

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society



April 1, 2022 issue #164

## Where Will You Vacation This Year?

The Heirloom is not in the business of making life-style suggestions and shouldn't be. There's too much else to cover. Here, though, is an opportunity for you to spend some time at a premier resort with the most modern amenities in the heart of Donner Summit's grandeur. We encourage you to send in your reservation requests. You'll have to use regular mail because phone and internet are not available in the 1870's. The landlord is a bit of a traditionalist in that.

Winter is leaving us and it is time to spend some time in the higher climates where we can be inspired by Nature's bounty and rusticate, away from the pressures of the city. The newspapers list many resorts where we can spend the summer months but not all are equal in wonders to be experienced. Lake County, for example, has tried to appropriate "The Switzerland of America" and the unwitting tourist might be lured there instead of to the true American Switzerland, Donner Summit. On Donner Summit the wise tourist will make the Summit Hotel his home for the season. The grandeur of the mountain scenery in all its loveliness is on display in every direction. One gets, for example, a satisfactory view of the grandest mountain scenery in the world - Donner Lake (see page 3), the towering Sierras, covered with glistening snow, the great pine forests and stretches of landscape the wildest and most lovely that eyes ever beheld. In addition there is an unending list of recreational opportunities in a modern facility.

We take the (train) cars to the station called Summit where the train stops right at the Summit Hotel seven thousand feet above the fervid plains of Sacramento. We are greeted by the landlord, "Jolly Jim Cardwell" who rules this altitudinal domain, one of the bright spots on the C.P.R. (rail) Road. Trains from the east stop here at sunrise for passengers to take breakfast which is sure to be good. The resort is said to be the finest Summer Resort in the State. For Invalids (those in less than optimal health) in particular no better resort than this can be found in the world,

### HOTELS.

## SUMMIT HOTEL

*At the Summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, on the Central Pacific Railroad.*

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**JAMES CARDWELL, Proprietor.**

This Hotel is the **FINEST SUMMER RESORT** in the State of California. The Climate is cool and pleasant in the Summer months ; the Hotel overlooks "Donner Lake," and about a pleasant drive from the famous Soda Springs.

**FINE LIVERY STABLE** in connection with the Hotel, at which Fast Turn-outs can be had at any time.

The Table will be supplied with all the Delicacies of the Season.

For **INVALIDS** no better resort than this can be found in the World, as the air is always Pure and Invigorating.

*California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*  
August 18, 1873

# Story Locations in this Issue

Beacon Hill Lodge pg 10

Lake Mary/Johnny Ellis rope tow pg 20

Summit Hotel pg 1

## DONNER SUMMIT



## Finding Your Way Through Donner Summit History

We've now 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

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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



Some of the magnificent views that label Donner Summit the "Switzerland of America"

as the air is always pure and invigorating and the climate delightful.

There are many amusements for guests. Among them is the menagerie of pets consisting of a cinnamon bear, raised by "Jolly Jim" since he was a cub. Other members of the establishment are a pair of monkeys, deer, racoons, mountain sheep, and a red bat which is kept in a darkened cage. That red bat attracts his own amazed visitors. People can be seen after obtaining a square meal, rushing out to get a fair view of this cheropterous mammal (fancy scientific word for bat family). The interest in the bear and monkey is as nothing to that manifested by parties in this extraordinary bat which took three days struggle to capture. Woodward\* of San Francisco has offered an extravagant price for this new wonder at the Summit Hotel, but Cardwell has not been tempted and so he shouldn't be.

Other amusements are many. Carriages take guests to Soda Springs on the American River where they can "take the waters." Stages take guests from Donner Summit to Donner Lake and Lake Tahoe. The dining room, with a capacity of 200, is the largest on the railroad between San Francisco and Ogden. Weekly dances, and sometime balls to which guests

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\*Woodward was a kind of family amusement park in downtown San Francisco

are brought by special trains, are held attracting visitors by train from far and near.

Fishing is a prime occupation for male visitors in this sportsman's paradise. It is rare for the fisherman to come home to the hotel with less than a basketful of trout from the Yuba River, Castle Creek, or the chain of lakes: Belden, Azalia, Gloria, Grass, Golden, Summit and Frog. Those really wanting larger numbers of fish can head for the American River where a basket of Rainbow can be filled in a couple of hours.

Hunting is equally as rewarding both for getting deer and quail or grouse. Filling a bag with quail is simply a matter of time.

Other visitors are more interested in the prosaic pursuits such as gathering flowers, admiring grand scenery, picnicking, and even gay games of snowballing.

Scenery is magnificent. Summit peaks like grand Castle tower overhead and some with more fortitude visit those peaks. From Donner Peak fair Donner reminds one of a mirror spread out beneath amid the mountains. If you would see nature's wonderland visit this ideal resort. Picturesque scenery, that rivals the Alps of Switzerland, everywhere greets the eye. Lakes, rivers and mountains all charm the tourist and pleasure seeker.

Lunch served under the pines and aided by the mountain air is an excellent tonic for sharpening appetites. A fine Livery Stable provides fast turn-outs for any expedition.

A short trip down to Donner Lake is a treat. The scenery by this route to Donner Lake, a distance of three miles, for rugged wildness is unsurpassed by any in this portion of the Sierras. The road winds over and around gigantic rocks piled up in every conceivable shape, the work of some sudden and fearful convulsion of

nature. We passed over the snow of miniature glaciers, almost as solid as ice, beneath which rivulets were forcing their way in cascades over the rocky heights. Donner Peak, grim and barren sentinel, rising 2,000 feet above the lake is one of the many prominent sights which attract the eye in passing down from the Summit. While riding along the shore of Donner the entire mountain ridges and points on the opposite side, some of which are ten miles away, were beautifully mirrored in the still, clear waters of the lake. Several persons in the stage who had seen Mirror Lake in the Yosemite Valley, were in raptures over this reflection of scenery from the blue depths



If you're going to talk about a bear you have to have a picture of a bear. Here is a bear at the Summit Hotel but it's a much later bear.

of Donner.

We must get back to the bear though since he brings in curious guests. Since he was raised by humans he was quite accustomed to the hotel's visitors whom he amuses with his clumsy antics. He is kept chained up between the snowsheds and the hotel entrance where visitors ply him with food. He prefers fruit but accepts most anything: doughnuts, pie, and cake using bear hugs on some of those carrying food until they leave it behind as a kind of toll to enter the hotel. Those giving the toll are not always amused but bystanders and locals are.



Summit Hotel looking north. Note the hotel was built right up to the railroad snowsheds.

When "all aboard" is called the bear laies down and whines with paws covering his face. There's always another train coming though, and the bear does not look near starvation.

News has traveled about the hotel bear and famous people have stopped by for a look.

Once some traveling editors stopped at the hotel bar and introduced the bear to whiskey. He liked it and lapped up the first drink. When the first drink was gone and a second put in front of him and then pulled away, the bear chomped down on the bartender's hand almost severing it. The editors beat a hasty retreat to the train. When Cardwell would not kill the bear the bartender quit.

The facilities at the Summit Hotel are quite grand in the best modern style with almost eighty finely furnished rooms, an attached grocery store and meat market, a dry goods store, sitting rooms, ladies parlor, dining room, postal telegraph. There is even one bathtub.

The outdoor "facilities" has two levels, one for the fairer sex on the second floor and one for men on the first floor. The whole thing is painted red.

Nearby are a barn, blacksmith, dairy, harness shop, and slaughter house to serve various guests' needs.

The Table (menu) at the resort is always bountifully supplied with seasonal delicacies and unsurpassed including the delicious frozen oysters, the best of beef from Joe Marsden's Truckee shop, Mohr and York's "Our Taste" hams and bacon, Booth & Company's groceries, bread baskets thrice weekly from Sacramento and delicacies of the season. There is always fresh milk, butter, and cream.

The bar is supplied with the choicest brands of Wines, Liquors and Cigars.

A new addition has just been finished consisting only of sleeping apartments. All of these rooms can be occupied as suites by families, if desired, and they are all open to the large airy porch which extends the entire length of the building on either side, a distance of 140 feet. Better contrived, or neatly arranged sleeping apartments could not be devised. Between the hotel and railroad track, a space of 50 feet wide by 110 long is a planked esplanade or walk; making it a pleasant place for promenade or playground for children.



First Summit Hotel without its addition - about 1870. Structures to the right are the snowsheds leading to Tunnel 6. The building with the cupola is the roundhouse

## A RARE CURIOSITY.

The "Summit Hotel" now admirably kept by "Cardwell," is one of the bright spots on the C. P. R. Road - it is here passengers coming from the East stop at sunrise to take Breakfast, and they are sure to get A good one always.

The "Summit Hotel" is the highest point on the Railroad, elevation 7017 feet high above the sea

It was here we had a good breakfast on our return from "Beautiful Tahoe."

The curiosity of which we speak we can only describe as we found it, a large Cage was hung high, and before it was a cloth on which was written,

A Red Bat, found in a canon after three day's search -- so great is the desire to see the "Red Bat" that visitors approach cautiously as they lift the curtain, not knowing how wild the thing may be.

As we said before we cannot describe it fully, it should be seen, to be realized, the thing is so curious that we rather liked it, although quite laughable affair.

California Farmer and journal of Useful Sciences  
August 27, 1874

# Some True Summit Hotel Stories

## Cardwell's bear

CARDWELL'S BEAR. The editorial excursionists, it appeared, had been informed of the amusing tricks performed by the large bear at the Summit and expressed a desire to see him perform. Of course the excursionists had only to intimate and their wish would be granted. They are going to write up the country and that bear is a typical specimen. He was taken into the bar-room and a glass of whiskey set before him which he drained with an easy familiarity that struck envy to the hearts of the reporters of the East. A second drink was offered him when someone took the liberty of pulling the bear's ear. This enraged him of course, and he caught the barkeeper's hand, driving his teeth through the fleshy part of it. The hand was finally torn from his mouth and terribly lacerated. The bear got madder and the lady "editors" screamed and the gentlemen "editors" shouted, and all ran to the train. The bear was controlled but they would not allow him to be killed, so the bar-keeper quit in big disgust. There is a good chance to draw a moral from this circumstance which could be used in the cause of temperance.

Truckee Republican July 21, 1875

## THE BALL AT THE SUMMIT.

At length, at 10 P. M., we reached the Summit Hotel, and found the ball in full operation. It was given in a building erected within the last week by Cardwell & Gordon, the energetic proprietors of the Summit Hotel. From the haste in which the building was constructed hardly expected so fine a hall, yet there is but one better dancing floor in Sacramento than the one at the Summit. The ball was decorated with national colors and trimmed with evergreens, and presented a gay appearance. The music was furnished by Couch, Jones & Beebe and needs no other recommendation to Sacramentans.

The dancing commenced at 9:30 and continued till midnight, when the guests partook of an elegant supper prepared by the originators of the ball. At 1 P. M. the dance was resumed and kept up with spirit until broad daylight. The floor was conveniently full during the entire time, while many, other than the dancers, enjoyed the scene and the music. Without going into details of dress, all the ladies were dressed nicely and in accordance with the circumstances. The weather was so cool as to prohibit dresses decolette, etc.

Sacramento Daily Union June 27, 1874

## YMCA Guys Serve Liquor Not the Best Idea

James Cardwell invited excursionists up from the State Fair and about 300 showed up "to view the scenery of the mountains." Cardwell also had a band from Truckee for the visitors' enjoyment. To serve the crowd he laid in supplies to provide a "good square meal." He also hired four bar tenders to "dispense the pleasure producing drinks." The four men were from the Summit Young Men's Christian Association "and did not appear to be as well qualified to dispense the liquid as the crowd, ten deep around the bar, was to 'gobble it up.'" One of the four was the president of the Association and he "stubbornly refused to set down a glass until he was reliably informed whether the person would take soda or lemonade.... "This feature was the only drawback to the whole excursion."

Truckee Republican September 22, 1875

## Noted Character Gone,

Every one who has crossed the Sierra on the Overland railroad, and stopped at Cardwell's Summit Hotel will remember the big Cinnamon bear that used to be tied on the porch in front of the house. The bear was an object of curiosity to thousands, and his clumsy antics were the occasion of much amusement. He was naturally a good natured old fellow. and his keeper could do almost anything with him, but being placed in a prominent position he became like other public characters, somewhat irritable, and was not altogether safe. Some months ago he nearly tore the hand off the barkeeper of the Summit hotel, when for the amusement of some travelers he was taken to the bar to show his accomplishments in the way of tossing off a glass of liquor. When Cardwell removed to Truckee and opened the Cardwell House he took old Cinnamon along, but he has not found him a convenient piece of stock to have on hand. The annoyance to which the bear was subjected by boys and men was rapidly spoiling his temper, and making him too dangerous to keep in town, where he was liable at any time to commit serious depredations, and so the other day, as we learn from the Truckee Republican, Cardwell had him killed. The boarders at the Cardwell house will luxuriate on bear meat, but the many visitors to that popular mountain hotel will miss him considerably.

Placer Argus June 17, 1876

# People in the Past Were Just Like Us

## **THE BALL AT THE SUMMIT**, an earlier episode

Thursday's overland train, which left Sacramento at 2:10 P. M., took with it a special car with a party of excursionists bound for the ball at the Summit Hotel. Your correspondent had the pleasure of forming one of that company. The ride to the foothills was pleasant, but devoid of any particular novelty. The first phenomenon of general interest to the party was observed when we were mid-way through a very dark tunnel. As the only direction in which daylight was visible was the entrance to the tunnel, all eyes were turned in that direction. Suddenly a young man and lady were observed in the earnest exchange of the fondest of all salutations. At first sight they seemed to be located in the mouth of the tunnel, but farther observation showed that they were sitting on the last seat of the rear car. They had relied on their supposed invisibility to make hay when the sun wasn't shining. The representative of your morning cotemporary was in the immediate vicinity, and seemed to enjoy his share of the performance.

Sacramento Daily Union June 27, 1874

## Less than attractive aspects of the times

SUMMIT, Feb. 12, 1886.

EDITOR REPUBLICAN: Last night, J. Golden discharged the two Chinamen who were employed as cooks in the Summit Hotel. The Chinamen were completely taken by surprise, and at first thought it was a joke, but when Mr. Goulden paid them their wages, it convinced them of the fact that "the Chinese must go." The Chinamen left on the first train for Dutch Flat, with the avowed intention of leaving California for China on the next steamer.

Truckee Republican February, 13, 1886

### Summit Hotel

"This Hotel is the finest Summer Resort in the State of California...For Invalids no better resort than this can be found in the world, as the air is always pure and invigorating."

Sacramento Daily Union September 17, 1870

### **SUMMIT HOTEL BURNED.**

Completely Destroyed, With Three Hundred Feet of Snowsheds.

John Golden's large hotel at the Summit was burned to the ground yesterday afternoon, and with it three hundred feet of snowsheds. The fire started shortly after 2 o'clock, and about ten minutes later the west-bound overland train arrived. It was able to pass, however, before the flames had communicated with the sheds.

When the fire broke out word was sent to the railroad office in this city, and the fire trains at Truckee and Blue Canyon were ordered to the scene. The fire train at the Summit was also out in readiness to fight the flames, and by 3:30 o'clock the fire was out, though not until three hundred feet of the sheds had been burned. About two hours' time was required in which to clean up the debris and repair the track, and no passenger trains were delayed.

The hotel was a total loss. The property was valued at \$8,000.

Sacramento Daily Union February 9, 1892

### **THE SUMMIT.**

**THE MOUNTAIN SIDES ROBED** with ever-greens and rhododendrons, crowned with snow in Summer; the atmosphere is surcharged with health and vigor, and a foe to bronchial infections. Every Inducement is offered not only to the tourist, but to all citizens of the Pacific coast. to pass a week or two of rest and relaxation. To the business man it will be money to all, health.

The Hotel is three miles from Donner Lake and two and one-half miles from Castle Peak with its head 11,000 feet above the sea.

**A LIVERY STABLE** is connected with the house, for the accommodation of guests.

The rates of fare on the Central Pacific Railroad are : From San Francisco, \$10 75 : to return, \$3 75: with proportionate rates from Sacramento, Marysville and other points.

**The SUMMIT HOTEL** is kept in the best modern style--finely furnished rooms, and its table bountifully supplied with everything of the best in its season,

JAS. CARDWELL, Proprietor.

Sacramento Daily Union, July 4, 1871

# Donner Summit Winter Magnificence

"A day at the Summit... in the full glory of winter is worth a month in summer"

How many such elevated mountain gardens of God we have in the Sierra Nevada and how few ever visit them in their winter flowering time--flowering time, not in the botanical, but meteorological sense! Each crystal of snow- their number innumerable - is a starlike flower of the most wonderfully varied pattern, invariable as to the number of its petals. These flowers are not evanescent, either, until the heat of early summer and nature's call for other flowers, liquefies the Snow into our mountain streams and rivers, not surpassed in the world for purity and beauty--the sun when he shines upon them, gilding these "pale streams with heavenly alchemy." These mountain streams descend rapidly and are broken over rocky channels. They are thus fully aerated and when aerated are whitened into cascades composed of water and air--air as it were made visible. When air and water are thus mingled they are so greatly beautified as to be almost spiritualized, the water vanishing in one sense as water, that it may be uplifted into air. A day at the Summit Soda Springs, in the full glory of winter is worth a month in summer, with full remembrance of how glorious the verdure, the mountain flowers and the forest then are in the latter season.

[Then much later in the article:]

No one can understand the superiority or far greater fascination of the mountains under winter's glittering and glorious rain but he who has himself visited the highest portions of the range in both summer and winter.

[And then]

Speaking for myself and with strong love for various kinds of physical exercise, I can say that not one of them approaches snowshoeing in the keen air one breathes, the elevations attained, the glorious sights seen, the health and strength acquired, and the sense of pride that follows indulgence in this manly kind of open-air work.



THOMAS MAGEE.  
San Francisco Call April 5, 1896



It was not always easy crossing Donner Summit. In the beginning the first wagons coming over the pass to California had to be disassembled. Later, you'd think that roads improved things,

### **Had a Hard Trip; And That's no Lyin'**

Last Saturday evening employees of the L. Huntley Co. garage wiped the dust off an old Ford, filled it with gas and mechanics and started it on its way presumably to cross the summit. They sailed along beautifully over the frozen snow until morning, then the sun came up and our Ford went down-up to the fenders in the slush. The crew piled out and took a look at the work that had to be done in order to get started again - and decided to eat, only to find that the eats had been left in the one place that needed them the least - Sather's Grill. Nothing to do but to walk about four miles to the Summit Hotel for their meals and back again to dig out their means of transportation. They pushed the car over fifteen feet of snow in four hours certainly not a record run - and then went back and picked up one of the members and carried him to the car.

The party arrived home at 2 o'clock Monday morning.

It was reported that one of the men started out to see how far a bank of snow extended and was followed both ways by a mountain lion, and Saturday night their sleep was interrupted by a visitor in the form of this same lion, whose wanderings in their direction caused the snow to crunch and woke them up, my but the cold air does a lot for the imagination!

Anyway, they are going again next Saturday to get the lion - maybe.

Auburn Journal March 13, 1924

To see pictures of others when crossing the summit was not always easy go to our website's exhibits page and see the two exhibits, "Crossing the Summit Was Not Always Easy" I & II.

# BEACON HILL LODGE



# SNOW SWIM SKI

**BEACON HILL**  
Lodge  
SODA SPRINGS

All Year SWIMMING  
WARM FILTERED WATER  
CLEAN ENOUGH TO DRINK

U.S. 40

Wintertime  
Summertime  
**SWIMMING POOL**



# 1951



*New Rope Tow Hill  
Starts at  
Enlarged Parking Area*

**Covered Ramp  
to**

## DONNER SKI RANCH

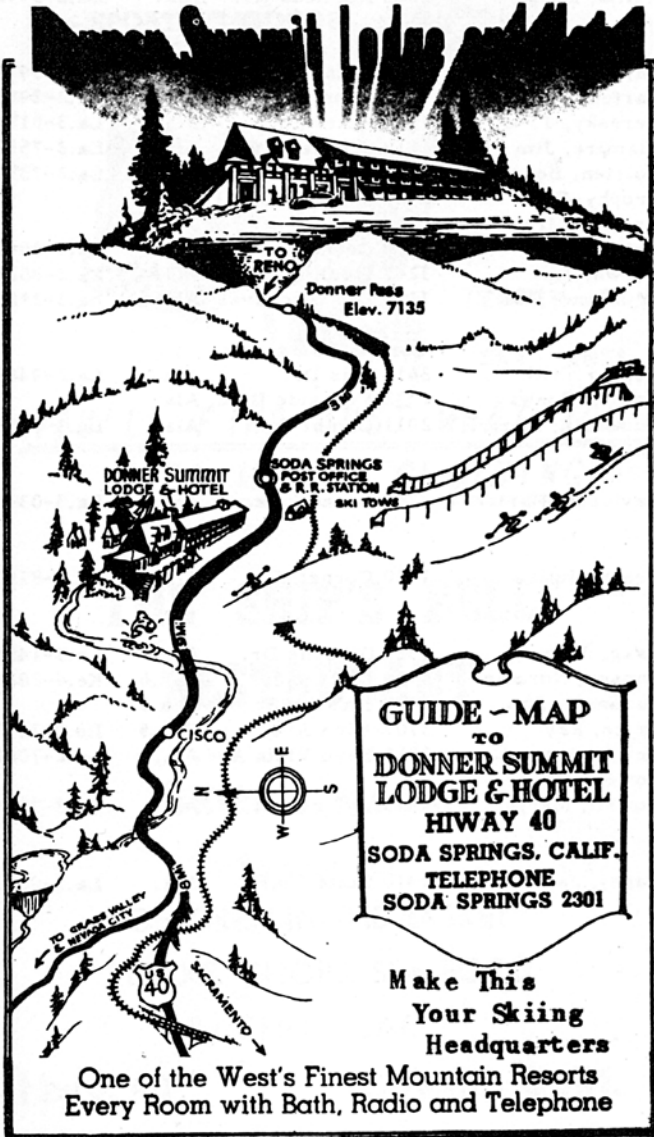
Bar. Cafeteria

**ARO** → Ski School

**T-Bar Lift** DONNER SUMMIT

When we at the Heirloom think about articles there's always the need for some good pictures. In this case, writing about the torch travels to the Eighth Winter Olympic Games, our research department took a tour through Norm's collection of skiing ephemera. In one drawer was a copy of the 1951 edition of Down Ski. We thought some local 1951 ads for Donner Summit would be nice illustrations - just in case you are looking for a way to enjoy 1951 Donner Summit.

WINTER SPORTS      SUMMER SPORTS  
Ideal for All-Year-'Round Vacationing



1951

*Ski* at **SODA SPRINGS**

Ride Side-by-Side . . . . . enjoy the  
**NEW DOUBLE CHAIR LIFT**

The SMOOTHEST \_\_\_\_\_ most COMFORTABLE \_\_\_\_\_ and SAFEST RIDE!

LEARN to Ski at the  
**BUD ZORICH SKI SCHOOL**  
Group and Private Lessons Daily

**BUD ZORICH**  
Director  
**EDDIE COPPEL**  
Head Inst.

Eat At The  
**SNOWFLAKE**  
Good Food  
Reasonable  
Prices



**MORE FUN... WHEN YOU RIDE DOUBLE**



"Added FREE Parking Area!"

**NIGHT SKIING**



**Soda Springs Ski Corporation**

# 1951



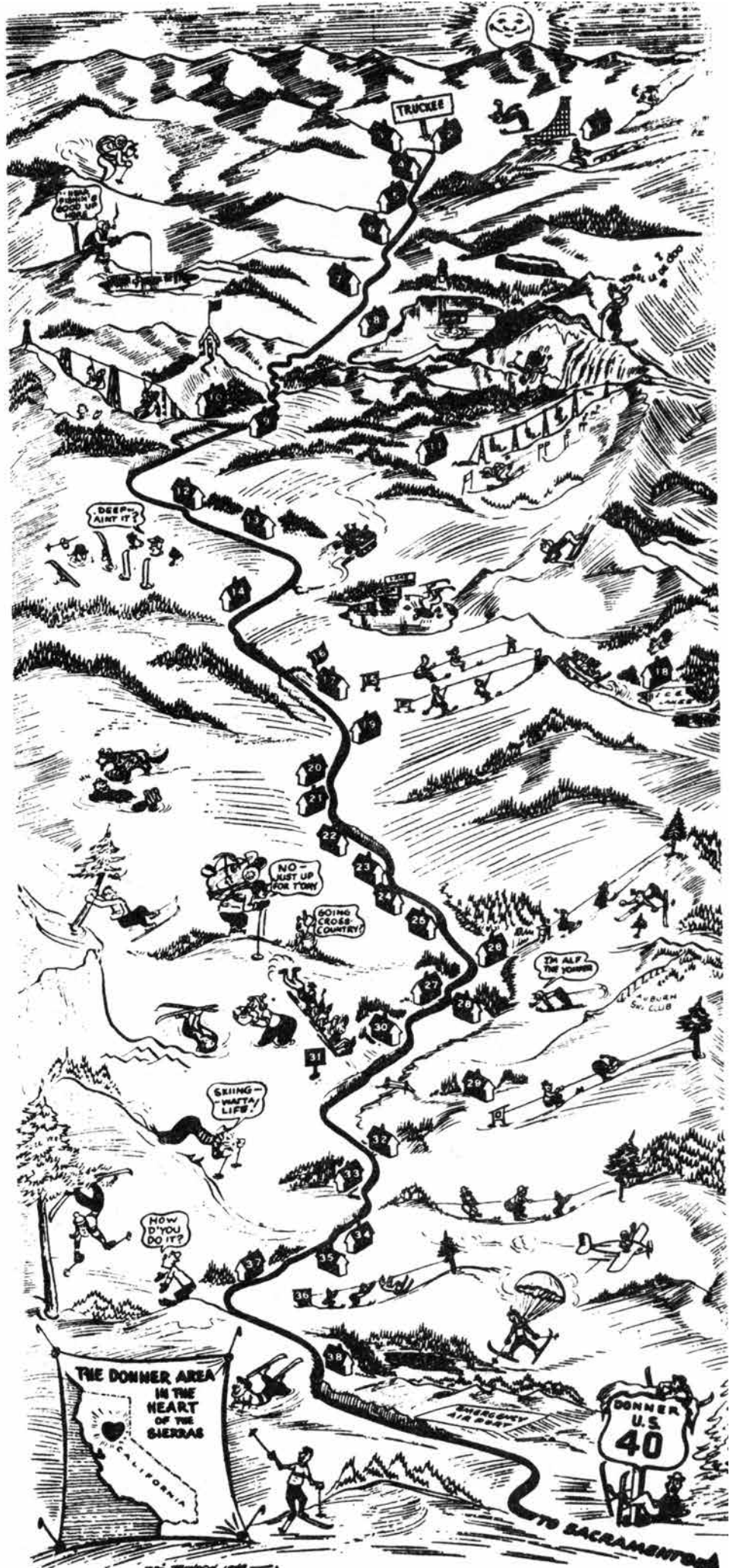
- 1—TRUCKEE HILL TOP LODGE
- 2—THORNTON'S GARAGE
- 3—RIVERSIDE HOTEL
- 4—PASTIME CLUB
- 5—COTTAGE HOTEL
- 6—TRUCKEE RESORT
- 7—RICHARDS LAKESIDE GARAGE
- 8—DONNER LAKE LODGE
- 9—SKI HI AND SUMMIT SPORT SHO
- 10—DONNER SKI RANCH
- 11—SUGAR BOWL LODGE
- 12—KISKI LODGE
- 13—SKI INN LODGE
- 14—NORDEN STORE
- 15—SODA SPRINGS SKI TERRAIN
- 16—SODA SPRINGS CORP.
- 17—SODA SPRINGS HOTEL
- 18—ICE LAKES CHALET
- 19—BEACON HILL LODGE

Stylized map of Donner Summit, 1951. Note, from the legends, how many businesses were on the summit in those days.

Then along came the freeway.

Then too, culture changed and people's preference for lodges, ski club, and other forms of communal ski weekends changed to individual cabins and rooms in hotels.

- 20—SODA SPRINGS POST OFFICE
- 21—PRATT'S GARAGE
- 22—DONNER SUMMIT LODGE
- 23—RICHARD'S LAKESIDE GARAGE
- 24—KINGVALE PARK
- 25—CRAMPTON'S LODGE
- 26—RAINBOW TAVERN AND SKI TOY
- 27—BIG BEND INN
- 28—TRAILSIDE LODGE
- 29—AUBURN SKI CLUB
- 30—CISCO GROVE STORE
- 31—CISCO GROVE TOBOGGAN SLIDE
- 32—SKYLINE LODGE
- 33—YUBA GAP LODGE AND SKI TOW
- 34—RANCHO SIERRA INN
- 35—MCKENZIE'S GARAGE
- 36—LAING'S SKI TOW
- 37—LAING'S PIONEER CAMP
- 38—LAKEVIEW LODGE



# 1951

SKI MANEUVER TERMS



SKI TURNS

- Pure Christie
- Royal Christie
- Pure Christie
- Parallel Turn



RUNNING

- Snow Plow
- Side Slipping
- Vorlage Schussing
- Rucklage Schussing
- Dipsydoodle



SLALOM GATES



- Open Gate
- Closed Gate
- H-Gate
- Corridor
- Hairpin
- Flush
- Selous Flush
- Elbow
- Starting Gate
- Finish Gate



WALKING

- Kick Turn
- Side Step
- Herringbone



- One Step Langluff
- Two Step Langluff

JUMPS

- Gelandesprung
- Field Jump

MARKER FLAGS

- Blue - Control Gate
- Red - Course Director
- Yellow - Dangerous Conditions



GRATS POWERS

Let's Ski



Reprinted from the California Winter Sports Guide, published yearly by the California State Chamber of Commerce.

Everyone can learn to ski well. Whether your aim is perfection, or acquiring simple fundamentals for skilling enjoyment, your first order of business upon reaching the ski area is to see the ski instructor. Above all things avoid the necessity of having to correct the faults learned through amateur or self-taught instruction. After your first lesson, your progress will depend upon the amount of time you devote to practicing what you have been taught. Ski instructors will be found at every area. They are selected for their ability and are certified by the Far West Ski Association. The following illustrations and instructions are by Tyler Micolleau, author of Power Skiing, and instructor at Squaw Valley. You cannot learn to ski from these, but they will give you the general idea of how skis are manipulated.

**THE KICK TURN**—Place poles on the opposite side of the skis to the direction in which you wish to turn. Lift up outside ski straight ahead, swing foot around and place it parallel to other ski but facing in opposite direction. Lift stationary ski and place beside first.

**SNOWPLOW TURN**—Keeping your weight even on both skis in the snowplow position, turn by a forward and inward pressure on one foot and a backward and outward pressure on the other.

**SIDESLIP**—Sideslipping is the basis for all high speed turning. With weight even on the skis release the bite of the edges by flattening the skis against the snow. A slight outward lean assures stability as the skis slip downhill.

**CLIMBING**—On gentle slopes straight-ahead walking is sufficient; as the grade steepens the half sidestep is used (a), then the herringbone (b), and for steep slopes the sidestep (c).

**STRAIGHT DOWNHILL RUNNING**—Keep knees bent and flexible (to compensate for uneven terrain) and your weight forward. Keep one ski slightly advanced when running into soft snow.

**SNOWPLOW**—For control at slow speeds press the tails of the skis outward bringing the skis slightly up on edge. Keep the points almost together and your ankles and knees flexible.

**PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA**—Skis remain parallel and evenly weighted (A). Rotation is initiated with the upper part of the body (B). As the skis start to turn, body weight is lowered and pressed forward (C) (reducing the weight on the tails of the skis). As rotation continues at the end of the turn the inside ski is pressed forward (D).



KICK TURN



PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA



PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA



PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA



PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA



CLIMBING



SNOWPLOW



DOWNHILL RUNNING



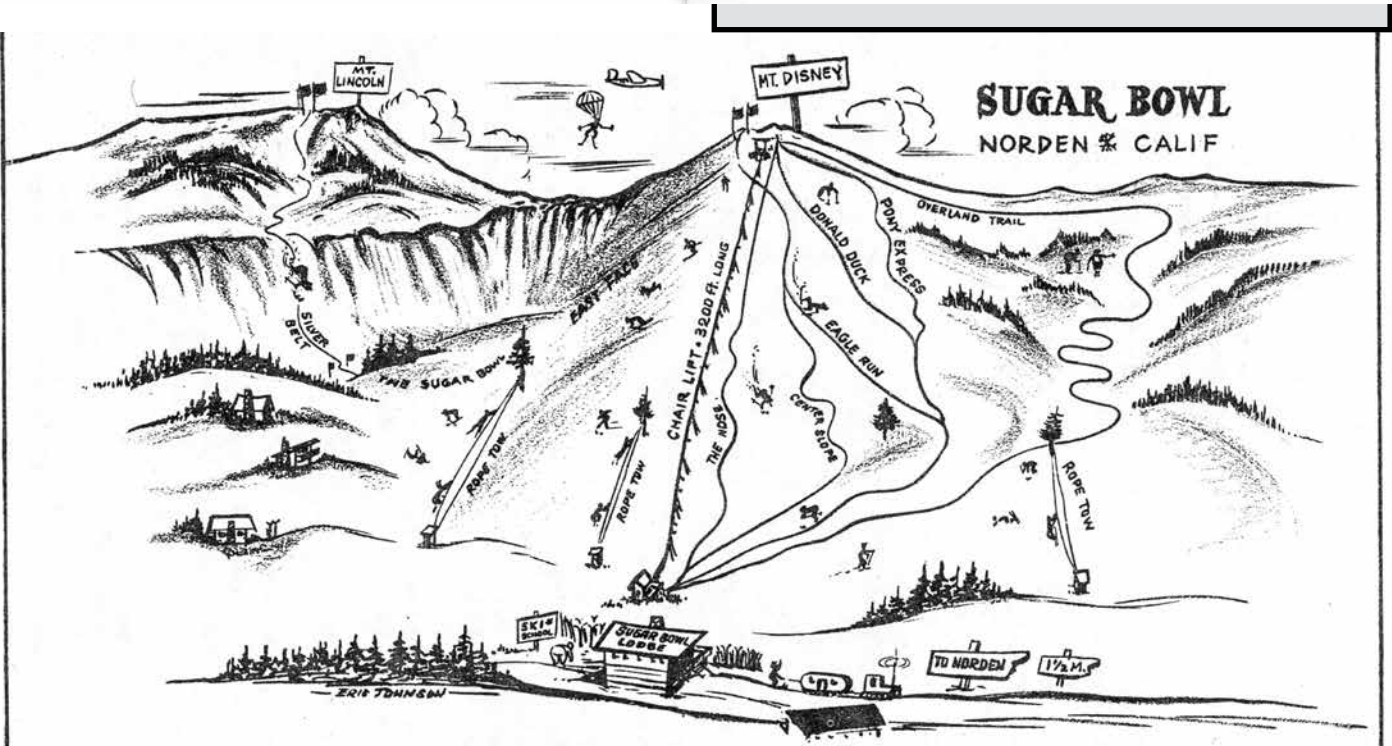
SNOWPLOW TURN



SIDESLIP



PARALLEL CHRISTIANIA



SUGAR BOWL  
NORDEN CALIF

# Book Review

## Rufus Porter, Yankee Pioneer

Jean Lipman, 1968 202 pages, large forma, with lots of notes

Rufus Porter never went close to Donner Summit but if his dreams had come true he probably would have. He was a fascinating character from America's 19<sup>th</sup> Century Age of Wonder and he should be recognized along with Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Samuel Morse, and others.

Rufus Porter Yankee Pioneer tells the fascinating story of Rufus Porter with many pictures, befitting the subject who was an artist, muralist, and inventor, among many other things (see page 17).

The first chapter is a wonderful start, laying out "The Porter Puzzle" which gives a good introduction and spurs the reader on to the rest of the book: his life; work as an inventor, journalist, painter, and muralist. Like America at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, anything was possible for Rufus Porter as his list of "careers" by age 26 attests (page 17). He had the same exuberant optimism as the country that was embarking on the Industrial Revolution.

Like the country breaking tradition, expanding rapidly, and entering a new age, Rufus Porter broke family tradition. Farming was too dull for him. "Static life would not suit him."

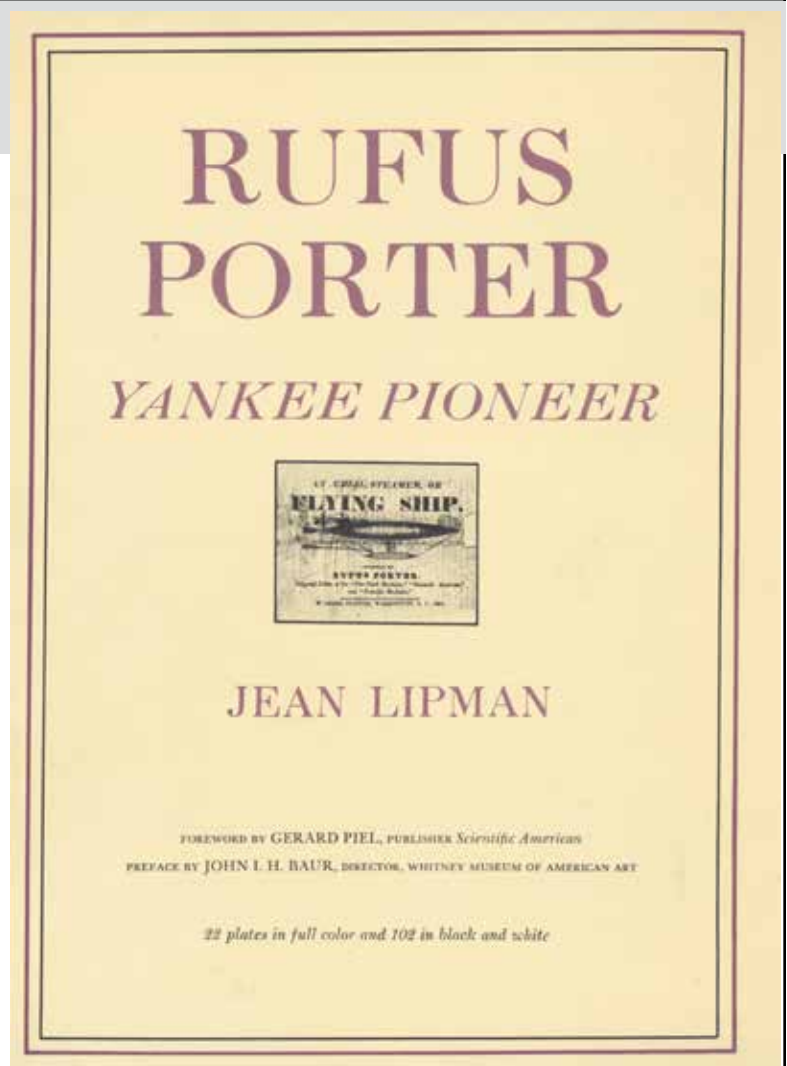
From 1815 – 1824 he was an itinerant portraitist and like other aspects of his life he devised improvements, in this case using a camera obscura for his outlines so he could do a portrait in 15 minutes. According to the author, the portraits "sold like hot cakes."

From 1824 – 1845 he concentrated on mural painting in people's houses and businesses, a kind of permanent wallpaper. Most of his work was unsigned which makes cataloging and studying his work hard.

Jean Lipman, the author, sees Porter just as free and innovative in his art as his later endeavors, questioning conventional ways of doing things with industrial inventions (see the list on page 17).

"Rufus Porter's outstanding trait was his total independence of the more conventional ideas and fashions of his day. He felt himself free to live as he would, think as he would, paint as he would. This accounts both for the bold originality of ideas as an inventor and for his free approach to the art of painting. His awareness of the simple beauty of New England farms and villages was a century ahead of his time; his dislike of academic realism and his personal, deliberately abstract style, his unconventional design and gay color schemes, his rapid, bold brushwork – all these add up to a truly modern art... He was the chief wall painter of his day and the most noteworthy mural painter in the history of American art."

A sideline to his art was what attracted the Heirloom to Rufus Porter: his industrial inventions and labor saving devices to improve the world, which is where his aerial locomotive comes in – but that's another story; we're just setting you up for next month.





Rufus Porter was an artist as well as inventor. People would contract him to come into their houses and paint murals like we put up wall paper today.

Teaching or propagating ideas was a theme in Porter's life – hence his founding of various publications including starting Scientific American; and his teaching school, painting, dancing, drum painting and drumming. Like his books which had only short runs, he kept his publications for short time periods before handing them off. Combine that with his not signing his murals, not taking credit for his work, patenting only a few of his inventions and either giving them away or selling them cheaply, and we have the first part of the puzzle of Rufus Porter. We don't know as much as we could and Lipman's study is left with lots of "seems likely", "an interesting possibility", "probably", "suggests", and "I believes."

In spreading his ideas and new inventions Lipman says, "He became a kind of mechanical Johnny Appleseed, sowing the seeds of new and ingenious ideas as he traveled his way through New England and scattering them abroad through

his journals." One interesting suggestion Lipman repeats from an A.J. Philpott (see the quote on page 17) is that Rufus Porter was the model for Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. At the end of his life Porter was in Hartford as was Twain. Twain may have known of this interesting character. See the sidebar quote on page 17.

The second part of the Porter puzzle was his being so advanced for his time, for example his automobile in the horse and buggy era and his flying machine (just wait for next month) Lipman says,

He was strikingly independent of the narrow prejudices and conventions of his time. He was an innovator in art and journalism, and his career as an inventor epitomizing this pioneering

# Scientific American.

THE ADVOCATE OF INDUSTRY, AND JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC, MECHANICAL AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.

Vol. 5.

New York, March 3, 1859.

No. 25.

THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN :  
CIRCULATION 11,000.  
PUBLISHED WEEKLY.  
At 105 Fulton Street, New York (then Building) and  
15 Court Street, Boston, Mass.  
By Munn & Company.  
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Poetry.

SABATH STILLNESS SOUND RE-  
VE D. A. BRIDGE.

## IMPROVED RAILROAD CAR COUPLING.



Lower part of it, operated by a lever, so as to let the screw O, when full, be raised by the horse power, or steam or other power, that may be applied to the radial levers. The screw can be made to deviate at any angle, and it can be drawn in and thrust out from the side of the vessel to take a long sweep by a double rope II, passing over a sheave between the ends of the angular levers and operated by the windlass seen at this side. On the other side is a windlass which lifts up the frame by chains, secured to the end of the frame and passing from the windlass up over a pulley above for the greater lever power.  
At the end of the screw are two vertical anchor stakes, to be driven into the bottom of the stream, and they can be elevated by the rope F, passing around the capstan drum. For

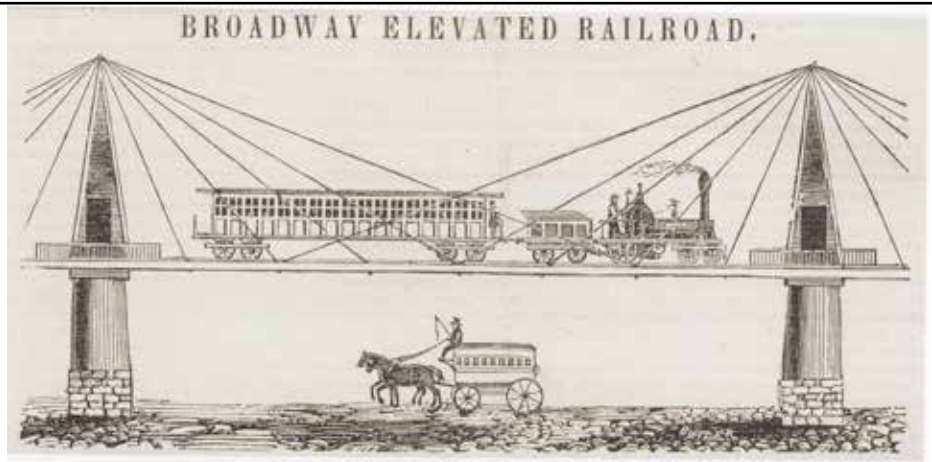
Rufus Porter founded the Scientific American

tendency. He became, in short, one of the most progressive Americans of the nineteenth century.”

She also says though,

“Many of the concepts and inventions that were to be found a generation later as an accepted part of every-day life were ridiculed as wild ideas when Porter first presented them. If he had been less of a prophet, Porter would have been heralded as a visionary inventor. Instead he was discredited as an eccentric crackpot.”

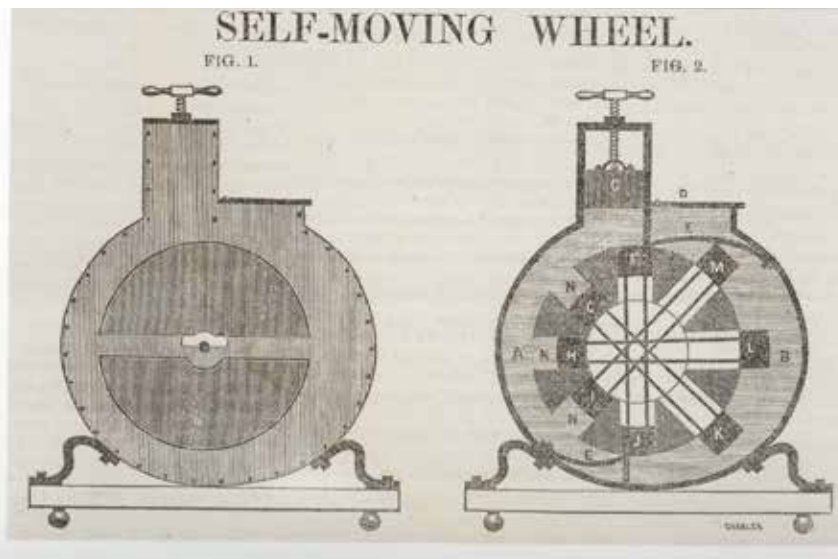
People generally thought in “small steps and slow stages” and Porter’s advances went too far. People could accept balloon flight but Porter’s idea of traveling in what we would call a dirigible (his aerial locomotive) was crazy.



fine with a large collection of annotated black and white as well as color Porter murals that Lipman found through her searches.

All that analysis of Porter’s murals comes down to, in Lipman’s mind,

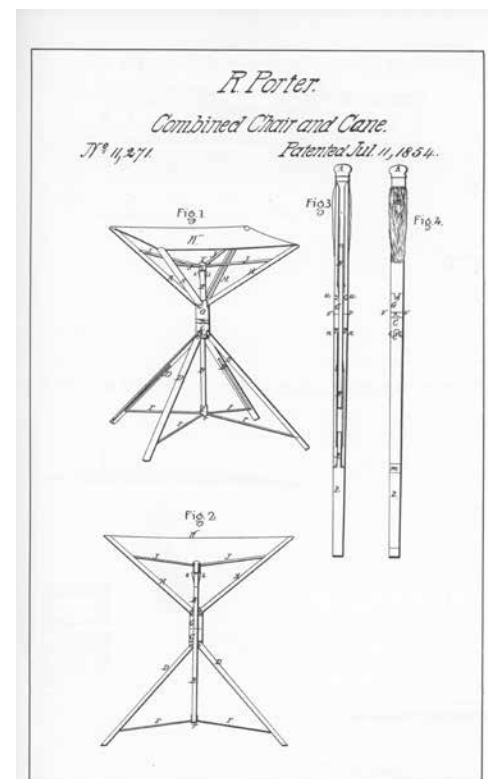
“Rufus Porter’s mural paintings, like his inventions and his scientific journals, were pioneer products, far ahead of their time. They represent our first native landscape school, and are among the most original and important artistic achievement of nineteenth century America.”



So he was kind of blackballed and not even mentioned in a chapter in a book about his home town’s “distinguished and professional natives.” And so we know less about Porter than we do about other greats of the time: Bell, Edison, etc.

Lipman had written five other books prior to her book on Rufus Porter and all were about art. Because that is her background she spends a very large amount of the Porter book on his paintings, Porter’s artistic style, and 19th Century American painting, and lesser on Porter’s other aspects. If you are not someone interested in the analysis of art then much of this Porter book is not interesting (see an example on page 19). One can only read so much analysis. If you are into artistic analysis then the part of the book will be

Pictured on this page just a few of Porter’s inventions. See a longer list on the next page.





## A few of Rufus Porter's inventions

Automobile  
Elevated train  
Portable horse power  
Portable fence  
Portable boat  
Folding chair/cane  
Car to move houses  
Revolving rifle – which he sold to Colt for \$100  
Distance measuring device  
A clock  
Various kinds of agricultural equipment  
Life preserver  
Fire alarm  
Punching machine  
Fog whistle  
Steam engine  
Fan blower  
Vise  
Dryer  
Sewing machine  
Copying machine  
Color printing machine  
Device to move houses  
Horse power boat  
Improvement of the telegraph  
Paddlewheel steamboat  
Floating dock  
Pocket lamp  
Truck lock  
Steam carriage for common roads  
Pre-fab dwelling

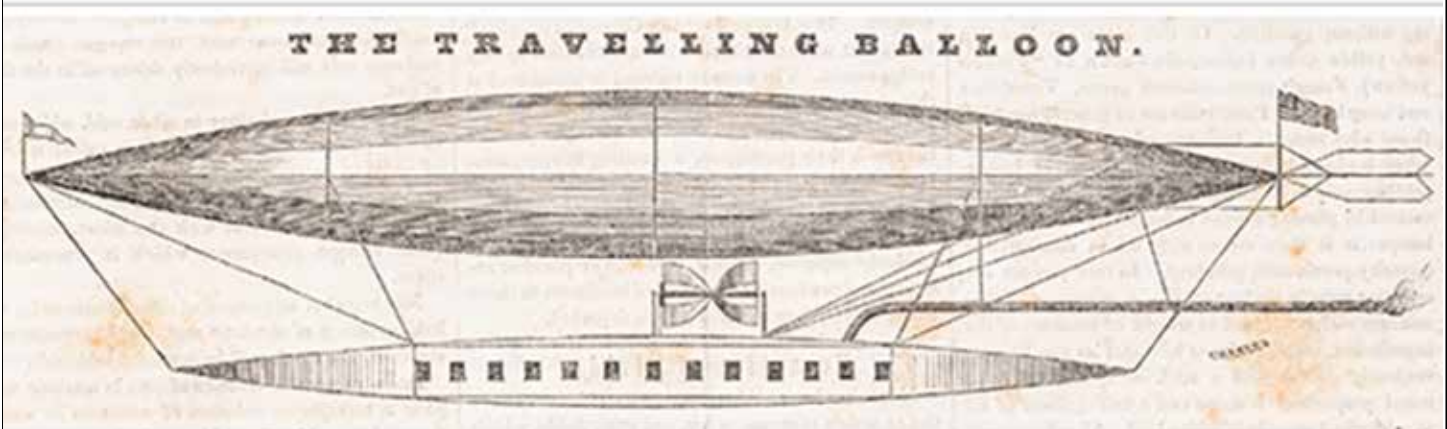
## List of occupations Rufus Porter had

Fiddler  
Drummer  
Fife player  
Shoemaking apprentice  
House painter  
Sign painter  
Gun boat painter  
Drum painter  
Sleigh painter  
Teacher of drumming and drum painting  
School teacher  
Author  
Publisher  
Builder of machinery  
Portraitist  
Muralist  
“professor” of dancing  
Inventor

That was all by age 26

Porter was a Yankee genius, if ever there was one.

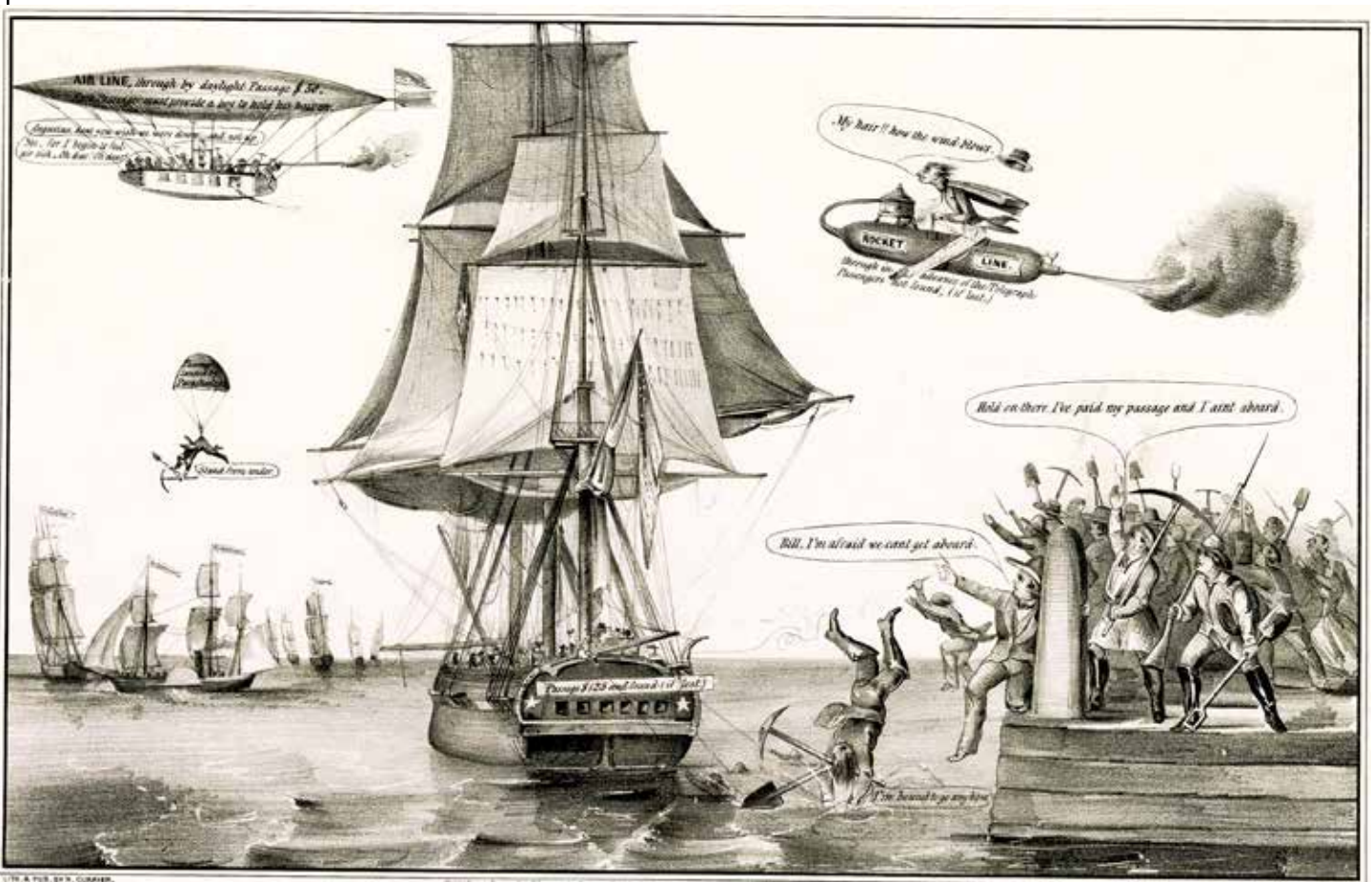
A.J. Philpott  
The Boston Globe  
July 5, 1936



Rufus Porter was a fascinating 19<sup>th</sup> Century polymath which was one reason the Heirloom was attracted to him. That has nothing to do with Donner Summit, however. He advocated flying gold seekers to California in one of his inventions and those flights would no doubt have gone over Donner Summit - hence a second reason for the Heirloom's attention. The drawing above which appeared in Scientific American on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1845 should whet your appetite for next month's Heirloom. If there's room we'll see about including a report of a dirigible flying in San Francisco in 1869. You just never know what the Heirloom will expose. Don't you wish it was more than a monthly?

## Example of Lipman's analysis of Porter's murals

The Porter and Porter-school murals are distinguished by a typical style and content which makes them easy for anyone to identify. Their most obvious characteristics are their large scale, clear, bright colors, and bold design and execution. The three most frequently recurring scenes are harbor view much like Portland harbor...ships and islands, mountains in the distance, and large "feather-duster" elm trees and small shrubs in the immediate foreground; mountain-climbing or hunting scenes used for stairway decorations; and farm-village scenes, most often used for the overmantel fresco, with building, fields, fences, roads, and again the large elms and small stylized shrubs in the foreground. The large trees invariable occupy almost the entire height of the painted wall and establish the first plane of the picture a manner which was Porter's special invention and which he consistently used. Other earmarks of his murals include the use of stencils for many details such as houses and boats, the billowing round clouds, the clear reflections of objects in water, the sharp shading of the darkened sides of houses and trees. Occasional exotic details such as tropical trees and vines, based on recollection of Hawaiian scenery, are also characteristic of the frescoes."



**THE WAY THEY GO TO CALIFORNIA.**

Since there's a bit of room here we'll include a Currier and Ives humorous print about gold seekers heading for California. Rufus Porter's dirigible is, presumably, in the upper left.

Stay tuned for next month.

### 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.

# Behind the Scenes

## DSHS Embarks on New Venture

Norm Saylor is a living repository of Donner Summit history since he's been on the summit since 1954. Judy Lieb, a member of our DSHS advisory board, decided it was time to take advantage of Norm's knowledge and save it for future generations. She began sitting with Norm last summer and having him divulge his stories that she would record both as video and sound. Below you can see Norm and Judy at work in the DSHS with some of Norm's incomparable collection in the background.

Judy enlisted Thomas Snider in her efforts. He's the technology link and parenthetically the nephew of Sharon Ruffner who is also on the DSHS advisory board. Thomas manages a community radio station in Reno. Thomas synchs the video and sound recordings.

Once the sound and video are synced Judy goes to work editing and bringing in illustrative pictures like the ones below.

Just a few topics so far: Norm's early Summit days, being in the 10th Mountain Division and how some of his friends there went on to found ski resorts, Donner Ski Ranch, people Norm has known, hotels and lodges on the summit, and Rainbow Bridge. In the picture to the right Judy and Norm are discussing the early roads and highways over the summit. Judy says "these are truly conversations."



Once she's finally finished with editing you'll be able to find the interviews on the DSHS website. Stay tuned.

---

Below is a collection of items in the DSHS that Judy wants to use to illustrate Norm's stories. From the left: 10th Mountain Division equipment, an official U.S. 40 sign, old sign from the Norden Store, a chair from the old Nyack Lodge (most of the lodge was put on wheels and moved to its current location after construction started on I-80), a chains sign, Marsha and Dave Lose with long skis, and 1960 VIII Winter Olympic poster.

Stay tuned for the interviews coming to the DSHS website.



# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

## Mobile Historic Research Team Tours Lake Mary Rope Tow Site

Pat Malberg's family has had a cabin, made partially with snow-shed timbers, on the shores of Lake Mary since the 1940's. Pat is on the board of the DSHS, serves as treasurer, and proofreads [Heirlooms](#). Then there are other community responsibilities that keep her occupied but too long to list here.

Since Pat has been around so long she knows a lot of the history and where many Odds & Ends of Donner Summit reside. One day, just before snowfall, 2021, Pat invited the Mobile Historical Research Team\* to see the remnants of Johnny Ellis' Lake Mary rope tow. The tow started at Lake Mary and went straight up the hill and across the Pacific Crest Trail. It's an amazingly steep slope and one wonders how skiers were able to hang on. You can read about Johnny Ellis in the April, '09; July, '09; and August, '09 [Heirlooms](#).

On this page you see the remnants today of the bottom of the rope tow structure and a footing from the warming hut. The bottom wheel is at the ski museum at Boreal.

On the next page are what the warming hut and rope tow looked like in about 1938, thanks to photographs from the Dartmouth Outing Club which has a cabin on Lake Mary near Pat's. Then there is the wording from one of Mr. Ellis' signs and a lift ticket just in case you have some time and there's snow.

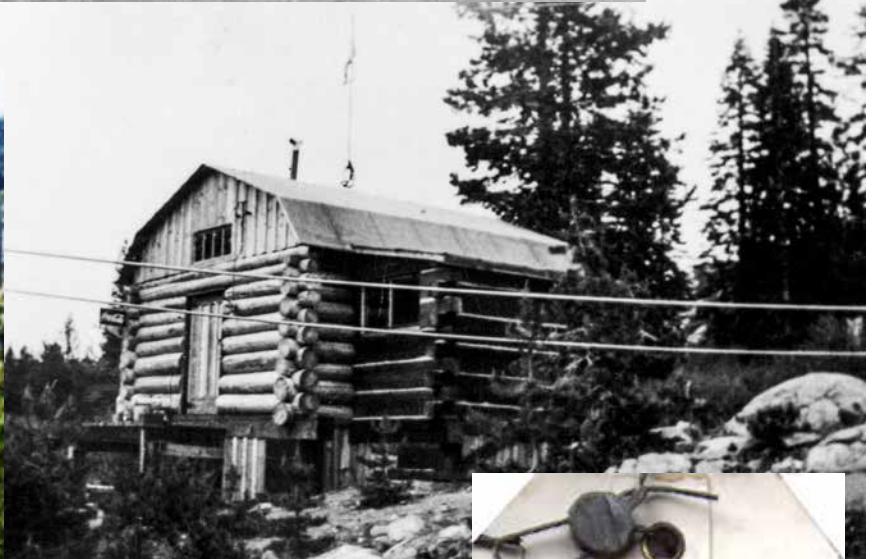
You never know what you might find in the forest.

\*Check out our [Heirloom](#) articles index for other adventures of the MHRT.



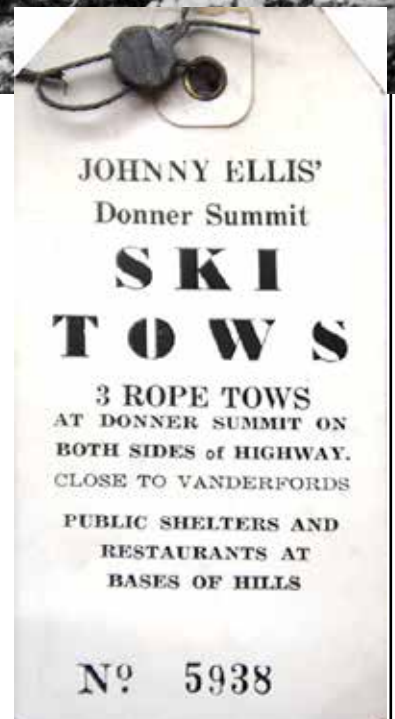
footing for the warming hut





Top and left: the bottom of the rope tow structure some years after it was abandoned with the coming of World War II. The building above is the warming hut.

Pay 50 cents.  
 Keep your skis on.  
 Grab a handle.  
 Ride up and ski down all afternoon.  
 We don't count the rides."





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September 17 & 18, 2022

Learn secrets  
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as you hike with  
local historians.

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