

The Donner Summit

Heirlooms

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

June, 2016 issue #94



Chinese Railroad Workers on Donner Summit - Pt I

All along the Transcontinental railroad line there were workers' camps. Most were transitory in nature. Once the rails were laid in one place the workers moved on to the next section needing attention. At the summit, though, workers worked for years on the tunnels and so the camps were less temporary and in use for a few years. That was long enough to plant catfish on the summit, but you'll have to wait a bit to get there.

Summit Camp was the camp just outside Tunnel 6 at the very top of the line. Had the workers been able to walk directly through the rocks into Tunnel 6 their commutes would have been measured in feet. Instead they had to walk a few hundred yards to the tunnel entrances or other nearby work sites. It was/is a beautiful spot but the weather can be incredibly horrible and there is danger from avalanche, but that's also something you'll have to wait to get to.

We can suppose that the camp was dismantled after the railroad was done and the building materials moved on to permanent railroad facilities nearby. There is precedent for that. When the snowsheds were reconstructed of concrete some of the old timbers were used by Summit residents for their house, but that's another story for another time.

There are no timbers left at Summit Camp. Harsh weather, souvenir hunters, archeologists, and construction projects (petroleum pipeline construction and leak repair and laying fiber optic cable) have made whatever was left disappear and so there is little left of Summit Camp. There is enough though, so the visitor knows there was settlement there. There are foundation outlines, pieces of metal and crockery, square nails, etc. Here a few hundred people lived and worked for four years and left evidence behind.

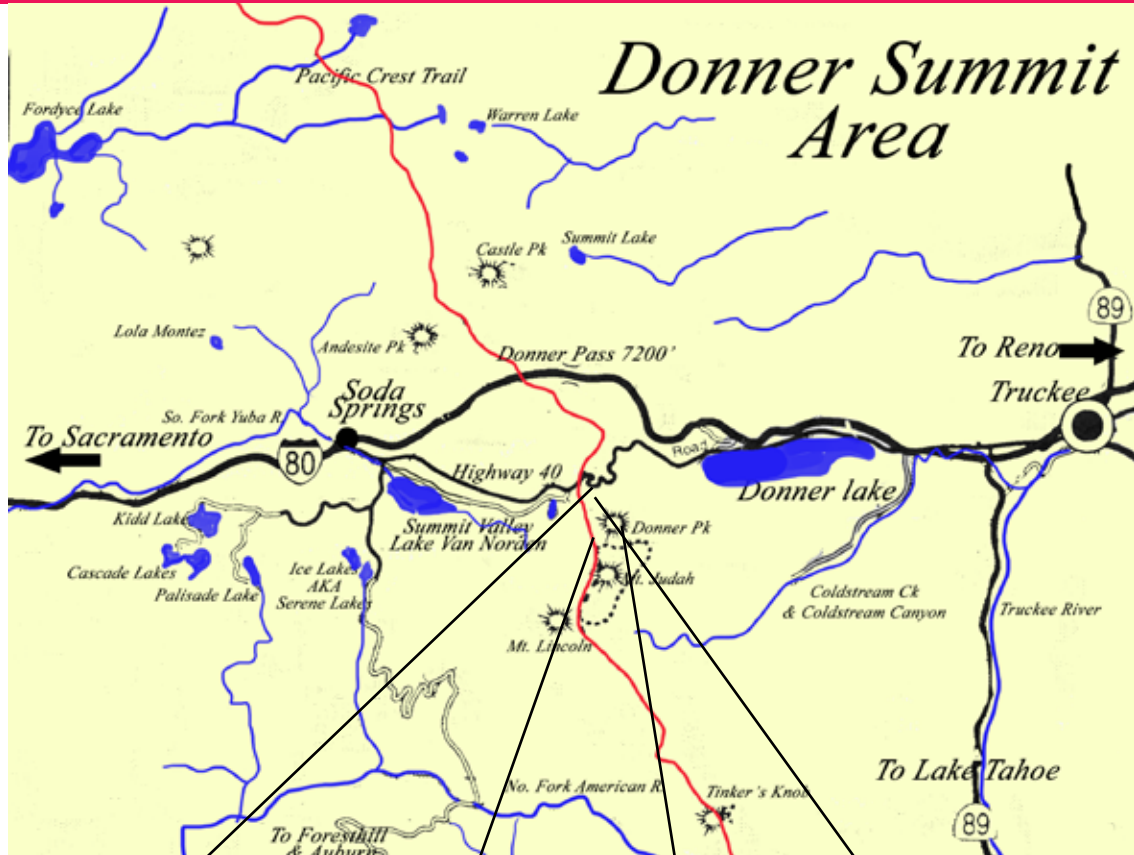
The Sierra was the most daunting challenge for the emigrants crossing the continent. The desert in Nevada was hard, but the Sierra was harder: "a formidable and apparently impassable barrier erected by Nature..." is how Edwin Bryant saw them in 1846 as he stood atop Donner Pass with his mules (see the April, '13 Heirloom, What I Saw in California).

Behind the Series

The series of articles in this and the next three Heirlooms comes about because Chuck Oldenburg of Serene Lakes wondered if we'd ever done anything on Summit Camp, a Chinese railroad workers' camp on Donner Summit. Although we've covered the Chinese and the Transcontinental Railroad in relation to Tunnel 6 (see the Heirlooms in May-September, 2012 and in two Chinese exhibits on the exhibits page on our website) we'd never specifically addressed Summit Camp. Chuck's question, which we supposed was a suggestion, seemed like a good objective. Chuck had included an article someone had sent him which led our research staff to contact the authors. That led to some papers about the archeological research of Summit Camp and about Chinese railroad workers and Chinese in America. Couple that with other research we've done, books read, and Stanford University's new site, Stanford.edu/group/chineseworkers, and we've got enough to write about the Chinese workers on Donner Summit. Two of the authors of the papers just noted are also working on additional material which should be published sometime in 2016.

Story Locations in this Issue

In This Issue

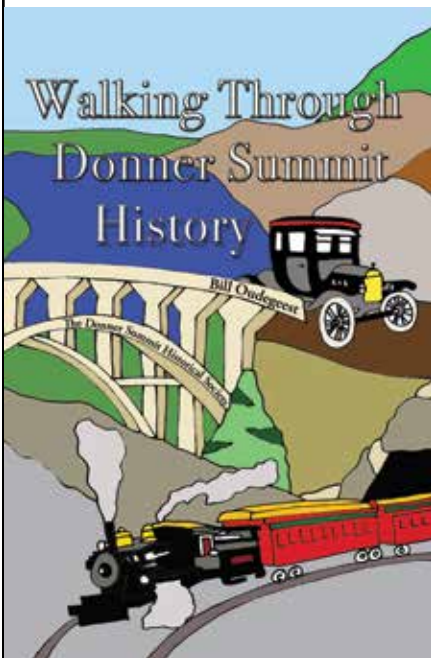


Summit Camp pg 1

Margie Powell Hike pg 7

Donner Pk. pg 15

picture pg 4



Summer is here. It's walking weather. If you are interested in walking through local history this is the book for you. Available on the DSHS website

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It looked terrible to the railroad builders too. Just as it was for the emigrants, the Sierra was the hardest part of the transcontinental crossing for the railroad and slowed the CPRR down immensely. Fifteen tunnels had to be dug out of solid Sierra granite in addition to the trestles, bridges, cuts, and fills. All of it was done by hand. Almost all of it was done by Chinese. The Union Pacific, coming from the east took the opportunity to taunt the CPRR saying they'd get to the California line before the CPRR even got out of the Sierra. That frightened the CPRR so much that they hauled 80 miles of track, three locomotives, and train car parts over the summit on sledges and wagons, but that's another story for another time too (keep up your subscription).

Before construction started Doctor Strong of Dutch Flat, who was the one who suggested to Theodore Judah that the Donner Pass route might be the most expeditious, led three of the CPRR's Big Four, Huntington, Stanford, and Crocker to the summit. They looked down from the summit where Judah said the track could go a thousand feet down to Donner Lake. It was impossible.

"I'll tell you what we'll do Crocker," said Huntington after a thoughtful silence, "We will build an enormous elevator right here and run the trains up and down it."

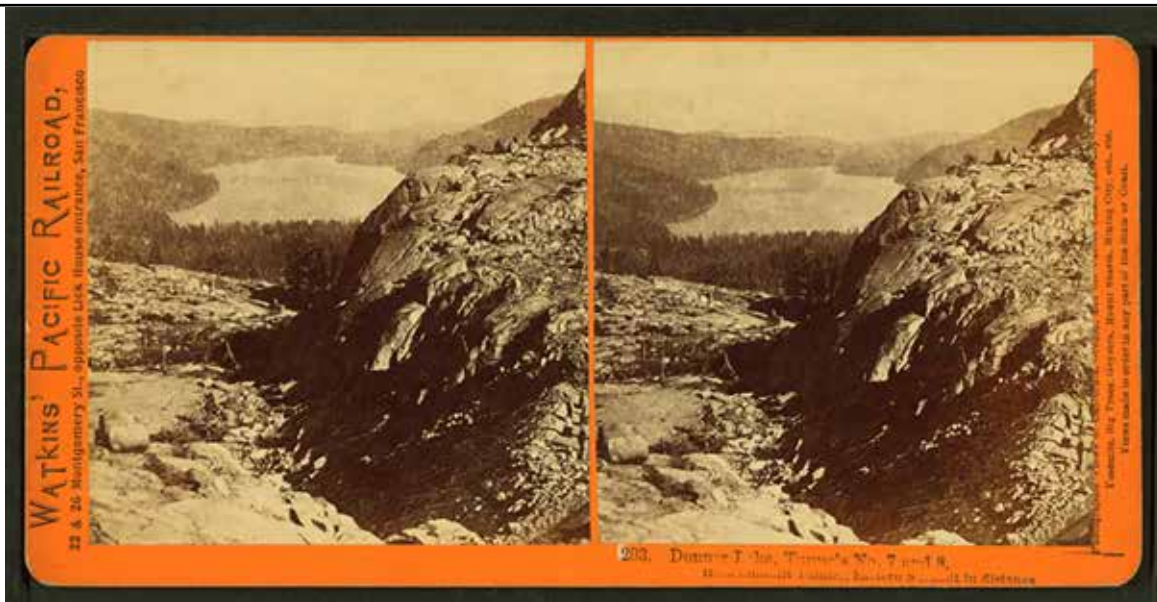
"Oh Lord," moaned Crocker, "It cannot be done." (pg 111 Empire Express)



Above: from Beyond the Mississippi, 1869 Chinese railroad workers in the Sierra.



This is a modern celebration of the Chinese railroad workers - a mural on a wall in Colfax.



The Meaning of the Transcontinental RR

Today California is one of the largest, richest, and most advanced economies in the world. California provides leadership in many fields. Three 19th Century events set California on that path: the Gold Rush, statehood, and the building of the transcontinental railroad.

We take a lot of what is around us for granted. It's easy to pick up an electronic device and use it as a window on the world, communicating with friends and relatives, seeing pictures from the far side of the globe, getting immediate gratification by shopping digitally, and having instant access to the newest. If we take a step back we realize how remarkable all of that and more is, and things just keep getting better and faster. Really, we live in an age of wonder. Who would have thought just a few years ago that the answers to every question are at our finger tips for immediate retrieval and gratification? Self driving cars are on the horizon and in a generation individual auto ownership may be passé.

Age of Wonder

The 19th Century was an age of wonder too, changing lives amazingly. For centuries and millennia the average person's life had not changed. It went along at 3 or 5 miles an hour, the speed of a walking person or a horse.

The 19th century introduced the Industrial Age. There was an amazing number of inventions: clipper ships, the light bulb, electric motors, gasoline engine, iron ships, the battery, the revolver, repeating rifles, photography, the elevator, nitroglycerine and dynamite, and the machines to make those things. Labor saving devices made life easier in the home: the vacuum cleaner and the sewing machine. The cotton gin, the combine, and the reaper reduced the need for farm labor and people moved to the cities which had whole different social structures from small rural communities and family farms. The frontier was disappearing. At the same time, machines made manufacturing easier and factories, instead of independent workers, began to manufacture goods. Interchangeable parts and division of labor made production more efficient. Sanitation and health improved. It had become accepted that germs caused disease and antiseptics could prevent infection. People were inoculated against disease. The steam engine powered factories and boats and then the railroads. Electricity brought light and motors. The telegraph and telephone made communication almost instantaneous. There were new theories of economics and sociology. Art was changing. At the end of the century America would become a world power and the richest nation on earth. There was even an airship company formed to take Argonauts to California during the Gold Rush. Some people bought tickets. Nothing seemed too outlandish. Americans could do anything. They could conquer a continent. They more than doubled the size of their country.

God, so it seemed, was indeed smiling on the United States

It was an age of wonder and experiment. What would come next?

During the Gold Rush a clipper ship took 3-4 months to go from New York to San Francisco.

In the 1850's a wagon train traveled 10-15 miles a day and took 4-5 months to get to California from Missouri. In 1858 the

stagecoach could travel 15 miles an hour and the trip from Missouri to California took 25 days.

The building of the transcontinental railroad was a wonder, going three thousand miles over and through mountains, deserts, ravines, and rivers. When it was completed in 1869 trains traveled at the incredible speed of 25 miles an hour and the trip, all the way across the country, took only 19 days!

19th Century citizens knew it was a wonder. If they had not thought about it, the idea was certainly brought to them. Certainly California's, and maybe even the whole Nation's feelings could be seen in an article, printed in a number of newspapers almost two years before the railroad's completion called, "The Mountains Overcome" celebrating reaching Donner Summit, the highest point on the road.

"The telegram which, starting from the summit of the Sierras [sic] on Saturday afternoon last, flashed across the continent to the shores of the Atlantic and underneath that ocean to Europe, announced an event which will probably seem greater to those far away than to those nearby; to those who read of it in history than to those who witnessed it in fact. On that day the track of the Central Pacific Railroad reached the summit of its grade. ... The flag of the Union was immediately planted near the spot, fitly signifying that an event had occurred which, more than any other, assures the continued unity of this great republic. For the completion of a railroad across the Sierras [sic] removes the only obstacle which has been regarded as insuperable to a vital connection between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. For California it means much, but it means more for the country at large and for mankind.

"The people of this continent are no longer severed by mountain barriers which would make of them two nations, diverse and hostile. We may now make certain of a common national life that shall secure not only our own best interests, but the largest and noblest influence upon the nations, from whom, on either hand, we are parted by an ocean, and whose destinies we must seriously affect."

That same year The Sacramento Daily Union (December 2, 1867) enthused, "... The company have great reason to congratulate themselves upon the monument of American engineering, energy and enterprise which their road undoubtedly is. No other great public work has met with obstacles apparently more insuperable, and none has overcome its difficulties of various kinds, with more determined perseverance. ... in the East and in Europe they will fill the public mind with added respect for the practical genius of the American."

The Daily Alta California (June 20, 1868) got into the act almost a year before the road was finished saying it was "The grandest highway created for the march of commerce and civilization around the globe."

Two days before the railroad's completion and the driving of the Golden Spike The Sacramento Union said (May 8, 1869) that the railroad was "a victory over space, the elements, and the stupendous mountain barriers separating the East from the West, and apparently defying the genius and energy of man to surmount. Every heart was gladdened by the contemplation of the grand achievement."

The completion of the railroad in 1869 was a national event. There were huge celebrations which we'll see in Part IV.

Once the immediate reporting was done, book authors took up the celebratory task. Alfred Richardson in Beyond the Mississippi, published in 1869, said, "...this magic key will unlock our Golden Gate, and send surging through its rocky portals a world-encircling tide of travel, commerce, and Christian civilization."

One visitor to Donner Summit to view the railroad's progress was succinct about its meaning, "Nothing is impossible anymore." (Daily Alta California November 10, 1867)

The celebrations and the florid language were appropriate.

TRIUMPHANT COMPLETION

....now that the mass of our people can stop to reflect upon the Grand results which has caused such vast rejoicings over the State within the past week, we shall all begin to see and feel the full value of our State, to Our Country, and to the World, the boundless good which has been achieved for us all by the Grand, Triumphant and Gloriously successful COMPLETION OF THE PACIFIC RAILROAD.

California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences May 13, 1869

I wish to call to your minds that the early completion of this railroad we have built has been in large measure due to that poor despised class of laborers called the Chinese – to the fidelity and industry they have shown.
Charles Crocker

Sacramento Union
May 8, 1869

The Transcontinental railroad was an amazing feat of 19th Century engineering. Nothing like it had ever been done before. Capital had been raised on a scale not seen before. Congress had to pass enabling legislation it had never before considered. It was the greatest construction project of the time using the largest wage-labor force of the 19th Century.

The results too were admirable. The new railroad tied the country together. It opened California to the country and to the world. The land of dreams and better lives – the Golden State – was accessible. Emigration to California was spurred and California's goods could get to the rest of the country. Mail

was faster, the transportation of goods was faster. Besides California, whole areas of the country were opened, the resources to be used by a growing nation. Towns and cities were born. News could travel and be read while it was still relevant. Innovation was spurred.

Albert Richardson, in Beyond the Mississippi (1869), listed the benefits he saw for 19th Century America: The road will protect our military interests, open natural resources, revolutionize trade and finance, and strengthen us socially and politically. "Great indeed must be the vitality of the republic when the warm blood from its heart pulsates to these remote extremities" because the railroad would "Do away with isolation; cut through the mountains! This enchanter's wand will make New York acknowledged queen of cities and San Francisco her eldest sister - this magic key will unlock our Golden Gate, and send surging through its rocky portals a world-encircling tide of travel, commerce, and Christian civilization."

There were negatives as well of course. The coming of the railroad was a harbinger to the destruction of the great buffalo herds and the Native Americans. It was a nail in the frontier's coffin and many small towns, bypassed by the railroad, simply disappeared.

Even with the Congressional legislation; the vision of the route's designer, Theodore Judah, the entrepreneurship of the Big 4, the financing, and the engineering, there could have been no railroad without the labor. It was immensely hard and even treacherous work. It was the Chinese who rose to the challenge, who built the western half of the road,

conquering the Sierra, the hardest part of the entire route.

That is the story that is coming in the next few Heirlooms: the Chinese on Donner Summit and Summit Camp.

Stay tuned.

Emigrants Views of the Sierra

"at last we came to the Sierra Nevada Mountains which seemed insurmountable."

Eliza Gregson 1845

"steep as the roof of a house. "

Joseph Hackney 1849

"formidable and apparently impassable barrier...."

Edwin Bryant, 1846

"When we reached Sierra Nevada mountains they looked terrible."

David Hudson 1845

"As we came up to it the appearance was exactly like marching up some immense wall built directly across our path ...

Elisha D. Perkins 1849

The Sierra were "tribulations in the extreme."

Wm. Todd 1845

"When we struck the main ridge of the mountains, every heart was filled with terror at the awful site [sic]."

William Tustin 1846

Giant Chinese worker statue in Downtown Auburn at the old RR station.

The statue was crafted by Dr. Dennis Fox, storied Auburn dentist and sculptor.



Margie Powell Illustrated* Hikes, 2016

Margie Powell was the inspiration for the Donner Summit Historical Society. She was also the energy behind the founding. In her memory we've held annual Margie Powell hikes in August.

The first year we spent some time in Summit Canyon, going from the top down to the petroglyphs and back. We talked about the Lincoln Highway, the railroad, Native Americans, turkeys (you had to be there), the Donner Summit Bridge, emigrants, rock carvings, the 1914 underpass, how they crossed the tracks before the underpass (it must have been harrowing driving in the snowsheds), snowsheds, fires, and more.

The second year, in 2013, went from the top of the pass down to the Land Trust kiosk on Old 40. The Land Trust had just bought the land and so the private property restrictions were gone. We lunched at a wonderful view site and talked about the above and more.

In 2014 we circumambulated Summit Valley talking about the Van Norden Dam; Lake Van Norden and the Van Norden brothers; Native American mortars, metates, petroglyphs, projectile points, the Martis and Kings Beach Cultures, and where maybe the Martis went; the Emigrant Trail; the Dutch Flat Wagon Road; the Lincoln Highway; Castle Creek and ice harvesting; etc.

In 2015 we traveled along Serene or Ice Lakes through the forest. We talked about the first settler at Ice Lakes, the ice industry, the Cedars, a possible railroad bed, the beginnings of the subdivision (it was the 50th anniversary of Serene Lakes), various development attempts, a proposal to make the valley a San Francisco water supply with a large dam (before Hetch Hetchy was the solution), Alfred A. Hart, etc.



Margie Powell Hike, 2014 at the petroglyphs.

This will be year five. This year will be very ambitious for the number of stories to tell. We are going to amble up to Roller Pass. It's two miles uphill and will take a couple of hours because of all the stories. We'll lunch at Roller Pass and admire the great views. Then people can follow the trail back two miles all downhill at their own speeds (unless they want to make side trips to Mt. Judah and Donner Pk.)

This is what's on the agenda this year's illustrated* hikes:

- Chinese RR workers and the camp site you can see from the PCT (brand new research)
- The first rope tow on Donner Summit, Johnny Ellis and the first subdivision
- Theodore Judah and the Transc. RR.
- Sierra Ski Trails -
- Peter Wedell and marking the Emigrant Trail
- Van Norden since there's a great view: Dutch Flat Rd. Emigrant Trail, etc.
- Forlorn Hope and Starved Camp
- The coming of Sugar Bowl
- Charlie Chaplin's Gold Rush movie - the Palisades as Chilcoot Pass
- The source of the mighty Yuba
- Coldstream Pass - the emigrant experience
- Roller Pass and the emigrants in 1846
(some people may want to experience it by going down)
- The first locomotive over the summit
- The transcontinental RR
- The Lincoln Highway
- Airway beacon and the transcontinental air route
- Various stories like the Blue Goose.

And more as we think about it.

*meaning lots of pictures

The dates: August 13,14. 9:30 AM

**August
13-14
9:30 AM**

Meet at the Pacific Crest Trailhead off of Old 40.

Take Old 40 to Donner Summit. Across from Donner Ski Ranch is Sugar Bowl Rd. Take the first left, Old Donner Summit Rd. Drive up to the parking area. If that area is full keep going, take the sharp left and park along the road or further up. The trailhead is at the sharp bend in the road where the porta potty is.

Bring hat, good shoes, sunscreen, water, camera, curiosity.



See the next page.

Sisters' Tour Coming to Donner Summit - July 23

The Back Story

In our September, '15 Heirloom we reviewed the book, Grace and Grit, about women motorcyclists. A couple crossed Donner Summit. One pair of those was the Van Buren sisters who crossed in 1916.

August and Adeline Van Buren must have been a pair of pistols; they were certainly not what we'd think of as traditional Victorian ladies. They boxed, canoed, swam, dove, ice skated, etc. and won prizes and medals for their endeavors.

In 1913, when Augusta was 29 and Adeline was 23, they became motorcyclists and that meant becoming motorcycle mechanics as well. In 1916 they decided on a transcontinental trip. They wanted adventure, wanted to use the publicity to get America ready to join the war raging in Europe, and wanted to prove women could play a part. Augusta and Adeline wanted to be dispatch riders. Here it's convenient to talk about one of the strengths of the book. There are plenty of asides that explain or elaborate on issues. In this case there is a good summary about dispatch riding with quotes from contemporary dispatch riders. There was even a female dispatch rider from Ireland. It was dangerous work; it was not just riding a motorcycle around as my grandfather described his experiences (parenthetically it turned out my grandfather was not a dispatch rider as he'd said. In reality he was part of a machine gun crew but thought motorcycle riding would better allay a youngster's questions about the war.)

The Update

Having read and reviewed Grace and Grit you can imagine that our interest was piqued when we saw an item about the Sisters' Centennial Motorcycle Ride scheduled for 2016. Contact was made to ascertain whether the Centennial Motorcycle Ride would be using the actual route and whether they wanted any advice or help from the DSHS.

They were not going to use the route over Donner Summit. They were going to take the alternate Lincoln Highway route from Carson City over So. Tahoe and then to Placerville on the way to San Francisco.

Discussion ensued. The route was changed. They will go from Carson City along Lake Tahoe to Truckee, then on to I-80 and off on to Old 40 at Donner Lake. They will go up the old road and be able to see the actual route, the old Lincoln Highway, the sisters took in 1916. It will be visible in a number of spots. They will stop to take pictures and talk to Norm Saylor at the Donner Summit Bridge and then head for San Francisco. It will be a full day so there will be no "lollygagging" on Donner Summit.

You might want to see the Centennial Ride come by though. The crossing of Donner Summit will be on July 23 sometime before Noon.



Above and left: the Van Buren sisters.

New Website for the DSHS

Today everyone is using tablets and smart phones to access the internet. Fewer people are using desktop computers. Websites that were designed for computers do not work well or as well on the smaller devices.

Wanting our "customers" to be happy the web team at the DSHS has completely revamped the DSHS website so it's "responsive," meaning the pages will adjust depending on the device being used for access. For smaller screens pictures and text will resize and elements will re-arrange themselves.

The web team also took the opportunity to delete tired pages, add pages, and add stories and pictures. It's a work in progress though, so take a look and come back again later. Please offer suggestions as well. The front page is to the right.



Not long after the new website was uploaded we received an email from Thailand, " Thanks for taking the painstaking effort to create this Masterpiece!" That was nice.

From the DSHS Archives the Crampton Album

Last month we introduced the Crampton Family picture album and promised some pictures this month of more general Donner Summit rather than specifically the Crampton Lodge. Unfortunately we've filled up page after page with other things so we'll include some pictures here and then include some more in the July issue.



The flooding in the winter of 1950 must have been something. Here the Yuba River has overflowed at Big Bend.

From the Crampton Album



Left and below, postcards of Donner Summit, 1950



Above: Sugar Bowl, 1950. The original lodge has not been enlarged yet. The original base of the Disney chair is very different from today's

Right, Trailsyde Lodge which used to be at Big Bend.



Book Review

American Road The Story of an Epic Transcontinental Journey at the Dawn of the Motor Age

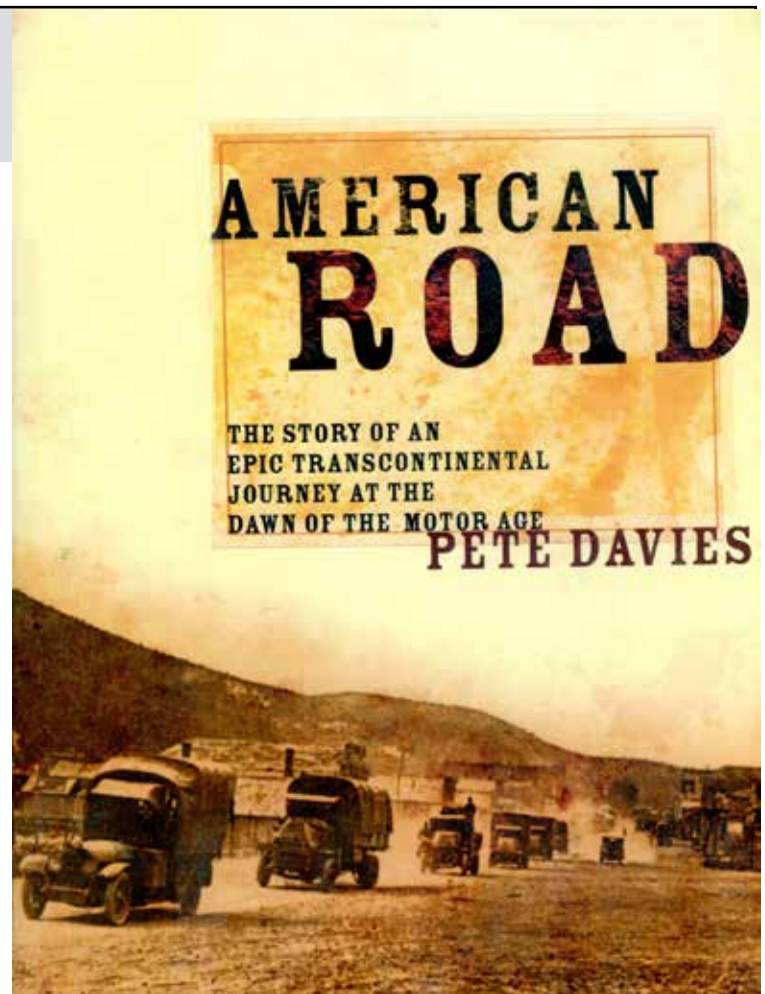
274 pages, 2002 by Pete Davies

This book is not about Donner Summit although we'd dearly hoped Dwight Eisenhower's trip across the country on the Lincoln Highway in 1919 had gone over Donner Summit. The Lincoln Highway had two routes over the Sierra. One went over Donner Summit and the other took the Placerville Route through So. Lake Tahoe. The "Epic Transcontinental Journey" took the Placerville route. Still, the trip was interesting as an episode in the early "Motor Age" and it did use the Lincoln Highway, so here it is. We're going to run out of books even tangentially related to Donner Summit some time so that will mean book reviews in the [Heirloom](#) and on our website of more general interest, like this one.

An awful lot of research went into this book. The author followed this now little-known cross-country trip all the way across the country through research in local papers, participants' contemporary documents, and then by actually driving the route. The reader gets to learn every detail of the trip. That's a little problematical though. We follow the convoy across Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada to the end in San Francisco, California. It's quite a tour and it's amazing it was completed in 1919. It's also amazing it was completed given the hardships. We learn about what every little town did to welcome the convoy; where soldiers ate, showered, and danced; where trucks ran off the road; where bridges had to be rebuilt; etc. By the time you are half way across America you are as tired as the soldiers must have been.

That's not to say there are not some good stories, anecdotes, and information about the convoy, the Lincoln Highway, and the state of roads in the early days. It's just a bit long. Not every detail of every town needed to be listed.

The story starts with a summary of Dwight Eisenhower's experiences and prospects after World War I. He'd heard about an Army convoy heading across the continent to San Francisco that needed observers from different branches of the Army. He volunteered as a member of the tank corps. He'd be able to do something more than push papers in the post-war army. Given that start the reader might expect that there would be a lot more about Eisenhower and the trip but that's not so.



Before getting into the day-to-day experiences there is some background: autos, roads, manufacturers, transcontinental crossings, and the "Road Across America," the Lincoln Highway.

The convoy was the largest convoy of military vehicles ever assembled up to that time. All assembled at the start the convoy was two miles long. There were 81 vehicles, 258 enlisted men, 37 officers, and 46 trucks from $\frac{3}{4}$ ton to 5 tons. The convoy included a blacksmith shop and mobile machine shops. There were 11 automobiles, 9 motorcycles, 5 ambulances, two ambulance trailers, four kitchen trailers, 2 four-wheel trail mobiles, 2 two-wheel Liberties, a pontoon trailer, a three million candlepower searchlight on its own chassis, a caterpillar tractor, and a "wrecker winch" or "artillery wheeled tractor" the Militor (see the next page).

There were five objectives. After the enormous effort of the war "America needed a celebration" and the "army meant to show off an impressive array of equipment that had helped win" the war. Second, the trip would be a good trial for equipment. The army could study the terrain and driving conditions on the transcontinental trek. The publicity would serve to aid recruitment. Finally, it would be the Government's contribution to the good roads movement,

drawing attention to the state of roads. Little did they know the actual state of the roads. To help with publicity the convoy was followed by a film crew.

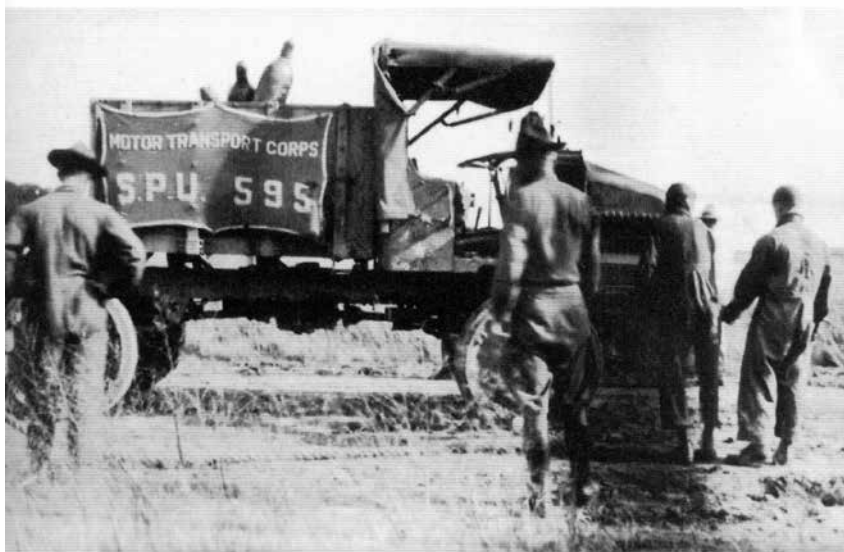
There is information about daily life in the convoy: reveille, sleeping arrangements, scouts, welcome parades, weather, accidents (230), break downs, lightning, and “civic courtesies.”

It is that last that takes up most of the book. The reader learns about what happened in every town along the way. Apparently the convoy was popular. Whole towns and thousands of people came out to greet the soldiers and provide them with food and recreation.

One soldier at the trip’s end said of the experience that it had been “pretty strenuous. Up every night until eleven or twelve o’clock at banquets and dances and out in the morning at five and five-thirty to be on our way... It’s a great life if you don’t weaken.” That of course belied the utter misery of the crossing: the constant break-downs, trucks going off the road, the thick dust, the heat, having to constantly dig out vehicles, etc.

Even the simple driving was hard. “The combination of solid tires and poor roads would have produced a constant, bone-jolting rattle and shudder. It would have been so bad that if the driver attempted any speed higher than ten miles an hour, it would have taken the sum of his effort just to hang on to the wheel and not be flung from his seat.” The convoy did not make ten miles an hour. The author continually reported daily progress: 20 miles in six hours, 58 miles in 11 hours, 63 miles in 17 hours, 41 miles in 7 hours, 20 hours to go 66 miles to Carson City, 12 hours to go 50 miles to Placerville, 7.5 hours to go 35 miles which included nine stops to fix bridges and culverts. Those kinds of statistics give you an idea of how miserable the trip must have been in general. The author slides in little anecdotes or descriptions to further make the point. In the town of Clinton, Iowa the surfaced roads were done in creosote wooden blocks. They stank and buckled in summer.

The statistics give one a good idea about the state of roads in America in 1910 and why there was the better roads movement and they give us a good idea for why Dwight Eisenhower was such a proponent of the Interstate Highway



Left: the Militor

System, begun during his terms in office as president.

There are also descriptions of conditions. Bridges had to be completely rebuilt before the convoy could cross. Colonel McClure, the convoy’s leader said, about the center of Wyoming, “mountain desert of most desolate and monotonous character... dry air wind and dust hardship continuous.” One soldier said about Western Utah he was “disgusted at the desert and trip.” In Nevada “two gas tankers buried themselves five feet deep in the mire; they broke through the hard crust of the trail’s surface and sank without warning. The shifting sand on the roadside made detouring around these bad spots impossible....” That was not unusual and contributed to the slow progress.

There are a lot of little stories throughout: how Goodyear tire got its start, examples of racism in America, mountain oysters, Big Nose Charlie’s brain (and the shoes made from his skin that were worn by the governor of Wyoming at his inauguration), Omaha politics and a lynching, the Negro Motorist’s Green Book (needed so blacks knew where they would be welcome), stocking-less women during a heat wave in Omaha, the shimmy (a “wiggly terpsichorean [dance] movement”) that scandalized proper society when Bay Area young women welcomed the soldiers, a scientist who went up in a balloon and would communicate with Martians, and a pants burglar in Nebraska.

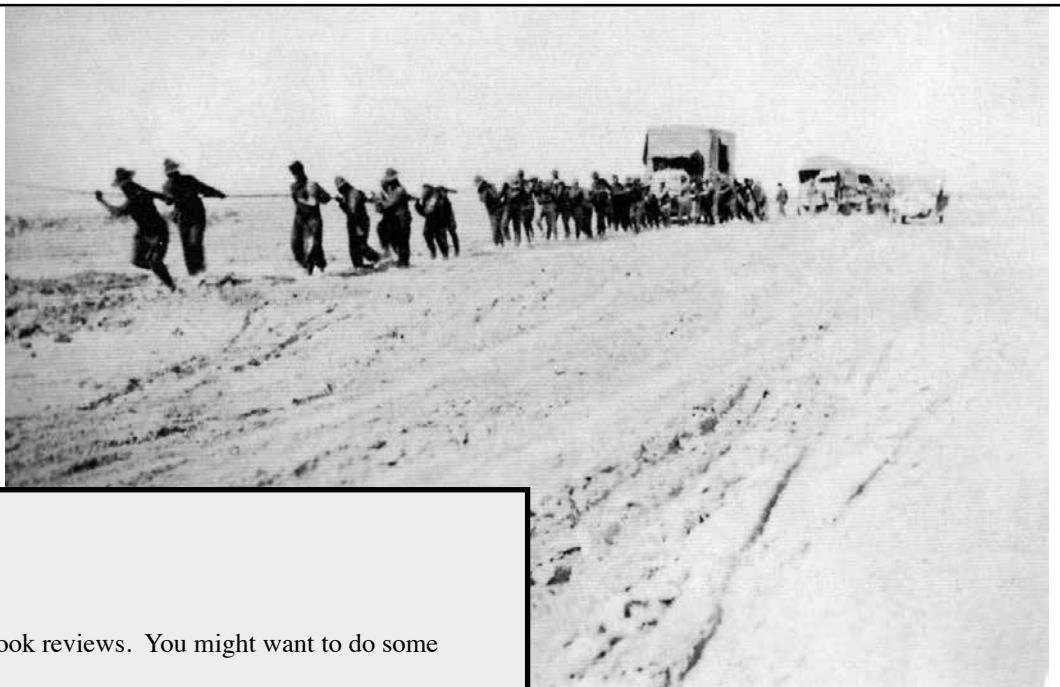
The main lesson of the book is the inadequacy of roads, bridges, and infrastructure in America and the public seeing the need to make fixes to improve commerce as shown by one Nebraska headline, “War Declared Between Civilization and Mud.”

There is also some fun reporting some of Dwight Eisenhower’s hijinks on the road. That’s about all that’s said about Eisenhower’s experiences. He and a friend played a number of practical jokes: pretending there were Indians around, having an apparently crazed officer chase another one

“wounded” with ketchup, pretending to Easterners they’d made an amazing shot to kill a rabbit (that had been dead twelve hours), etc.

The trip was a success. The convoy did get to California losing only a few trucks. A lot of publicity was made and roads did get better.

The trip across the continent must have been miserable.



Note:

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

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

You might even want to a review for us.



This commemorative cartoon is from the Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

Then & Now with Art Clark

Alfred A Hart 209 - Donner Lake from Crested Peak -

Several versions of this view exist. The stereo versions were cropped to showcase the lake, and hid the rock wall just out of sight on the right side, except for a tiny spot in the upper corner. In the uncropped view, the entire wall is visible, and has several distinct clefts which indicate exactly where Hart's camera was placed for the shot.

Photo enlargers didn't exist in the 1860's, so contact prints were made by placing glass negatives over sensitized paper and exposing in sunlight. The prints were then processed and trimmed and mounted on stereo cards.

Carleton Watkins also reprinted the scene from the same negatives in his Pacific Railroad series.

Photo location 39° 18.515'N 120° 18.728'W



Then & Now with Art Clark

Alfred A Hart No.4 From Summit Tunnel

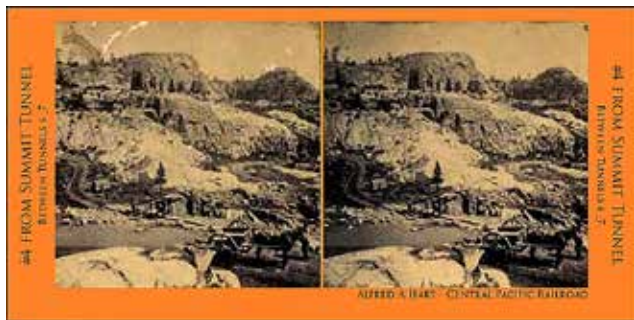
This view is from the rocks just south of the West end of Tunnel 7.

The horse-drawn cart in the foreground is on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road, which circled around to the right and then behind the camera.

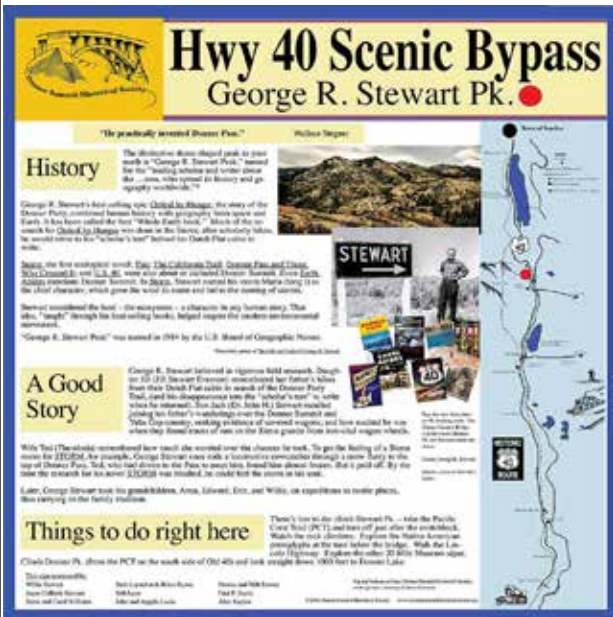
The workmen are slightly lower, and appear to be using a small ore cart on rails to haul out rubble from Tunnel 7 to dump over the side.

By chance or intent of the photographer, the wagon road far below appears to line up with the dump rails and then is visible again curving to the right to a spot where the Petroglyphs Monument is now located.

Photo location 39° 18.939'N 120° 19.355'W



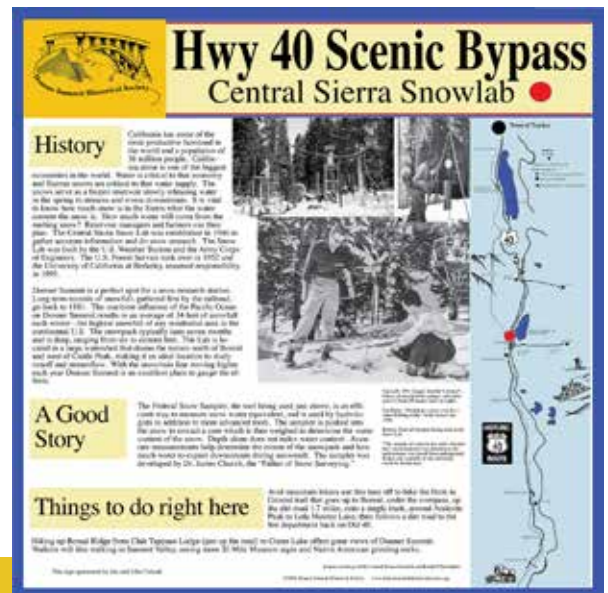
New Signs in Place



Last year we had requests for two new 20 Mile Museum signs. One request was from Norm Saylor, DSHS president, for a sign for the Central Sierra Snow Lab in Soda Springs. Joe and Julie Celenti of Colfax sponsored the Snow Lab sign which sits just at the turn off from Old 40 for the Snow Lab.

The second sign was suggested by Don Scott, author of The Life and Truth of George R. Stewart. He gathered up some Stewart aficionados and descendants to sponsor the sign which sits on Old 40 above the Donner Summit (Rainbow) Bridge with a great view of Stewart Pk.

The signs were produced last fall and have been stored along with others taken down prior to winter at the Donner Ski Ranch.



DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY www.donnertsummithistoricalsociety.org

Membership

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

- New Membership
 Renewing Membership
 Individual Membership - \$30
 Family Membership - \$50

DATE _____
 NAME(S) _____
 MAILING ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

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

Truckee Business Men Make Trip to Summit On Tour of Road

Last Monday morning a party made the trip to the Summit in Joe Kirchners [sic] machine to look over the work that had been done by State Road commissioner G.L. Baxter, a part of which money was raised in Truckee a couple of weeks ago. They found the road in very good condition, and all were very much please with the work Mr. Baxter has accomplished.

This has proven to be a big help to the business men of Truckee, because every automobile that passes this place means some business to the town either in meals or gasoline, and souvenirs.

Those in the picture are J.G. Kirchner, John Fay, and F.J. Crittenden.

San Francisco Examiner, June 18, 1914

From Flowers to Snow, Auto Party Makes Notable Trip



Halsey W. Smith and party of friends taking a Studebaker E-M-F "30" through to Lake Tahoe on June 5. It was the first automobile to get through this season. The picture was taken on the summit, 98 miles from Sacramento.

Before 1932 when Highway 40 was first plowed in the winter it was an anxious time each spring as Truckee and Tahoe merchants waited for the snows to melt and the passes to open so tourists could come.

Truckee business men sometimes hosted snow shoveling bees, hired workers to clear the road, or spread ash and soot on the snow to speed melting. The Tahoe Tavern in Tahoe City sponsored a silver cup challenge for the first automobile to annually cross the summit and get to Tahoe City. The resulting publicity would, probably, spur other travelers.

That the article to the left was deemed important enough to get into the San Francisco paper shows the importance of the issue. The one to the right, from the San Francisco Call on June 12, 1909, shows the interest the public must have had in those annual feats. We have it a bit easier today.

See the [Heirlooms](#) for 6/15 and 7/14 for first cars those years and 5/15 for the Tahoe Tavern.



Donner Summit Historical Society



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June 1, 2016

We've been doing a lot and we are asking you to continue to help support the DSHS in its quest to let the world know about the unique historical importance of Donner Summit.

Here at the DSHS our many departments are always scrambling to acquire, digest, and disseminate local history. There are a lot of stories to tell. Our Mobile Historical Research Team (MHRT) has placed the original Soda Springs Station buildings (stay tuned it will be in the Heirloom), explored the largest Chinese railroad workers' camp (June-September '16 Heirlooms as well as some future explorations to other camps), found petroglyphs and grinding rocks, mapped Summit Valley history, walked the Lincoln Highway finding long lost signs, explored the emigrant trail and emigrant rust marks, found Sierra Ski Way signs and Emigrant Trail markers, etc.

The museum is open for visitors.

The Heirloom publishes the most fascinating history and later this year issue #100 will come out. There are 744 official subscribers with some of those passing on the issues to others. Still others access the website for the Heirloom.

The 20 Mile Museum crew places signs each spring, retrieves them in the fall, maintains them, and adds to the collection. Two new signs, for the Central Sierra Snow Lab and Mt. Stewart were just installed.

The publications committee develops and reprints a host of brochures and

other publications about local history. The newest brochure, "Donner Summit History Tour" is enclosed. There are many others which you can find on our website, at the museum, at the State Park or at the Summit Restaurant.

Hike leaders lead hikes.

Then there is the web crew, sitting patiently by the DSHS computer, keeping up and just recently completely redoing the website and trolling for historical resources. The new website was quite a job. Now it is "responsive" so you can view it on any device: smart phone, tablet, or desktop computer.

We want to continue with the work listed above and too, our rent payment at the museum went up this year. **Please take a few minutes to renew your membership using the enclosed form. You can also go to our website and click on one of the "membership" buttons. There you can renew via PayPal.**

In other news the Margie Powell Hikes will be on August 13 and 14. Details are on our website. The Placer County Heritage Trail Museum Tour will not be just on one weekend this year. It will be all summer long with the 23 different museums having different open dates. Details are on our website. Our weekend is August 13 and 14.

Thank you for your help,

Norm Saylor
President



Heritage Trail all Summer Long

For more information about this year's Placer County Museums Heritage Trail, start at <http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/temporary/heritageTrail.html>