewed a number of books about the Emigrant Trail to California and the emigrants' experience (check our [Heirloom](#) article index or go to the book review page on our website). Each one has a different focus or emphasis. All tell the compelling story and lead us to the conclusion that those people in the old days were way tougher than we are today.

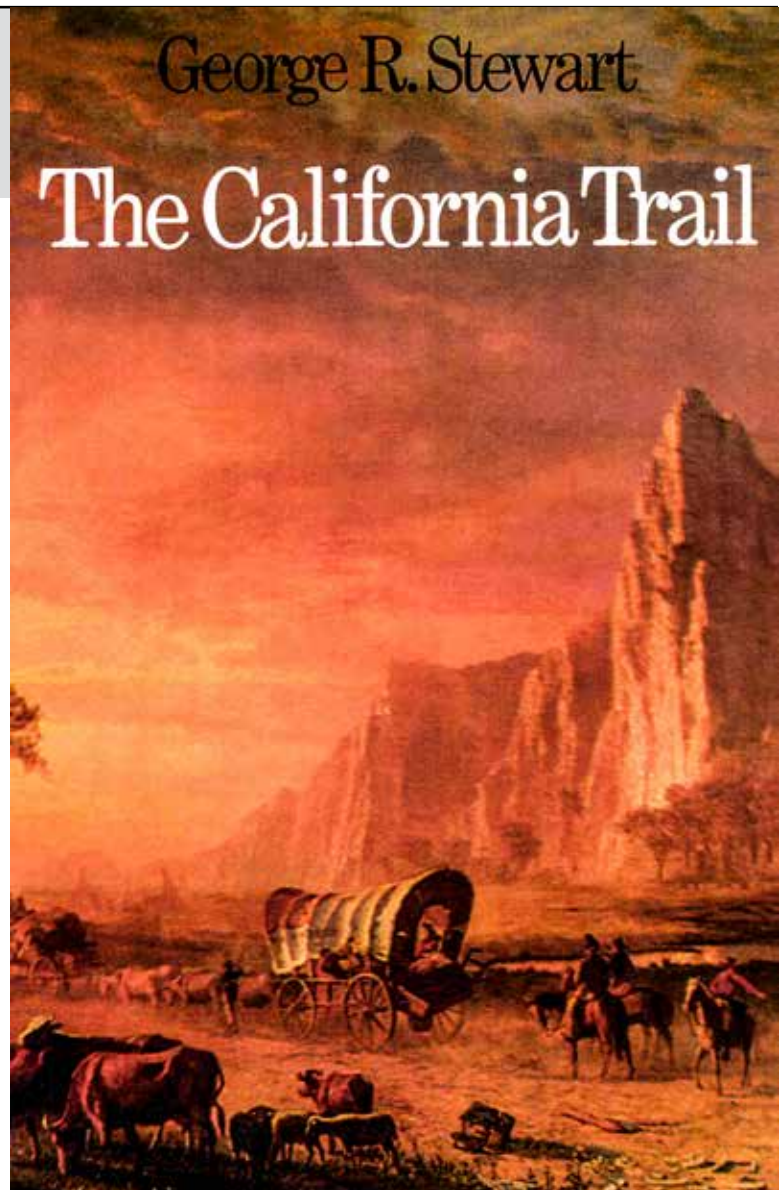
The California Trail, "an Epic with Many Heroes," by George R. Stewart relates the emigrant experience not primarily focusing on emigrant quotes, personal experiences, or the history of the migration west. Instead Stewart tells the story by cataloging the wagon trains that came across the country year by year starting in 1841 and ending in 1850. By 1850 and beyond Stewart begins to summarize the experience since what happened then was not new. All of the routes and cut-offs had been discovered, there were trading posts along the routes, and the emigrants were following what had been done before on roads that could not be missed and which were becoming more road-like. It was still hard by then but not as hard or heroic as the first emigrants' experiences. For the first emigrants everything was new. If they had maps the maps were not detailed. They had little idea of what was coming next or which was the best route (the Donner Party got into trouble by believing others who really had no idea). They did not have the benefit of good advice. The trips were "iffy." Those first emigrants were heroes. They made the routes, conquered the dangers, and helped open California.

The California Trail is a heroic story not just of the leaders, the well-known, but also of the ordinary people who left home eyes set on the prize of new lives and opportunities.. They beat hardship, accident, diseases, Indians, desert, starvation, ignorance, dissension, lack of information and just bad luck. It is an epic story.

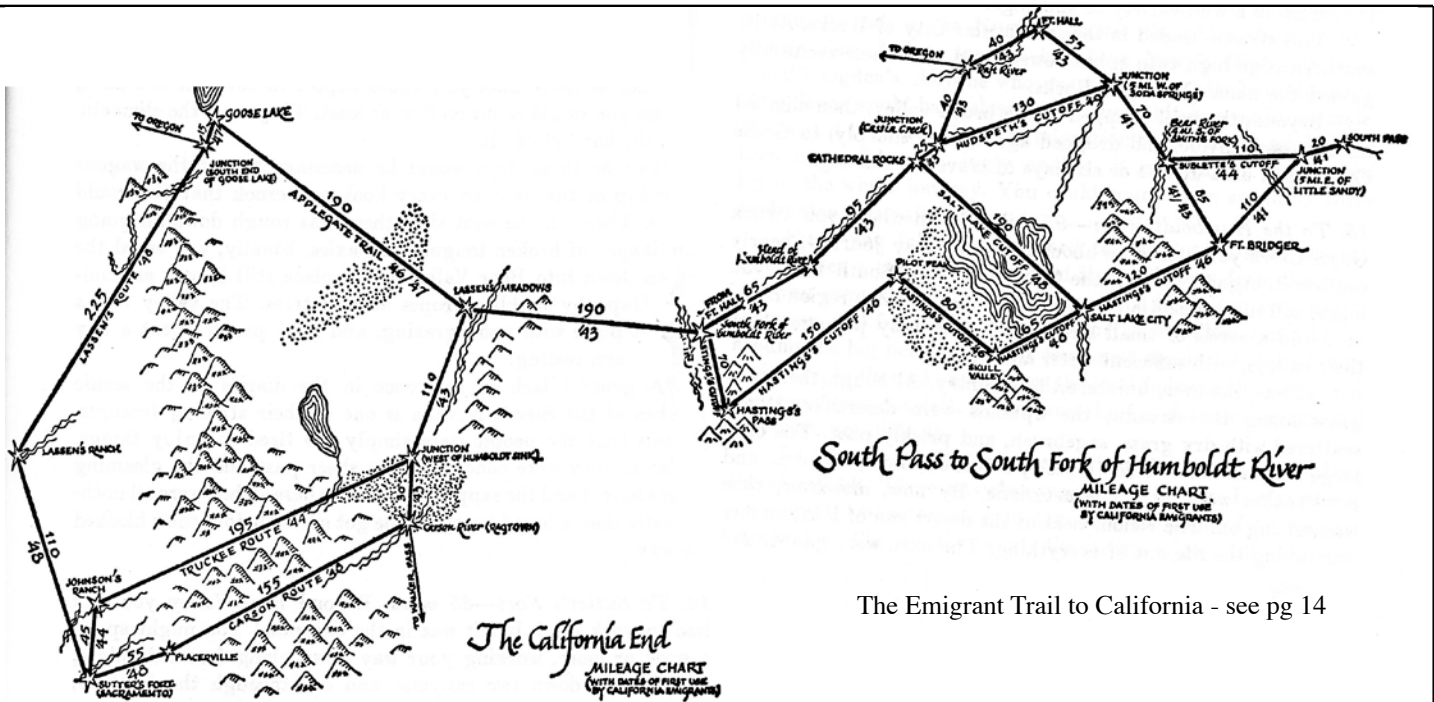
Although the book is a catalog of wagon trains with diary quotes from the members of the trains, it's not just a dry dusty text. It's fairly lively, at least until the end. For example, the first page of Chapter 1 starts out, "But young John Bidwell, when he arrived at the appointed place, found only one wagon already there. Oh, it had been brave and glorious, that preceding winter, to plan going to California!" That's lively and draws in the general reader, even though it's not quite "academic." A good portion of the book is written in that spirit along with a few digressions about life on the wagon trains day to day.

Stewart covers the Bidwell Party ('41), no wagons in '42, and a return to California of a member of '41 leading a group in '43. Those first trips were failures. They did not develop a road to California and they did not bring their wagons. The Stephens Party ('44) was the first successful group to make it to California and Stewart gives a good, though short, description. In '45 there were lots of wagons and lots of stories and personalities and Stewart does a good job summarizing that year's trek.

There is a chapter about how the emigrants traveled: wagon beds were four feet by nine or ten feet, travel was two miles per hour, there were no springs for suspension, there's information about crossing streams and driving wagons, a discussion of oxen vs. horses, vs. mules, how to go downhill, day to day life on the trail, disease, how many people per wagon, how much food was needed per person, how much animals could pull (almost just the food weight) and travel in general. That's a good chapter if you ever want to try traveling by wagon yourself. Then Stewart explains, as the journey proceeded and troubles happened, what it meant to have to abandon wagons and how people then got along.







The Emigrant Trail to California - see pg 14

Stewart also covers with a fair amount of detail the various routes and cut-offs in each section of the journey west. For example he talks about “Ice Slough” (“This last was a boggy place where you could dig down through a foot of muck and come to layers of ice, even in summer.”) Stewart covers Lansford Hastings’ and his cut-off pretty well too (the fellow who gave the Donners wrong turn advice).

Then there are summaries of the next years: less than two hundred wagons in ‘46 (the year of the Donners), the Mormons made up half of ‘47’s emigration, ‘48 was not much and ‘49 was fifty times ‘48’s. ‘49 was a big change with the news of the gold rush and a new kind of emigrant hit the trails. The earlier emigrants were novices but they were mostly country people and were at least somewhat familiar with wagons. The gold rush emigrants were pure amateurs. They had no idea what they were doing and some of the stories are amusing like the group that decked themselves out in uniforms with gold braid, knives, swords, pistols, and rifles. They were ready to cross the country.

Stewart puts ‘49 into perspective saying that if all the wagons that year had been in a line it would have stretched 60 miles and there were reports at the time of lines of 500 wagons.

There’s some good detail too. The diaries don’t mention the offensiveness of emigrants but being in their company must have been offensive. “...who was there to complain of smell? Generally speaking, the pot does not even know that the kettle is black. And by this time the noisomeness of rotting carcasses of mules and oxen filled the air at every campground.”

As we view the pictures or movies with covered wagons and think about the migration we don’t think about the more prosaic needs of people. Stewart reports though. Being constantly around other people must have been tiring. A private moment must have been cherished. “I have found a quiet spot at a little distance from the wagons, where I am seated on a stone, with book and pencil in hand, the babbling brook just at my feet, and close beside me, my little Mary who is picking up the colored pebbles and throwing them, with exclamations of delight, into the sparkling waters.”

Other books describe the emigrant experience better with more liberal doses of emigrant quotes and more vivid descriptions but those writers have had access, via the internet and because more has come to light, to more diaries. They do not go into detail about the routes, however, as Stewart does.

Towards the end the story strengthens when Stewart talks about emigrant troubles at the end of ‘49 and the relief parties sent out from California. To one emigrant woman the loose garments flapping at the sides of the relief party made them seem like angels “winged and high in the air.” The woman said they looked “heaven-sent!” One set of emigrants was in particularly bad shape. “They were trudging along, each with some pounds of decaying mule-meat strung around his neck. Their smell was so high that the relief party refused to do anything for them until they had gone to the river and washed.”

Then even more graphically, "A more pitiable sign I had never before beheld. There were cripples from scurvy, and other diseases; women, prostrated by weakness, and children, who could not move a limb. In advance of the wagons were men mounted on mules, who had to be lifted on or off their animals, so entirely disabled had they become from the effect of scurvy."

Stewart is good with the perspective too. He says that in the big year of 1849 some one thousand wagons with 21,000 emigrants crossed one of the Donner passes and 1850 was twice that of '49.

The California Trail is a good catalog of the early emigrant trains. The listing gets a bit tedious towards the end but that just shows Stewart's massive research. The book does a good job detailing life and delineates the emigrant experience. Some other books do a better job of that last with more liberal usage of emigrant quotes but Stewart has a good complete package.

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On the previous page is a map in the book of the Emigrant Road from Independence Mo. to San Francisco. by T.H. Jefferson, made in 1849. T.H. Jefferson printed a map for use by emigrants following his 1846 trip to California. His map was based on the map produced by John Fremont's cartographer, Charles Preuss. To the map Jefferson added important information for emigrants some of which is printed below.

An interesting part of this map and its route is that Jefferson arrived in California as part of Lansford Hastings' wagon train somewhat ahead of the Donners in 1846. Hastings was the fellow who gave the Donner Party the idea to take a "shortcut" that he advocated. That advice was seconded by men at Fort Bridger and the Donners did not get a letter that warned against taking the shortcut. Hastings' party, with Jefferson, initially took the same route and were a bit ahead of the Donner Party. They got over the Sierra before winter set in. The Donner Party started using the "shortcut" but on advice from Hastings, via a letter posted to a board, diverged from the route in the Wasatch Mountains.

### **Accompaniment to the Map of the Emigrant Road – "Brief Practical Advice to the Emigrant or Traveller" [in case you want to go]**

There is an "accompaniment" to the map which is a booklet of advice to emigrants heading for California. It starts off with advice, "The journey is not entirely a pleasure trip. It is attended with some hardships and privation - nothing, however, but that cannot be overcome by those of stout heart and good constitution."

The first bit of advice is that there are two ways to go across country. One is with a wagon and that takes four to six months. The second is "packing" or going only with horses or mules. That takes sixty to ninety days. Jefferson recommended packing even for women and children. Women should wear, while packing, hunting-frocks, loose pantaloons, men's hats and shoes, and ride just like men – no side saddles.

Take enough food. You can't count on game.  
Carry nothing but provisions and what's absolutely necessary

#### **Packers Should Take:**

Bring a stake that "will hold the wildest horse"  
You can get horses shod at Ft. Laramie or Ft. Bridger for \$5  
Take a sleeping tent 7' x 4' x 5' Don't paint it.  
Oil cloth the floor of the tent – dip in water and paint with linseed oil.  
Take an umbrella for desert sun.

#### **Wagoneers Should Take:**

Take a "farmer's wagon" of seasoned wood – he gives a lot of design considerations  
Don't paint it.  
Take a spare cotton cloth to use as an awning. It provides "agreeable shade for a lunch or siesta..."  
Mackinaw blankets – the very best, thick and heavy  
Sack coat and pantaloons  
Deer skin hunting shirt and pants  
Duck trowsers  
Striped twilled cotton or hickory shirts Red flannel shirts,  
Cotton socks Stout pegged shoes or brogans – broad soled and large  
Stout white felt hat



One should not start with wheels about which there is a "particle of doubt" or he'll "meet with trouble and vexation." Wheels must be made of the very best seasoned wood, by a superior workman, and ironed in the driest weather."

Do not take more than 1,000 or 1,500 lbs of weight.

Two oxen is good but three is better.

Don't take loose cattle except a milk cow. If she becomes troublesome kill her and eat her.

Drive everything before your wagon. Following in the dust causes an animal to fail rapidly.

Wash your oxen's necks with water and sometimes soap each day. Don't grease their necks.

If the ox's neck gets sore wash with urine and powder.

Oxen go 2 mph and 15 miles per day or so.

It's better to travel every day.

Start after breakfast. Stop an hour at noon. Camp at 4 PM.

Take lots of bread stuff. "this is the staff of life"

Don't take just fine flour. It's not good for the bowels and is unwholesome. Take "unbolted wheat flour and Indian corn meal."

Take 200 lbs of bread per man (packers take 100 lbs.) Take more if you can. "it becomes valuable as gold during the latter part of the journey."

Don't take fat bacon. Take lean ham and smoked beef ("bagged and limed)

### **Food to Take:**

Smoked salmon, herring, sardines, preserved meats, and soups in tin.

Cheese A little olive oil and butter.

Meat and grease packed in tin.

Rice, beans, peas, butter crackers, soda biscuits, ship bread, dried fruit, ...

Sugar house syrup (in tin can), sugar, vinegar, pickles, pepper, salt.

Tea, ground coffee

"Those determined to annoy themselves preparing coffee, want a coffee-mill screwed to the body of the wagon. A water drinker fares the best, and is saved a great deal of trouble; cooking is an annoyance."

"Buffalo meat is sweet and wholesome; cow meat is the most tender." The best way to cook it is to run a stick through the meat, plant the stick in the ground at an angle to the fire and "mountain roast" it. Cut slices and hang the slices over the fire. The meat will keep the entire journey.

"Good bread is the most important and best food to be had upon the journey—" Few know how to make it though. Don't use grease.

Bake bread, after kneading it well, in the form of a biscuit.

Packers should carry bread in goat-skin sacks which can be used for water later.

Wagoners should carry bread in cotton canvas sacks with circular bottoms 2' x 2'. They stand upright.

Use buffalo chips for fires.

Bring a single-barrelled rifle \$25 and a brace of U.S. holster-pistols

One to five pounds of powder Split and ribbed percussion caps Bullets

Bullet screw, ladle, lead, friction matches, tin cans, powder-flask; oil-cloth gun-case

Patent leather drinking cup

Spy glass

### **Various useful articles to take:**

Knife, whetstone, axes, hatchet, sickle, spade, saw, nails, tacks, needles, pins, thread, thimble, scissors, wax, sail needles, twine, palm, shoe leather, pegs, awls, hammer, king bolt, lynch pins, staples, iron ring. Rope, cotton cloth, camp stool, bee's-wax, tallow, spare chain, soap, sperm candles, tin lantern, camp-kettle. Tin ware – pail, plate pan, mug, washbowl, coffee-pot small water-keg iron spoon, knife and fork, herbs, "a few simple, useful medicines"

A little more advice for your transcontinental travels is on page 18

# Then & Now with Art Clark

Crystal Lake and Railroad, from Black Butte.

This Alfred A. Hart view is looking west from Cisco Butte, formerly called Black Butte.

In the original image, below and to the right is the railroad, the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road and the South Yuba River.

Today the wagon road is hidden in the trees, and I-80 and Old 40 stand out. On the horizon is Grouse Ridge.

In the stereo card, Crystal Lake was cropped out on the left side, despite what the caption read.

Photo location 39° 18.570'N 120° 33.703'W

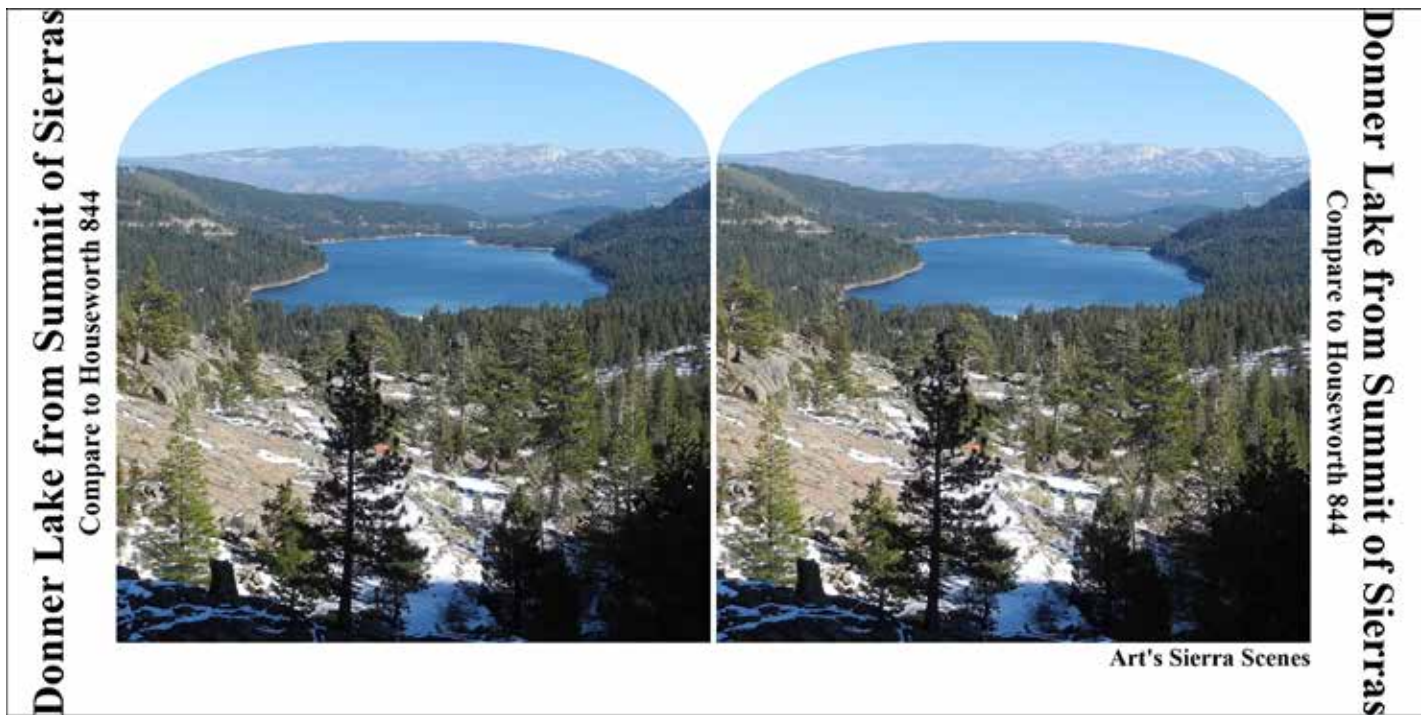




# Then & Now with Art Clark



Houseworth #844. Donner Lake and Eastern Summit. From the Road on the Western Summit. 1866





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## Some General Emigrant Advice from T.H. Jefferson, 1849

“Upon this journey the bad passions of men are apt to show themselves. Avoid all partnerships if possible.. Provide your own outfit and expect to take care of yourself..... Appoint no captain – make no by-laws. Be quiet; attend to your own business; make no promises.”

You will stay together only as long as you have common interests and no longer. You can stop and join another party any time (not a quote) “It is much better for the emigrants to scatter themselves along the road in small parties, a day’s journey or so apart, than to undertake to travel in a large body. Try to go in company with quiet, peaceable men – avoid braggarts; ...Start in April,... but not later than the first of May. Those who go ahead get the best grass and clean camp grounds.”

He explains how to get up a hill if it’s too steep, that one should test out the wagons ahead of time and be practiced with oxen.

Always be on the guard against Indians and take a few “articles of trade.” “The less you have to do with the Indians the better. That said, “Indians like Mackinaw blankets, flint lock guns, powder and ball, knives, hatchets, squaw awls, whiskey, tobacco, beads, vermilion, flints.”

## And then a little miscellaneous:

The photograph on the next page was sent to us by Ron Rettig who found it at National Geographic.com who got it from Pacific Telephone.

The date is 1952, a huge winter. The Soda Springs Hotel is in the background. How will this winter's El Nino finish us up on Donner Summit?

For comparison a chart from the Central Sierra Snowlab in Soda Springs is included, courtesy of Randall Osterhuber. Donner Summit gets an average of 34 feet of snowfall each winter. That, of course, has greatly affected the history. Emigrants had to get over the pass before snow. Snow was a great problem in the building and then the operating of the transcontinental railroad. They built 40 miles of snowshed to try and solve the problem. Snows shut off car travel. On the positive side snow was the impetus for a huge winter Sierra industry.

The left hand arrow shows 1952. The right hand one shows last year.

