



# Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass Meadow Lake

## History

### Sierra Bubble

Henry Hartley settled at Meadow Lake living the life of a solitary trapper. When he found some flakes of gold, word spread. Henry's solitary life was over – for awhile. Prospectors, too excited to build houses, lived on the ground with pockets full of rock samples. By 1865 a 160 acre town site had been laid out with 80' wide streets and a central plaza. City lots had gone from \$25 to \$800.

By 1866 4000 people lived in the town. There were hotels, saloons, restaurants, lumber yards, breweries, blacksmiths, a stock exchange, and a newspaper. 11,000 mining claims had been filed. Lots were as much as \$3,000 and there were 600 buildings. Summit City was incorporated as Meadow Lake.

Then reality overcame optimism. The gold could not be separated from the rock. Winter brought 30 foot snow drifts that covered the town which could not be found except for the tunnels leading down to buildings. By 1869 there were only a few families left. In 1872 only a solitary Henry Hartley remained. Dreams had gone elsewhere. Today the gold is still there and only a cemetery and mine tunnel remain of the dream.



With prospects so cheering, located in a section of country abounding in timber and water, with a climate so healthy, who can foretell the future of Meadow Lake? Here the puff of the iron locomotive will soon be heard as it speeds onward to silver-land. It has often been predicted that at some period not distant a rich deposit of mineral wealth would be discovered in the Sierra Nevada; and we have every reason to believe such predictions are about to be fully realized, and that the doors of an immense vault of treasure are being opened, the contents of which will astonish the world. ...

*Sacramento Daily Union* May 11, 1866

## A Good Story

Mark Twain visited Meadow Lake. "We reached the town of Meadow Lake ... the prettiest site for a town I know of; and the town already built there is the wildest exemplar of the spirit of speculation I have ever stumbled upon... recklessness and improvidence repeated... they have built a handsome town and painted it neatly, and planned wide, long streets, and got ready for a rush of business, and then--jumped aboard the stage coaches and deserted it! .... Here is a really handsome town, built of two-story frame houses--a town capable of housing 3,000 persons with ease, and how many inhabitants has it got? A hundred! You can have a house all to yourself merely by promising to take care of it."

## Things to do right here

If you want to get to the Meadow Lake site you should approach from the Henness Pass side; it's a much better road. Pick up a USFS map, available at the USFS office in Truckee on Hwy 89 just north of the freeway.

This sign sponsored by Sugar Bowl



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