

# Many Crossings of Donner Summit



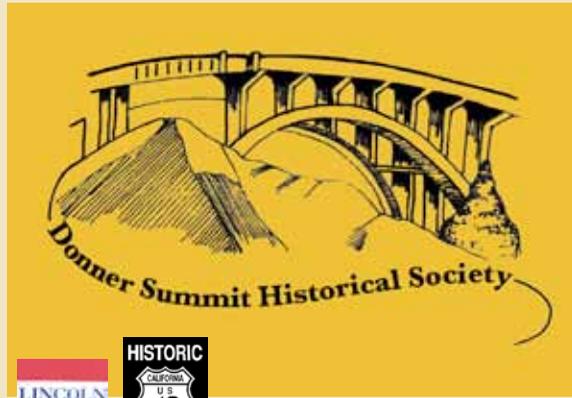
Native Americans crossed Donner Pass for thousands of years as they traded and moved from summer to winter residences. These are Donner Summit petroglyphs.

The first wagon train to cross Donner Summit was the Stephens Party which crossed in 1844. This first route was so rugged some wagons were left at Donner Lake and others had to be dismantled to get over the Summit.



The first Transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869 and crossed the Summit using 15 tunnels and almost 40 miles of snow-sheds. The sheds protected the trains from snowfalls that average 35 feet in a season.

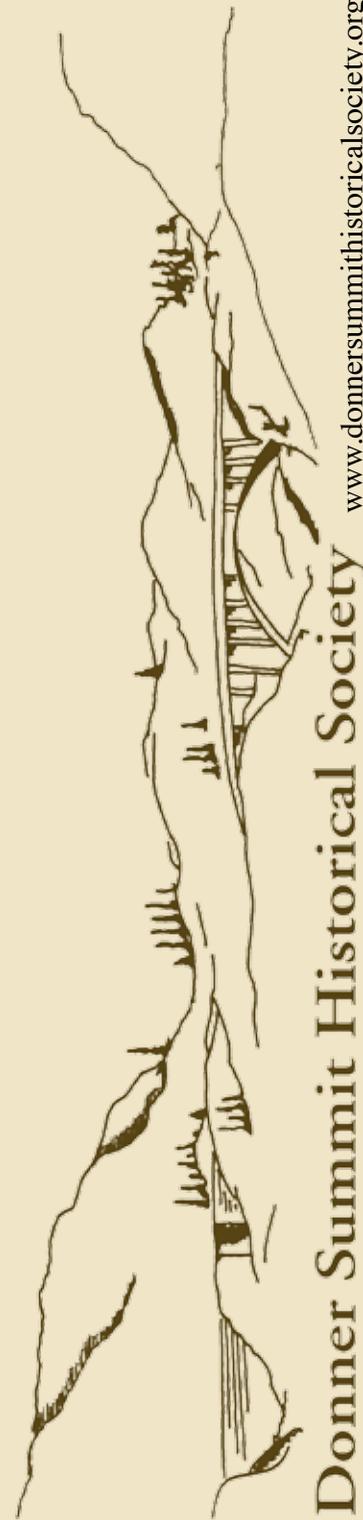
The first transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway was completed in 1913. It was superseded by the Victory Highway and then Highway 40 which became year-round in 1932. Automobiles now can cross using the same routes as people have for thousands of years.



**Donner Summit  
Historical Society & Museum**  
P.O. Box 1  
Norden, CA. 95724  
21501 Donner Pass Road  
Soda Springs, CA

[www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

free monthly Donner Summit history publication  
*The Heirloom* - via email  
[info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)



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This narrow and natural Donner Pass at Donner Summit, leading westward into the Sierra Nevada and California, bears witness to the rich tapestry of ethnic, economic and cultural migrations that defined California's history and has played a significant role in our nation's history. There are grinding rocks and petroglyphs left by Native Americans. The first wagon train to reach California arrived in 1844 establishing the Emigrant Trail. Two years later surviving members of the ill-fated Donner Party crossed as did many of those seeking their fortunes with the discovery of gold in 1848. In the 1860's, the Transcontinental Railroad, the fulfillment of the 19th century's Manifest Destiny, was constructed over Donner Summit paralleling the Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road. When automobiles came into vogue in the early 1900's much of the old disused toll road became part of the the Lincoln Highway system, and was briefly called the Victory Highway following WWI. U.S. Highway 40, part of the first numbered system of U.S. highways, replaced the Lincoln Highway, only to be decommissioned once Interstate 80 was built in the 1960's. This part of Highway 40 is now known as Donner Pass Road. The history, environment, people and enterprises of the Summit are fascinating and rich.

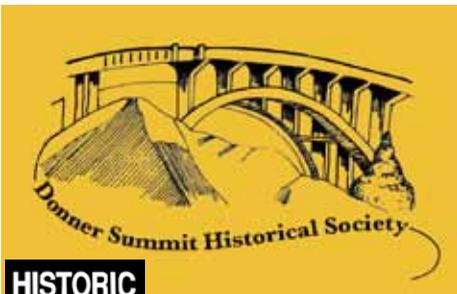
We invite you to enjoy and participate as the Historical Society saves and shares the Summit's rich history. If you have old pictures, stories, or memorabilia you would like to share or donate or if you would like a speaker for your organization or school, please let us know.

The Donner Summit Historical Society is a 501c3 non-profit - donations are tax-deductible.

Visit our website to read stories and *The Heirloom*, our free monthly historical publication which is full of stories and pictures. You can also sign up for *The Heirloom*:  
[www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

**Board of Directors:**  
Norm Saylor Bill Oudegeest Starr Walton Hurlley Jim Hoelter Cheryl Paduano

Front panel pictures: Getting around in the snow 1939, plane crash 1922, Norden Store 1938, Land Grant for 160 Summit acres in 1869 for \$2.50/acre, Dennis Jones the father of commercial skiing on the Summit, and Beacon Hill rope tow 1940's



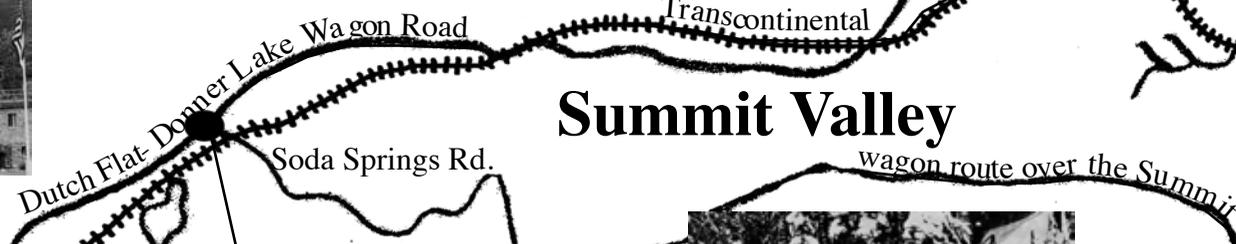
Our purpose: to offer lectures, seminars, and field trips that will help the community learn the history of Donner Summit and the surrounding area, and to collect and display artifacts relative to the history, and to carry on other educational and charitable activities associated with this purpose.



Donner Lake



7.



### Summit Valley



4



5.

Cisco Grove

Ice Lakes



6.

Soda Springs and the Donner Summit Historical Society museum at the corner of Old 40 (Donner Pass Rd.) and Soda Springs Rd. 21501 Donner Pass Rd.

This map reproduced from an 1889 Placer Co. map. This brochure dated: 2010

Pictures here: 1. Soda Springs Hotel at its 1927 opening, 2. Summit Hotel with its multi-story outhouse and the Dutch Flat Rd. in front, 3. Rainbow Bridge 1950's, 4. a very early picture of the Donner Summit snow tunnels on the trans-contintental railroad. The timbers in the picture are round. 5. the very first "ski lift" on Donner Summit: the Up-Ski on Beacon Hill (Soda Springs) circa mid 1930's. 6. Sierra Gift Shop Cisco Grove 1953. 7. Rainbow Tavern 1930's

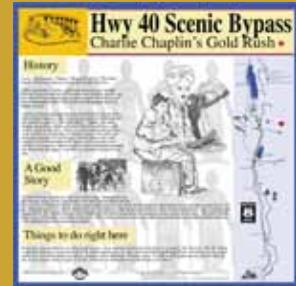
## Visit the 20 Mile Museum



The Donner Summit Historical Society's 20 Mile Museum, along Old Highway 40, celebrates the history of Donner Summit.

The 20 mile museum consists of thirty-four interpretive signs placed along Old Highway 40 from the Nyack exit, over the Summit and to just below Rainbow Bridge. Each sign highlights history, displays historical photographs and quotes, tells a good story, and lists activities for the location.

The signs highlight our unique history, share the beauty of Donner Summit, encourage visitation, and help revitalize the Summit economy.



The signs are sponsored by local businesses and individuals who paid for their construction and placement.

Brochures are on line and on Donner Summit.



Read *The Heirloom*, monthly publication of Donner Summit history. [www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)