

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

October, 2020 issue #146

# Lola Montez

A.K.A. Elizabeth Rosanna Gilbert

We've covered a number of Donner Summit personalities in the [Heirloom](#) and all of them made some important contributions to Donner Summit, for example: Hannes Schroll, Wendell Robie, Peter Weddell, George R. Stewart, Johnny Ellis, etc. You can find them all in our [Heirloom](#) indices. Lots of other people have visited Donner Summit but have not deserved valuable page space in the [Heirloom](#). Lola Montez does not really fall in the "deserves space" category. On the other hand we can't simply ignore her even though she only visited Donner Summit once, in passing, while living in Grass Valley for two years. She was an interesting character though, and so her spot this month in the [Heirloom](#) is kind of like the impulse buy tabloids at the super market check out lanes. Some of those stories might sound interesting, but we know they are probably lies. Lola's life was interesting, although in her telling, a lot of it was lies. What follows here though, is the absolute truth. We have a quick overview of Lola's life followed by a couple of book reviews in case you'd like to delve in more. It's all pretty interesting. If only our lives could be as colorful.

Some Donner Summit name origins have been lost to history. Others have been changed to meet modern needs. Still others are of prosaic origins and uninteresting. There is a category though, that's really interesting. Tinker's Knob (or for some purists, Tinker Knob) is named for the nose on James A. Tinker's face. Mr. Tinker owned the Tinker's Station Hotel at Soda Springs Station. Donner Pk. is named for a group that had a harrowing experience. On the one hand we celebrate the group's failure and ignore those who crossed before. On the other hand we celebrate bravery, tenacity, courage, selflessness (rescuers), and sacrifice.

Two little lakes north of Highway 40, and a mountain further north of Donner Pass, bear the name of one of the most interesting historical characters, Lola Montez. She drove men crazy and since it was guys who used to do the naming of

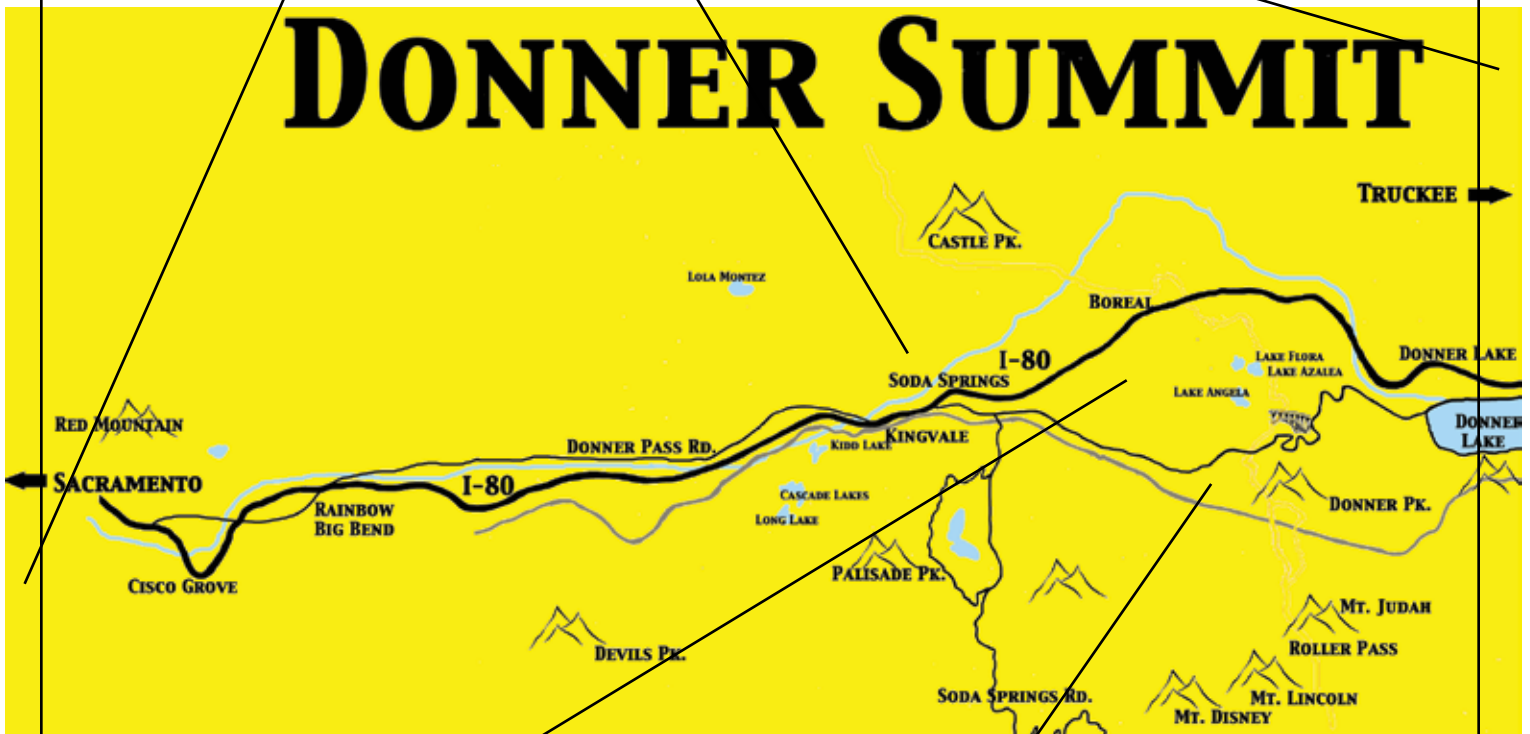


# Story Locations in this Issue

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geological features, she got her name on some of Donner Summit. Those two lakes, next to each other both bear her name with the clever differences being “upper” and “lower.” That her name graces those lakes shows just what an effect she had on some people. Her story is unbelievable but it all did happen even if everything she said didn’t.

Just to whet your appetites, Lola was famous for her temper throwing tantrums attacking servants, police, and husbands. She once drank, histrionically, poison. She bit a policeman in New Orleans. She used riding whips with aplomb. She had numerous husbands, both legal and not, more lovers, and even lost one overboard on the way back to San Francisco from Australia. She pledged undying love to a king (he's got two good quotes later on here), which was reciprocated, and then was chased out of the country.

That’s enough “whetting.”

To understand Lola Montez you have to appreciate her spirit, which was adventurous, and her outlook on life and acceptable behavior, which was unconventional.

Eliza Gilbert, a.k.a. Lola, was born in Ireland and showed her spirit early, evading an arranged marriage to a 60 year old general and eloping with an English lieutenant. That marriage lasted only five years and at the end Lola was sued by her husband for adultery. That episode of life over, Lola embarked on an epic redo of her life. It was a triumph of marketing. She took up dancing and became famous saying she was the descendant of Spanish nobility. She danced before European nobility and joined high society becoming an intimate of Franz Liszt and Alexander Dumas. While in Europe she was expelled from various countries for scandalous or at least inappropriate behavior. As she became famous she traveled the world and even to lawless California.

When she danced in Munich, Ludwig, the King of Bavaria, convinced her to be his mistress. He was 60 and she was 22. He was besotted, practiced Spanish and wrote her love poems. Ludwig thought he was Lola’s “first,” but he wasn’t and during her time with him she “saw” a number of other men.

Eventually the Bavarian public had enough. It’s easy to understand. Ludwig had supplied Lola with a house, a large allowance (maybe \$200,000 annually today), a carriage, and horses. He later doubled the allowance and ended up picking up her many expenses because she couldn’t manage her money. He spent over 100,000 Florins on her the first year she was in Bavaria. He made her a citizen so she could escape arrest for assaulting a police officer. He also named her Countess of Landsfeldt. In return Lola gave Ludwig a marble sculpture of her foot on which he showered his kisses.

Ludwig’s affair with Lola lasted until he finally realized she

lied, long after she’d been chased out of Bavaria and Ludwig had abdicated. Ludwig was ousted partly because of Lola against whom students at a local university rioted. Finally Lola was chased from Munich by a mob and she went to Switzerland. Sneaking back in to Bavaria (as a bearded man) to try and secure her promised annuity, she sparked more riots and led to Ludwig’s abdication. To be fair, Lola was not the only reason for Ludwig’s problems. 1848 was a year of revolution in Europe, but that’s for another publication.

Lola moved on to England where she married a well-off Englishman. She still tried to extract an annual income from Ludwig. Since she was still married to husband number one when she married the Englishman, she was arrested for bigamy and escaped the law by jumping bail with her new “husband.”

Then it was on to America in 1851. By then Lola was so notorious due to her well reported adventures, that a Boston paper said,

“Thousands of American ladies, it is expected, will rush to see one who possesses in a remarkable degree no artistic talent, and who has acquired notoriety - the only notoriety that makes her an object of attention – by her shameless dissoluteness of character.”

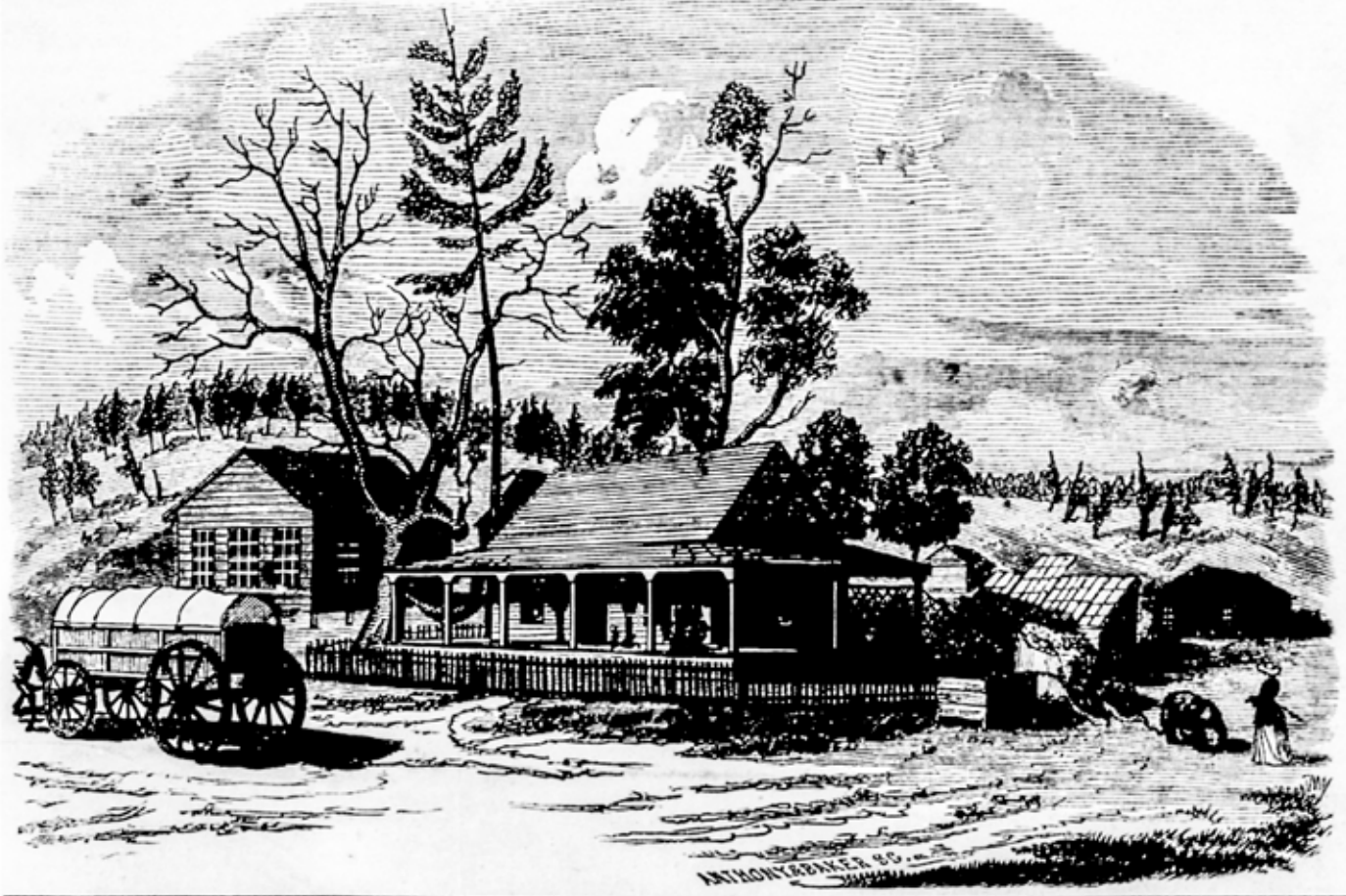
“We shall be sadly disappointed if this creature has any degree of success in the United States. She has no special reputation as a dancer. She is known to the world only as a shameless and abandoned woman.”

Lola danced her way west, married again, and came to live in Grass Valley.

Her U.S. performances morphed from dances to plays in which she acquitted herself well, according to reviews. Full houses earned her as much as \$1000 a week. Her fame rose.

Lola’s first dance in Grass Valley was scandalous. She appeared in flesh colored tights with two cork spiders. Her "Spider Dance" was a combination of writhing, spinning, and whirling with the action growing more and more frantic as she tried to throw off the spiders. The audience was shocked. She was booed and hissed. The show was a money maker, though, and she continued to perform as people came to see the scandalously clad woman behave in scandalous ways living up to her scandalous reputation which had evolved from her scandalous life. It all gave rise to “Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets.”

In general, her performances earned varied results. Sometimes she was showered with flowers and sometimes with boos. Many times the enthusiasm resulted from crowds



**RESIDENCE OF MADAME LOLA MONTEZ, GRASS VALLEY.**

The Wide West Magazine (December 1, 1854) editorialized about Lola's coming to live in Grass Valley, saying that it was a big change from palaces with "princely adjuncts" to a ranch. Even the daughter of "pampered luxury" could find charm in California where there was "freedom of movement, the absence of restraint, and the difference in social intercourse." "Mountain life has a charm for all bold, adventurous spirits, among whom none can deny Lola Montez a place... And as she roams on the hills thickly covered with the wild flower - daughters of our spring - or flies on her willing steed over the plains that spread themselves at her feet..."

seeded with her many male admirers who didn't much care about dancing ability. In Sacramento she argued with the audience and received apples and rotten eggs in return.

Living in Grass Valley alone, she acquired a garden, dogs, a pet bear, a player piano, and many admirers. Her Wednesday evening salons became the place to be and where Lola smoked her cigars. Lola's Grass Valley house is at 248 Mill St. in Grass Valley and it's a State historic landmark.

Supposedly she met six year old Lotta Crabtree there as well. Lola tried to convince Lotta to go on tour with her but Lotta's mother was smarter than to allow that. She knew about Lola; smoking cigars; whipping a newspaperman who gave her a bad review; and shooting at a lover who disappointed her, sending him dodging bullets, down the streets of Grass Valley with his pants undone.

Her behavior was not completely scandalous. She did attack a local editor with a horsewhip, but at the same time held a Christmas party for the little girls of Grass Valley, took food and medicine to a poor miner, and sat at the bedside of a sick child. Over her career she did many performances for free to benefit various causes.

While in California and living in Grass Valley in 1854, she decided to take the trip to the Truckee Meadows, where Reno would some day be. This was before the railroad so she traveled by horseback with some companions taking some days to do the trip. She and her companions visited the Donner Cabin (one of the Donner Party cabins at Donner Lake) and "brought away with her some of the human bones, which are quite plenty there." The rest of the trip was a bust because they lost their food and ended up back in Grass Valley very hungry. It was during this trip that the Upper and

## A Very Short Lola Story

In Grass Valley, after the local parson called her a “shameless devil in the guise of a beautiful and fascinating dancer”, Lola donned her “Spider Dance” costume and went to see Parson Wilson. She ended up staying for tea with him and his wife.

Lower Lola Montez lakes were named. During this trip too, according to the 1883 Tourist’s Illustrated Guide to the Celebrated Summer and Winter Resorts of California, Lola visited a lake she named Independence Lake on July 3, 1853. Just north of that is Mt. Lola. Those stories are later in this issue. [Yes, the dates don't agree (1853/54) but that's an historian's life.]

During the return from a tour to Australia, her married lover fell overboard. Lola then spent money, including the proceeds from auctioning off the jewels she'd acquired from King Ludwig, to help the family. The wife refused any help, but the stepmother accepted with alacrity.

Needing money after being jilted by a European nobleman, Lola turned to lecturing and became another success earning even more writing books containing compendia of her lectures. One book, The Art of Beauty has been reprinted many times even in recent decades.

At age 40 Lola had a stroke. Just as she was recovering, she developed pneumonia and in 1861 she died.

# The Spider Dance

The dance was as scandalous as Lola’s life. She posed as a young Spanish girl who had had a spider crawl up her dress. The dance revolved around getting the spider. “Respectable” ladies would not find the dance acceptable. Lola would search her skirts, sometimes higher than should be done in public while she gyrated.

“...and then the Dance. The dance was what all had come to see, and there was an anxious flutter and an intense interest as the moment approached which would bring her before the house. She was greeted with a storm of applause, and then she executed the dance, which is said to be her favorite, and has won for her much notoriety. The Spider Dance is a very remarkable affair. It is thoroughly Spanish, certainly, and it cannot be denied that it is a most attractive performance. As a danseuse, Madame Lola is above mediocrity. Indeed, some parts of her execution were truly admirable. We shall endeavor to do her full justice in another notice.”

Daily Alta California May 28, 1853

## Not Everyone Was Enamored With the Dance

A woman in Connecticut thought that Lola “flounced about like a stuck pig, and clenched her short clothes, raising them nearly to her waist, while with a thin, scrawny leg she keeps up a constant thumping upon the stage, as if she was in a slight spasm”

Nevada Journal July 17, 1852

“She looked her loveliest as she pirouetted into view, her long slender legs in flesh-colored tights, for she no longer danced with the requisite maillot. Her glossy hair, wreathed in flowers, fell to her shoulders. Her skirt consisted of tiers of tinted chiffons creating the illusion of a spider’s web, entrapping her as she spun around, constricting her step. With the music slowing down she struggled to free herself and shake off the spiders lurking in her chiffons. As the dance grew more frantic she shed the spiders and stamped them underfoot. They were stage props made of whalebone, cork or rubber. When the music changed to a jig Lola spread out her hands and feet like a spider and she leaped from one side of the stage to the other. The effect was as grotesque as it was riveting. It all ended with fire and abandon, as stamped on the last of the fallen spiders. Sometimes she did the dance in pantomime without the props.

The Uncrowned Queen The life of Lola Montez

# More Lola

Readers should note the dedication the Heirloom staff has to the reporting of historical news. Other, less assiduous periodicals would stop at the general biography and book reviews. The Heirloom, however, digs deep into the stories. Here we have Lola’s trip to the mountains, an altercation with an editor, and her adventures with her Grizzly friend.

## Lola Montez and the Donner Summit Visit

Lola Montez, world famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century personality, has been immortalized on Donner Summit with two lakes bearing her name, Lower and Upper Lola Montez Lakes. Some miles north of Truckee, Mt. Lola bears her name too. It may be that like a 19<sup>th</sup> Century race horse named Lola, and a brand of shoes, the geographic names were given just because Lola was famous. Lola also visited Donner Summit, the Truckee River, and Independence Lake (which sits under Mt. Lola) in 1854, and that might be the reasons for the namings.

“Off for the Mountains. Quite a party started out this morning for a trip to the Sierra Nevada: Madame Lola Montez, Old Block [Alonzo Delano - see last month’s Heirloom], Dr. Delavan and others of the company. It is their intention to be absent for two or three weeks.”

Grass Valley Telegraph July 13, 1854

The trip was an adventure, first because of Lola’s personality, and second, because of its conclusion. Alonzo Delano, “Old Block,” was a member of the party and although he wouldn’t say much, he did report on his short stay as part of the group. Somewhere near or at Donner Summit Lola took out her indignation at not being treated as she thought she deserved and quarreled all night with someone. The next morning

“a solitary horseman might have been seen descending the western slope of the Sierra in the direction of Grass Valley.” “Old Block” was, the Golden Era (August 5, 1854) said, willing to face the “tumult of howling wilderness” rather than more of Lola. He was accompanied by, or was accompanying, a woman of the party.

That was just the beginning. Lola’s party went on and got to Independence Lake. James Delevan did not go far with the group but his brother, Lewis, was the fellow charged with the pack horse and the supplies. One morning on the return trip back to Grass Valley, he got everything loaded up before everyone else was ready. He headed off, expecting everyone to catch up. Somewhere he took a wrong turn and crossing a stream, he was thrown by his mule, losing both animals. He wandered for days “nearly exhausted by hunger, exposure, and fatigue” (Grass Valley Telegraph August 3, 1854).

Delavan was found some days later by a pleasure party of ladies and gentlemen from Nevada. He was sitting by a rock next to the road, “looking wild and wo-begone and nearly starved.” His feet were swollen and blistered. He’d been without food and blankets, as well as his coat and hat for three days and could walk only a few yards before having to sit or lie down. He was given brandy and crackers to revive him. The pleasure party continued on to their camp where they left Delevan while they went off to Donner Lake to explore the Donner site. That was where Lola had earlier “brought away with her some of the human bones which are quite plenty there.” (James Delevan, brother of Lewis, in a

letter to the Adrian Expositor in Michigan which shows the national attention Lola received, like today's Khaardashians.) Then the party sent someone to Grass Valley to notify people there that Lewis had been found and they headed there with him.

Meanwhile, the remains of Lola's group headed back for Grass Valley thinking they'd find Lewis on the way. They didn't and arrived, having gone two days without food.

With Lola's arrival in Grass Valley the speculation turned to the fate of Lewis Delavan. Indians must have gotten him. Upon hearing that, James Delavan gathered up twelve fighting men, accustomed to the mountains and familiar with the ways of Indians, as well as some other white men and tractable Indians, to go looking for Lewis. The rifles and revolvers were put in "good trim" and prepared with ammunition. Just as the group was ready to leave, news arrived that Lewis had been found.

There is just one remaining part of the story. What happened to Lewis' mule, the pack horse, the supplies, and Lewis' coat, hat, and blankets? Imagine the good luck some traveler or Indian had upon coming across the loaded and accoutered animals. On the other hand, maybe they are still wandering the Sierra somewhere in the neighborhood of Donner Summit and the subject of a good ghost story. When the moon is new, when there is a slight breeze, long after sunset, sometimes you hear the neighing of a mule, its shoes scraping the granite slabs.... You get the idea.

OFF FOR THE MOUNTAINS.—Quite a party started out this morning for a trip to the Sierra Nevada. Madame Lola Montez, Old Block, Dr. Delevan, and others are of the company. It is their intention to be absent two or three weeks.

Grass Valley Telegraph July 13, 1854

## Lola Montez and the Grizzly

in which we learn something of 19<sup>th</sup> Century amusements

The Weather – Lola Montez Attacked by a  
Grizzly

We have no special news of interest. After two or three days of pleasant weather, the clouds are thickening, and promise more rain. The event of most general interest in town today is the attack on Madame Lola Montez by her pet grizzly bear. While feeding him with sugar from her hand, he caught her hand in his mouth, and wounded it badly ; he struck at her with his paw, but fortunately did not reach her. A man standing near caught a club, and, by a stroke across the bruin's head, caused him to let go his hold, and thereby probably saved the life of the Countess.

February 10, 1854  
Sacramento Daily Union

**GRIZZLY FOR SALE** – We are authorized to inform the public that any person or family desirous of obtaining an animal of the above mentioned species, either for public or family uses, they can gratify their desire by applying at the residence of Madam Lola Montez, on Mill street, Grass Valley.

By the way, like his present mistress, Mr. Grizzly is amiably inclined, and was never known to interfere with the rights of others unprovoked. This animal would be a great acquisition to the amusement of families and children, to say nothing about his other good qualities.

March 11, 1854  
Sacramento Daily Union

The famous Lola Montez Bear has been purchased by Mr. Storms and will no doubt act well his part in the coming festival.

Six of the best dogs, two at a time, will fight the bear until either the bear or the dogs are vanquished

June 22, 1854  
Grass Valley Telegraph

The Bear and Bull fight, was the best part of the performance. The bull was ferocious, the bear highly enraged, and for the space of half an hour, the contest with slight intermissions, was terrible and determined. The bear would fasten upon the neck of the bull, and twist hugging and biting, he seemed to be getting the better, but the bull would suddenly throw him off, and stamping and goring him, he would oblige him to retreat.

These scenes are growing common in this county, and next Sunday there is to be a contest between a Bear and Panther at Iowa Hill. The bear is the same which was formerly owned by Madam Lola Montez. It has now become very large and [sic] ferocious

October 31, 1854  
Grass Valley Daily National Gazette

## Lola Montez and the Editor

Lola Montez in a row. We learn from a dispatch in the State Journal that the town of Grass Valley was into an excitement on the morning of the 21st inst. by the appearance of Madame Lola Montez rushing from her residence, through Mill street, toward Main, with a delicate lady's riding whip in one hand and a copy of this morning's Telegraph in the other, "her eyes in the fine frenzy rolling," vowing vengeance upon that scoundrel of an editor, &c. She met him at the Golden Gate Saloon, the crowd, who were on qui vive, following. She struck at him with her whip, which he caught and wrenched from her before she could get in a blow. She then applied woman's best weapon, her tongue. He contented himself with keeping himself almost insultingly cool.

Finding all powerless, she appealed to the miners, but the only response was a shout of laughter. Mr. Shipley retired, having by his coolness completely worn her out. The immediate cause was the appearance of sundry articles copied from the New York Times, regarding the "Lola Montez-like insolence and effrontery of the Queen of Spain."

The scene was a rich one. The Countess' resorts in such cases, appeals to the "honest miners," were powerless, and so she invited all hands in to drink. Again the response was a groan, and none stepped forward to show themselves her champion. It was a perfect fizzle on her part. How are the mighty fallen.

Further — Reliable Account — The following account of the extraordinary fight was taken from the Grass Valley Telegraph extra. As it is penned by one of the survivors, an eye witness of the affair, it is doubtless reliable in every particular ;

GRASS VALLEY RING—FIRST FIGHT OF THE SEASON  
• — Combatants : Marie, Countess de Landsfeldt de Heald, de Hull, "Lola Montez," and Henry Shipley, Editor of the Grass Valley Telegraph.

Time -11 a. m., Tuesday, Nov. 21.  
Place-Golden Gate Saloon, Grass Valley.  
Weapons--Horsewhips, Nails and Tongue.

First Round. —Countess pitching in, strikes blow with whip, Ship catches it—both close ; Countess' seconds takes her off, [sic] Ship falls with whip in his possession.

Second Round. —Countess returns to the attack, with her tongue. Ship, provokingly cool, smokes his pipe and laughs at her.

Third Round.— Countess urged to desperation, strikes at Ship and spits in his face. Ship magnanimously advises her not to go too far.

Fourth Round. —Countess tries on her old tactics—appeals to the crowd as "Miners," &c. Crowd sensibly laughs at her.

Fourth and a half Round. —A "green" chap in the crowd said something, when the Countess informed him it was not his "put in."

Fifth Round. —Crowd greatly amused.

Sixth Round.— Cries of "Speech from Shipley." Ship offers the "stump" to "Lola." Countess informed Ship that her name is "Mad Lola."

Seventh Round. —Countess reads extracts from Grass Valley Telegraph, counts number of words, and informs Ship that there are twenty words to be atoned for.

Eighth Round. —Ship remarks that the crowd has been sufficiently amused, and concludes to retire in disgust.

Ninth Round. —Countess springs forward and demands



the whip— “her father’s whip.” Article in dispute placed in the hands of a disinterested party.

Tenth Round.— Countess asks all hands in to drink—crowd laughs and refuses.

November 24, 1854  
San Joaquin Republican

This story was reported in many newspapers but this was the best rendition and is reprinted as it appeared in 1854.

Fie on you sir!

Lola Montez

### Quotes from "Lola Montez in Grass Valley" by Ralph Friedman

“She was such a slattern that to me she was frankly disgusting. When attired in a low-necked gown as was her usual custom, even her liberal use of powder failed to conceal the fact that she stood much in need of a good application of soap and water.”

A neighbor woman

She wore a bonnet with long ribbons and was sweet to everybody she met.”

Another neighbor woman

“[The]... notorious Lola Montez... displayed her many eccentricities to the amusement of some, and the disgust of more of the inhabitants... [She] produced, out of the mountain soil, a perfect little paradise.”

A neighbor man

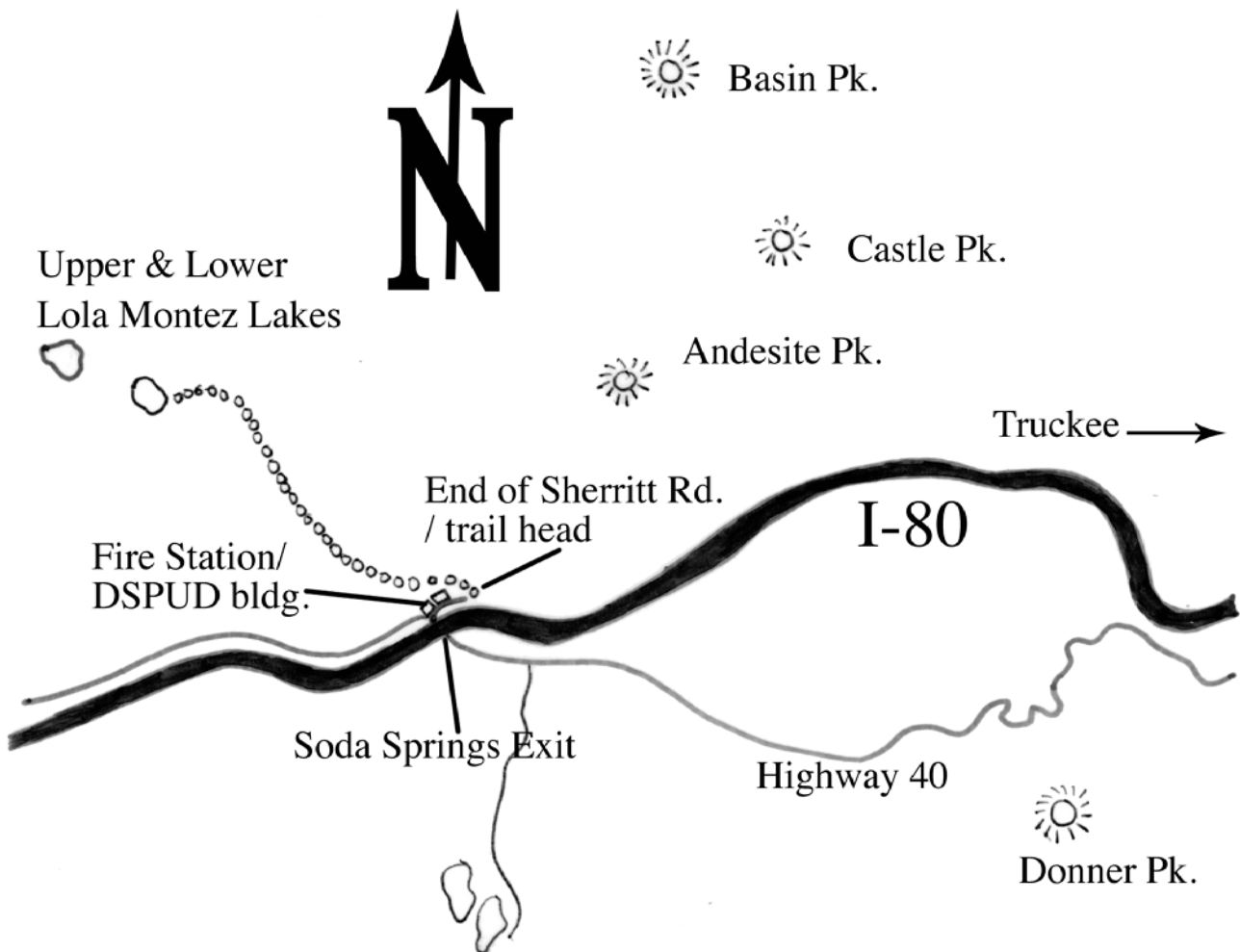
Reverend Mr. Wilson “denounced her as a devil, in a sermon at the Methodist Church. Lola paid a friendly visit to the minister, asking him to see how much of a devil she was, and they parted on friendly terms.’

“She was positively the most beautiful creature I had ever seen up to that time. The eyes of every one in range followed her wherever she went in those days. The enchantment, however, disappeared very rapidly upon better acquaintance.”

Lemuel Snow

San Francisco Examiner February 19, 1899

# Upper and Lower Lola Montez Lakes



A walk to Upper and Lower Lola Montez Lakes is easy and the history behind the name is a great story.

## Lower and Upper Lola Montez

Drive to the fire station in Soda Springs and then past it to the dead end. There a dirt road heads off to the left. That's the trail head. Follow that road, which is gated until you get to lower Lola Montez Lake. If you have the Soda Springs Quadrangle topo map, you can then make your way across country and uphill to Upper Lola Montez. You can also drive to the upper lake. Take the Cisco Grove exit from I-80 and go north to Donner Pass Rd. Turn left and go just a very short distance to the dirt road on the right, Fordyce Rd. just before the private campground. Follow that road some miles and you'll see signs to Upper Lola Montez Lake. On the way, you will pass some water falls that are worth a look, particularly in the spring. That road, incidentally, was the trail people took from the thriving town of Cisco Grove to the town of Meadow Lake that lasted only a couple of years until the miners discovered there really wasn't recoverable gold. At its height Meadow Lake had a couple of thousand people. Meadow Lake only lasted a year.

Taken from [Walking Through Donner Summit History](#) available on the DSHS website or at the DSHS.

# From the DSHS Archives

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, 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 [the hotel], and as he approached the fire he fell on the floor and expired. A doctor who examined the body said the the deceased had "frozen to death."

Sonoma Democrat, Volume X, Number 3, October 27, 1866

[Crystal Lake is west of Donner Summit at the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80; today it is private.]

## House of Vanderford's

The House of Vanderford's was a lodge that sat on Old Highway 40 across from Donner Ski Ranch right where the road into Sugar Bowl's Mt. Judah Lodge is now. The lodge is in the lower right of the picture below in 1938.



# From the DSHS Archives



Vanderford's from the west,  
Old Highway 40 with 1930's  
automobiles in 1941.

We'll talk more about  
Vanderford's next month with  
the coming of ski season.



# Book Review

## Lola Montez a Life

Bruce Seymour 468 pages 1995

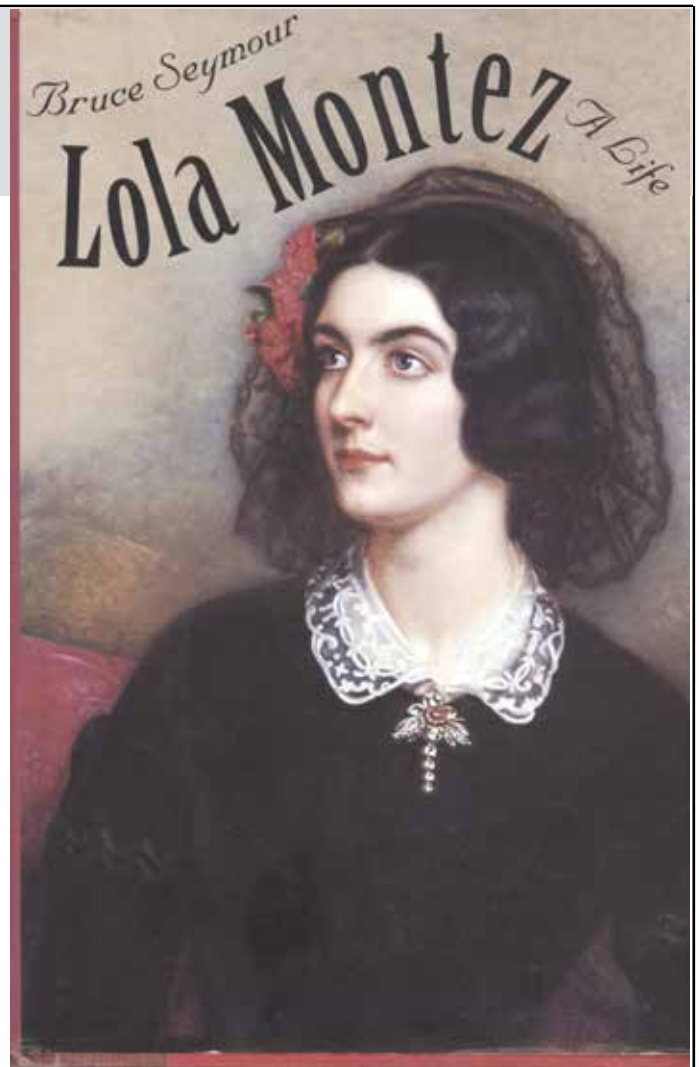
We at the [Heirloom](#) realize that most readers will not read the books in our [Heirloom](#) book review section. So we use the book reviews to tell good stories along with the reviews. In this case we have the previous articles, utilizing many sources, which tell the outlines of Lola's story so this review doesn't have to include the history.

[Lola Montez A Life](#) is the definitive biography of Lola Montez. Bruce Seymour, the author, spent four years of his life on it, "seduced by the charms that transcend time." Those four years were only possible with his winnings from the TV game show "Jeopardy." So there is a thank you in the introduction to Merv Griffin Productions.

We should thank Merv Griffin Productions as well as Mr. Seymour because the four years paid off. In 468 close spaced pages there is a lot of information and a lot of stories. Lola's life, as much as we can know, is in the book. The job must have been tough for the author because not only was there all the research to do and then write about, but there were all the lies to wade through in order to separate the truth from fiction. Lola lied continuously and remade her background a number of times. It was all for public relations which maybe makes her a forerunner of today.

The book starts briefly with Lola dying and that serves as an introduction to enigmatic Lola: "living fury or feminine charm incarnate, a woman of imposing intellect of a common drab, the most amazing figure of her age or a greater humbug than Barnum..." She lived "forty years filled with adventures sufficient for forty life times." That's a great introduction to Lola Montez.

In telling the many stories, true and untrue, Seymour uses all kinds of sources: letters, reports, memoirs, newspaper articles, and diaries. Some of those are surprisingly intimate and some, surprisingly, are the intimate letters from the King of Bavaria (see the Ludwig quotes on pages 14 and 16). They give the reader more than the basic history. Here are the contemporaneous thoughts of people who came into contact with Lola. All of that is listed at the end of the book, and show four years well spent. The bibliography is six pages long but the "sources" pages are forty pages. The details in the book really tell everything from all of the addresses where Lola lived to daily activities like decapitating flowers and irritating hosts. We know some friends sent their employees to theaters to cheer Lola. We know every one of Lola's public events. We know her



anger. We know her happy times.

It is a full book, full of even surprising detail, but it's missing two elements that are more than the simple history and which should be in a biography. We are left trying to divine the real Lola from the history or in the history. Who was the real Lola? Lola was able to manipulate so many people and attract constant attention, particularly of men. She was able to get away with so much. How was that possible? Mr. Seymour spent four years with Lola and was "seduced" by her charms. What are his thoughts about how Lola was able to do what she did? How could someone act with impunity serially? How could someone so willful; of such dubious talent until the end of her life when she captivated people with her lectures; so prone to temper tantrums; so arrogant, histrionic, demanding, selfish, mendacious, disloyal, temperamental, manipulative, scheming, dishonest, intemperate, unpredictable, and entitled, attract so many people to be her friends? How could so many men, both husbands and lovers, knowing her history and behavior, be conned into relations with her? Then later in life what caused her change from complete

mendacity to auctioning off her jewels to support a lover's children after his death?

Then there is one more thing. We should also say here, in this part about things left out, that Lola did visit Donner Summit, did some naming and had some naming done for her. There's nothing in the book about that. That's unconscionable.

Going back to the fame and notoriety Lola earned and why, perhaps it's just like the super market tabloids we pick up in the grocery store check-out lines. We're fascinated by the unique even if it's clearly fake. People in the past were just like us.

"I can compare myself to Vesuvius, which seemed burned out until it suddenly erupted once again... Now I'm not like a man of forty or even a youth of twenty, no, like an amorous boy of twenty; I'm in the grip of passion like never before. Sometimes I couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, my blood boiled feverishly, I was lifted to heaven's heights, my thoughts became purer, I became a better person. I was happy. I am happy. My life has a new vitality, I'm young again, the work smiles on me.

King Ludwig I on finding Lola Montez  
from Lola Montez A Life

### Special Bonus Review

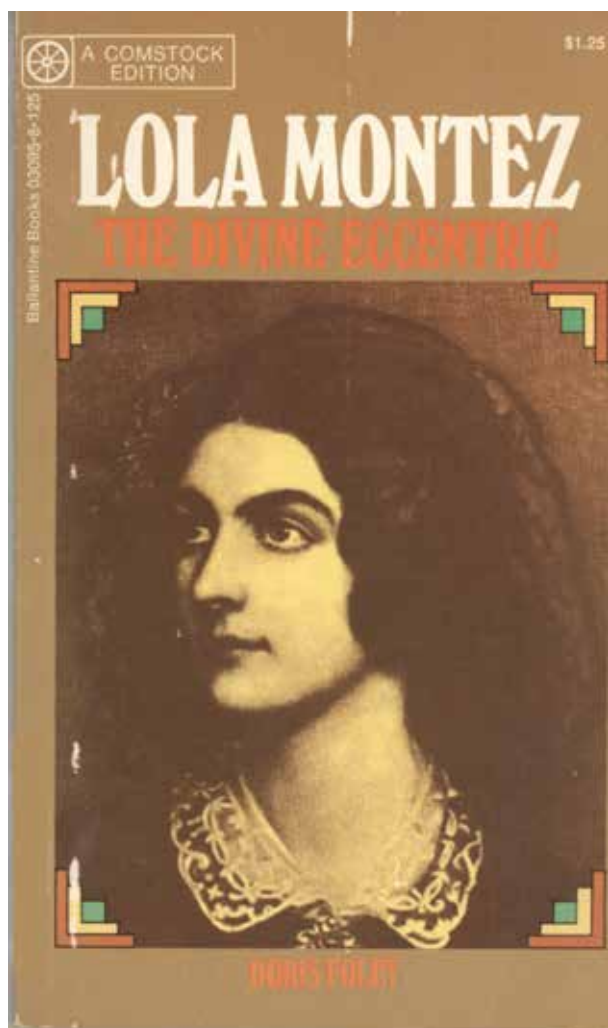
#### Lola Montez The Divine Eccentric

Subtitled Lola Montez and the newspapers

Doris Foley 1969 174 pages

The book's title give you the idea that the subject is wider than it really is. The book is about Lola Montez in Grass Valley from 1853-1855. That is chronicled in the California newspapers, in particular, those in Grass Valley and Nevada City. Foley, the author, says the reason she focused on Lola Montez as chronicled in local newspapers is that her prior life had already been told and did not need retelling.

In this rendition of Lola's life we get the observations of her contemporaries with little other text. Foley says that "seemed a likelier source for character analysis." The contemporary observations are interesting and Foley is probably right. Foley searched newspapers from 1853 to 1861. Even though Lola was not in California in the latter years, there were mentions of her, especially upon her death.



## The Spider Dance

..The spider dance inspired us with new life. Up went the curtain and on came Lola, fermenting the pit, agitating the gallery and sensationizing the dress circle...

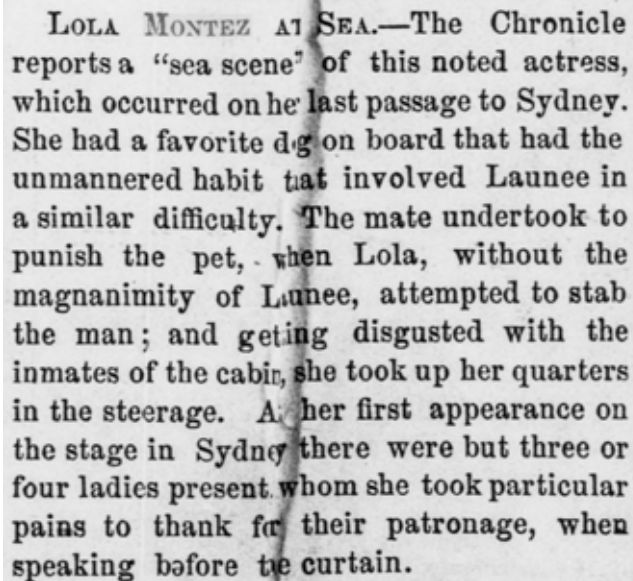
Lola comes in, sails in, flies in, arrayed in a costume to which Joseph's coat could never think of comparing. She stands an instant, full of fire, action and abandon. One is reminded at first glance of a full-blooded Arabian, eloquent with force and freedom, and "all-a-jump" with the excitement of the coming dance.

She unwittingly gets into one of those huge nests of spiders, found during the spring time in meadows, with a long radius of leading spires and fibres, stretching away into an infinity of space. She commences to dance, and the cobwebs entangle her ankles. The myriad of spiders, young and old and half grown begin to colonize.

The music, a slow-measured but fascinating amalgamation of polka, waltz, march, mazurka and jig, conforms admirably to the step. The spiders accumulate and the danseuse stamps. They appear in myriads-eleven-legged nondescripts with two heads and no eyes; hairy monsters with fire-clawed feelers and nimble shanks.

They crawl and sprattle about the stage, invading the fringes of Miladi's petticoats and taking such unwarrantable liberties that the spectator imagines an inextricable mass of cobwebs and enraged spiders, and would sympathize with the demoiselle, but she seems to take it so easily herself that one quickly jumps to the conclusion that she is enough for them. It is Lola versus the spiders.

After a series of examinations and shaking dresses, she succeeds in getting the imaginary intruders away-apparently stamps daylight out of the last ten thousand, and does it with so much naivete that we feel [a] sort of satisfaction at the triumph.



LOLA MONTEZ AT SEA.—The Chronicle reports a "sea scene" of this noted actress, which occurred on her last passage to Sydney. She had a favorite dog on board that had the unmannered habit that involved Launee in a similar difficulty. The mate undertook to punish the pet, when Lola, without the magnanimity of Launee, attempted to stab the man; and getting disgusted with the inmates of the cabin, she took up her quarters in the steerage. At her first appearance on the stage in Sydney there were but three or four ladies present, whom she took particular pains to thank for their patronage, when speaking before the curtain.

The picture winds up with Lola's victory, and she glides from the stage overwhelmed with applause, and smashed spiders, and radiant with parti-colored skirts, smiles, graces, cobwebs and glory.

June 3, 1853  
San Francisco Whig

Daily National Gazette November 6, 1854

The "Spider Dance" was performed by Mlle. Lola Montez on Monday and Tuesday evening, to the ribald delight of sensual roués, and the disgust of all persons of refinement. In absolute obscenity, this dance exceeds anything with which an audience has yet been insulted in this city. All who witness it were astonished, not at the meretriciousness of the woman – because she is past all hope – but because it was almost incredible that the manager of any place of public amusement should allow such an exhibition... before a respectable audience.

Some in the audience objected on the first night but were removed by the police. Gentlemen "hurried their fair charges from the building." Some persons did hiss the second night but "The danseuse, with raised finger, defied them."

The Daily Pennsylvanian

### Various quotes about Lola Montez from Lola Montez A Life

“the girl is a wonder. She’s an artwork of nature.”

German spectator of Lola Montez

"The guest appearance of the dancer Donna Lola Montez, from Seville, set Berlin to wondering how such a substantial reputation could have preceded this lady. Her beauty, or rare, voluptuous fullness, is beyond any criticism. Her dancing, however, was no dancing at all but a physical invitation... she writes Casanova’s Memoirs with her whole body.”

newspaper critic

“Lola Montez was beauty itself, perfection incarnate. She had blue eyes, thick black lashes, finely arched eyebrows, abundant, thick, black hair with bluish highlights, a supple figure. In addition, she was full of charm, gay amiable, seductive, and at the same time naïve as a child.”

Gendarme Rospopov assigned to escort Lola Montez as she left Poland

Lola Montez: “the most perfect, the most enchanting creature I have ever known... Oh, you must see her! She’s... constantly creative! She is truly a poet! The genius of charm and love! All women pale beside her!”

Franz Liszt

"Lola Montez is a person without education ill-mannered without fixed ideas, whose capricious game can’t last. She is more unrestrained and sensation-addicted than depraved and ambitious.”

Austrian ambassador to Prince Metternich

“I want to take your feet in my mouth, at once, without giving you time to wash them after you’ve arrived from a trip.”

King Ludwig I

"We shall be sadly disappointed if this creature has a degree of success in the United States. She has no special reputation as a dancer. She is known to the world only as a shameless and abandoned woman.”

New York Times

"The dance of Lola Montez is poetry in motion, sometimes fantastic, often lascivious, always attractive.”

French critic

"Lola Montez is not a good dancer. She makes a very bad work of it and does not even exercise good taste in selecting the ‘spider dance’ as one of her performances; for that makes her appear disgusting as well as a miserable danseuse. In it she flounces about like a stuck pig, and clenches her short cloths, raising them nearly to her waist, while with a thin, scrawny leg, she keeps up a constant thumping upon the stage, as if she was in a slight spasm”

Hartford Times

“everyone to go and see Lola Montez, for she is certainly worth it. She is the most eminent actress who has appeared for many years.”

New Orleans Daily Picayune

"Enticingly androgynous, a battlefield of sweetness and energy."

Courrier de la Louisiane



# Then & Now with Art Clark

Last month we ran an article about a trip Alonzo Delano or "Old Block" made to Independence Lake in 1861. We included some Then & Now's by Art Clark. The September Heirloom was getting a bit long though and so we pushed a third Then & Now to this issue. Here we have a heliotrope hut built by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the remains of the hut just recently. Heliotropes were used for long range surveys and used a mirror to reflect sunlight (the "helio" part). This one was used to measure the distance of a triangle with corners at Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Shasta, and Mt. Lola. This was done in 1878 and so the "Then" picture here comes from then. This measurement became the "longest triangulation line ever observed" up to that time.

George Davidson was the one who set up the measurement project and he wrote the story published as "Nine Days on the Summit of Mt. Shasta" in the The Journal -Coast and Geodetic Survey, June 1953. That "Friday August 1, (1878) proved to be the day I had been waiting for. The wind had hauled to the northward during the night, and the smoke had vanished as if by magic. At sunrise, I turned my telescope in the direction of MT LOLA, and there was the heliotrope, 169 miles off, shining like a star of the first magnitude. I gave a few flashes from my own, and they were at once answered by flashes from LOLA. Then turning my telescope in the direction of MT HELENA, there, too was a heliotrope, shining as prettily as the one at LOLA. My joy was very great; for the successful accomplishment of my mission was now secured. As soon as I had taken a few measures, I called Doctor McLean (a visitor from Oakland, CA) and (Richard) Hubbard (a guide) to let them see the heliotrope at MT HELENA, 192 miles off, and the longest line ever observed over the world. In the afternoon the smoke had arisen, and HELENA was shut out; but on the following morning I got it again, and my mission on Mount Shasta was finished... the glory is ours; for America, and not Europe, can boast of the largest trigonometrical figures ever measured on the globe."



Read about the idea here: [https://www.history.noaa.gov/stories\\_tales/geodetic4.html](https://www.history.noaa.gov/stories_tales/geodetic4.html)

# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit Crater Lake & Rhino Rock

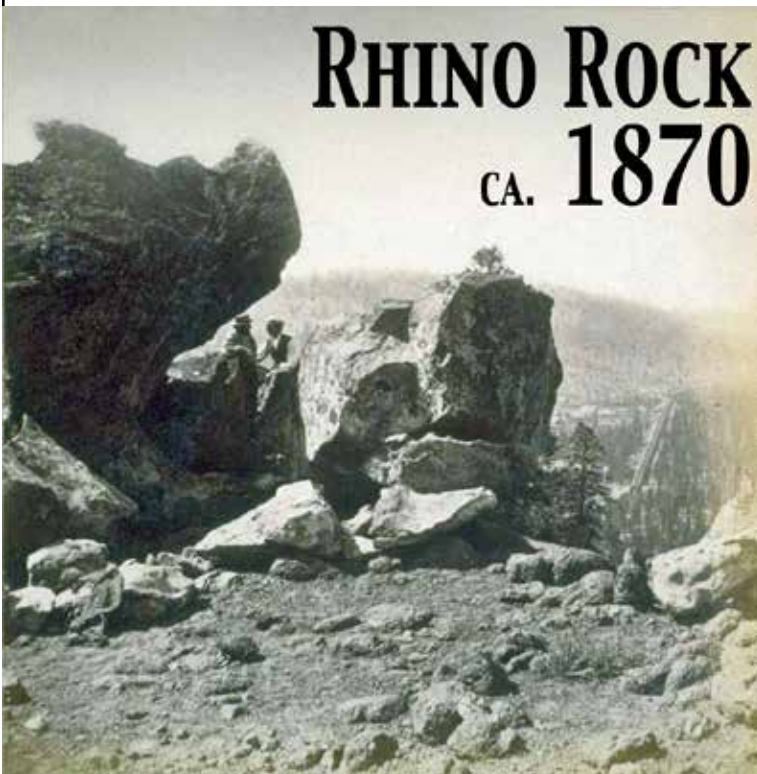


## It's still nice hiking weather.

On top of Boreal Ridge, there are two local gems. One is Crater Lake, above. Geologists don't know how it was formed but the best guess of geologists is that it was formed by volcanic gases finding an escape and blasting out the depression.

A few hundred yards to the west, still atop the ridge, is Rhino Rock, photographed by Eadweard Muybridge (below left). Art Clark, DSHS Mobile Historical Research Team member, took the photograph below right as part of his Then/Now series which you can find in back issues of the [Heirloom](#) (use the indices) or on our website.

Directions and map for this hike are in our "Historic Hikes of Donner Summit" brochure available at the DSHS, on our website, at the State Park, or at the Truckee or Tahoe City visitors' centers.



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Donner Summit Historical Society.org

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\_\_\_\_\_



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



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

**50 interpretive signs along Old 40**  
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