

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

March, 2018 issue #115

## Eadweard Muybridge on Donner Summit

At some point in my life when I was able I tuned in to "Bonanza" the TV show about a father, his three grown sons, the Ponderosa Ranch, and their adventures around Virginia City and Lake Tahoe. There was a new adventure every week and to make the new adventure every week, the writers brought in guest stars because there were only so many stories the Cartwrights could get into themselves.

It seemed to me that everyone famous visited the Ponderosa: gypsies, Emperor Norton, a president, criminals, etc.

In studying Donner Summit history a lot of people kept dropping by too. Mark Twain took the stage over Donner Summit a couple of times. The Central Pacific's Big Four were here. Famous artists visited and did art work. Famous photographers visited and fortunately documented Donner Summit for us. There were authors, a vice president, a famous dog musher, famous skiers, Snow Shoe Thompson, record setters in various fields, industrialists, the Donner Party rescuees, members of the State legislature, etc. (I was going to list more but you get the point).

One of the visitors was Eadweard Muybridge, famous 19th Century photographer. It would be nice to discover some of Mr. Muybridge's experiences on Donner Summit. The DSHS research team set off looking for information on the internet and in that older technology, books. Besides some Muybridge photographs on Donner Summit the internet does not divulge anything about Muybridge visits. That's when we turned to the bookstore and picked up [The Inventor and the Tycoon](#). That review is here on page 18. There was not even a mention of Donner Summit and so next was [River of Shadows](#) (next month). Again, there was no mention of our preferred subject. We give up. Maybe some energetic reader will want to get into another book about Mr. Muybridge and maybe something will turn up there.



Eadweard Muybridge Snowsheds at Cisco from the Northeast. Cisco was a thriving town before the RR was completed.

Meanwhile we have Muybridge photos to share and of course they are worth thousands of words.

# Story Locations in this Issue

Palisade Lake pg 5   Crater Lake, page 3   Rhino Rock pg 4   Summit Hotel pg 7   Donner Lake Resort pg 8



Upper Cisco remnant pg 17

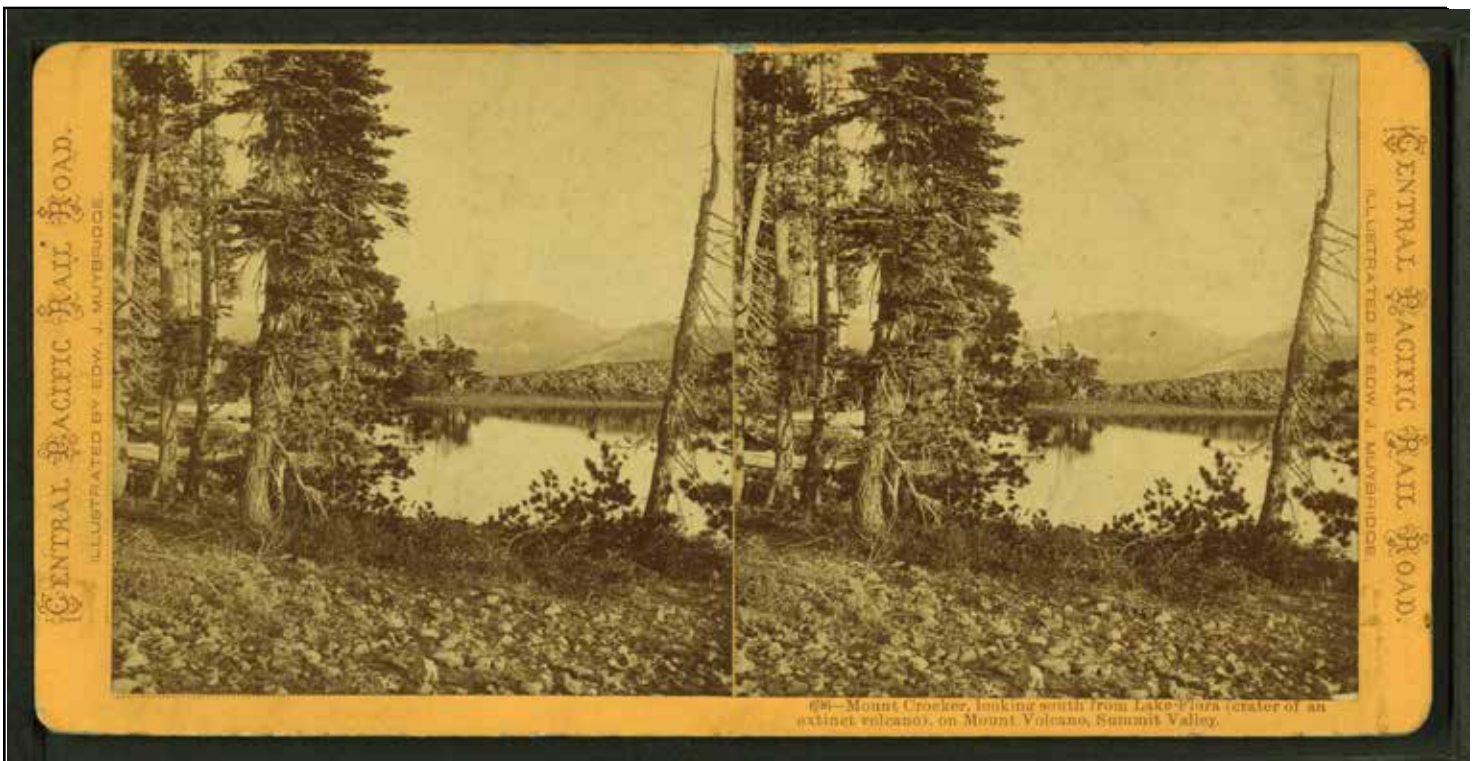
Pictures pg 8-9-10

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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



Muybridge #696 "Mt. Crocker..." and "Lake Flora" which today is actually Crater Lake.

Back in the fall someone emailed the DSHS Historical Help Desk for help getting to Lake Flora on Donner Summit. Well that was an easy one and at no extra “charge” we provided more: how to get to Lake Azalea and the Catfish Pond or Maiden’s Retreat (we’re thoughtfully full-service that way and recommend [exploredonnersummit.com](http://exploredonnersummit.com)). That started the [Heirloom](#) staff thinking. Where did the name “Flora” come from? (We covered how Lake Angela got its name in the May, ’10 [Heirloom](#)).

Almost at the same time some of our more exploratory members were pushing the Donner Party Hike (now sponsored by the DSHS – see the November, ’17 [Heirloom](#)) to include as a new hike, Crater Lake on Boreal Ridge.

Here’s where that comes together and leads us to Eadweard Muybridge, a famous photographer who visited Donner Summit. Eadweard’s wife was named Flora. He got up to Boreal Ridge about 1873 and made some stereographs of “Lake Flora” which in the 1866 Government survey had no name. So a good guess is that Muybridge named it for his new wife, who was half his age, but before he found out she was having an affair and murdered her lover (stay tuned for more on that). He captioned his stereographs, taken up there, with “Lake Flora.” He also made photographs of Rhino Rock on Boreal Ridge (to take that hike consult our “Historic Hikes of Donner Summit” brochure which is available at the DSHS, or on our website).

At some point the Lake Flora on Boreal Ridge lost its name or was only named Lake Flora in Muybridge’s stereographs. At some point later one of the unnamed lakes that sits between what is now Old 40 and I-80 was named Lake Flora. Since we have no other evidence, and have gone searching, one reasonable conclusion is that Muybridge’s wife’s name got attached to the current Lake Flora.

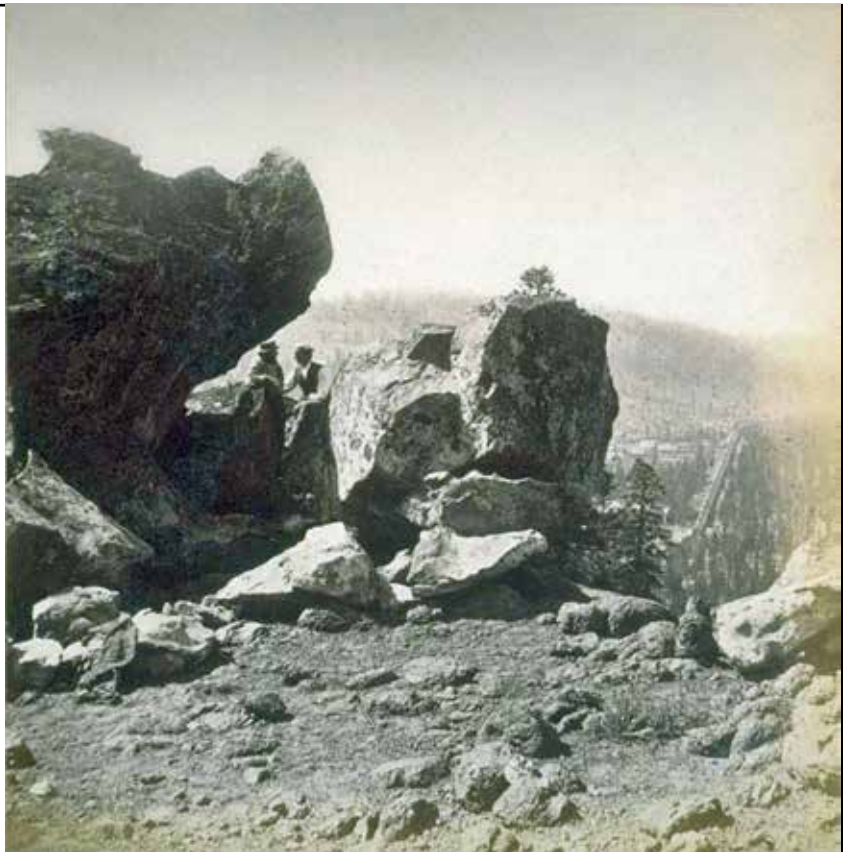
If we accept that then that opens up more about Eadweard Muybridge on Donner Summit. We’ve covered Alfred A. Hart and Carlton Watkins (January, ’14 and December, ’16 [Heirlooms](#)), famous photographers who visited and photographed Donner Summit so there’s some precedence to bring in Mr. Muybridge. Parenthetically we’ve also looked at other famous artists who visited but that’s really a field for future [Heirlooms](#) – keep up your subscriptions.

Having the rationale for introducing Mr. Muybridge to [Heirloom](#) readers the research staff went in search of books. There are quite a few since Mr. Muybridge was pretty famous in the late 19th Century. He was the guy who won the bet for Leland Stanford about whether a horse lifts all four legs off the ground while galloping (they do and Stanford won). That led to a lot of pictures and then some books on humans and animals in motion. That leads some people to give Muybridge credit for inventing moving pictures. That’s not Donner Summit though so we were looking for other books, preferably some with

Donner Summit in them. Then we came upon [The Inventor and the Tycoon: A Gilded Age Murder and the Birth of Moving Pictures](#). It is about Eadweard Muybridge and Leland Stanford. The murder of course refers to the lover of Muybridge's wife, Flora.

Muybridge visited Donner Summit. His wife had her name on Donner Summit and there was scandal. What could be more enticing?

Muybridge was born in England and came to the United States and then California in his early twenties. He had had a couple of careers before hitting on photography which made him famous. He didn't like photographing people and so concentrated on landscapes. Not only did he photograph San Francisco and the Pacific Coast but he also photographed Yosemite, Central and South America, Alaska and the Modoc Indian wars. He photographed houses of rich people which is how he came to know Leland Stanford. That led to a long relationship, financed by Stanford, that explored animals and people in motion. That is what his long term fame is based on. As he experimented with motion. Muybridge developed the first moving pictures and so can be considered a father of motion pictures.



Eadweard Muybridge Rhinoceros Rock. #700

His friendship with Stanford brought him into contact with the Central Pacific Railroad and so Muybridge photographed Donner Summit. His photos of the railroad are much like Alfred A. Hart's or Carleton Watkins' but he also photographed other things. At some point he decided to climb what is now Boreal Ridge. There he found "Lake Flora" and "Rhino Rock." The lake is not difficult to find. It's easy to see and it's the only lake up there. Rhino Rock, though, is difficult and shows Muybridge must have spent time on the ridge exploring for different views. If you want to find Rhino Rock the GPS coordinates are 39° 19.467'N 120° 21.710'W or go to page 6.

More on Mr. Muybridge in the review [The Tycoon and the Inventor](#) later in this [Heirloom](#) - see page 18 and then more next month.

### **From Art Clark about the photo of Rhino Rock above.**

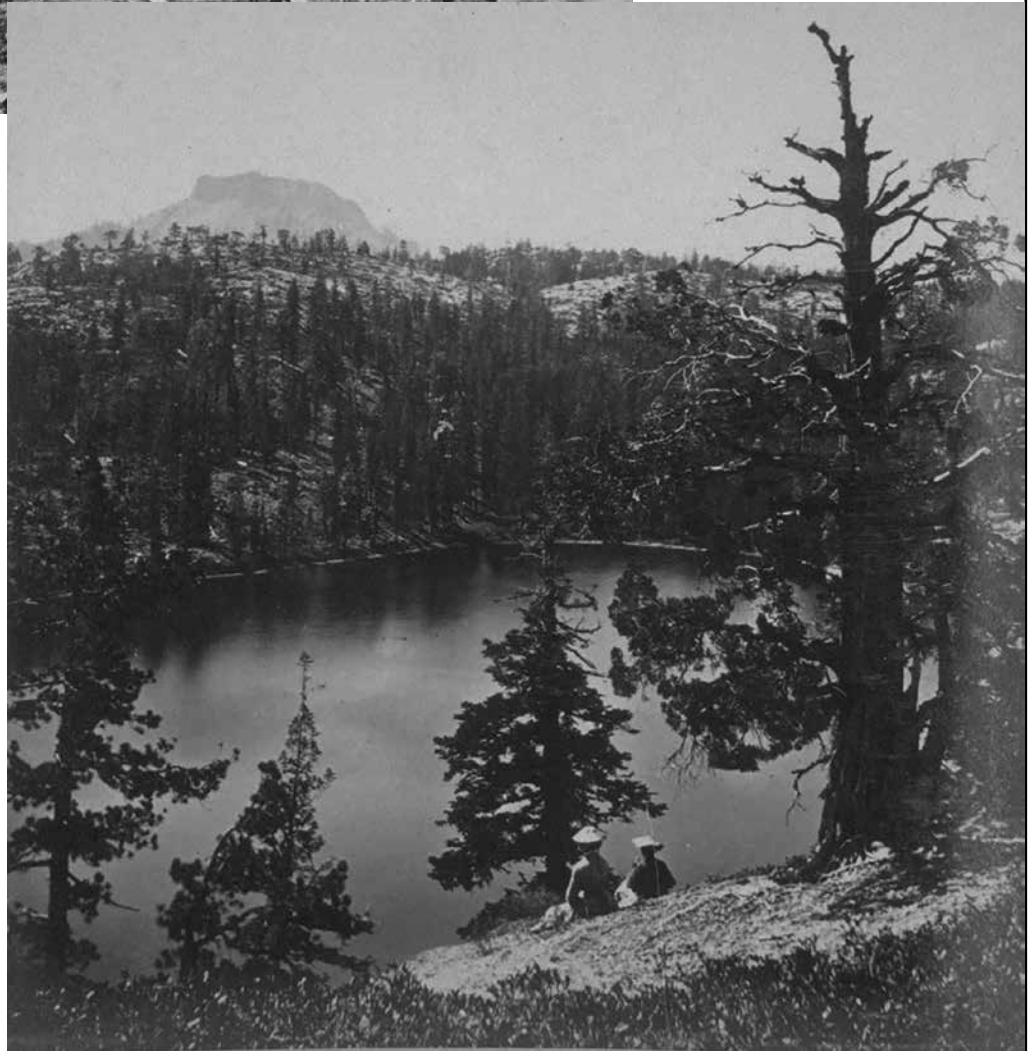
Sometime around 1870, Eadweard Muybridge spent some time in and around Donner Summit photographing interesting outdoor scenes. I'm not sure how he found this chunk of granite, which he named Rhinoceros Rock, but we had a hell of a time locating it! This rock formation does have a passing resemblance to a Rhinoceros, but only if viewed from a certain angle. From other directions it might also be a cat, or whatever.

39° 19.467'N 120° 21.710'W

If you want to visit see page 6.

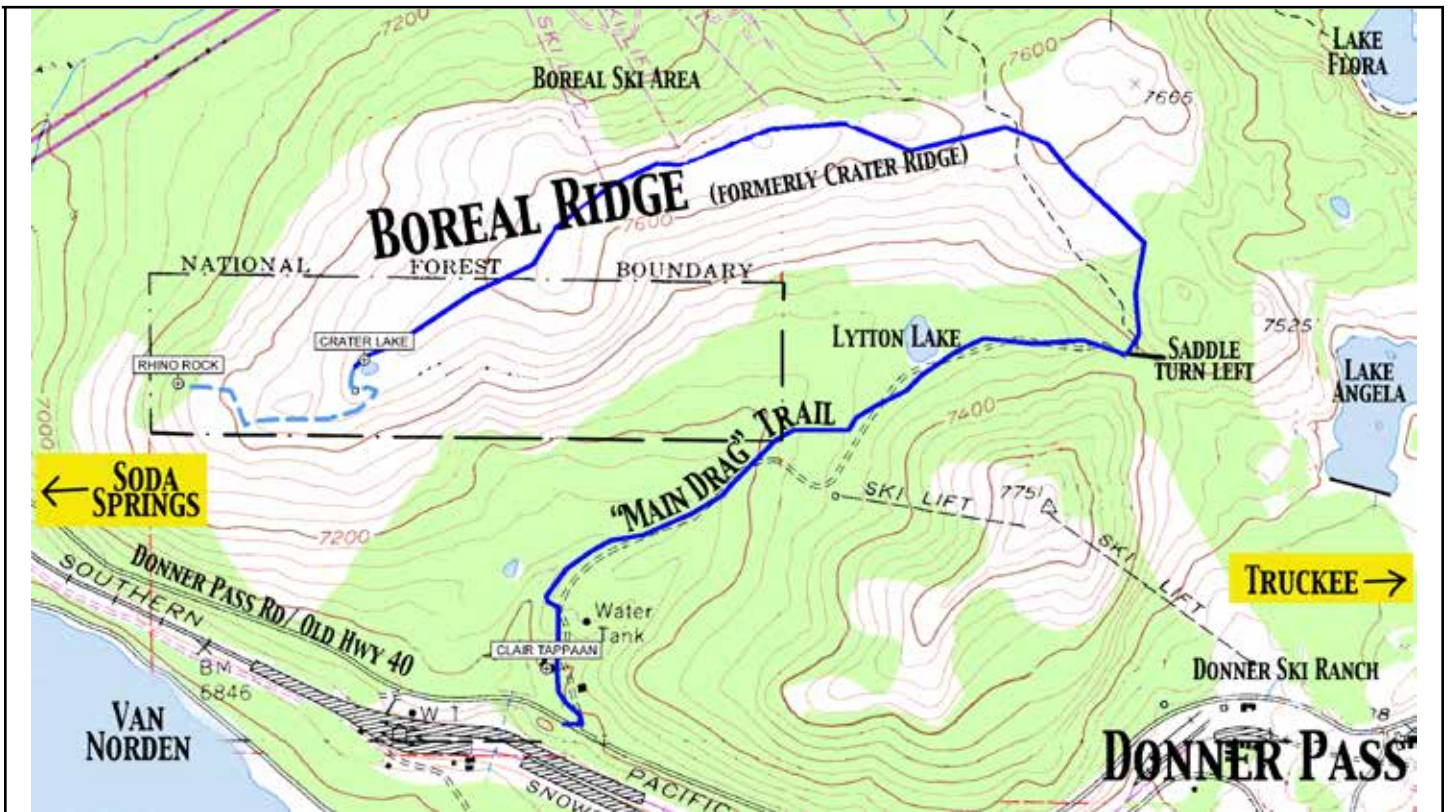


Eadward Muybridge  
Interior of snowsheds  
western summit Sierra  
Nevada Mountains.



Eadward Muybridge The  
Devil's Peak from Palisade  
Lake near western summit  
Sierra Nevada Mountains

Palisade Lake is a private  
lake with a private  
community of cabins.  
Access is not allowed.



# From the DSHS Archives



Here is a special treat. We used to run Art Clark's Then & Now feature each month until Art ran out of subjects. More than a hundred are on our website. Here is one that never ran in the [Heirloom](#). Left is the "then" version of #701 Muybridge's Rhinoceros rock. Right is the "now" version featuring Art Clark and Art Clark (he's a funny fellow.) Who the guys in the "then" version are we don't know but probably they are not Art Clark.

# Wm. M. McCarthy Photograph Collection at the State Archives

Wm. M. McCarthy and his wife Grace did a lot of automobile traveling around the U.S. in the early part of the 20th Century. Fortunately for us they also took a lot of pictures. Even more fortunately the albums containing 3,000 or so pictures were donated to the California State Archives which digitized them.

Norm, (president of the DSHS) was exploring on his computer and came across the collection. He passed the information on to the DSHS research department which zeroed in on Donner Summit pictures and then obtained permission from the State Archives to use a few in the [Heirloom](#). These are all the ones of Donner Summit but if you like old photographs you might want to go exploring: [www.sos.ca.gov/archives/william-m-mccarthy-photograph-collection](http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/william-m-mccarthy-photograph-collection) (or just search for Wm. M. McCarthy photograph collection).



Every tourist takes a picture of Donner Lake from the summit. This is what it looked like in 1927

A really good picture of the Summit Hotel. Note the snowsheds left and rear leading from the RR tracks to the hotel. Note the elevated walkway right leading to the three story outhouse. For more about the hotel see the February, April, and May, '11 [Heirlooms](#)



Pictures here: California State Archives, William M. McCarthy Photograph Collection id#96-07-08



Donner Lake Resort (west end of the lake) in 1927

GROUNDS AT DONNOR

S.P. Snowsheds. Note the underpass center left and the highway route at the base of the rock center of the photograph. Also 1927



THE S.P. SNOW SHEDS CUTTING THROUGH THE RUGGED SIERRA SUMMIT



SIERRA SUMMIT, TRUCKEE HIGHWAY

The Lincoln Highway leading down to Donner Lake from the summit. 1927





*THE ROCKY SIERRA SUMMIT ABOVE DONNER LAKE*

"The Rocky Sierra Summit Above Donner Lake." 1927

The Lincoln Highway leading down from the summit. Note the rockwork. 1927

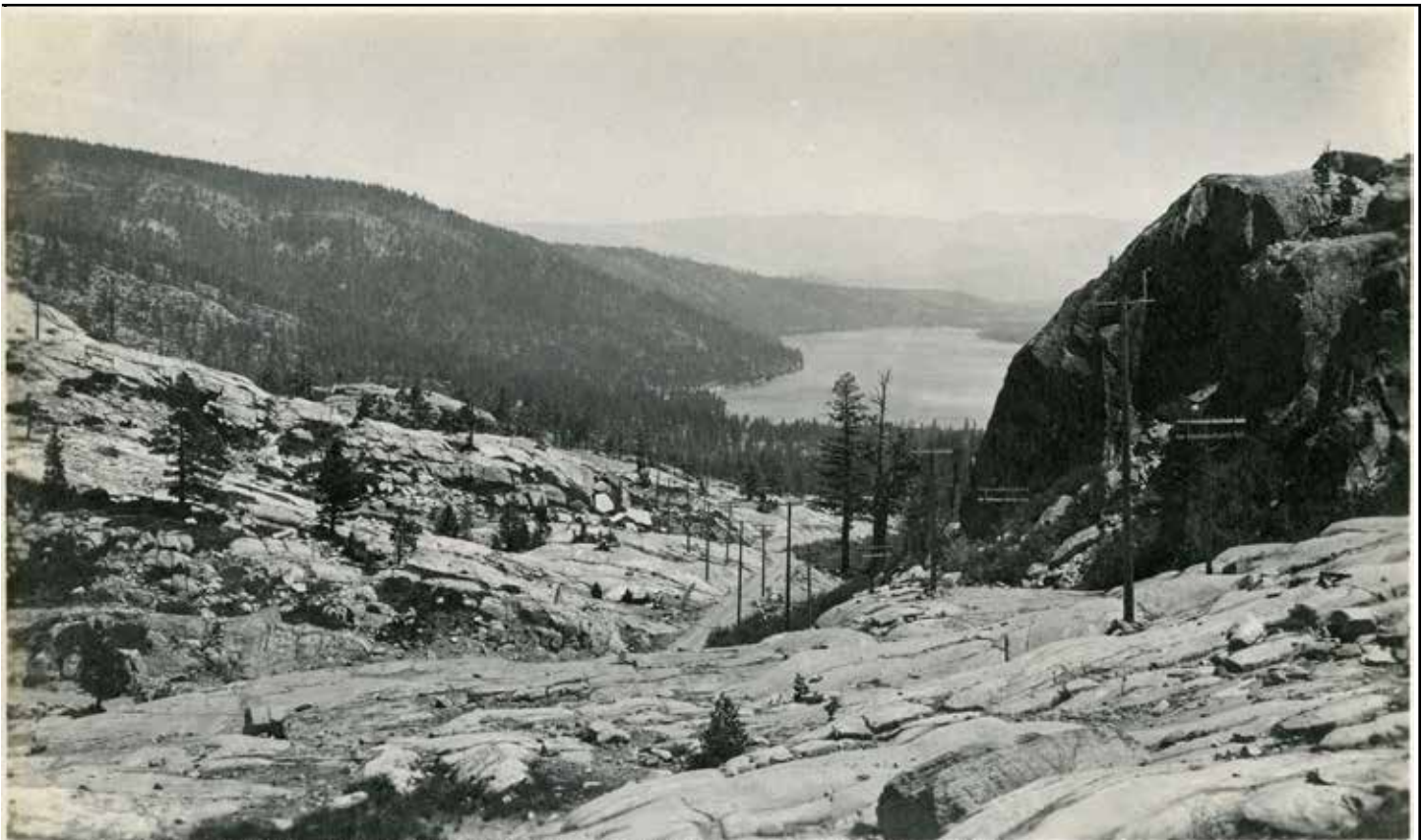


*SIERRA SUMMIT-TRUCKEE HIGHWAY*



*SCENE ON THE TRUCKEE HIGHWAY-SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS.*

"Scene on the Truckee Highway - Sierra Nevada Mountains." 1927



**DONNER LAKE—VIEW FROM THE HIGHWAY AT THE SUMMIT**

Here is one more. "Donner Lake View..." Note the highway in the center and the telephone poles. Some of those poles, placed in 1914, are still there today.

## **‘Richest Girl’ Marooned by Snow in Sierra**

RENO, Nev. March 45 – (TP) – The “richest girl in the world,” Doris Duke, was marooned along with 50 other skiers today at Rainbow tavern [sic], in the high Sierra, near the summit Donner pass [sic].

The Skiers were caught by the heaviest snowstorm to sweep the Sierras [sic] since 1938. Reports from the tavern said that food supplies were ample for immediate needs.”

March 5, 1944  
Long Beach Independent

# Alone and Awheel (Across Donner Summit)

Today lots of people cross Donner Summit on bicycle, generally going from Donner Lake to Cisco or vice versa. People used to do it in the old days too but they went farther and the Heirloom has carried stories about some of those exploits (The Wilsons in 1894, September, '17; the guys who bicycled up from Sacramento in 1901, March, '14; Thomas Stevens on his "Ordinary" in 1884, March, '15; and a number of shorts in the April, '15 Heirloom. Coming soon will also be the "Yellow Fellow" Transcontinental Bicycle Relay, the greatest event ever, but you'll have to be patient).

This article was supposed to go along with that collection of bicycling articles but it never did. It's been sitting waiting.

Bicycles were exceedingly popular in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The new mode of transportation increased mobility, and so freedom, and popularity exploded. There were cycling clubs it seemed in every town and city and people bicycled everywhere. The bicycle enabled people to visit friends who lived farther away. They could go to neighboring towns and work farther from home. The new freedom played into the women's movement as well. Of course the automobile would eclipse the bicycle but that would still be a few years away.

By the beginning of the 20th century the world had been "circumcycled" by bicycle and there had been many cross-country trips.

In 1897 Margaret Valentine Le Long decided she needed to bicycle from Chicago to San Francisco. She had been visiting in Chicago and decided to bicycle home for "enjoyment." Those near her tried to dissuade her. Those who were farther away tried to dissuade her by mail. She would die of thirst, be abducted by cowboys, scalped by Indians, starve, or break her arms and legs. Instead of listening Margaret put on a suitable skirt, got thicker soles for her shoes, and packed a change of underwear, a hanky, toiletries, a pistol, and her tool bag on her bike and embarked. This was a remarkable challenge. She was going to go two-thirds of the way across the country and she was going to do it alone. Margaret was not an imposing figure; she was only 5'2" and weighed just 114 lbs.

She dealt with rain, lightning, cold, mud, sand, bogs, hunger, accidents and spills, hunger, "black muck roads," and her greatest fear, tramps. When the roads were bumpy, which was often, she was riding a "bucking bronco of a bicycle." In Iowa she said "the road will go several miles out of its way to climb a hill ; in Nebraska it makes some attempt to

go around." Leaving Iowa she shook her fist "at the black muck roads and bluffs... It didn't hurt Iowa and it relieved my feelings." There's a bit of Mark Twain in those quotes.

The improvement was not permanent. "Eastern Nebraska is next door to Paradise ; Western Nebraska is next door to the other place." For seven years there had been a drought and the homesteaders had almost all been starved out. The "soddies," or sod houses, showed the state of the local economy, "the poor deserted 'soddies' with the wind howling through the broken doors and windows, and flapping the remaining wings of the windmill, is a mid-day nightmare not soon forgotten." One after another was deserted. There was no chance even for a drink of water.

Then Le Long found an inhabited 'soddy' and approached finding an "old woman with bare feet, and a face like badly tanned leather, [who] was feeding some pigs by the door. I told her I wanted something to eat - anything, everything she had." Her "bicycler's appetite, sharpened by Nebraska wind" helped her ignore the sagebrush flavored milk and sour bread.



Maargaret Valentine Le Long from "Alone and Awheel."

The road turned bad, "up and down, in and out, over rocks

Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel. It gives woman a feeling of freedom and self-reliance.”

Susan B. Anthony.

and through sand... There must have been merry mix-up when that country was in course of construction.” She received dents, bruises and abrasions as she forgot she was riding a “bucking bronco of a bicycle” and paid too much attention to the Wyoming scenery and wrecked.

She lost the road, had an accident, was taken in by kindly residents, faced down wild cattle with her gun, and a thunderstorm. It was “beautiful, grand, awe inspiring, but not encouraging to a lone woman without an umbrella.” She pedaled faster with each lightning flash “Great, bold, black mountains loomed above me on all sides... At every flash I put on more speed, but seemed to make about as much headway as one does in a nightmare.” She saw a prairie dog that barked and then a snake which gave her comfort that she was not alone.



She also saw “scenery...beautiful beyond description” and was treated well by almost all she met.

She crossed the Nevada desert by following the railroad tracks because the “wagon road has a habit of disappearing in the most unaccountable manner...” After leaving Reno and heading into California the roads were good and the “scenery beautiful, and the water like wine after the alkali of the desert. At every turn I felt my spirits rise...” She mentioned that those who have traveled on the train, stuck in the snowsheds have only “tantalizing glimpses” of the beauty between Truckee and Blue Canyon. That scenery “amply repaid me for the many miles I had to walk and push my wheel up the long, steep hills.”

In the end Margaret had taken 90 days to cover 2000 miles. Her best day was 86 miles and she walked an average of 10 miles a day. (Hayward Daily Review September 24, 1897)

### Long Ride for a Plucky Woman

August 1 from San Francisco: “A slender little woman had ridden from Chicago to San Francisco on her wheel, with no companion, and is now resting here after her perilous trip.”

August 2, 1897  
Chicago Tribune

She ended her account with some fashion advice to her “cycling sisters.” She never felt the need to discard the skirt to ride in bloomers and felt it was the skirt that accounted for how well she was treated. Bicycling in a “medium-short skirt, properly cut” is the right costume. “Leather shoes laced to the knee I find to be the neatest and most comfortable footwear.” The Hayward Daily Review said, “She is a muscular woman as few women are, and is brown as the proverbial berry, for she even tanned her hands through her thick chamois gloves.” She lost eight pounds she didn’t need to lose on the trip. She was glad she’d made the trip although she did not want to do it again “at least not ‘til a season has passed.”



# This Was a Time... The Context

When Margaret Le Long rode to San Francisco on her bicycle it was a time when many felt that bicycle riding was dangerous to women. Bicycle riding encouraged the wearing of bloomers or even pants. It redefined femininity. It was revolutionary.

Clothing styles changed with the coming of bicycles from rigid Victorian styles to looser clothing that allowed movement and athletic activities. That was dangerous because the new freedom might encourage irresponsible behavior. Then there were the health problems like "bicycle face." The bicycle face was flushed or pale, the lips were drawn and there would be dark shadows under the eyes, weariness and a hard clenched jaw and bulging eyes. It was caused by overexertion necessary to keep upright and keep balanced. It must have been a horror.

If bicycle face was not enough, others said bicycling was too taxing and could lead to all kinds of health problems resulting in headaches, insomnia, depression, and heart troubles. Bicycling could also ruin the "feminine organs of matrimonial necessity" or it caused bicycle eye caused by having to look forward while the neck was bent.

The unconscious effort to maintain one's balance tends to produce a wearied and exhausted 'bicycle face.'"

*Literary Digest*, 1895

## Symptoms of Bicycle Face

flushed face  
lips draw  
dark shadows under the eyes  
weary expression  
hard clenched jaw  
bulging eyes

Munsey's Magazine, 1896: "To men, the bicycle in the beginning was merely a new toy, another machine added to the long list of devices they knew in their work and play. To women, it was a steed upon which they rode into a new world."

**Old Time Sunday Drive**

**Next Time Take Scenic Old Hwy 40 instead of I-80**

**HISTORIC ROUTE 40**

Historic Towns  
Interesting Scenery  
Fascinating History  
Picnic Spots  
A Slower Pace

Take a look at our guide to Old Highway 40: turn by turn instructions from Redding to Truckee, broken into four legs and including pictures and history.

And while you are at it, check out the 20 Mile Museum - interpretive signs from Nyack to before Donner Summit on Old 40. Information at [www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY PRINCETON, N.J.

# OUTING

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OF

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# Phil Sexton and the San Mateo

Readers will remember that in the January [Heirloom](#) the page one story was about the first locomotives over Donner Summit – another one of the examples that people in the old days were much tougher than we are today.

We have 813 subscribers and some of you send in suggestions along with appreciations for the monthly [Heirlooms](#). One of our readers is Phil Sexton who used to be a USFS ranger at Big Bend on Donner Summit and has a wealth of information about Summit history. Some years ago he moved to Sacramento to work at the State Railroad Museum. He read the January issue and the page one story struck a cord. He sent in some good information and links you might like to explore.

First, he noted that the San Mateo, the first locomotive over the summit was a twin of a locomotive that still exists, the C. P. Huntington. That locomotive occupies and place of honor at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento (there was a photo in the January issue and there's another on the next page) from which Phil just got a promotion. He mentioned that the Huntington was featured in a 1946 [Popular Science](#) issue ([http://espee.railfan.net/sp\\_steam\\_cph.html](http://espee.railfan.net/sp_steam_cph.html)). If you make the model be sure to let us know.

Phil believes that the location of the 1924 John Ford “Iron Horse” movie’s taking of the locomotive over the summit was, “If you look at the scene carefully, it appears that they are pulling the loco over the pass on the Lincoln Highway route, which would make logistical sense. It may also be in the area of the current Kinder-Morgan pipeline, but I really think that it’s the highway route.” It would be great to know the exact location of the route they were trying to take. Go back to the January [Heirloom](#) and see what you think.

Parenthetically our research department had read that the scene in the “Iron Horse” was done on location near Truckee. The date was the end of 1923 or the beginning of 1924. Ah ha! Something like that would have been newsworthy in 1923/24 and would have been covered in the local newspaper. Down to the local library we went where they have microfilm versions. The last reel is for the fall of 1923, a month or two early. There is nothing later. Well we’re not easily flummoxed. The next stop was the State Library in Sacramento where they have newspapers from across the State – all the newspapers. Their collection was also lacking. The next stop was the Sierra Sun office in Truckee which has inherited the [Truckee Republican](#) archives. We put in a request and waited anxiously for them to check the archives in Carson City. Weeks later, they said they don’t have any that old.

You can imagine the disappointment. There is apparently no way to see what was in



Photos by Phil Sexton

the news in early 1924 in Truckee. So that takes care of the rather long parenthetical digression.

Phil Sexton went on: “If you’re familiar with the TV show “Hell on Wheels,” they show generally this episode [the locomotive going over Donner Summit] in season 5, and it’s kind of hilarious because it’s obviously shot on a ski slope (it was done at Banff, actually) but they did break the prop down more as it would have been during the actual events than Ford did for “Iron Horse.” I was a consultant for the show, and though I didn’t see this scene be filmed, I talked with the producer and writers as they were preparing the episode, and I’ve always been pleased that they didn’t show the loco fully assembled [photos here are by Phil Sexton]. Unfortunately I lost the argument about the smokestack. In the scene, it does have the smokestack attached, which probably would not have been mounted. The director told me that this was necessary for the viewer to clearly understand that this was a locomotive. Such is artistic license. You can see a bit of this scene at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV93mS2Thtg> if you go to about 2:07 in the video. If you find the episode on Netflix (I can’t recall which one it is, but it’s in season five, maybe the 2nd or 3rd) it’s a pretty interesting sequence.

“The actual locos that the show used were props, not working replicas. I was able to visit the set while they shot the finale and these props were light enough for six grips to detach the drive rods and roll both locos into place for the Promontory scenes. The smoke was a vaporized ammonia solution, which is why it’s always white in the show, and the cabs were pretty sparse, with a throttle, a boiler door and a couple of fake gauges, along with a bell rope. They are designed with a “steampunk” ethos, quite different than the polished, shiny locos in the day. This is another compromise with two intents—one, to show the dirty reality of the times, but also to appeal to millennials, and even the steampunk look caused a ripple in the railroad fan community. There’s a video about these props online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoLc1EZsRig> that’s kind of interesting. I’ve attached a couple of photos of the props themselves during the shooting of the finale.

“The show is pretty silly in many respects, but in November I did a talk at the National Interpreter’s Workshop about working



C.P. Huntington at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. Photo by Phil Sexton

with film and television companies based on the work I did with the show and some other productions, and if you look at the films that dramatize the building of the railroad, you're kind of limited. The films include:

"The Iron Horse," 1924, Ford, Fox Film

"Union Pacific," 1939, DeMille, Paramount

"How the West Was Won," 1962, RR Sequence directed by George Marshall, MGM

"There are some other films that contain references to the transcontinental railroad as background info, but these films purport to show building activity and some detail. None of them are able to explore these events in as much detail, or oddly enough, as culturally appropriately (in an odd way; this is fictional drama after all) as "Hell on Wheels" did. Part of the reason is that they had much more time. They aired 57 episodes, totalling 47 hours of content. Additionally, this is a 21st century production, designed to appeal to today's more diverse audiences, and they were consciously making metaphorical statements about today in terms of race, ethnicity and capitalism. It's not accurate in any respect overall, but generally the show was respectful to culture and race. But I've always been impressed that they, more than DeMille or Ford, created story lines and explored the CPRR story more than other dramas chose to do."

Thank you Phil. Other readers with interesting things to share, please do: [info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org).

# From the DSHS Archives

## Donner Area – In Case You Want to Go Skiing

From the Oakland Tribune January 21, 1938

DONNER TRAIL RECREATION AREA – Along U.S. Highway 40 from Emigrant Gap to Donner Lake over Donner Pass (7315), distance 25 miles. Parking: Areas along highway at Cisco, Norden and other Winter sports centers. Ski jumps: Auburn Ski Club, Cisco, Class A and B, smaller jumps at other ski centers. Ski runs: Unlimited opportunities for amateur skiing. Up-ski: Auburn ski club, Cisco, cable car: 10c per ride, \$1.00 per day. Soda Springs, double cable car; 15c per ride, \$1.50 per day. Donner Summit, up-ski: week days 50c half-day or 75c per day, week-ends \$1.00 per day. Toboggan slide: No permanent slides but snow [unreadable] on safe slopes on sports areas. Ski trails: From Auburn Ski Club, Cisco to Mt. McIntosh. 3 trails, 2 miles each; To Devils Peak, 10 miles; to Cisco Buttes, 3 miles. All posted. From Soda Springs to Devils Peak, 5 miles, 20 miles posted; to Mt. Lincoln, 4 miles, posted. From Sierra Club, Norden, to Mt. Lincoln, 2 miles; to Cold Stream, 4 miles; to Castle Peak, 3 ½ miles, to White Rock 7 miles, All posted. Recommended for amateur skiers-Mt. McIntosh ski trail No. 2 and Crest trail from Norden to Castle Peak. Shelters, equipment, instruction, meals, lodging, first aid in areas. 50 inches of snow at Norden, Soda Springs, Cisco and 36 at Emigrant Gap, Highway open, Skid chains compulsory. Between 165-183 miles from Oakland. [sic]

## A Murder Near Cisco

Cisco, January 18th

An old colored man, known as Uncle Billy, was murdered in his cabin, just above town last night. He was found by a neighbor about eight o'clock this morning, lying with his head resting on a folded comforter, against the side of the fireplace, as if he had been sleeping when the murderer entered and struck him three or four blows with an ax, one across the jaw to the back of the neck, almost severing the head from the body, and two or three others on the face and forehead, cutting open the skull and exposing the brain in the most horrible manner. Robbery was doubtless the object of the murder, as Uncle Billy was supposed to have money and had been seen to receive pay for a lot of charcoal yesterday. No trace of the murderer has yet been found, a light fall of snow having hidden all tracks to and from the cabin.

January 19, 1867  
Sacramento Daily Union



# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



Cisco used to be a vibrant and active community. When it was the "end of track" while the tunnels of the railroad were being constructed on the summit, thousands of people lived in Cisco (see [Heirlooms](#) for November and December, '17 as well as "1867" in the July, '17 issue). Once the railroad was finished Cisco emptied. That was Upper Cisco. Lower Cisco sat where the Dutch Flat Rd. went through town. That too went away because with the railroad few used the old road. Later, Cisco Grove grew up along Highway 40 but that too mostly disappeared with the coming of I-80.

In the forest above Upper Cisco Art Clark found the remnants above: a swimming pool? reservoir? Huge foundation? Its use has been lost to time. Poke around up there and you'll find the remnants of the round table too but almost everything else that was Upper Cisco has been replaced by dense forest.

This is part of a series of miscellaneous history, "Odds & Ends" of Donner Summit. There are a lot of big stories on Donner Summit making it the most important historical square mile in California. All of those episodes\* left behind obvious traces. As one explores Donner Summit, though, one comes across a lot of other things related to the rich history. All of those things have stories too and we've been collecting them. Now they're making appearances in the [Heirloom](#).

\*Native Americans; first wagon trains to California; the first transcontinental railroad, highway, air route, and telephone line, etc.

# Book Review

The Inventor and the Tycoon: A Gilded Age Murder and the Birth of Moving Pictures Edward Ball 2013 464 pages

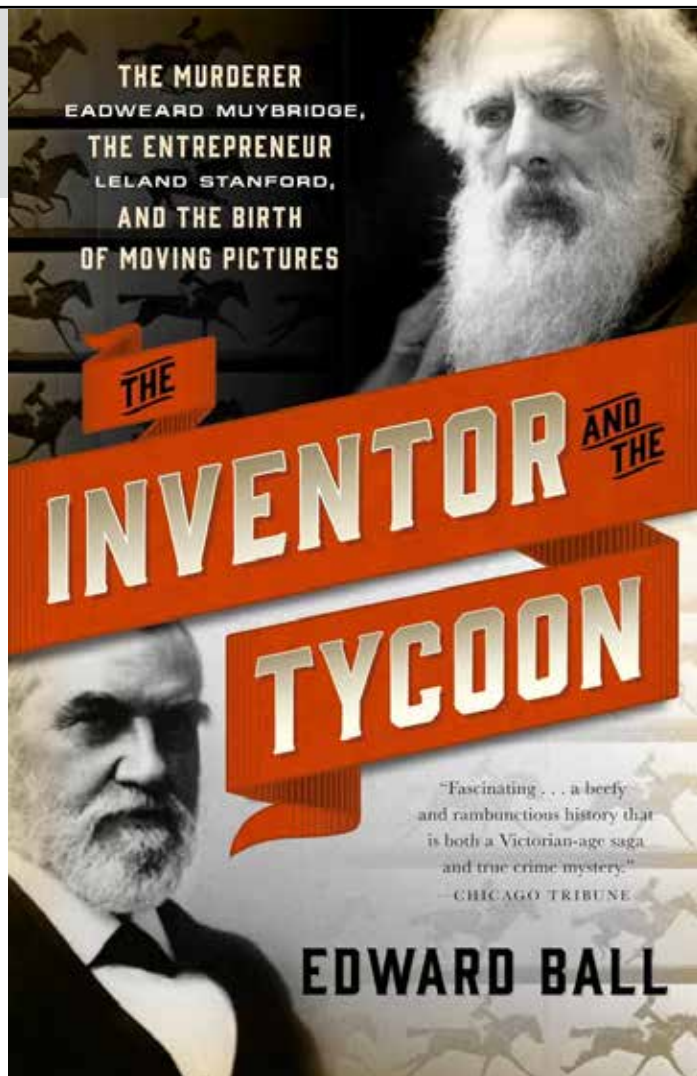
The Inventor and the Tycoon is an interesting book because it has so much to tell. That also might be a weakness because there is so much.

The story is about Eadweard Muybridge's and Leland Stanford's backgrounds and careers. It is about the transcontinental railroad. It is about Muybridge's investigation into photography and motion. It is about early motion picture history. It is about Muybridge's murder of his wife's lover, the trial, and his acquittal. There are also small stories such as the background of Flora Muybridge's lover. That's a lot. Any one of those topics could be a book and is. Edward Ball, the author, covers all that extensively (his footnotes and bibliography are extensive). To put it all together Ball goes back and forth in time so the book is mostly not a linear progression.

The theme of the book is that together, Stanford and Muybridge "married the camera to the railroad and became the inventor of moving pictures." That's a bit overdrawn but you get the point.

Muybridge was an interesting and maybe weird guy. He did fit the age of wonder (see at least the June, '16 Heirloom for that theme) that was the 19th Century. He was an inventor and he advanced technology. He "captured time and played it back." In inventing ways to photograph motion, study motion, and develop primitive moving pictures and in his landscape photography Muybridge was brilliant. He was also a bit strange especially in that he changed the spelling of his name a few times. He was enigmatic and apparently not so good at interpersonal relationships. He was also a murderer.

The name is the first thing. Mr. Muybridge started life as Muggeridge but changed his name to Muybridge, Muygridge, Helios, and Eduardo Santiago at various times. He also varied the spelling of Edward. He started adulthood in England selling books and art. He was an inventor in his 30's inventing the hand crank washing machine which was a failure. He went into business later and then mining but never found success until he found photography. By age 49 he was in San Francisco and the best known photographer. As a landscape photographer, he apparently didn't like photographing people, he popularized Yosemite. Muybridge lived there for five months in 1867 and Ball posits that American landscape photography began at Yosemite with Muybridge. It should be noted that Carleton Watkins had been there the year before photographing the landscape (see December, '16 Heirloom: Carleton Watkins The Complete Mammoth Photographs).



At age 44 in 1874, two years after marrying Flora Downs who was 23 when she married, Muybridge took a carriage to St. Helena and shot his wife's lover. Muybridge and his wife were completely mismatched and so when he was off traveling to photograph, Flora was meeting Harry Larkyns, "the prince of confidence men." Murder is not normal behavior of course but as a murderer Muybridge wasn't even what one would consider a normal murderer. He was jealous and had someone drive him in a carriage 75 miles north of San Francisco to St. Helena. There he found Larkyns and shot him in the chest. Then he apologized to the others in the building for the disturbance.

There is a lot of detail in the book about the murder and subsequent trial.

The book is full of information and tells many stories. There are lots of old Muybridge photographs and series of motion. There are historical photographs of the beginning of the motion pictures industry. Within all the information there are some obvious inaccuracies that leave the reader wondering if everything else is true. For example Ball says that St. Helena is 75 miles east of San Francisco. It's not east; it's north. He says that Napa Valley lies between "two courses of the Sierra

Nevada Range.” There are not “two courses of the Sierra Nevada Range” and that makes one wonder what sources Mr. Ball was consulting. The time frame for Tunnel 6 on Donner Summit is wrong too.

Then too, there are some asides that just don’t need to be in the book. There was no reason to be speculating about Muybridge’s sex life. Since Ball didn’t know anything about it and said that, it doesn’t advance the narrative.

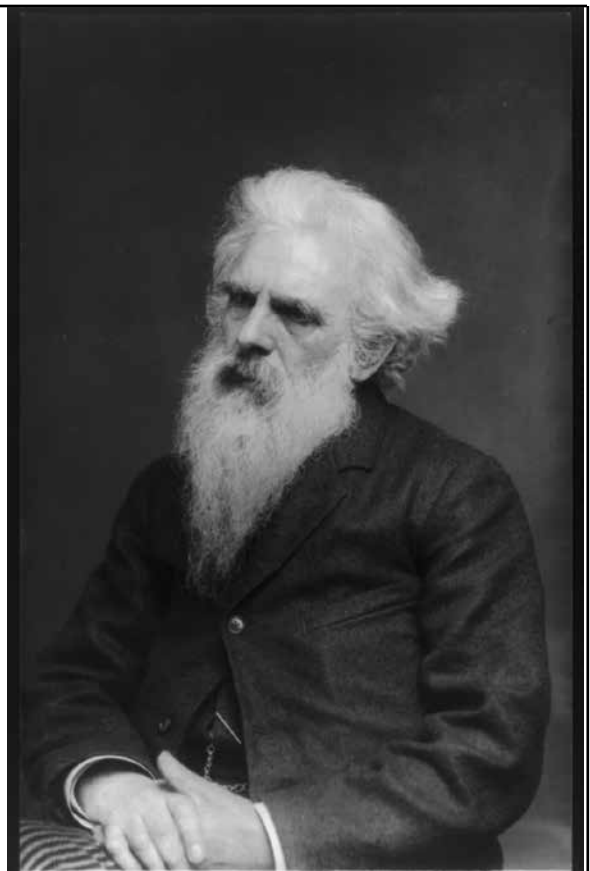
That brings up another weakness. There are lots of facts in the book given that there are so many stories to tell. Eadweard Muybridge’s life, though, has a lot of holes in it. Ball doesn’t want to leave the holes though, so he speculates to fill them with suppositions that are unsupported. There are lots of examples: “may have turned Ted [Eadweard] in a way to cause him to withdraw,” it might have made him even more irregular or mischievous, Ted may have looked up to his older brother, or we can “speculate about what prompted” change. There are lots of “may’s”, “He might have,” “It may have been that”, “It is possible to guess,” “we can imagine,” “although he never mentioned it he may have had a gun”, or “this might be conjecture.” Leaving the holes in Muybridge’s life and focusing where there are no holes such as Leland Stanford’s life or the early film industry, there are no speculations and lots of verifiable facts.

Then there is silliness. According to the author “Muggeridge” rhymes with “bugger” and that’s why Muybridge might have changed his name. Another good one, “...did Justice Stanford operate a bordello.” It’s unnecessary speculation unless there is proof.

Given that there is such a wealth of stories and attendant information there is no reason for all the suppositions. The narrative could have been tightened a lot without the guessing and tightened even more by leaving out excess detail.

That said, there is a lot of detail about Muybridge’s work speeding up photography and leading to projecting motion in very short moving pictures. Eventually that would open whole new fields of entertainment. So whereas most people who know of Muybridge know about the bet he won for Leland Stanford, Muybridge was much more but he was also a bit weird which is maybe what some genius requires.

If you want to page through more than a thousand Muybridge photographs of Yosemite, Donner Summit, Lake Tahoe, the railroad, San Francisco, etc. go to <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6t1nb6w7/> Then click on “online items available” which is in red small print.



Eadweard Muybridge



Flora Muybridge

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