

The Donner Summit

Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

October, 2018 issue #122

Stage Travel - Not So Easy in the Old Days

“Last Sunday night, says the Virginia Enterprise, of the 17th, when Wells, Fargo & Co.’s fast freight stage arrived at Crystal Lake, near the summit Nevada [sic], on the Donner Lake route, a man who had been riding on the back part of the stage got off and walked into the house, and as he approached the fire he fell on the floor and expired. A doctor who examined the body said that the deceased had “frozen to death.””

Sonoma Democrat October 27, 1866

Crystal Lake, today, is just south of the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80. Go to the south side of the freeway, up the hill to the RR tracks and across and follow the old road. The lake is private property today but was a hotel and train station in the 19th Century.

Cisco - background

Today it's Cisco Grove but when it was named it was just Cisco, although there was Upper Cisco which was up the hill and at the railroad line, and Lower Cisco which was down by the river and the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. Upper Cisco disappeared as did Lower Cisco to be replaced by Cisco Grove which is a small vacation home community along Old Highway 40. Even that community is much smaller than in its heyday when it sat astride Highway 40 and catered to tourists. The coming of the freeway put an end to that.

Back to Cisco. Originally called Heatonville, it was named for John J. Cisco who was treasurer of the CPRR. He had been assistant NY State Treasurer. In that position he'd helped provide stability to state finances when

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Dashed to Death A Frightful Accident Caused by Runaway Freight Train

Four Men Killed and Several Others Badly Injured.

A Collision Occurs in the Snowsheds – Nar- row Escape of Railroad Men and a Passenger Train

[Saturday August 23, 1890
Daily Alta California]

“A terrible railroad accident occurred this morning at Cascade [just below Cascade Lakes, west of Kidd Lake] killing four men and seriously wounding another.”

Freight train 19 was seven hours late and was followed by another freight, #23. While taking on more cars at the summit the air brakes on #19 failed. “Seventeen cars and a caboose began backing down the steep mountain grade.” The conductor, seeing the danger of escaped railroad cars, jumped onto the escaping cars and began setting the brakes by hand. “The runaway was tearing down the steep grade with constantly increasing speed the efforts of the heroic conductor having no perceptible effect.” A track walker at Summit valley thought he only saw two cars rush past him since the train was going so fast and only heard a rushing sound and saw dust. #23 had gotten almost onto a side track at Cascade just as the escaped cars from #19 sped by “at a speed of one hundred and fifty miles an hour.” Unfortunately #23's caboose was still on the main track as the escaped cars approached.

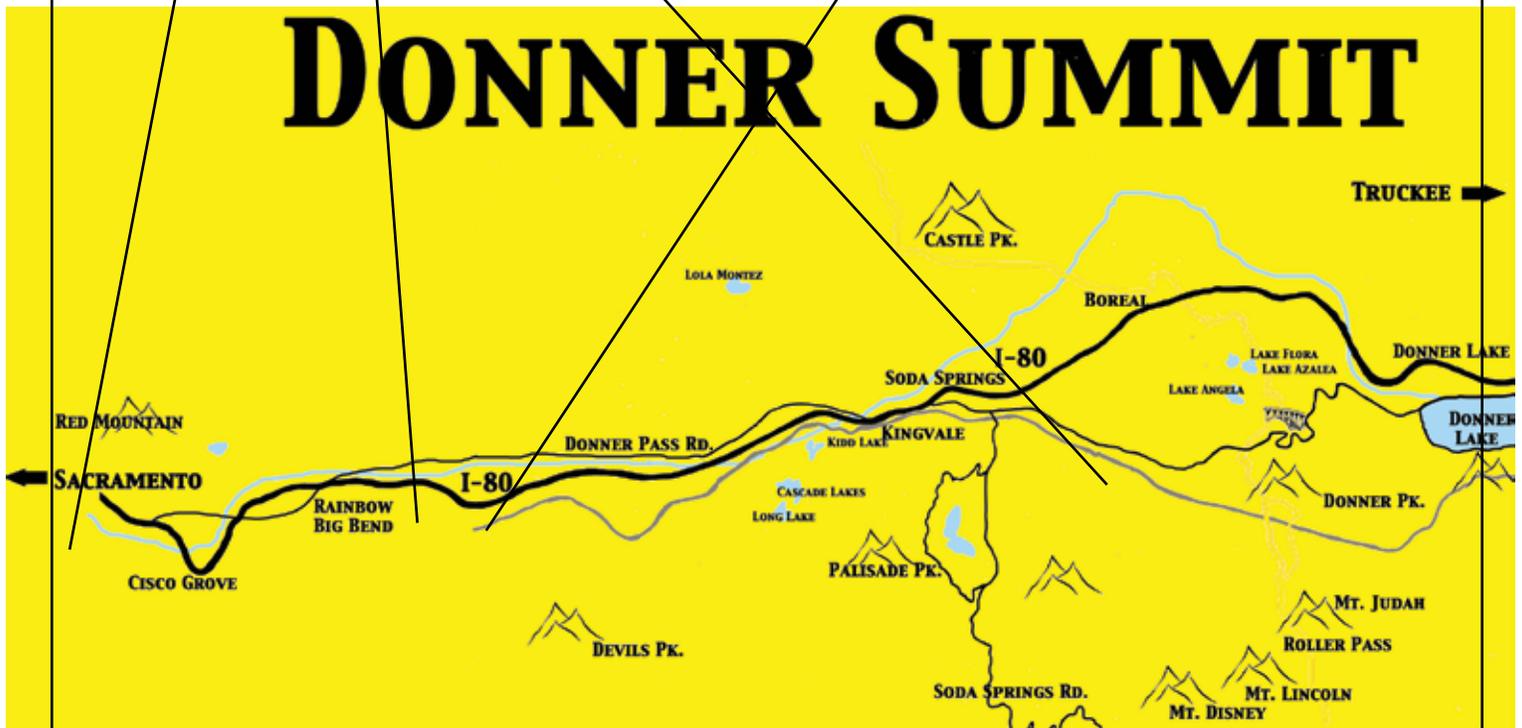
“There was a mighty roar as of a prolonged peel of thunder” 302' of new showsheds, and railroad track, the telegraph station, and twenty cars “Were swept into a broken, confused, indescribable mass, portions of which extended far down the

steep bank toward the Yuba River.” The telegraph operator was awakened by his house heading downhill atop the caboose of #23. On top of his bed he was in “a clear space just large enough to hold him and his bed in the midst of the horrible debris.” He climbed out a rear window, bruised and with two crushed toes. There were two hundred carpenters and bridge-builders nearby who rushed to the rescue. They’d been working on the new steel bridge at Cascade.

“The wreckage was piled twenty feet high. Cars were crushed to fragments, trucks, axles, wheels and steel rails were twisted and broken like pipe-stems. The strong shed timbers were ground to splinters, and freight of every conceivable description was mingled through the entire mass.” The body of the hero conductor, Frank Kingsley, was found. His head been “torn entirely off, only the skin of the face remaining.” “The last that mortal eye beheld of Conductor Kingsley was just before the awful crash. He was standing on top of one of the cars heroically setting the brakes. He died at his post...”

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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

The Heirloom researchers cast about for historical sources having to do with Donner Summit. Despite the title of this excerpt there is Donner Summit and Truckee in the story. Isabella Bird (pictured below left) crossed the U.S. by train on her way back to England and of course went over Donner Summit. She wrote about her adventures in a series of letters to her sister starting in September and ending in December of 1872, only three years after the transcontinental railroad had been completed. Her first letter begins the story in California on the way to the Sierra, Truckee, and Lake Tahoe, including, of course, Donner Summit. You can read a bit about Ms Bird on page 11. She sounds like an amazing person.

This is letter 1 and it's been edited for length but we've left a lot so you can get an idea of life in the Truckee area in 1872. Isabella's descriptions of scenery are almost poetic. Next month we'll get to letters 2 and 3 which will cover Isabella's understanding of the Donner Party and the snow-sheds.

A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains, 1872

Isabella Bird

Going from the Sandwich Islands back to England across American continent.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/755/755-h/755-h.htm>

Shivering in the keen, frosty air near the summit pass of the Sierras, we entered the "snow-sheds," wooden galleries, which for about fifty miles shut out all the splendid views of the region, as given in dioramas, not even allowing a glimpse of "the Gem of the Sierras," the lovely Donner Lake. One of these sheds is twenty-seven miles long. In a few hours the mercury had fallen from 103 degrees to 29 degrees, and we had ascended 6,987 feet in 105 miles! After passing through the sheds, we had several grand views of a pine forest on fire before reaching Truckee at 11 P.M. having traveled 258 miles. Truckee, the center of the "lumbering region" of the Sierras, is usually spoken of as "a rough mountain town," and Mr. W. had told me that all the roughs of the district congregated there, that there were nightly pistol affrays in bar-rooms, etc., but as he admitted that a lady was sure of respect, and Mr. G. strongly advised me to stay and see the lakes, I got out, much dazed, and very stupid with sleep, envying the people in the sleeping car, who were already unconscious on their luxurious couches. The cars drew up in a street— if street that could be called which was only a wide, cleared space, intersected by rails, with here and there a stump, and great piles of sawn logs bulking big in the moonlight, and a

number of irregular clap-board, steep-roofed houses, many of them with open fronts, glaring with light and crowded with men. We had pulled up at the door of a rough Western hotel, with a partially open front, being a bar-room crowded with men drinking and smoking, and the space between it and the cars was a moving mass of loafers and passengers. On the tracks, engines, tolling heavy bells, were mightily moving, the glare from their cyclopean eyes dulling the light of a forest which was burning fitfully on a mountain side; and on open spaces great fires of pine logs were burning cheerily, with groups of men round them. A band was playing noisily, and the unholy sound of tom-toms was not far off. Mountains—the Sierras of many a fireside dream—seemed to wall in the town, and great pines stood out, sharp and clear cut, against a sky in which a moon and stars were shining frostily.

Shivering in the keen, frosty air near the summit pass of the Sierras, we entered the "snow-sheds," wooden galleries, which for about fifty miles shut out all the splendid views of the region, as given in dioramas, not even allowing a glimpse of "the Gem of the Sierras," the lovely Donner Lake.



It was a sharp frost at that great height, and when an "irrepressible nigger," who seemed to represent the hotel establishment, deposited me and my carpetbag in a room which answered for "the parlor," I was glad to find some remains of pine knots still alight in the stove. A man came in and said that when the cars were gone he would try to get me a room, but they were so full that it would be a very poor one. The crowd was solely masculine. It was then 11:30

P.M., and I had not had a meal since 6 A.M.; but when I asked hopefully for a hot supper, with tea, I was told that no supper could be got at that hour; but in half an hour the same man returned with a small cup of cold, weak tea, and a small slice of bread, which looked as if it had been much handled.

I asked the Negro factotum about the hire of horses, and presently a man came in from the bar who, he said, could supply my needs. This man, the very type of a Western pioneer, bowed, threw himself into a rocking-chair, drew a spittoon beside him, cut a fresh quid of tobacco, began to chew energetically, and put his feet, cased in miry high boots, into which his trousers were tucked, on the top of the stove. He said he had horses which would both "lope" and trot, that some ladies preferred the Mexican saddle,

that I could ride alone in perfect safety; and after a route had been devised, I hired a horse for two days. This man wore a pioneer's badge as one of the earliest settlers of California, but he had moved on as one place after another had become too civilized for him, "but nothing," he added, "was likely to change much in Truckee." I was afterwards told that the usual regular hours of sleep are not observed there. The accommodation is too limited for the population of 2,000, which is masculine mainly, and is liable to frequent temporary additions, and beds are occupied continuously, though by different occupants, throughout the greater part of the twenty-four hours. Consequently I found the bed and room allotted to me quite tumbled looking. Men's coats and sticks were hanging up, miry boots were littered about, and a rifle was in one corner. There was no window to the outer air, but I slept soundly, being only once awoken by an increase of the same din in which I had fallen asleep, varied by three pistol shots fired in rapid succession.

This morning Truckee wore a totally different aspect. The crowds of the night before had disappeared. There were heaps of ashes where the fires had been. A sleepy German waiter seemed the only person about the premises, the open drinking saloons were nearly empty, and only a few sleepy-looking loafers hung about in what is called the street. It might have been Sunday; but they say that it brings a great accession of throng and jollity. Public worship has died out at present; work is discontinued on Sunday, but the day is given up to pleasure. Putting a minimum of indispensables into a bag, and slipping on my Hawaiian riding dress^[3] over a silk skirt, and a dust cloak over all, I stealthily crossed the plaza to the livery stable, the largest building in Truckee, where twelve fine horses were stabled in stalls on each side of a broad drive. My friend of the evening before showed me his "rig," three velvet-covered side-saddles almost without horns. Some ladies, he said, used the horn of the Mexican saddle, but none "in the part" rode cavalier fashion. I felt abashed. I could not ride any distance in the conventional mode, and was just going to give up this splendid "ravage," when the man said, "Ride your own fashion; here, at Truckee, if anywhere in the world, people can do as they like." Blissful Truckee! In no time a large grey horse was "rigged out" in a handsome silver-bossed Mexican saddle, with ornamental leather tassels hanging from the stirrup guards, and a housing of black bear's-skin. I strapped my silk skirt on the saddle, deposited my cloak in the corn-bin, and was safely on the horse's back before his owner had time to devise any way of mounting me. Neither he nor any of the loafers who had assembled showed the slightest sign of astonishment, but all were as respectful as possible.

[3] For the benefit of other lady travelers, I wish to explain that my "Hawaiian riding dress" is the "American Lady's Mountain Dress," a half-fitting jacket, a skirt reaching to the ankles, and full Turkish trousers gathered into frills falling over the boots,—a thoroughly serviceable and feminine costume for mountaineering and other rough traveling, as in the Alps or any other part of the world. I. L. B.

Once on horseback my embarrassment disappeared, and I rode through Truckee, whose irregular, steep-roofed houses and shanties, set down in a clearing and surrounded closely by mountain and forest, looked like a temporary encampment; passed under the Pacific Railroad; and then for twelve miles followed the windings of the Truckee River, a clear, rushing, mountain stream, in which immense pine logs had gone aground not to be floated off till the next freshet, a loud-tongued, rollicking stream of ice-cold water, on whose banks no ferns or trailers hang, and which leaves no greenness along its turbulent progress.

All was bright with that brilliancy of sky and atmosphere, that blaze of sunshine and universal glitter, which I never saw till I came to California, combined with an elasticity in the air which removed all lassitude, and gives one spirit enough for anything. On either side of the Truckee great sierras [sic] rose like walls, castellated, embattled, rifted, skirted and crowned with pines of enormous size, the

walls now and then breaking apart to show some snow-slashed peak rising into a heaven of intense, unclouded, sunny blue. At this altitude of 6,000 feet one must learn to be content with varieties of Coniferae, for, except for aspens, which spring up in some places where the pines have been cleared away, and for cotton-woods, which at a lower level fringe the streams, there is nothing but the bear cherry, the raspberry, the gooseberry, the wild grape, and the wild currant. None of these grew near the Truckee, but I feasted my eyes on pines which, though not so large as the Wellingtonia of the Yosemite, are really gigantic, attaining a height of 250 feet, their huge stems, the warm red of cedar wood, rising straight and branchless for a third of their height, their diameter from seven to fifteen feet, their shape that of a larch, but with the needles long and dark, and cones a foot long. Pines cleft the sky; they were massed wherever level ground occurred; they stood over the Truckee at right angles, or lay across it in prostrate grandeur. Their stumps and carcasses were everywhere; and smooth "shoots" on the sierras marked where they were shot down as "felled timber," to be floated off by the river. To them this wild region owes its scattered population, and the sharp ring of the lumberer's axe mingles with the cries of wild beasts and the roar of mountain torrents.

The beauty is entrancing.
The sinking sun is out of sight behind the western Sierras, and all the pine-hung promontories on this side of the water are rich indigo, just reddened with lake, deepening here and there into Tyrian purple. The peaks above, which still catch the sun, are bright rose-red, and all the mountains on the other side are pink; and pink, too, are the far-off summits on which the snow-drifts rest.

The track is a soft, natural, wagon road, very pleasant to ride on. The horse was much too big for me, and had plans of his own; but now and then, where the ground admitted to it, I tried his heavy "lope" with much amusement. I met nobody, and passed nothing on the road but a freight wagon, drawn by twenty-two oxen, guided by three fine-looking men, who had some difficulty in making room for me to pass their awkward convoy. After I had ridden about ten miles the road went up a steep hill in the forest, turned abruptly, and through the blue gloom of the great pines which rose from the ravine in which the river was then hid, came glimpses of two mountains, about 11,000 feet in height, whose bald grey summits were crowned with pure snow. It was one of those glorious surprises in scenery which make one feel as if one must bow down and worship. The forest was thick, and had an undergrowth of dwarf spruce and brambles, but as the horse had become fidgety and "scary" on the track, I turned off in the idea of taking a short cut, and was sitting carelessly, shortening my stirrup, when a great, dark, hairy beast rose, crashing and snorting, out of the tangle just in front of me. I had only a glimpse of him, and thought that my imagination had magnified a wild boar, but it was a bear. The horse snorted and plunged violently, as if he would go down to the river, and then turned, still plunging, up a steep bank, when, finding that I must come off, I threw myself off on the right side, where the ground rose considerably, so that I had not far to fall. I got up covered with dust, but neither shaken nor bruised. It was truly grotesque and humiliating. The bear ran in one direction, and the horse in another. I hurried after the latter, and twice he stopped till I was close to him, then turned round and cantered away. After walking about a mile in deep dust, I picked up first the saddle-blanket and next my bag, and soon came upon the horse, standing facing me, and shaking all over. I thought I should catch him then, but when I went up to him he turned round, threw up his heels several times, rushed off the track, galloped in circles, bucking, kicking, and plunging for some time, and then throwing up his heels as an act of final defiance, went off at full speed in the direction of Truckee, with the saddle over his shoulders and the great wooden stirrups thumping his sides, while I trudged ignominiously along in the dust, laboriously carrying the bag and saddle-blanket.

I walked for nearly an hour, heated and hungry, when to my joy I saw the ox-team halted across the top of a gorge, and one of the teamsters leading the horse towards me. The young man said that, seeing the horse coming, they had drawn the team across the road to stop him, and remembering that he had passed them with a lady on him, they feared that there had been an accident, and had just saddled one of their own horses to go in search of me. He brought me some water to wash the dust from my face, and re-saddled the horse, but the animal snorted and plunged for some time before he would let me mount, and then sidled along in such a nervous and scared way, that the teamster walked for some distance by me to see that I was "all right." He said that the woods in the neighborhood of Tahoe had been full of brown and grizzly bears for some days, but that no one was in any danger from

them. I took a long gallop beyond the scene of my tumble to quiet the horse, who was most restless and troublesome.

Then the scenery became truly magnificent and bright with life. Crested blue-jays darted through the dark pines, squirrels in hundreds scampered through the forest, red dragon-flies flashed like "living light," exquisite chipmunks ran across the track, but only a dusty blue lupin here and there reminded me of earth's fairer children. Then the river became broad and still, and mirrored in its transparent depths regal pines, straight as an arrow, with rich yellow and green lichen clinging to their stems, and firs and balsam pines filling up the spaces between them, the gorge opened, and this mountain-girdled lake lay before me, with its margin broken up into bays and promontories, most picturesquely clothed by huge sugar pines. It lay dimpling and scintillating beneath the noonday sun, as entirely unspoiled as fifteen years ago, when its pure loveliness was known only to trappers and Indians. One man lives on it the whole year round; otherwise early October strips its shores of their few inhabitants, and thereafter, for seven months, it is rarely accessible except on snowshoes. It never freezes. In the dense forests which bound it, and drape two-thirds of its gaunt sierras [sic], are hordes of grizzlies, brown bears, wolves, elk, deer, chipmunks, martens, minks, skunks, foxes, squirrels, and snakes. On its margin I found an irregular wooden inn, with a lumber-wagon at the door, on which was the carcass of a large grizzly bear, shot behind the house this morning. I had intended to ride ten miles farther, but, finding that the trail in some places was a "blind" one, and being bewitched by the beauty and serenity of Tahoe, I have remained here sketching, reveling in the view from the veranda, and strolling in the forest. At this height there is frost every night of the year, and my fingers are benumbed.

The beauty is entrancing. The sinking sun is out of sight behind the western Sierras, and all the pine-hung promontories on this side of the water are rich indigo, just reddened with lake, deepening here and there into Tyrian purple. The peaks above, which still catch the sun, are bright rose-red, and all the mountains on the other side are pink; and pink, too, are the far-off summits on which the snow-drifts rest. Indigo, red, and orange tints stain the still water, which lies solemn and dark against the shore, under the shadow of stately pines. An hour later, and a moon nearly full—not a pale, flat disc, but a radiant sphere—has wheeled up into the flushed sky. The sunset has passed through every stage of beauty, through every glory of color, through riot and triumph, through pathos and tenderness, into a long, dreamy, painless rest, succeeded by the profound solemnity of the moonlight, and a stillness broken only by the night cries of beasts in the aromatic forests.

I. L. B.

The next letter, slated for the Heirloom next month talks about Donner Lake, the snowsheds and Mr. Keseburg (of Donner Party fame).

Read more about Isabella Stone on page 10

From the DSHS Archives

If you like looking at old pictures then you'll probably like the pictures here. To fully enjoy these pictures, though, you should first see the February, '09 Heirloom which had an article about the "Remarkable Dennis Jones." He was quite amazing in his own right but there was more. His father was Oscar Jones who built the Soda Springs Hotel and his uncle was Virgil Jones who built on to Rainbow Tavern and built Nyack Lodge. To whet your appetite for looking up the February, '09 Heirloom, we should say Dennis started Soda Springs Ski Area and once did a trans-Sierra crossing on skis. He started the first ski school in California and put in the first ski lift on Donner Summit although it did not work. His niece, Starr Walton, sits on the DSHS board and she is the one who donated this scrapbook. Most of the pictures are from the 1930's and are around Lake Van Norden. Van Norden must have been an attractive place for summer bathing and other activities. The pictures are small and some show Muriel Jones' (Dennis' wife) sense of humor in the captions she cut from newspapers or periodicals to decorate them with. Unfortunately Muriel didn't label the pictures with labels helpful to us - like people's names.

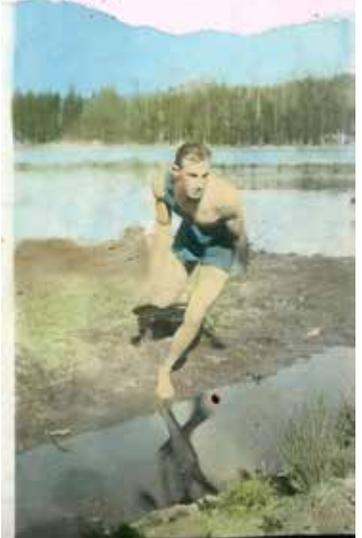
That said, "What's in Your Closet?" You may have old photos lying around or other artifacts. We can copy them and give them life.



BEE: "But I'm too young to marry."
BOB: "Well, I'm only proposing."



Virgil

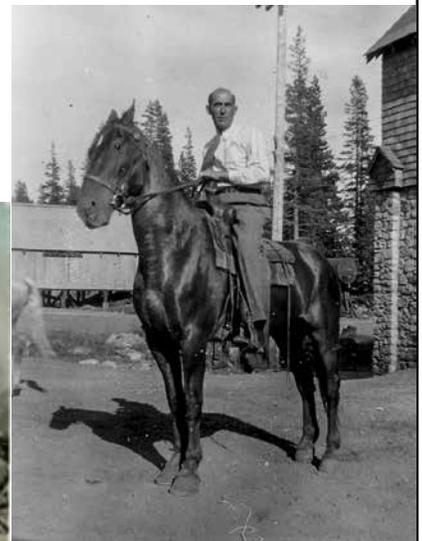


"Cuticura" is an anti-bacterial soap made since 1865

From the DSHS Archives



"What do you call your new car?"
"Passion."
"How come?"
"It's so hard to control."



WHOOPS, MY DEAR!



Oscar Jones



RR crossing at Soda Springs

Oscar Jones at the Soda Springs Hotel



At the service station at the blinking light in Soda Springs

Book Review

Hints to Transcontinental Tourists Traveling on the Lincoln Highway

FM Trego, chief engineer Lincoln Highway Association
1914 10 pages

This is a useful booklet for tourists who want to travel the Lincoln Highway in 1914. The inclusion of this review just goes to show the broad offerings of the DSHS. It's not just compelling stories of history on Donner Summit, but also practical advice for every day life. If you do the transcontinental crossing let us know or send us letters so we can follow your progress.

First some background. The Lincoln Highway was born in 1913 and over the ensuing years as existing roads were combined on maps to create the first transcontinental highway route. That highway was something boosters had been advocating for years and was much needed by the American economy. The Lincoln Highway came at a time when the Federal Government did not do large infrastructure projects. That would come later with the efforts to relieve the effects of the depression.

The Lincoln Highway Association was a private organization dedicated to the transcontinental route that not only would benefit the economy but be the first national commemoration of Abraham Lincoln. They believed, "continuous improved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, open to ...all..., without toll charges...."

Existing roads were strung together on maps to create the transcontinental route. The very first national engineering standards for roads were part of the project.

Lincoln Highway crossed 14 states, 128 counties, and went through 500 cities. The highway originally was 3,388.6 miles long, then reduced to 3,142.6 by making the route more direct and missing some towns. Highway 80 is 2900 miles long and basically parallels the Lincoln Highway.

It was tough going crossing the country even with the Lincoln Highway. For example, first transcontinental Army convoy in 1919 went 3,310 miles in 62 days averaging 53 miles per day. Dwight Eisenhower was on the trip and it was the memory of that trip that spurred Eisenhower to push for our present interstate highway system.

Another example of how hard travel was, was that the improvement that would be Lincoln Highway called for a design for the highway "predicated upon an average of 15,000 passenger automobiles per 24-hr. day traveling at a speed of 35 miles per hour and 5,000 motor trucks per 24-hr. day traveling at an average speed of 10 miles per hour.

35 MPH was for the best sections. Can you imagine traveling across Nevada at less than 35 MPH? This is maybe because in 1924 of the total length, 836 miles were paved, 1,650 miles were graded gravel, leaving the remaining 3,143 miles apparently not graded or graveled.

In 1913 it was estimated there were only 150 transcontinental trips by cars under their own power. By 1923 the number had grown to 20-25,000 automobiles. Where it used to take 60 days, by 1923 "20 days is an easy drive for anyone."

A few selected quotes illustrate the Lincoln Highway from later publications.

"There are many wonderful things to see as you pass along the Lincoln Highway, some historic, some scenic; but above all, the greatest impression which will be left with you will be the immense size of this, our country – the thickly settled East, with its farms and frequent houses, the vast rolling prairies of the Middle West, where the buffalo used to roam in countless herds, the



dreary deserts, the majestic mountains, and finally sweet California, wafting to you the odor of orange blossoms and roses with the breeze as you approach the golden Gate.”

“New sensations and a few thrills await the dweller of the East when first he makes the transcontinental tour over the Lincoln Highway. New sensations are the spice of life and this country of ours is full of them to the lover of scenery, and many wonderful works of nature are open to him who will make just a little effort to see.”

“An uplifting of the soul is sure to follow this contact with Nature in her majesty, and Self becomes smaller and smaller as we realize the immensity of things in traversing this country.”

“To stand upon the great desert amidst overwhelming silence, gazing with awe at the glorious, yet delicate, coloring of the sky and distant mountains in the cool of the dawning day or in the fading light of evening, is worth all of the little hardships of the tour; and then to pass through the cool forest of the Sierras, on a fine road, with great fir trees on all sides, and roaring water tumbling over rocks alongside, makes u glad that we have lived to see and feel such things.”

“To those who love the wide open spaces of the great West, and who enjoy exertion and the clear pure air of the western plains and the high altitudes of the Rockies and the Sierras, the trip between San Francisco and Omaha is a delightful outing.”

With all that as prelude what are the Hints to Transcontinental Tourists Traveling on the Lincoln Highway?

By 1914 the author, Mr. Trego, who was an automobile engineer, had made the “Coast-to-Coast journey many times.” So we can rely on his advice. Here, a little digression, suppose the Donner Party had had advice from someone so experienced as opposed to Lansford Hastings who had never taken his route? I suppose we could go the other way too. Suppose Mr. Trego was as full of advice but ignorant as Mr. Hastings. Maybe there would have been piles of old cars at Donner Lake. Of course, by 1914, Truckee was there, as was the railroad, so that’s a silly thought and so the Heirloom staff begs your indulgence.

Mr. Trego says that (1914 advice) “The transcontinental trip is now comparatively easy and decidedly worthwhile”. Until recently the trip had been more adventure than easy. It cost a lot and required endurance. By 1914, though, "the great Lincoln Memorial Highway had been graded, drained, hard-surfaced [in spots] and plainly marked”.

If you want to travel the Lincoln Highway in 1914 from New York to San Francisco it will only cost you, with three friends covering 3,400 miles, \$240. That’s way cheaper than flying in 1914 (in fact you couldn't without incurring death defying crashes but that's another story). That \$240 would include everything but tires and repairs. The best part is that it would take only “nineteen days, driving approximately ten hours per day” averaging eighteen miles an hour. Compare that to the wagon trains.

To make the trip work it would be worthwhile to pay attention to some advice from experienced travelers:

Don’t wear wool next to the skin. Wear linen or cotton underneath. That’s just common sense.

Don’t wait until the gasoline is almost gone before looking for more.

Don’t allow the water can to be anything but full.

Don’t allow the car to be without food at any time. That’s different from the gasoline. This is people food.

Traveling can be hungry.

Don’t fail to have warm clothing.

Don’t carry loaded firearms no matter what the NRA says. We must admit the last part of that is not 1914 advice but the staff at the Heirloom has to have some fun.

Don’t fail to put out your campfire.

Don’t forget the yellow goggles.

Don’t forget camphor ice.

Don’t ford water without first wading through it. You’ll dry off soon enough.

Don’t drive more than twenty five miles an hour. Things will break.

Don’t carry your good clothes. Ship them ahead.

Don’t wear leather puttees – use canvas.

Don’t drink alkali water.

Don’t wear new shoes.

Then, unlisted there is more advice. “...hunger and thirst are not pleasant companions; neither can a man work if he is half starved and his mouth dry from dust and lack of water. Be sure to wear heavy socks in your sleeping bag.

Mud holes are not uncommon on the Lincoln Highway so extracting yourself is an important skill. Dig a hole in front of the automobile into which the front tires can go. Put sage brush in front of the rear wheels. As the car moves block the rear wheels so the car cannot go backwards. Dig a new hole in front and continue until you're free.

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 do a review for us.

Isabella Bird

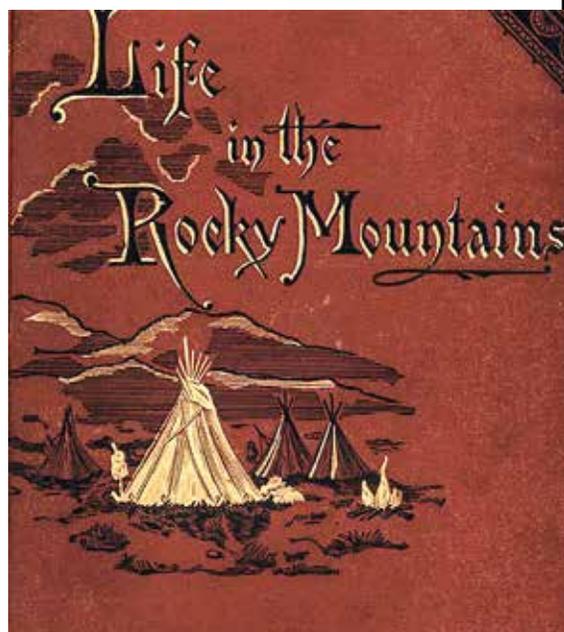
Isabella Bird, author of *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, her most popular book, was a famous 19th Century explorer, photographer, and author. She ended up in the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame, The Royal Scottish Geographical Society and was the first woman elected as a fellow to the Royal Geographic Society.

Isabella was born in England in 1831. She was sickly as a child and had health problems as an adult so her doctor prescribed an "outdoor life" and she began traveling in 1854, aged 23.

At a time when women were better seen than heard, Isabella charted a life of adventure, traveling the world, writing about it, and photographing it. She may have fallen in love with a one-eyed outlaw in Colorado, Rocky Mountain Jim, whose love she turned down because a drunken outlaw was not suitable, long term, for a lady. In any case she spent a lot of time with him. She eventually married someone else when she was fifty years old. A few years later she inherited a good amount of money when her husband died and decided to study medicine and become a missionary. She established a hospital and then joined up with British soldiers in the Near East and carried a revolver along with her medical supplies. She sounds fascinating.

Rocky Mountain Jim – according to Isabella Bird

"He has pathos, poetry, and humor, an intense love of nature, strong vanity in certain directions, an obvious desire to act and speak in character, and sustain his reputation as a desperado, a considerable acquaintance with literature, a wonderful verbal memory, opinions on every person and subject, a chivalrous respect for women in his manner, which makes it all the more amusing when he suddenly turns round upon one with some graceful raillery, a great power of fascination, and a singular love of children. The children of this house run to him, and when he sits down they climb on his broad shoulders and play with his curls."



The cover of Isabella Bird's most popular book.

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

History Is Everywhere You Just have to Look

David Fullerton of OCTA (Oregon California Trails Association) guided a half dozen people to various Emigrant Trail sites on Donner Summit in early June. David is out on the trail fifty days of the year looking for trail evidence. It's a good hobby. Parenthetically too, OCTA is a good organization which works to preserve the Oregon-California Emigrant Trail and to pass on trail history. Their annual convention is held in different cities in the west each year and features speakers, displays, and tours. Their quarterly publication Overland Journal is a scholarly publication with articles about trail segments, preservation, and personalities. It frequently contains emigrant diary entries. You might want to check OCTA out.

David uses Charles Graydon's book Trail of the First Wagons Over the Sierra (reviewed in our August, '15 Heirloom or on our website) as a basis to start his searches for trail evidence and then looks for likely spots: not too much uphill, not much side slope, etc. to find evidence of emigrants' passage. The evidence is often rust marks on the rocks of which there are pictures here.

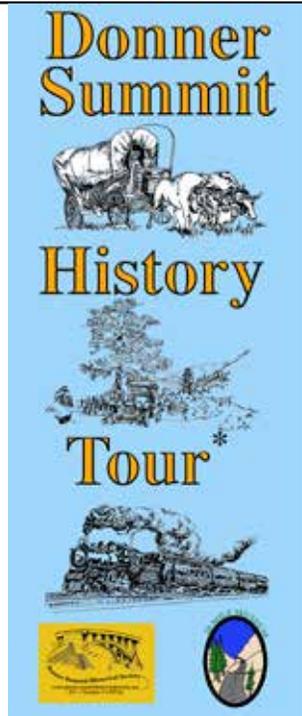
For the June tour we started at Hampshire Rocks and found evidence north of the freeway, then down to Rainbow for spots north of Old 40, Donner Pass Rd., then to Big Bend for lots of rust marks (see the April, '16 Heirloom for an exploration there) and finally on to the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80 south of the freeway. Here are some of the pictures that you can use to go hunting.

There are some hints about hunting for rust marks you might find useful. First, you want to be in a place where wagon trains went. So picking up Graydon's book is a good idea. He's got the routes mapped out although you should know emigrants did not all go in exactly the same places. Then look for spots that don't have too much side slope. Top heavy emigrant wagons could tip over. Look for exposed rock faces where the iron "tires" of emigrant wheels might have rubbed. Many wagons in the same place, rubbing on the same rock, may have left rust marks visible 160 or so years later. Just because you find brown does not mean you've got rust marks. The brown area should also be smoother than the surrounding areas. That said, here are some pictures from our June excursion. The two without arrows have been enhanced to make the

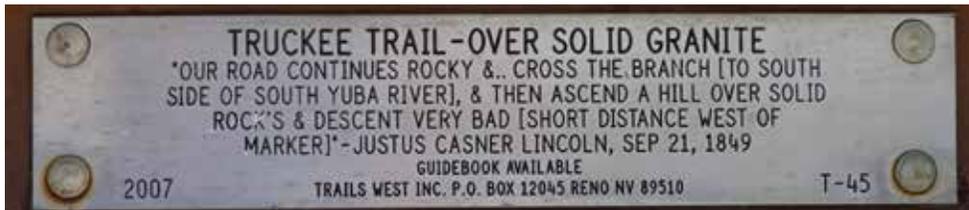


rust marks more visible. The two with the arrows have not been enhanced.

There are many places with rust marks and if you are like Mr. Fullerton you may have a good time ferreting them out. If you just want to find rust marks easily take a look at the August, '15 Heirloom (above) or pick up our "Donner Summit History Tour" brochure, on-line, at our website or at discriminating organizations like the DSHS, the visitors' centers at the Donner State Park, Truckee or Auburn, or the Colfax Historical Society (at the train station there). The front panel is to the right.



There Was More Than Rust Marks



Trails West marker at Big Bend just north of the parking lot for Loch Loman Lakes; Left, Trails West marker south side of the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80 and up the hill.

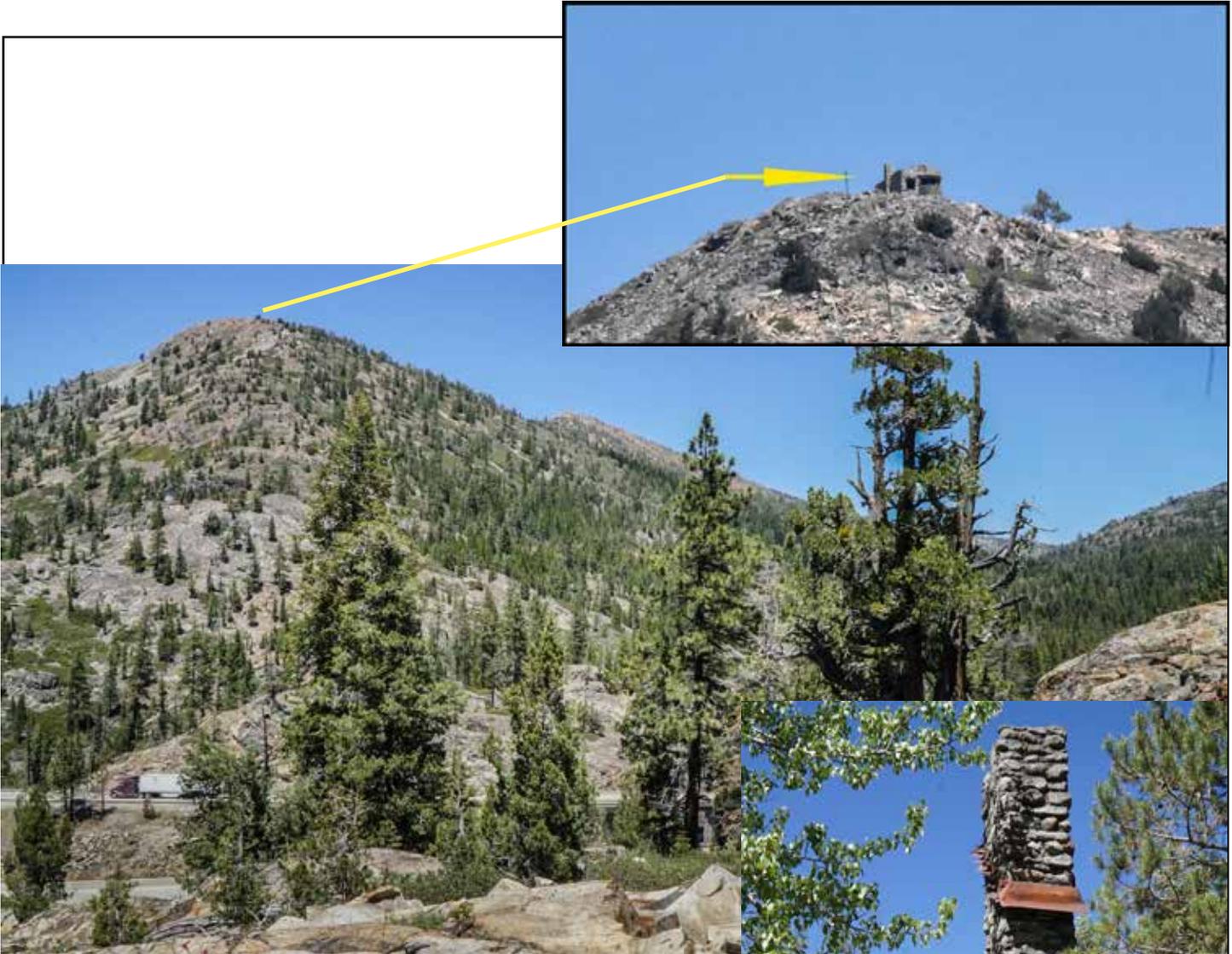


Date under the old Highway 40 bridge at Rainbow.



Up towards the chimney (next page) and just 20 yards short of the freeway we found the Emigrant Trail marker above right. Then we found another, right very close to the river where you can think emigrants forded. Neither was readable but Art Clark remembered seeing one like them on Rick Martel's website (<http://www.historicdonnertrail.org>). His picture is middle right and we see they were put up by the Auburn Lion's Club in 1936. They, of course, were only one of many groups that marked the trail. Look at last month's "Trail Mystery" article for example or Heirloom articles about Peter Weddell (see the Heirloom indices on our website).

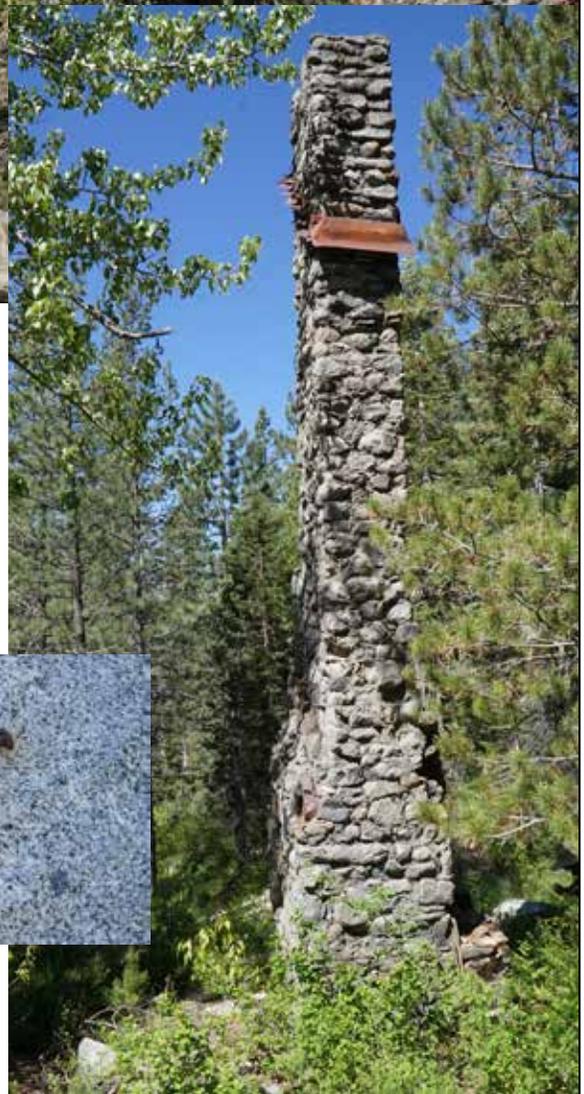




More Stuff

Take the Eagle Lakes turn off from I-80 and go to the south side. Follow that dirt road until you want to park. Then walk along east and uphill. You are on the Emigrant Trail and the Lincoln Highway. Go towards the freeway and you'll find Lincoln Highway rockwork. You'll also find the view above of Red Mountain. Up there, still standing (see inset), is the stone building the railroad used to use as a fire lookout to protect the wooden snowsheds (see the July, '10 [Heirloom](#)).

On the north side of Donner Pass Rd. just east of the bridge at Rainbow there are two roads. One is quite old and the other leads to some cabins. Head northwest and uphill on an even older road towards the freeway. There's the chimney to the right as well as the nails below. Whose it was and when, who knows. Directly north from that through the brush is the top Emigrant Trail sign from the previous page.





& Still More Stuff

The Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway, went over Donner Summit and some of that route is evident at the Eagle Lakes Exit from I-80. Go to the south side and up the hill. The dirt road there is the Lincoln Highway. To the right you get to the railroad tracks where the highway crosses but there's barbed wire. Were you to follow the route a bit west you'd come to Crystal Lake which used to be a railroad stop and hotel. It's private now.

Go left instead of right (as above) and park where you can before it gets too rough. Walk along and you're on the Lincoln Highway and Emigrant Trail. Wander along and you'll eventually come to I-80 and the rock work above. The above pictures are from the north side of I-80 but if you come from the Eagle Lakes exit as

described above, you can walk on top of the old route. One day we'll do an article on sections of the Lincoln Highway you can walk on Donner Summit. Keep up your subscription.

Below, because there is room, is a picture from 2014 of the Lincoln Highway where it runs into I-80 at the Eagle Lakes exit as described above. If you want to explore the route over Donner Summit find the book, [To Donner Pass from the Pacific](#) by Jack Duncan (reviewed in our July, '09 [Heirloom](#) or our website)



the corrupt financier J. Cooke, cooked up his financial schemes.

Cisco was an assistant Secretary to the Treasury under two Democrats and then under Lincoln. In 1864 he resigned for health reasons. He must have helped the Central Pacific to have a town, which at its height had thousands of residents, named for him.

The information above comes from Phil Sexton who used to be a ranger at Big Bend and who now is District Interpretive Coordinator for the Capitol District of the California State Parks.



Remains of the turntable at Cisco Grove - just above the railroad tracks.

Photo by Art Clark.

Miscellaneous Advertisements

Heatonville Hotel

At the junction of the Dutch Flat and Meadow Lake wagon Roads, Heatonville

Wash. Madden.....Proprietor

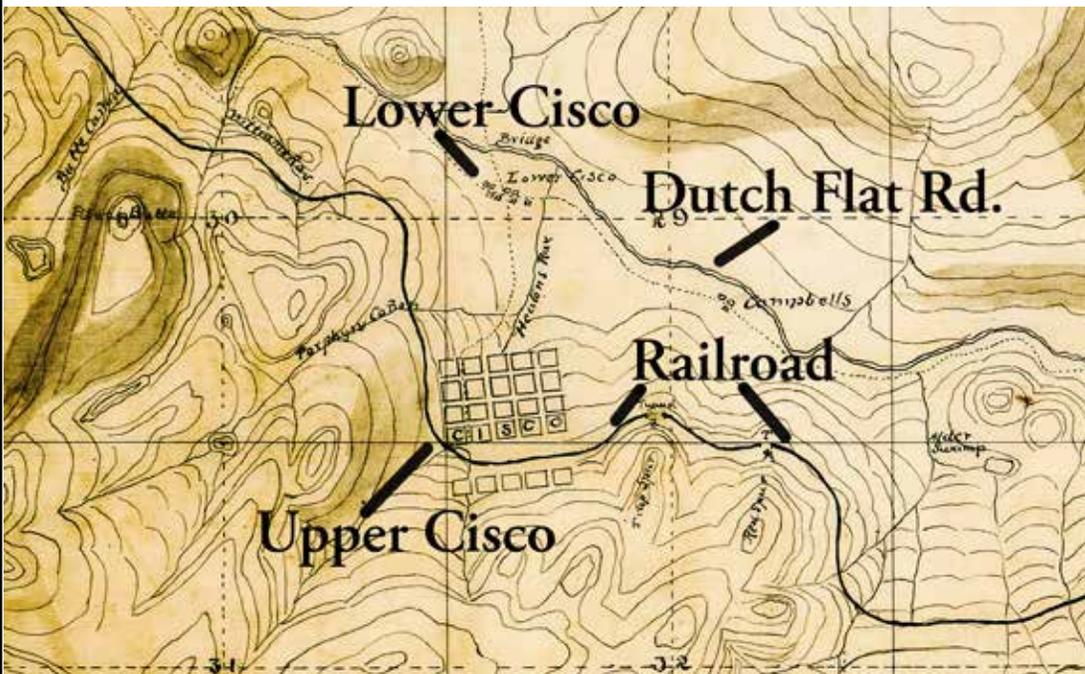
The Attention of the traveling public is respectfully directed to the above Hotel. Furnished rooms for Families and every attention is paid to the comfort and accommodation of families.

People from California or Nevada going to Meadow Lake, will do well to stop here, it being much nearer than any other point on the Dutch Flat Road, and
The Only Practical Route to Meadow Lake.

A Saddle Train leaves the Hotel every morning on the arrival of the Stage going West, returning from Meadow Lake in time to connect the same day with the Stage going East.

June 6, 1866

formatted as it was in the Meadow Lake Morning Star, which you can have fun perusing at the Foley Library in Nevada City



1870 map of Upper and Lower Cisco

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

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DATE _____

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____ New Membership

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____ Individual Membership - \$30

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

____ Family Membership - \$50

____ Friend Membership - \$100

____ Sponsor - \$250

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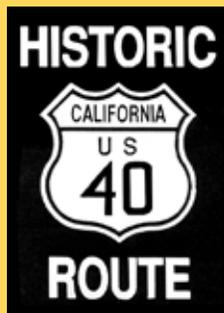
____ Business Sponsor - \$1000

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.



Take the Scenic Route: Donner Summit's Old Highway 40



Pick up or download the brochure at the DSHS at <http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/brochures.html>



Pick up or download the brochure

50 interpretive signs along Old 40
<http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/20MileMuseum.html>