

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

March, 2021 issue #151

## About This Issue

You may wonder, on visits to Donner Summit, why two little lakes with lots of houses around them have an alias. For a long time the lakes were called Ice Lakes but then long ago a real estate developer, wanting to sell lots, imagined that Serene Lakes would sell better in California, the land of sunshine and oranges. This issue of the Heirloom and the next focus on the old name and its fascinating interwoven stories.

Right now Serene Lakes is a sleepy little community of mostly second homes. The residents enjoy the summit and enjoy a host of community events. At one time, though, the lakes were a hive of industry that matched their name and the stagecoach made regular runs from Soda Springs Station (today's Soda Springs) down to the Summit Soda Springs Hotel at today's Cedars. One day soon the Heirloom will focus on Summit Soda Springs. It's all written up and waiting Heirloom exposure so keep up your subscription.

For a short time the Ice Lakes were the site of ice harvesting. That lasted only a few years because of the horrendous amounts of snow that accumulate on Donner Summit (an average of 34' each winter). Just after the ice harvesting left for a more hospitable climate in Truckee, the Truckee Republican said on August 26, 1872: "About a mile and a half from Summit Valley there are two beautiful little lakes, with some ice houses broken down by last winter's snow, and abandoned by the company who have moved to Prosser Creek where they have as much cold weather but not so much snow."

The articles this month and next explore the short history of ice at Ice Lakes and the people involved.

Carleton Watkins #194 "Lakes in Anderson Valley" (today's Serene Lakes)



## Finding Your Way Through Donner Summit History

Now that we've passed 150 issues of the Heirloom, thousands of pages, thousands of pictures, and hundreds of subjects, you've probably begun to realize that you cannot keep all the history in your head. Even if you remember it all, retrieval is difficult.

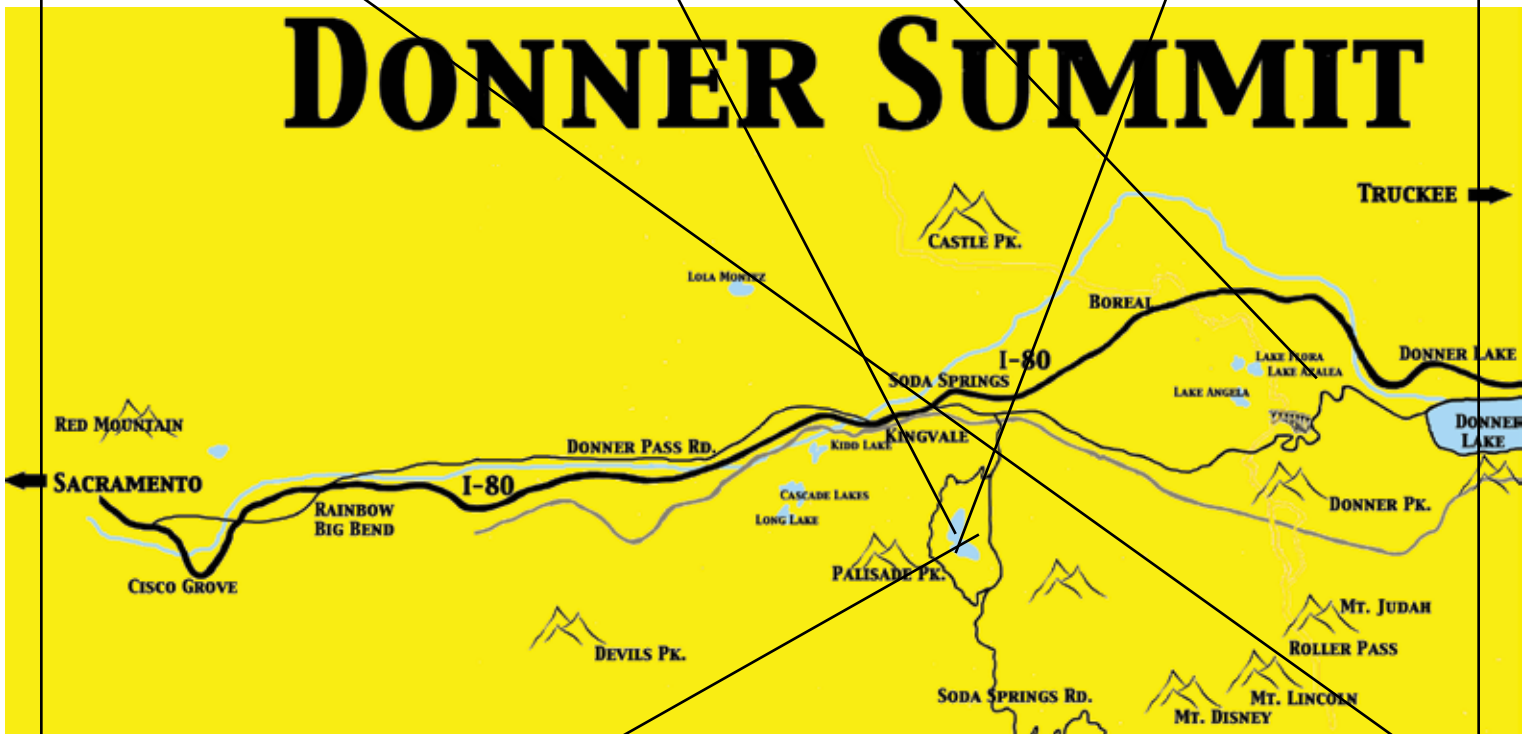
Fortunately John Albert Index invented the index\* and one of the choices we made back at the birth of the DSHS was to index all our Heirloom articles and pictures. We've diligently kept up the indices so that they are many pages long, full of alphabetized titles and subjects. Go to our website and to any of the Heirloom pages (one for each year) and you'll find links to the Heirloom indices.

One of the strengths of the DSHS is the incomparable historical photograph collection of Norm Saylor, our president. The collection is thousands of pictures and again the sheer number makes finding anything in particular, difficult. Avoid the long URL by going to our website and clicking on the "photographs" link and then to the "historic photo collection link." A third link, to the Flickr URL will take you to those thousands of searchable historical photographs of Donner Summit. Have fun.

\*historical society humor

# Story Locations in this Issue

Summit Soda Springs pg 1    Serene or Ice Lakes pg 3    Hurlled from Auto pg 12    rope tow remnant pg 18



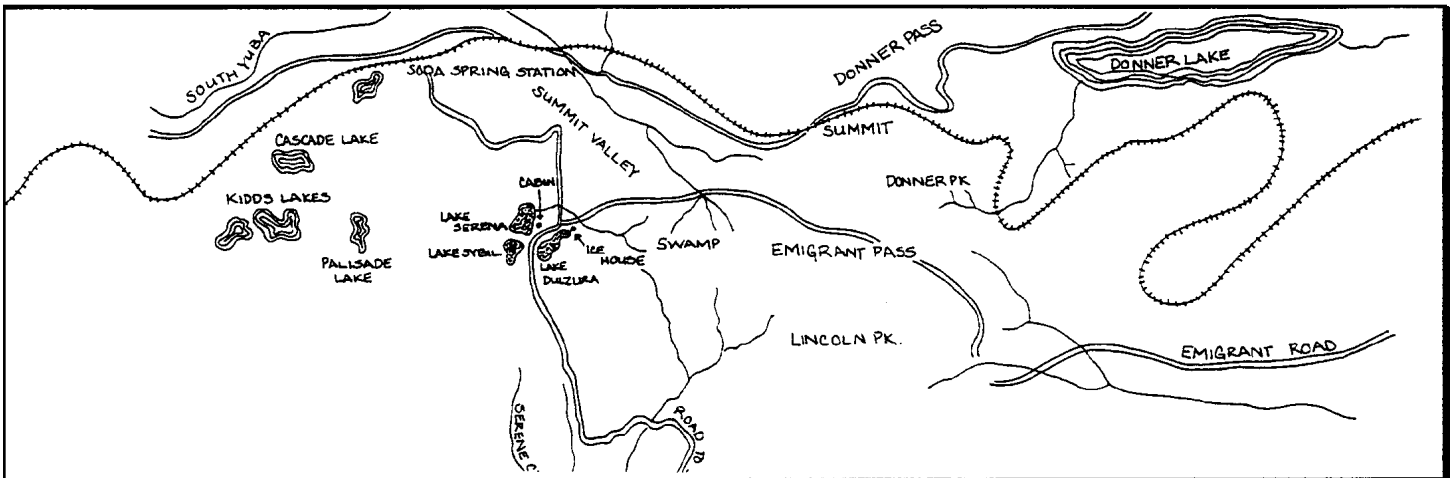
possible jigback remnant pg 19



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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



**Serene Lakes, 1889** source part of Placer County map Bancroft Library U.C. Berkeley (size: 4' x 3')

## Ice Industry

**B**efore 1850 in California you'd have had to drink your Pepsi/Coke warm because there just was no ice. Whatever Baskin Robbins was selling then, it wasn't ice cream. In that year though, the first ice arrived all the way from Boston and immediately sold for \$12.50 per hundred pounds. Ice continued to arrive from Boston, the home of America's ice industry, but local merchants, seeing an opportunity, formed the Sitka Ice Co. which began shipping ice from Alaska in 1852 and selling it for \$75 a ton. Until 1869 most of the ice consumed in California came from Alaska.

It's ironic that ice had to be shipped from so far away and spend so much time melting at sea when fields of ice were only a few miles away on the Sierra Crest. Transportation was limited though, before the railroads came the Sacramento Union opined in 1855 that the high price of labor, the inferior quality and "exorbitant freights and unreliable means of transportation..." prevented people from supplying ice from the Sierra.

Still, Sitka ice was expensive and so the California Ice Company challenged Sitka's ice monopoly. They harvested ice from ponds northwest of Georgetown and sold their ice for 7¢ a pound, which was 3¢ less than Sitka's price. Sitka immediately undercut California's price with 5¢ ice. Then Sitka bought the California company out and raised the price to 10¢ a pound. People have not changed.

Competition did grow and later the price declined to 4¢ a pound. That led people to look to the interior of California for cheaper sources of ice. As ice began to be produced in California, the amount of ice imported from Alaska declined. Still, without decent transportation, the natural place to harvest ice, the high Sierra, remained untouched. A railroad would solve that problem as well as others.

Though the railroad construction seems to be an obvious

advantage to us, for lots of reasons more important than ice, when the transcontinental railroad was proposed in 1862 not everyone was in favor. Many special interests were opposed such as the stage and steamship companies, telegraph companies, express and freight companies and the out of state ice harvesters. Fortunately, it appears their campaign contributions weren't big enough to derail the railroad. Congress passed the law and construction was on.

Sitka Ice Company's dominance of the market was crushed by the coming of the railroad. The company had netted \$75 a ton profit until the railroad opened the way to the Sierra lakes. In ice alone, with the coming of the railroad, San Francisco saved \$600,000 annually.

### Ice Lakes

The story of the ice at Ice Lakes starts in 1849 all the way back in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. A letter had arrived touting the discovery of gold in California. People saw money to be made, but not just by mining the gold. Ebenezer Haley was the leader of a joint stock company that was formed to buy a ship to go to California. The ship would be filled with cargo to sell to the argonauts. This, of course, made a lot of sense because looking back we know that very few gold seekers found their gold in the ground. The real riches were made in hardware, farming, and services to miners. Mining miners was very lucrative. Haley's principal collaborator was Fitz William Redding who was a merchant and shipowner in Yarmouth.

The joint stock company was organized into thirty shares, 11 for Redding and speculators, and 19 for Haley. The company bought the four year old schooner, Mary Jane, rigged it as a brigantine and gave it a coppered bottom. Apparently it was a good ship because it had an "established" reputation and the speed of a yacht.

By mid-November 1849 the ship was ready and a cargo of house frames, shingles, wagons and hardware had been loaded. There were 19 in the party to sail the ship including Benjamin B. Redding, Fitz Wiliam's son, who was to act as supercargo to look after the interests of the investors - the stay-at-homes. When the ship arrived in San Francisco, the crew members went their various ways to search for gold. B.B. Redding stayed in San Francisco to sell the company's goods. The cargo of wagons and hardware sold well, but the rest was a failure except for a load of turtles. The turtles will turn up next month, so stay tuned.

Eighteen years went by and B.B. Redding went from hunting gold to hard labor, to acting as a lawyer and then representative to government conventions, member of the assembly, state printer, mayor of Sacramento, secretary of state, and more. Not only was he interested in many things, by being so involved he was able to meet the important people of the day. By 1868 he was land agent for the Central Pacific Railroad with the job of taking charge of and organizing the sale of lands granted to the company by Congress. By then his father, mother and siblings had arrived in California with his father investing money in Central Valley farmlands, at least some of which he bought from the government. There will be more about B.B. next month too.

Imagine you're B.B. Redding and you're the land agent for the CPRR, taking stock of railroad lands and preparing their sales. You have an entrepreneurial spirit and you and your other railroad bigwigs are in the market for other commercial enterprises. You like ice in your drinks. Since you are also an avid fly fisherman you've explored the streams and lakes of the Sierra for years. On your peregrinations in the Sierra you've come across a couple of small lakes just over the hill from where the railroad will be - remember you have some advanced knowledge. These three lakes are beautiful jewels surrounded by forest and grasslands. Your brother, who is twenty years younger, and has a different mother, is also

## ICE - SUMMIT - ICE

At 1 1/2 Cents per pound

Rocky Mountain Coal -- Semi-bituminous

And the celebrated **Summit Mineral Water Office, Summit Ice Company.**

149 I Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>

**J. HOEHN, AGENT**

**Ice one and a half cents per pound**

Sacramento Daily Union August 12, 1871

pretty adventurous and listens to your ideas. You suggest, or he suggests, or someone suggests that he settle on the land these lakes occupy. One of the things this land, these lakes, may be good for is ice harvesting and ice is in great demand in the cities. So, in 1866, Fitz William Redding Jr., brother of B.B. Redding, settled at Ice Lakes and built a small cabin. The lakes look like a good bet for ice since they're presumably so cold in winter. Ice harvesting is a ways off though because transportation is the problem. We'll also get to Fitz Jr.'s dreams next month.

By 1867 the railroad had reached Cisco Grove and 1867 and 1868 saw the construction of the first tunnel in the Sierra. The first engines went over the summit in pieces in 1867 and 1868 so construction could continue on the flat lands to the east. Tourists had begun to arrive in the Sierra as well, taking the six hour train trip from Sacramento to Cisco. Excursions were offered from there, the end of track and to the old Summit Soda Springs, below Ice Lakes where the Cedars is. It had become so well-known that a hotel was scheduled to be built in 1869 and Mark Hopkins had built his estate there.

In 1868 the Summit Ice Co. was incorporated and "commenced operations at Sereno (sic) Lake,... near the summit of the Sierras (sic). The company made improvements and erected buildings to the extent of \$50,000." They constructed a "substantial shed 450 feet long by 80 feet in width over the surface of a small lake. Three trustees were in charge: Fitz William Redding (the father), Samuel D. Smith, and Jacob Hoehn. In addition to those three, the other stockholders were B.B. Redding and W.E. Brown. (Brown and Hoehn would later be pall bearers for B.B. along with the governor of California and Mark Hopkins' nephew.) The company was capitalized at \$50,000 with 500 shares outstanding.

An idea of the scale of the opera-

**ICE! ICE!**  
**At Lower Prices than Ever Before Sold.**  
**SUMMIT VALLEY ICE COMPANY,**  
**261 First Street, near Folsom,**  
**Office at the Miners' Foundry.**  
**J. L. MOULTHROP, AGENT.**  
**Office open at all hours of the day.**  
 mh25-1m2p

Daily Alta California March 31, 1870

tion can be gotten from the Summit Ice operations at Prosser which is where they moved after leaving Ice Lakes. Since their Prosser building was the same length as the Serene Lakes building and since it was built immediately after, it's reasonable to assume the rest of the operation was comparable. The Prosser operation in 1877, five years after Ice Lakes, had a building "450 feet in length by 50 feet in width with posts 24 feet in height. The walls are 1 foot in thickness and are packed with sawdust." 75-80 men worked there for \$2 a day plus board along with six horses. They harvested 8000 tons of ice a year or about 40-45 cakes a minute. That's 10,000 lbs of ice harvested per minute. Each cake weighed about 225 lbs.

We should remember too that an operation like that won't just consist of icehouses. The Prosser operation also had "a boarding house, store house, stables for the teams, a blacksmith shop and a tool shop." So there must have been quite an establishment at Ice Lakes.

### It Didn't Last Long

The elements were just too much for the company on the summit. "After expending about \$30,000 in the endeavor to construct buildings that would sustain the great weight of snow that fell upon and crushed them... the company located on Prosser creek [sic] in 1873 [it was 1872]". They had spent three years harvesting ice and battling Ice Lakes winters before calling it quits. The Truckee Republican said "It was found by experience, a somewhat expensive one, too, that the snow fell too deep at the summit to render the ice business profitable." The new location was "a paradise for icemen" "with subfreezing temperatures, reduced snow fall, purity of water, and the natural sources of the Truckee River System." One aspect of this relocation is interesting. They'd no doubt given up on Ice Lakes by the end of the winter of 1872. In the spring, the Truckee Republican reported that they were going to move, by summer the paper reported their buildings on Prosser, and in fall reported on their celebratory opening party. So, why did the company buy the property from one of the stockholders,

# JACOB HOEHN,

Dealer in

ICE, COAL AND MINERAL WATER,

OFFICE, 149 I STREET,

Between Fifth and Sixth streets, Sacramento

AGENT FOR

**SUMMIT ICE COMPANY,**

Summit Mineral Water, and

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN COAL COMPANY.**

Fitz William Redding, for \$800 In mid-summer?

The capital of the company was increased to \$100,000 in 1872. The money no doubt went for construction at Prosser Creek, which according to the newspaper was extensive and included a railroad siding.

So, Summit Ice Co. moved to Prosser Creek in 1872. To reduce competition, a number of ice companies united under the Pacific Ice Co. banner. Others had seen the opportunity for ice harvesting around Truckee as well and eventually there were at least 15 companies harvesting ice at Boca, Martis Valley, Prosser Creek, Truckee, Donner, and Verdi. In 1882, the year B.B. Redding died, a price war erupted and the icemen found



a solution, joining their many companies together under the Union Ice Co. name. The Union Ice Co. was headed by E.W. Hopkins, another Central Pacific executive and nephew to Mark Hopkins, owner of the estate down at the old Soda Springs at The Cedars.

The turn of the century saw artificial ice making plants make inroads and with home refrigeration coming in the 1930's the last natural ice harvests took place in the mid-1930's. The Union Ice Co. continued to grow and prosper getting into the business of shipping fruits and vegetables, refrigeration, transportation, and other things. Then the company fell afoul of the 1980's. Its various parts were more valuable than the company as a whole and so astute financiers (corporate raiders) bought up controlling interest and sold off the parts. The Union Ice Co. was no more.

### Article Second

The name of the said corporation shall be "the Summit Ice Company."

### Article Third

The name of the said corporation shall be "The Summit Ice Company."

### Article Third

The said corporation is formed for the purpose of engaging in and carrying on the business of manufacturing, preserving, cutting, selling, and exporting ice and the buying of real estate containing lakes or ponds upon which lakes, ice can be produced or manufactured, within the State of California, and in such other places as the company may determine.

**From the incorporation papers  
of the Summit Ice Company September 7, 1868**

## Some stories in the next exciting Heirloom

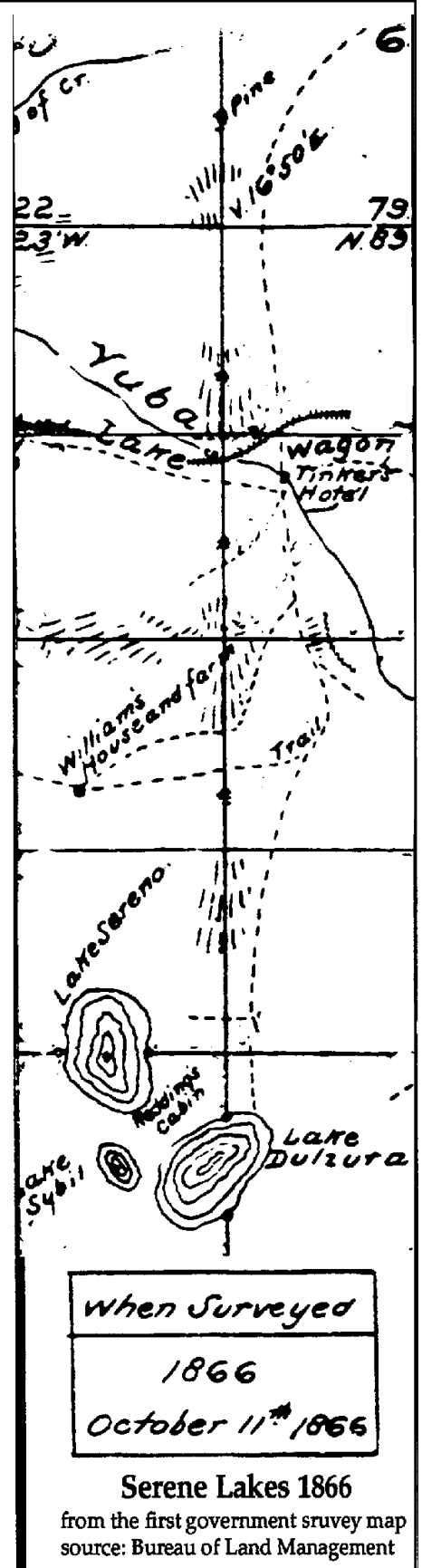
The Dreams He Had (Fitz William Redding Jr.)  
Consternation - What Do We Do Now?

BB. Redding

The Voyage of the Mary Jane  
Patenting Land on Donner Summit  
Ice Lakes - the Novel

and then....

an ice contest - the fun they had in the old days



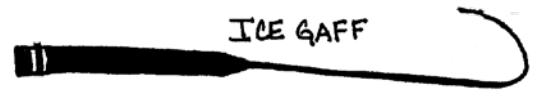
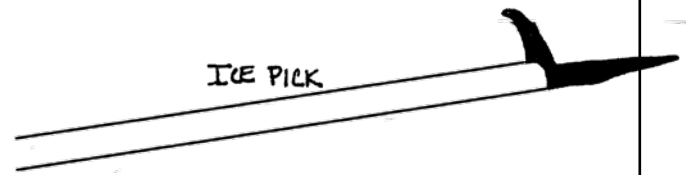
Part of the first U.S. Gov't survey of Donner Summit, 1866. Note "Redding's Cabin."

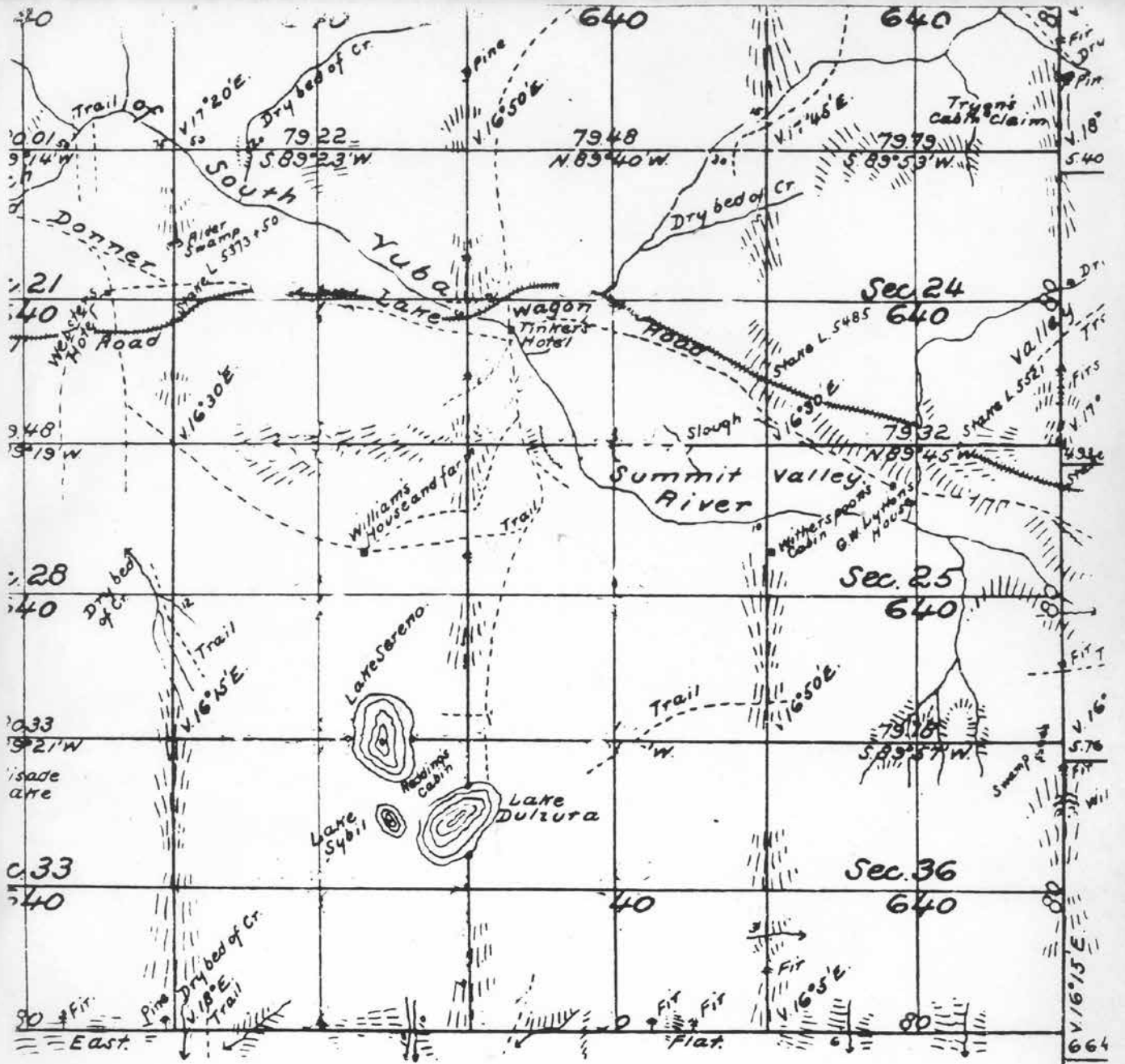
# How to Make Ice

**Don't stand still or you'll freeze fast.** Famous 19th century ice harvesting advice

An authentic & rewarding method of ice production with apologies to the refrigerator industry

- Clear ponds of stored lumber (the summer activities).
- Boom out (clear) the ponds of floating debris.
- Each night the temperature falls below 0° you'll add an inch of ice.
- It will take a month after the first formation of ice to get harvestable ice.
- Wait until the ice is 12" thick. Anything less can't be stored profitably.
- Keep your ice free of snow - it retards ice growth and makes low quality ice. Ice sinks under the weight of the snow and own weight which causes coagulation.
- Remove snow falling on your ice pond by hand until the ice will support horses.
- Scrape the ice with a shaving machine to remove snow.
- Exposed ice will glisten with a blue-ish hue. Really good ice is so clear you can read a newspaper through it.
- Lay out squares on your ice pond of 22" X 22"
- Use ice plows to incise the ice. Make repeated passes (you'll need 5-6) until you can use an ice saw.
- All 30 teeth on your five foot long hand operated ice saw should be sharp.
- You don't have to saw all the way through. Ice forks and spades applied to the grooves will cleave the ice.
- Make your cuts uniform so the blocks end up 22" by 44". This makes for efficient storage. Each will weigh 250-300 pounds.
- Once the ice is cut, your workers called, face spudders and switchers, will use splinters, chisels, bars and pickeroons to separate the ice and guide it to the ice house. A good design will put your ice house below your pond (below a dam) so you can just slide the ice down a ramp into the building.
- Make sure your horses are wearing their spiked caulks so they don't slip.
- Store the ice blocks on their sides using sawdust in between for insulation and to keep the pieces separate.
- The ice must be stored immediately so it doesn't freeze together.
- Your ice house should be well insulated. Many ice house owners stuff their ice house walls with a foot of sawdust or newspaper.
- Well stored ice will last you two years and get you through a bad winter if necessary. Of course, you'd like to sell as much as you grow.



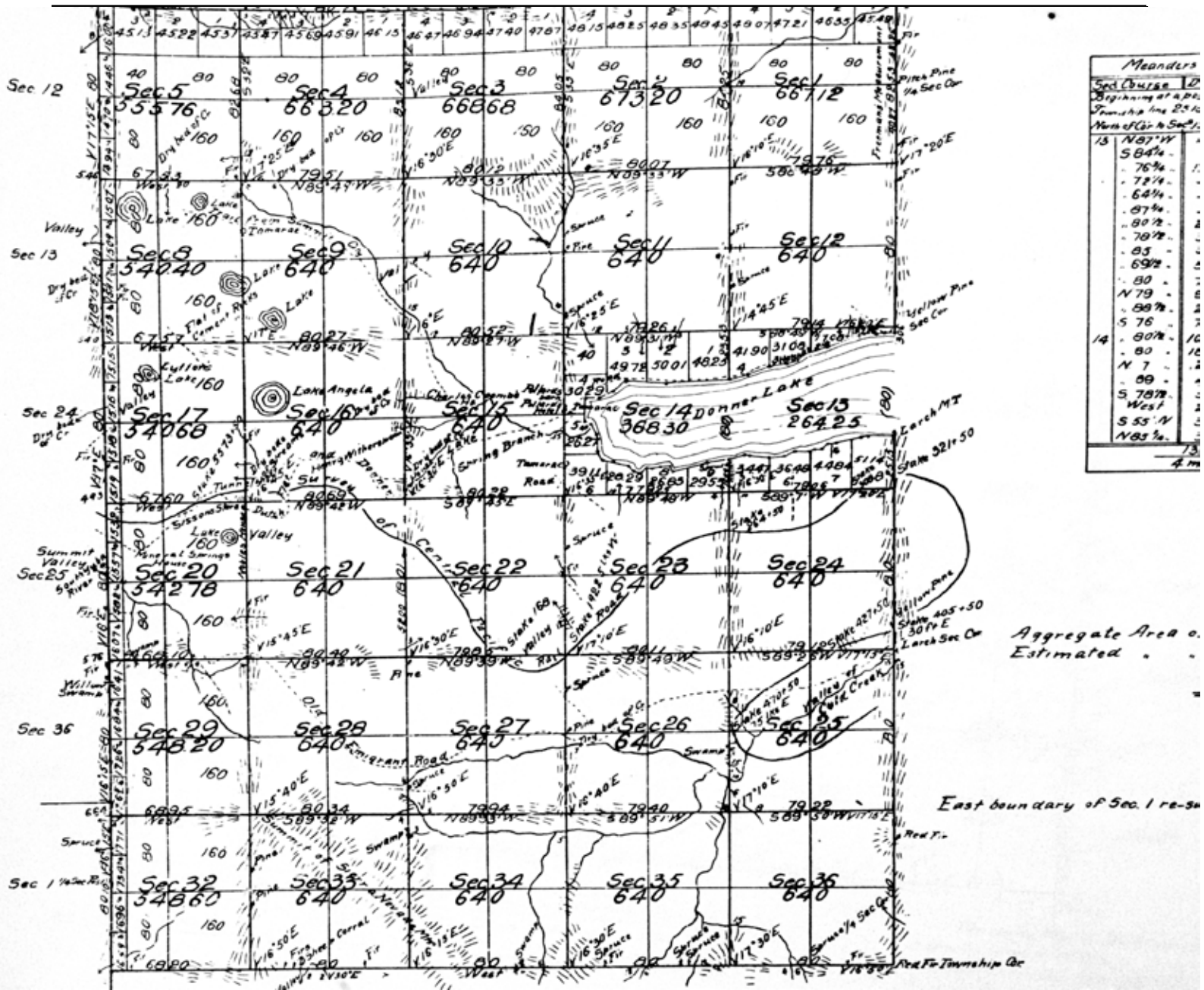


Amount of Surveys	When Surveyed
23 mls 78 chs 11 lts	1866
59 - 37 - 45	October 11 <sup>th</sup> 1866

The above Map  
is strictly conformab  
have been examined  
Surveyor General's Off  
San Francisco Calif  
April 2<sup>nd</sup> 18.

The maps on these pages are pages from the first Government survey of Donner Summit, done in 1866. What can you see is the same or familiar today? "Lake Sereno" is Ice Lakes, today's Serene Lakes. Tinker's Hotel is Soda Springs Station on the Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. The 1866 survey allowed the Federal Government to sell land and give title of every other section to the railroad.





Serene Lakes today, an aerial view from the east side about 2007.

# Ice Lakes, 1941



No. **LAND OFFICE** at *Sacramento Cal Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 1869.*

It is hereby certified, That, in pursuance of Law, *Fitz William Redding*  
*one of the heirs of Fitz William Redding Jr decd of*  
*Placer County, State of California* on this day purchased of the Register  
of this Office, the Lot or  
*North East 1/4* of Section No. *Thirty Four (34)* in Township No. *Seventeen (17)*, of Range No. *Fourteen (14)* E containing  
*One Hundred and Sixty* acres, at the rate of  
*Two* dollar and *fifty* cents per acre, amounting to *Two Hundred*  
*Eighty* dollars and *cents*, for which the said *Fitz William*  
*Redding &c* has made payment in full as required by law.

Now, therefore, be it known, That, on presentation of this certificate to the  
COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, the said *The Heirs of*  
*Fitz William Redding* shall be entitled to receive a Patent for the Lot above described.

*John G. McFallan* Register.

Purchase receipt for 160 acres of Ice Lakes for \$2.50 per acre to the father of Fitz William Redding Jr. Stay tuned for next month for that story.

# Clearing the RR of Snow, 1874

Truckee Republican March 30, 1874

## Clearing the tracks.

We get a lot of snow on Donner Summit – an average of 34 feet each winter. That means an immense amount of work clearing roads, clearing houses, and clearing the railroad tracks. Sometimes it seems almost not worth it, but then we remember it's Donner Summit.

The snowsheds were built in response to the heavy snows (see the “Snow is Not a Problem” in the 2015 Heirlooms). The sheds didn't cover all the track and so huge bucker plows (example below at Cisco about 1869) were employed that weighed up to 20 tons (see particularly the January, '15 Heirloom). Here we have a reminder of the work involved keeping the tracks clear from the March 30, 1874 Truckee Republican.

In severe storms plows worked night and day assisted by squads of men. Five or six locomotives were harnessed to the huge bucker plows. Sometimes as many as eleven engines are hooked up and the resulting machine is driven at high speed into the walls of snows. Snow flies in huge geysers from each side of the plow. The snow is too much for even the largest and fastest assemblages and the plow is brought to a stop. Everything backs up and charges again at full speed into the snow. This can go on hour after hour until there is a breakthrough or derailment.

The drifts were deep and getting deeper the further the train got from Truckee. Four miles from Truckee they hit a drift. Speed slowed, wheels slipped, and the train came to a halt. They tried to back up but snow had fallen between the wheels. The train was stuck. Shovels were taken out and the crew shoveled out each engine starting with the rear one, and backed each back down the track. Everything was reassembled in a snow shed and the steam pressure was brought up. The train charged forward at forty miles an hour out of the shed and towards the snow. It struck the drift again “carving out the snow in columns” the height of the plow. The engines plowed into the snow to the length of the train and were stopped again. Engines were reversed and the process started again six times. On the seventh attempt they got through the snowbank, six miles from Truckee in Coldstream Canyon.

Firewood was loaded on to the tenders and the train started again for the snow. It was lighter and great plumes were thrown up on either side of the plow. It was “one of the most beautiful scenes that can be imagined.” The snow sprayed in “two perfect arcs... and the sun shining upon it, pro-

duced an effect at once grand, beautiful and indescribable.”

That was the introduction to “one of the most daring feats of snow plowing” only a few days before at Emigrant Gap. In that episode five locomotives were attached to the plow. The rear four engines ran off the track along with the tender for the front locomotive. “It was storming at a fearful rate and the snow lay on the track to the depth of from two to three feet.” There could be no help coming from other engines nearby until the plow could get through. A crew of one hundred men went to work getting the front locomotive's tender back on the track. The steam pressure in the engine was brought up to 130 lbs. The superintendent of the plow department told the engineer that he had to either get through the snow “or land his snow plow, engine and tender at the bottom of the American river [sic] cañon.”

“The throttle was thrown wide open, and the engine that had the 40 ton plow in front started forward on the steep down grade as if impelled by gunpowder.” There had been little snow in front of the plow for a hundred yards or so and so the locomotive was “under complete headway when it struck the first drifts. On it flew with irresistible force at the rate of nearly a mile a minute, dashing the snow fifty feet in the air as if it had been the slightest spray. Around the steep curves it circled and swept with full head of steam and crowded to its utmost speed.” A message had been sent to Blue Canyon to have the switch turned so the plow would not run into a waiting passenger train. The crew of men with the ditched engines watched. The people at Blue Canyon watched. “All seemed to understand the extreme peril of the ride, and that if the engine or snow plow jumped the track, certain death at the bottom of a cañon awaited the daring men on board. The plow charged forward two and three-quarters miles to Blue Cañon and was rewarded with three rousing cheers. “The enthusiasm of the moment was so catching, that even the seventy-five Mongolian laborers [remember, this was 1874] present mingled their shrill yells in the general chorus of cheers.”



# From the DSHS Archives

## Hurled from Runaway Auto Machine Runs Away Down Mountain Near Summit and is Wrecked

Oakland Tribune September 7, 1907

Sometimes it's just serendipity. Who knows what we were looking for when we came across this 1907 article about a traffic accident on Donner Summit on the Dutch Flat Rd., predecessor to the Lincoln Highway (what arrived in 1913).

Charles d'Arcy was heading for New York from California on what he thought would be a 13 day trip. He was coming down from Donner Summit at a fast clip when his "transcontinental Dragon" automobile "ran away with him."

He was going at a "terrific pace" and had just rounded a sharp curve when he saw a steeper stretch. He tried to stop but couldn't. The steep bank was on one side, down into the canyon. It could be death. He turned into the rocks on the other side of the road and flipped the car.

d'Arcy was thrown from the car. A friend in the passenger seat was held in by the searchlight braces. A fellow in the back seat took a "daring leap through the air."

Front wheels and axles were broken. One passenger could not continue the journey. The other went off to San Francisco for a new axle. A new third passenger, to do the mechanical work that autos in those days needed, was found and met the remaining two, the driver and the passenger, in Reno.

The autoists, as autoists were called in those days, were aiming at breaking the transcontinental record of a Whitman automobile. At the time of the accident they were ahead of the Whitman's time and ahead of their own planned time. There's no record of the transcontinental result.

We should note that the Truckee Republican included a few more details than other newspapers and said that all three men had been thrown from the car. (9/7/07) See the next page. They also said the auto was going at "break neck speed" of thirty miles an hour.

The Capital Journal in Salem Oregon, wrote a week later (9/15/07) that d'Arcy and friends did not get any further than Omaha. They were too late in the transcontinental season (who knew there was such a thing) and a string of acci-

San Francisco Call February 20, 1907

*Leo Melanowski*  
Designer

*Joseph Tracy*  
Consulting Engineer

\$2150

Standard Americanized  
French Design  
Proportionated  
Construction  
Throughout

**5-PASSENGER TOURING CAR**  **2-PASSENGER ROADSTER**

*Now on View at the Automobile Show, Space No. 3.*

## D'ARCY, SCOTT & CO.

**524 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Cal.**

**DRAGON AUTOMOBILE CO., MEMBER A. M. C. M. A., PHILADELPHIA**

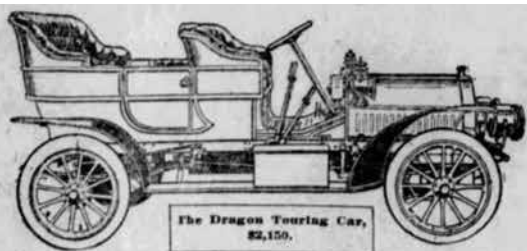


**24-26 H. P. (French Rating) Motor, four 4x4½ cylinders. Special water cooling—water admitted around exhaust valve and emitted around inlet valve; this gives cooling at point of greatest heat, while keeping inlet hot to insure perfect carburetion. Protected shaft drive. Double-acting hub brakes.**

# From the DSHS Archives

dents made it impossible to go forward. The car was sent to Philadelphia for overhauling. Maybe 1908 would be a record breaking year. A thorough search does not show Mr. d'Arcy trying again. One reason may be that the Dragon Auto Co. went out of business and Mr. d'Arcy had no vehicle to advertise making a transcontinental trip. Mr. d'Arcy had done this before, having crossed the continent both by automobile and by bicycle ([Stockton Evening Mail 7/13/07](#))

This article and all the other copies in other papers show the popularity of the new machine, the automobile, and the attempts to break transcontinental records



The Dragon Touring Car, \$2,150.

## A New Car at The San Francisco Automobile Show SPACE NO. 3

The Dragon car marks the dawn of a new era in automobiling; the era of the car that can be run and kept up by the average man, and that is less costly both in initial cost and in maintenance than the over-heavy cars that have been in use. The Dragon is a perfect adaptation of the best French principles and practice to the requirements of American usage. It was designed by a leading French designer with 24 years' experience in gasoline engine and automobile building, and is undoubtedly a masterpiece of lightness, strength and simplicity.



### Specifications of Touring Car

Four-cylinder motor, 4-inch x 4 1/2 inch cylinders. Protected shaft drive. Sliding-gear transmission. Three-piece crank-case. Engine valves on opposite sides of cylinders. Centrifugal pump, self-regulating and air-proof. Double acting hub-brakes, external contracting and internal expanding. Marine type steering gear, as used on 10,000-ton battleships. Jump-spark ignition, storage batteries and dry cells. Full elliptical springs in rear. Large tonneau. 104-inch wheel base.

Sold and demonstrated in San Francisco by

**D'ARCY, SCOTT & CO.**  
524 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco

Dragon Automobile Co., Member A. M. C. M. A., Philadelphia



The Dragon Roadster, Screenshot

## Auto Runs Wildly Down Mountain Road----Brake Refuses to Work

Charles D'Arcy, G. W. Turner and Roy Scott, three young men who left San Francisco Wednesday afternoon in a Dragon auto car to break the record of a Whitman across the continent, met with an **accident** coming down the Summit hill about one-half mile west of the Truckee Lumber company's sawmill, Thursday afternoon.

For some reason or other the break on their car refused to work and the auto started down the mountain road at break-neck speed. Realizing that they were at the mercy of the machine they guided it against the roadside upsetting the machine. The three men were thrown out by the auto being thrown on its side.

The front wheels were smashed and the rear axel broken, besides other parts of the machine being badly damaged. They at once telegraphed for new parts.

Except the few bruises they escaped any serious injury.

At the time of the **accident** they were ahead of their schedule about four hours. They were to be in Reno Thursday night at nine o'clock. On the time they were running they would have arrived in Reno about five o'clock.

Jack Blaney happened to be along when the **accident** occurred and he says he does not see how they escaped not being killed. The machine was running at the rate of thirty miles an hour when it was ditched.

[Truckee Republican](#) September 7, 1907

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**F. O E**—Aerie Lodge No. 1124 meets every Thrsday night in I. O. O F hall. Visiting members welcome. Chas. Hope pres.  
 L. F. Harter, secretary.

Truckee Republican September 7, 1907

Ads from the paper that contained the story of the people hurled from the automobile.

# Book Review

## Unfortunate Emigrants Narratives of the Donner Party

Kristin Johnson 1996 318 pages

Kristin Johnson says the Donner Party did not have much of an effect on history but that it has fascinated people beyond just the interest in cannibalism. There have been many books, stories, plays, songs, poems, films, etc. The interest is because the story is about ordinary people caught in a tragedy

This book is a collection of documents, put together out of Johnson's frustration about accounts of the Donner Party published in early books, newspapers, and magazines. They are all hard to find. She intends the collection to supplement the many things that have been published, all, generally, by amateurs.

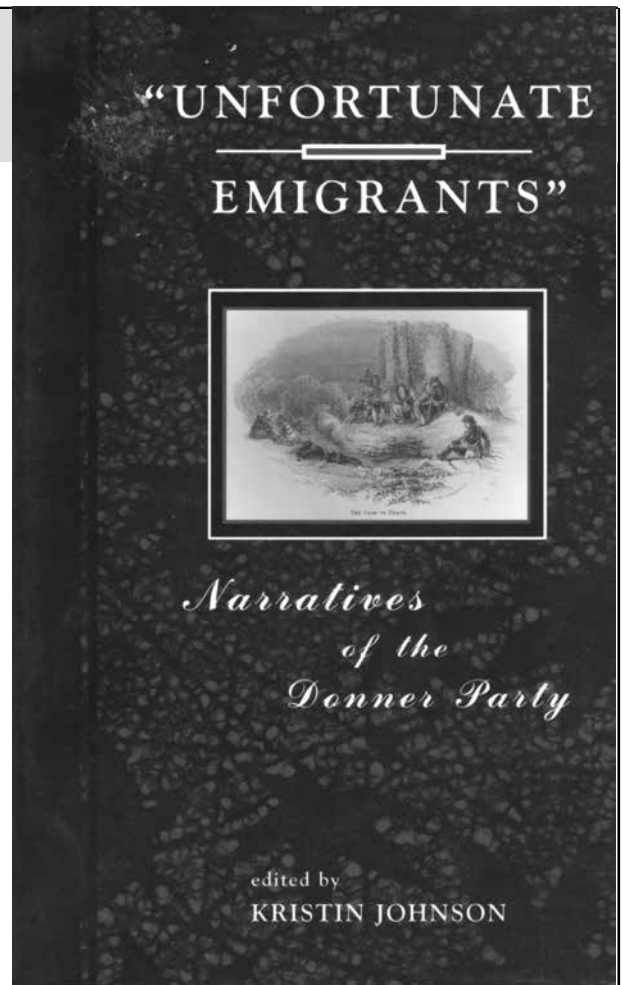
The documents have discrepancies in their tellings but their "historiography and folklore are a fertile ground for more research." The authors are a mix. There are Donner Party members, reminiscences of those who traveled with or near the Donner Party for awhile, and people who wrote about it after the fact sometimes after interviewing participants.

Each document is preceded by a short explanatory essay giving the document's background, criticisms of it, context (the time each was written and the relationships to other primary and secondary sources), influence, and interpreting some aspects. A big strength of the book is the many footnotes which help with the above.

This book does not really add to the overall study of the Donner Party events unless you are interested in the various discrepancies. That's probably too deep for most people. So there is little new for the average person. There are interesting little tidbits. For example the larger wagon train the Donners were a part of gives us an idea of the size of those transcontinental undertakings: 72 wagons, 130 men, 65 women, 125 children, 69,000 lbs of breadstuff, 40,000 lbs. of bacon, 1100 lbs of powder, 2600 lbs of lead, 155 rifles, 104 pistols, and about 710 cattle and horses.

"I will now give you some good and friendly advice. Stay at home, - you are in a good place, where, if sick, you are not in danger of starving to death. It is a healthy country here, and when that is said all is said. Horses and cattle running wild on the commons are abundant. You can live with out work if you are complete rascal; for a rascal you must be to stand any change at all. In the number of rogues this country exceeds I believe any other."

Mary Ann Graves  
Forlorn Hope member



## Thoughts of Virginia Reed Murphy From Horror to Beauty

With the snow came a perfect hurricane. The crying of half-frozen children, the lamenting of the mothers, and the suffering of the whole party was heart-rending; and above all could be heard the shrieking of the Storm King. One who has never witnessed a blizzard in the Sierra can form no idea of the situation. All night my father and his men worked unceasingly through the raging storm... at times the hurricane would burst forth with such violence that he felt alarmed on account of the tall timber surrounding the camp. The party were destitute of food, all supplies that could be spared having been left with those at the cabins. ... death stared all in the face. ... Three days and night they were exposed to the fury of the elements.

Virginia Reed Murphy

Then in California

"Words cannot tell how beautiful the spring appeared to us coming out of the mountains from that long winter at Donner Lake in our little dark cabins under the snow. Before us now lay, in all its beauty, the broad valley of the Sacramento. I remember one day, when traveling down Napa Valley, we stopped at noon to have lunch under the shade of an oak; but I was not hungry; I was too full of the beautiful around me to think of eating. So I wandered off by myself to a lively little knoll and stood there in a bed of wild flowers, looking up and down the green valley, all dotted with trees. The birds were singing with very joy in the branches over my head, and the blessed sun was smiling down up-on all as though in benediction. I drank it in for a moment... and wafting kisses to Heaven in thanks-giving to the Almighty for creating a world so beautiful..."

Virginia Reed Murphy

### 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.

## The Heirloom Answers

In our last exciting [Heirloom](#) we included a special bonus page with the picture here of some gizmos used for skiing in the old days. Note that one has a little holster on a belt for quick access while skiing. Another has a cord to attach to the skier and presumably the others did too. Two of the gizmos appeared in previous [Heirloom](#) (January, '15 for example (available on our website).

We'll not repeat the whole stories here. You can look those up easily. The gizmos are rope tow clamps or grips. Ski up to the rope tow, pull out your grip and slowly squeeze it to clamp on to the rope. (Squeeze too fast and you were on your face.) The small one toward the bottom of the collection clamped to the ski pole and the jaw part went on to the rope, then pull back slowly and the rope went diagonally in the opening and the increased friction pulled the skier uphill.

I never knew about these. My mittens and gloves just had worn holes in them from squeezing the ropes.





# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

Walk around in the forests, meadows, mountains, and granite and you have marvelous scenery. You have really historic spots too. That's the obvious though. Slow down and really look and there's all kinds of stuff from days gone by. Here we have an automobile wheel up high with bracket holding it tightly to a pole.

Today there are a few major ski areas but in the old days, it seemed like every little community had its own little ski area with a rope tow or poma lift. Those were mostly along Old Highway 40. Here we have a rope tow remnant that was across the street from the homeowners' beach at Serene Lakes. Until about ten years ago the old diesel engine was still up the hill along with other wheels. The developers who wanted to add a huge development to Serene Lakes removed most of it, but here's still a little piece.



There are others on the Summit. Can you find them?

Today you can take your own "census" of changing times and note, as you drive I-80, the areas where these little ski areas were but can no longer exist, even if they were economically viable. The rain/snow line has moved up the mountain several thousand feet and there is not enough snow anymore for consistent operation.

Here and on the next page are two views of what the little ski area looked like at Serene/Ice Lakes.

Serene Lakes rope two, 1950's Royal Gorge Collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society



Serene Lakes rope  
two, 1950's Oren  
Horst Collection at  
the Donner Summit  
Historical Society



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](#).

If you find any "Odds & Ends" you'd like to share pass them on to the editor - see page 2

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

## Special added bonus, another "Odds & Ends."

Norm Saylor, president of the DSHS, remembers clearing some land on the east side of Serene Lakes for Frank Allen, president of the Sierra Lakes Club (the future Serene Lakes) for a jigback ski lift on the east side. That was in the mid-1950's just after Norm arrived on the summit.

A jigback had two attachments that skiers would grab on to. Sometimes the attachments were sleds that skiers sat in. (see the 12/11 or 2/12 [Heirlooms](#).) This one had a large triangle what would go up with five skiers holding on. At the same time another triangle would come down to get more skiers. Norm says their capacity exceeded today's lifts.

If there were any remnants they've remained hidden for decades as the trees grew. This year the Truckee Donner Land Trust sent masticators in next to the area they thinned last year and exposed an area up the hill of concrete detritus, 55 gallon drum remnants, cable, squashed wooden structures, pipe, conduit, etc. It's right in the area of the jigback but there's nothing really identifiable as anything like a ski lift. There is an old boot however. Maybe some long lost jigback operator wore the rubber boot while helping skiers up the hill. Then again, maybe not. How would he/she have gotten down the hill wearing one boot? It would have been quite a hop.



There are no pictures of the Serene Lakes jigback either operating or not. We know of no pictures of the area. Norm's amazing picture collection apparently does not include everything. He'll have to work on that.

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