

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

October, 2017 issue #110

## Lost and Found - Strong's Cañon

The Chinese railroad workers' strike of 1867 took place on Donner Summit (See the June, '17 [Heirloom](#)). On June 25 workers from Cisco Grove to Strong's Canyon (cañon in old sources) stayed in camp rather than go to work. They were striking for a raise in pay and shorter daily work hours. As our crack historical investigative team was ferreting out the details of the strike a subcommittee was given the task of delineating the extent of the initial strike on Donner Summit. How big is the area "from Cisco Grove to Strong's Canyon"? Cisco Grove is easy. That was end of the track for about two years as the railroad worked to finish the summit tunnels. Grinding away at Sierra granite is a difficult job and the longest tunnel, Tunnel 6, took two years to build. During that time trains stopped at Cisco and freight and passengers were off-loaded onto stages and freight wagons which took the Dutch Flat Road to points east. Thousands of people lived in Cisco at that time and the traffic on the road must have been continual and crowded. At the height of traffic before the railroad was finished, 58 train car loads were unloaded at Cisco daily to travel on the Dutch Flat Rd. Then there were passengers, cattle drovers, sheep herders, and individual travelers. Some were aiming for Truckee or Virginia City. Others were going further east or heading up to the booming town, Meadow Lake, to the north. Those are all stories for another [Heirloom](#) (or previous [Heirlooms](#) – see our indices) and are a slight digression.

The other end of the strike, to end the digression, was at Strong's Canyon. It would seem an easy thing to point that out and be done with the matter. Just find a map, insert an arrow and the reader is satisfied as is our historical responsibility. Strong's Canyon, though, is elusive. The naming is lost to history but it's probably named for Doc Strong, who was the fellow who showed Theodore Judah the area Judah chose for the route of the transcontinental railroad over Donner Summit. That's also a story for another [Heirloom](#) (although you might want to digress right now to your carefully bound April, '13 [Heirloom](#) for "We'll Build an Elevator." It will take just a moment.)

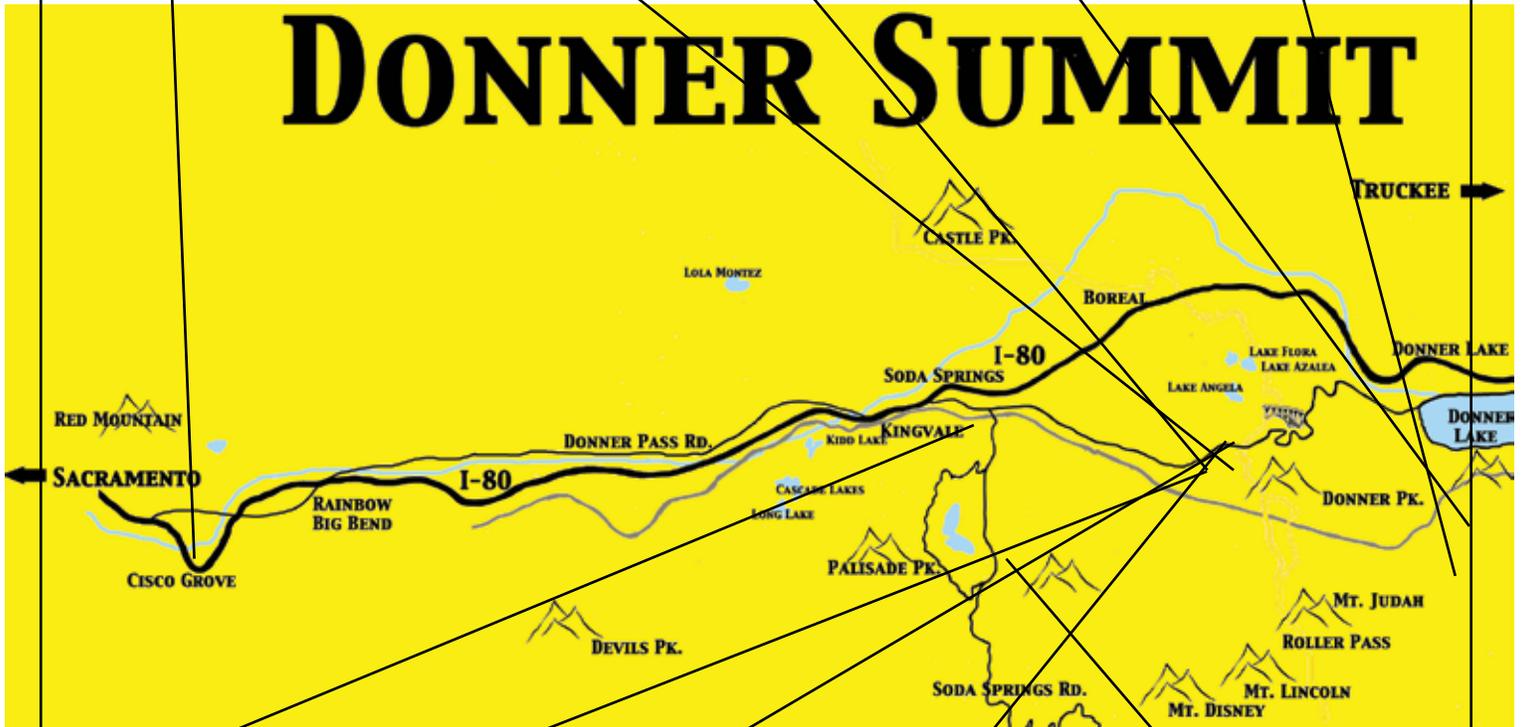
Unfortunately for the skilled [Heirloom](#) historical investigative team the first available maps perused didn't show Strong's Canyon and other stories were put off in favor of providing the [Heirloom](#) with a complete view of the Chinese railroad workers' strike of 1867, 150 years ago last June. We had to find Strong's Canyon.

The story of ferreting out the location of Strong's Canyon really starts and finishes with the tenacity of Art Clark, our Then & Now guy as well as integral MHRT (Mobile Historical Research Team) member.

First there was a search for maps of Donner Summit with Strong's Canyon noted. That was hard. There are lots of old maps but Strong's seems to have disappeared. A number of old maps did not turn it up. We thought, though, that the disappearance had more to do with the name than any actual geological disappearance. That would have been a really good story but we couldn't be that lucky. Geology usually works much more slowly on Donner Summit – given the exposed batholith that's 400 million years old or so (another story for another [Heirloom](#)).

# Story Locations in this Issue

Cisco Grove pg 10    Alpineer Ski Lodge pg 11    picture top pg 12    Strong's Canyon pg 1    Coldstream Canyon in pg1 story



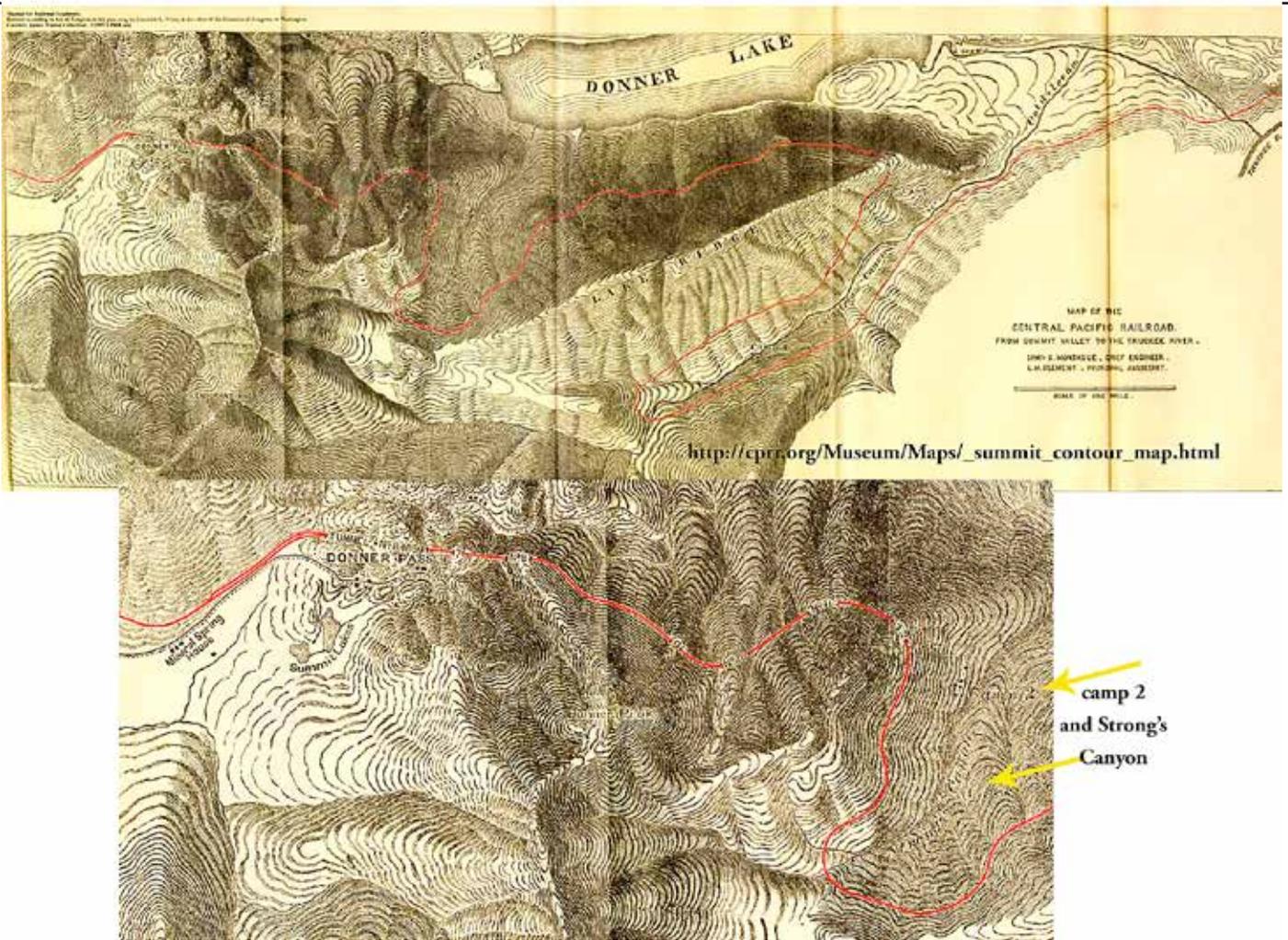
Soda Springs Ski Area pg 12    picture top pg 8    weather station pg 13    Donner Ski Ranch pg 16    Stock driveway sign pg 17

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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



Eventually Art found a really good map (above) in Vose's Manual for Railroad Engineers, 1883. That book is available on line (t - click on "full view") if you're interested but you have to be an engineering type person to appreciate it. It covers everything you'd want to know, technically, about 19th Century railroad construction. Of relevance to our search were the plates in the back. There was a good map of Donner Summit in 1880 or so although it needed some work because it was so dark. Then it needed some annotation (above and page 7).

That map noted that Strong's Canyon was where what we call Lakeview Canyon is today. If that was the spot, at some point Mr. Strong must have lost favor for the renaming to Lakeview to occur.

Then things got complicated. Art found a timetable on the CPRR.org website from 1882 saying that Strong's had an elevation of 6317 feet (see the timetable here) on the railroad route. That meant that the Strong's Canyon station was in Coldstream Canyon not up higher where Lakeview is.

Essex	4936
Mystic	5336
*Bronco	5831
*Boca	95 5831
Prosser Creek	5590
Proctor's	5732
*TRUCKEE	2,000 5819
Strong's Canon	6317
*Summit	7017
Soda Springs	6538
Cascade	6200
Tamarack	5934
*Cisco	250 5221
*Emigrant Gap	250 4693
*Blue Canon	4136
Shady Run	

Another source said Strong's Canyon was near Tunnels 11 and 12 and Camp 4. Note the picture on page 5 by Alfred A. Hart, #257 titled "Tunnel 12, Strong's Canyon." That would put Strong's at Lakeview but the Camp 4 reference would put it in Coldstream. A railroad time table from Croft's New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide (1879) showing the elevation at 6780 would also put Strong's at Lakeview.

Here we have strong's at elevation 6317 or today's Coldstream.

**TIME TABLE.**  
**SACRAMENTO DIVISION.**  
**SACRAMENTO TO TRUCKEE.**

F. A. FILLMORE, *Division Superintendent.*

WEST FROM OMAHA.			SACRAMENTO TIME.		EAST FROM SAN FRANCISCO.			
Daily Emigrant and freight.	Daily Express, 1st & 2d Cl's	Distance from Omaha.	STATIONS.		Elevation	Daily Express, 1st & 2d Cl's	Daily Emigrant and freight.	
1:30 a m	3:05 a m	1655..	Lv.....	†TRUCKEE.....	Ar.....	5845	12:00 m	11:00 p m
2:15	4:35	1662..	.....	Strong's Canyon .....	.....	6780	11:35	10:20
3:00	4:00	1671..	.....	†Summit .....	.....	7017	11:05	9:35
3:40	4:22	1675..	.....	Cascade .....	.....	6519	10:34	9:00
4:10	4:34	1679..	.....	Tamarack.....	.....	6191	10:10	8:35
4:50	4:45	1683..	.....	†Cisco.....	.....	5939	9:55	8:10
5:42	5:13	1691..	.....	†Emigrant Gap.....	.....	5229	9:18	7:10
6:35	5:30	1697..	.....	†Blue Canyon.....	.....	4677	8:50	6:15
7:10	5:53	1702..	.....	Sandy Run.....	.....	4154	8:25	5:05
7:40	6:10	1706..	.....	†Alta.....	.....	3612	8:00	4:30
7:55	6:17	1708..	.....	Dutch Flat.....	.....	3403	7:50	4:00
8:10	6:25	1710..	.....	†Gold Run.....	.....	3206	7:40	3:40
8:50	6:44	1617..	.....	C. H. Mills.....	.....	2691	7:12	2:55
9:25	7:00*	1721..	.....	†Colfax.....	.....	2421	6:30*	2:10
10:00	7:37	1725..	.....	N. E. Mills.....	.....	2280	6:07	1:40
10:30	7:48	1728..	.....	Applegate.....	.....	2000	5:51	1:15
10:55	8:00	1732..	.....	Clipper Gap.....	.....	1759	5:35	12:55
12:10 p m	8:25	1739..	.....	†Auburn.....	.....	1362	5:10	12:10 p m
12:40	8:43	1744..	.....	†New Castle.....	.....	969	4:50	11:30
1:13	9:04	1750..	.....	Pino.....	.....	403	4:27	10:57
1:55	9:15	1752..	.....	†Rocklin.....	.....	248	4:00	10:40
2:30	9:32	1757..	.....	†Junction.....	.....	163	3:46	9:32
2:40	9:43	1760..	.....	Antelope.....	.....	154	3:35	9:00
3:30	10:00	1767..	.....	Arcade.....	.....	55	3:20	8:25
3:55	10:12	1771..	.....	A. M. Bridge.....	.....	52	3:09	8:05
4:15 p m	10:25 a m	1775..	Ar.....	†SACRAMENTO.....	Lv.....	30	3:00 p m	7:45 a m

† Day Telegraph. † Day and Night Telegraph. \* Meals.  
 — The passenger's attention is directed to the elevation of each station.

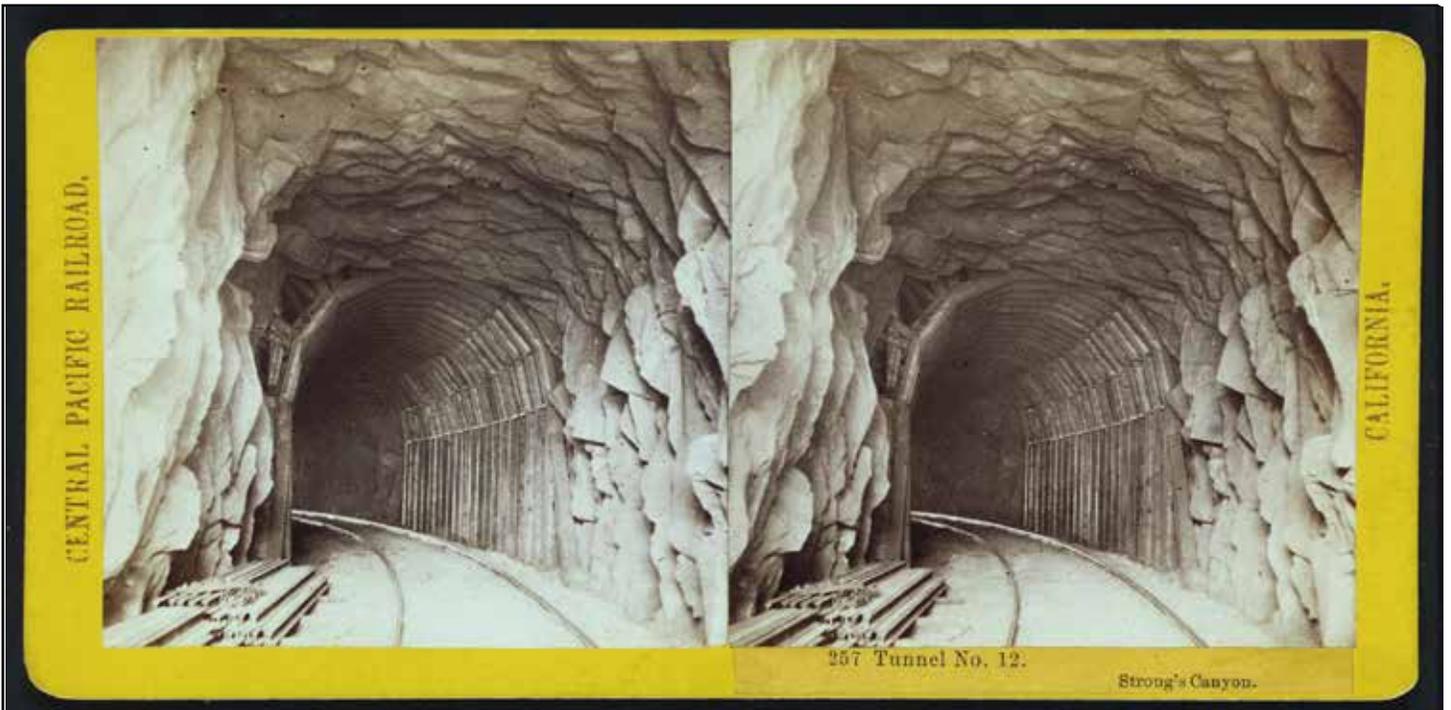
from Croftt's New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide, 1879 shows Strong's at 6780 elevation puts Strong's at today's Lakeview Canyon.

Note all the railroad stops in the old days.

References to Strong's in the Croftt's New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide, (1874, 1884, etc.) says "Strong's Canyon – and bend" is 6.54 miles from Truckee and is in Coldstream Valley before the snow tunnels, which at that time extended for 28 miles and have a few "peek holes" to see the scenery, are entered. That puts Strong's in Coldstream leaving Lakeview out in the cold (regarding Strong's Canyon).

Then there is the Williams Pacific Tourist Guide from 1876 that says "Cold Stream must not be confounded with Strong's Cañon, for the latter will not be reached till the train has passed half way along the lofty wall of Donner Lake." That puts it back at Lakeview. The railroad map, though, shows the "cañon" at the east end of the lake not half way. Williams says that Strong's is 252 miles from San Francisco and has a side track, telegraph office and turn table, "for snow-plows principally." The only spur was in Coldstream and there was a turn-table at Tunnel 13. Then Williams says, "The station was originally at Strong's Canon, but was afterward moved to tunnel NO. 13., the point where the road leaves Cold Stream Canon." That fits with the turntable and there was a station at that spot, called Andover later. To bolster Andover as the location, Art did some final analysis after waking up in the middle of the night after the above had been written and said, "I was just glancing at the Williams 'confounded' version, and noted that it listed distances from San Francisco for Truckee - 259, Strong's - 252, and Summit - 244. That puts Strong's at Andover, 7 miles from Truckee. Measuring from there to the Lakeview Work center in Google Earth gives just over 5 miles. From there to the Summit is about 2 1/2 more. So where the text says 'Strong's Canon will not be reached till the train has passed halfway along the lofty wall of Donner Lake' I think he is referring to half-way along the east side of Shallenberger Ridge – Andover."

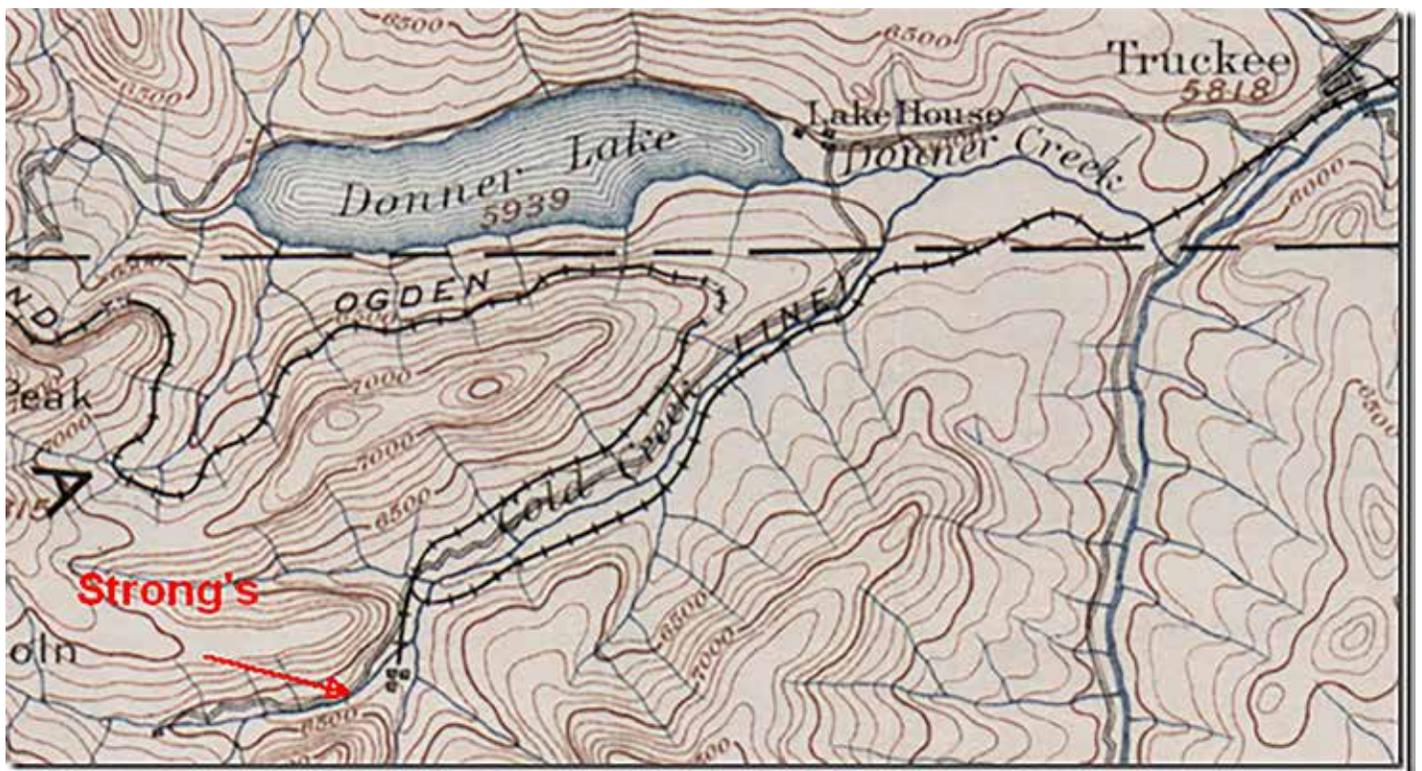
Art can't let things go though, and he contacted Chaun Mortier, president of the Truckee Donner Historical Society. She provided some links to a Sierra Sun article, an article on their website about the winter of 1873-74, a timeline from the Chinese RR workers project at Stanford University, and a CPRR.org article by Wendell Huffman of the Nevada State Railroad Museum (Iron Horse Along the Truckee). Each has references to Strong's Canyon being at Lakeview and near Tunnels 11 & 12 (excepting an error saying it was near railroad workers' camp 4 which you see on the map). So maybe that settles it unless Art gets another idea to follow up on. The links to the articles are below in case you want to do any investigating.



Alfred A. Hart #257 Tunnel No. 12, Strong's Canyon dated about 1867

In the end it doesn't matter a lot. The rest of the workers on the line joined the strike so the extent was way beyond Strong's to the east. We have Art's final analysis here on the next page. You can see the small part of a map with arrows as Art takes text from Croft's and matches it to the map. You can see the spur of track and a few buildings that were there in those days.

Links provided by the Truckee Donner Historical Society's president Chaun Mortier: (next page)



<http://www.truckeehistory.org/truckee-survives-the-winter-of-1873-1874.html>

<http://www.sierrasun.com/news/tunneling-through-the-sierra-inch-by-inch/>

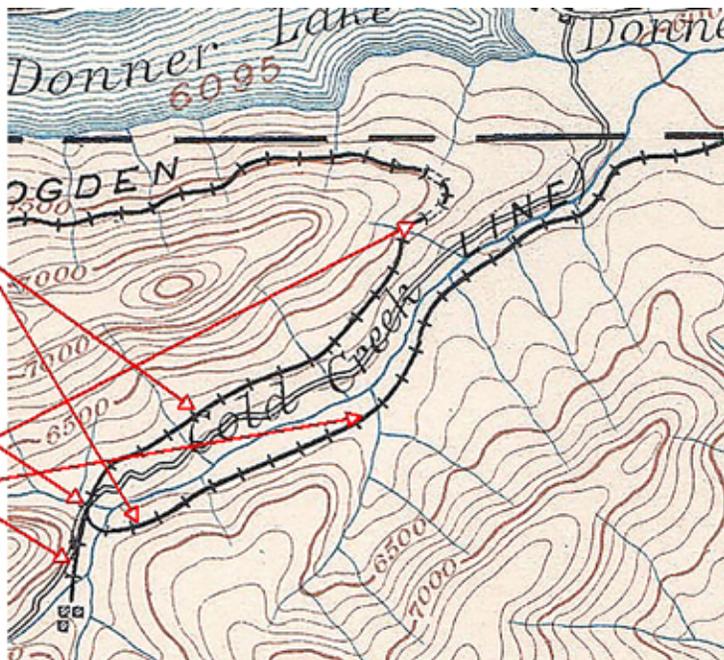
<http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/timeline/>

[http://cpr.org/Museum/Iron\\_Horse\\_Along\\_Truckee.html](http://cpr.org/Museum/Iron_Horse_Along_Truckee.html)

Finally, to show just how dedicated Art Clark is, we have the following. When this was being researched in the fall of 2016 (see next page bottom) the fall weather turned to winter which precludes on site investigation for all except Art Clark. He went out in early December, having checked the Truckee webcams first for conditions. It turned out the webcams do show current conditions where the cameras are located but not where Art wanted to go. He ended up hiking through the snow in Coldstream looking for evidence of Camp 4 and any possibilities of RR sidings as noted for Strong's Canyon. He said, "As expected, didn't see anything to confirm that I was near Camp 4, but at least I have an idea where it is. And it's on the other side of the creek. Walked on up to Horseshoe with an eye to see if that siding looked reasonable. It does. Walked on it (now a road) out to the Lost Trail Lodge."

**Strong's Canyon**—and bend around the southern end of the valley, which borders Donner Lake, then crossing Coldstream, commence the ascent of the mountains. Soon after passing this side-track, our train enters a snow-shed, which—with a number of tunnels,—is continuous for twenty-eight miles, with but a few "peek-holes," through which to get a glimpse at the beautiful scenery along this part of the route—yet, we shall describe it, all the same. As the train skirts the eastern base, rising higher and higher, Donner Lake is far below, looking like a lake of silver set in the shadows of green forests and brown mountains. Up still, the long, black line of the road bending around and seemingly stealing away in the same direction in which we are moving, though far below us, points out the winding course we have followed.

Up, still up, higher and higher toils the train, through the long line of snow-sheds leading to the first tunnel, while the locomotives are snorting an angry defiance as they enter the gloomy, rock-bound chamber.



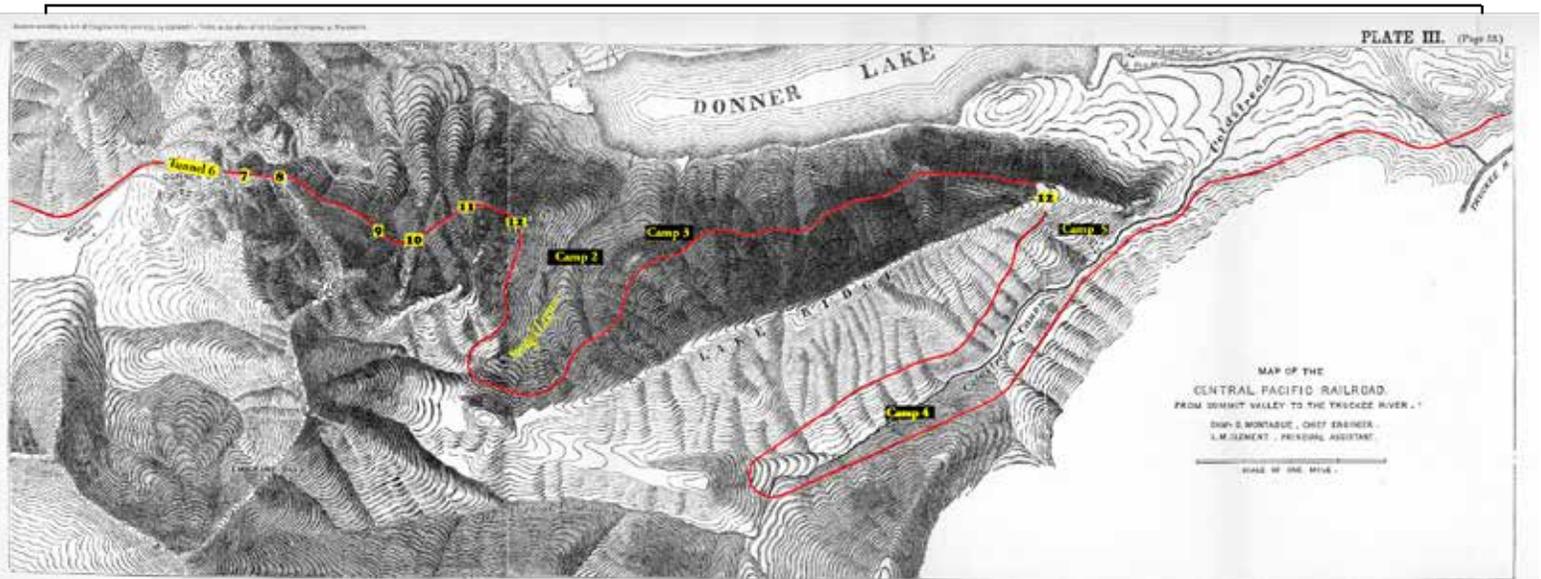
Art's final analysis. The text is from Crofutt's...

### **from Crofutt's New Overland Tourist Guide pg 155**

"Strong's Canyon – and bend, around the southern end of the valley, which borders Donner Lake, then crossing Coldstream, commence the ascent of the mountains. Soon after passing this side track, our train enters a snow-shed, which- with a number of tunnels, - is continuous for twenty-eight miles, with but a few "peek-holes," through which to get a glimpse at the beautiful scenery along this part of the route - yet, we shall describe it all the same. As the train skirts the eastern base, rising higher and higher, Donner Lake is far below, looking like a lake of silver set in the shadow of green forests and brown mountains. Up still, the long, black line of the road bending around and seemingly stealing away in the same direction in which we are moving, though far below us, points out the winding course owe have followed.

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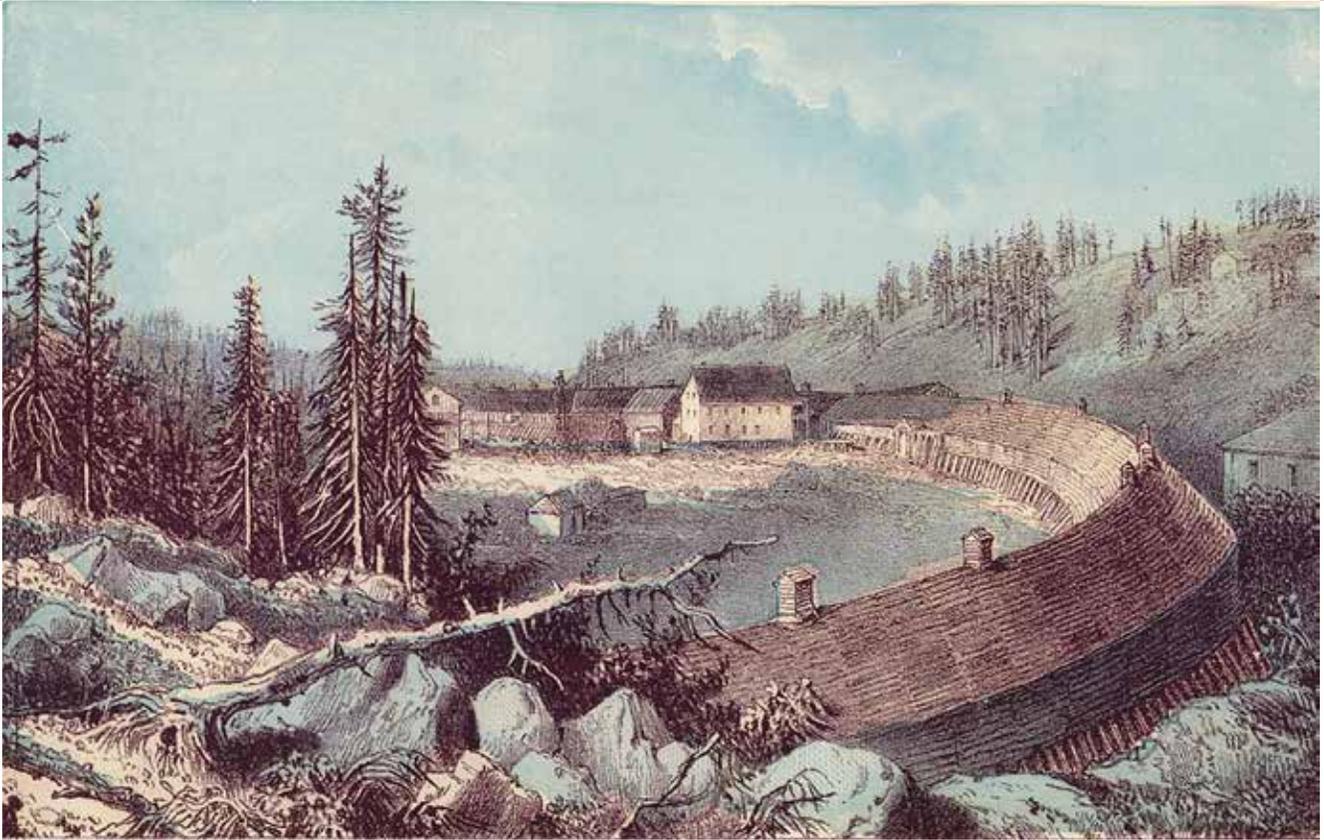
"Summit... Distance from... San Francisco, 245 miles... bleak and bare of verdure, rise the granite peaks around us, to an altitude of over 10,000 feet. Piles of granite—their weather-stained and moss-clad sides glistening in the morning sun—rise between us and the 'western shore,' hiding from our sight the vast expanse of plain that we know lies between us and the golden shores of the Pacific Ocean. Scattering groups of hardy fir and spruce, line the mountain gorges, where rest the everlasting snows that have rested in the deep shady gulches, near the summit of these towering old mountains... They have lain, evidently since Adam was a very small boy..."



Map from the Vose Manual For Railroad Engineers, 1882. Art Clark has annotated this map labeling the tunnels, Chinese workers' camps 2,3,4,5 and Strong's Canyon. Look closely at the left edge of the map for Mineral Spring House, a hotel on Donner Summit; Summit Lakes, which are today just Lake Mary since the addition of a dam; Pollard's Hotel at the west end of Donner Lake; Donner Lake House, a hotel at the east end; and a sawmill.



Art's Dedication - investigating Coldstream Valley in the fall of 2016



**From The Central Pacific Railroad –  
A Trip Across the Continent from Ogden to San Francisco, 1870**

"*Strong's Canyon* (1668 m.), elevation 6780 feet.

"Still we continue our long ascent, leaving Donner lake like a lost diamond in the depths below us ; we enter the long line of snow-sheds which leads to the first tunnel ; we plunge through the gathering shadows of the tunnel, and finally emerge at

"*Summit* (1671 m.) 7017 feet above the sea, the highest point of the railway, the highest point... reached as yet by the iron horse and the iron road in any quarter of the world. We are not, however, at the summit of the Sierra Nevada range, but only the elevation of the mountain-pass... the prospect is one, nevertheless, unequalled for extent and grandeur. We stand on the watershed of several mountain-torrents which, after



Above: Summit Station and Exterior Snowsheds  
Below: Interior of snow-sheds

taking the most irregular and capricious fancies, and winding by rock and valley, pour their tribute at last into the one great receptacle of the Sacramento River. Towering mountain peaks are all around, their brightness contrasting with the mysterious shadows of profound ravines; while the murmur of falling waters is on the ear, and ever and anon comes the flash of a mountain lake, like that of a diamond, set in an emerald ring.

"From the moment we reach the high ground of the Summit, the railroad strikes through a succession of tunnels and snow-sheds, so closely connected that for miles it seems all tunnel. The longest of these measures 1700 feet.

"The snow-sheds,' we are told 'are solid structure, built of sawed and round timber, completely roofing the road for many miles. When the road was completed, there were 23 miles of shed built, at an annual cost of \$10,000 per mile...'

"Cascade (1677 m), elevation 6510 feet. Here one of the branches of the Yuba leaps down the rocks in a pleasant waterfall...

...

"Cisco (1684 mi), elevation 5939 feet. Here passengers stop for refreshment, or may amuse themselves looking about in this little village of 400 inhabitants."

## By Stage Over Donner Summit - 1865

In a letter in the [Marysville Daily Appeal](#) on September 15, 1865 and [Sacramento Daily Union](#) on September 13, a "native Californian" who had never crossed the "Sierra Nevada" wrote about a stage trip over the mountains he had taken the previous June.

Compared to the emigrants' travails over the mountains, and the Sierra were the hardest part of the emigrants' transcontinental journey, "it is only a pleasure trip now, even for ladies." In 1865 the traveler left San Francisco at 4PM on the ferry and arrived in Sacramento at midnight. Travelers could stay on the ferry to finish their "night's sleep in peace and comfort" and go ashore for a quick breakfast at 6AM before getting "on the cars of the Central Pacific Railroad." The train arrived at Clipper Gap, track's end, two hours from Sacramento. Passengers then switched to the stagecoach and after good travel could reach Virginia City by midnight.

The author said there was no better [rail]road in the United States. It was solid, evenly leveled, and "scarcely any vibrations of the cars is felt. You can read your paper with as much ease, while going at the rate of 30 miles an hour, as if seated in your easy chair in your own sanctum ; if, indeed, you are able to withdraw your gaze from the wild scenery through which you whirl away into the fastnesses of the Golden Hills."

"All the way up, thunder along the sides of steep gorges, around points where the solid rock walls rise hundreds of feet above your head, while below – well, it looks fearful..."

As the train passed through Auburn the author reflected that he had dug for gold there 16 years before. Then there were no houses, "and but a few tents of brush... Who then dreamed that the Steam Horse would be snorting through these solitudes in the lifetime of those who were delving for the shining ore?"

The stages the passengers switched to at Clipper Gap ("an impromptu town") were six horse Concord coaches that started off at "a gallop over a broad, smooth, evenly-graded road, known as the 'Dutch Flat and Donner Lake Wagon Road.' ... All the way up, thunder along the sides of steep gorges, around points where the solid rock walls rise hundreds of feet above your head, while below – well, it looks fearful, ... you can hardly see into the depths – at the average rate of ten miles an hours. It is a marvelous enterprise, the construction of such a wagon road." It is amazing that such a road could be built with such quality that even the "best turnpikes of the Atlantic States" seldom attained and "as safely too." "To be sure, cases of overturn down the precipices have occurred, and life and limb been endangered – lost or broken – but always

Who then dreamed that the Steam Horse would be snorting through these solitudes in the lifetime of those who were delving for the shining ore?"

“Now we are on the summit” and a “magnificent view pens down the cañon to Donner Lake... As we go down the cañon, the scene is wild and fearful beyond description”

from carelessness.”

After Dutch Flat the road entered a dense forest “magnificently somber, yet beautiful, and to the timid suggestive of grizzly bears;” The stage passed everywhere substantial and sometimes even handsome dwellings, “picturesquely situated, with clear, cold, mountain streams to quench the thirst...”

“Approaching the summit, the higher ranges on either hand and in the far distance are glistening with fields of snow, or which we are made sensible by the increasing coolness of the clear, exhilarating atmosphere of that elevated region. We pass through drifts of snow in the gorges, almost beneath our wheels, lying along the road, while clouds of dust whirl hither and thither from the horses feet – not a foot from dust to snow wall.”

“Now we are on the summit” and a “magnificent view pens down the cañon to Donner Lake... As we go down the cañon, the scene is wild and fearful beyond description [the author was seated up top behind the driver]. In the descent we pass through the remains of an enormous avalanche of snow, which came down from the overhanging peaks one day last Winter, covering the road 100 feet deep, and burying beneath its chilling shroud two travelers, who were passing on foot at the précis moment. Five months after their entombment they were dug out, frozen stark and stiff. The holes from which bodies were drawn were still intact in the snow wall, not a dozen feet from the passing coach.” (The road had been reopened by removing the snow and that exposed the bodies.) “Down, down, we thunder along ; the road seems to cling like a thread along the perpendicular sides of precipices – down, still down, we go, 1,500 feet, in a mile or two, till we approach Donner Lake... where a change was afforded to clean off the redundant dust, and satisfy our appetites on fresh lake trout.”

That was the most romantic part of the journey. There was still sixty miles to go to reach Virginia City. At 3 AM they arrived in Virginia City, “26 hours of travel from San Francisco.”

Continuing on into Nevada the journey was markedly different. There were no dwellings. At intervals of 15 miles there were stage company stations, “Palisades of crooked cedar sticks.” There were no refreshments except at the stations. There the stableman was “cook and all hands.” The refreshments were salt-pork, tough mutton, saleratus biscuit [before baking soda to leaven bread], golden in color and horrible to the taste, boiled beans – the only unbedeviled dish, though swimming in rather too much pork-fat – and black coffee without suspicion of milk. As for water, it was the alkaline variety, not much esteemed by unsophisticated passengers.”

## From the DSHS Archives

Cisco Grove  
Red Mountain  
(background),  
1920





Last month our "What's in Your Closet" feature told some of the story of the Alpineer Lodge and showed some of the pictures from the album. In the weeks following that contribution Jeff Pearce, son of early Alpineer members, sent along "Snow Bunnies on the Hill" along with a few more pictures.

## From **Snow Bunnies on the Hill** The Early History of the Alpineer Ski Club 1939-1949

By Imants Kaupe

In 1938 some graduates of San Francisco private schools got together to form a club, the members of which would go hiking, have house parties, go on picnics and go snow skiing. About the same time another club, focused on snow skiing, was starting and the founders of both clubs crossed paths at church in San Francisco and discovered what they had in common. Shortly thereafter they came into contact with the Swiss Ski Club and from that a new organization, the Alpineers, was chartered.

The new club met at Druid's Temple on 44 Page St. in San Francisco. By the end of 1939 the Alpineer Ski Club was really in business. Members went bowling, ice skating, bicycling, picnicking, dancing, horseback riding, and "smorgabobbing at Mama Gravender's." What "smorgabobbing" is or was still needs to be defined. It is apparently "ungoogleable." Despite the wealth of activities skiing was the "main interest." In late 1939 the first ski trip was organized and a lot of "sitzmarks" were made by the "skiers" in their first foray to ski country..

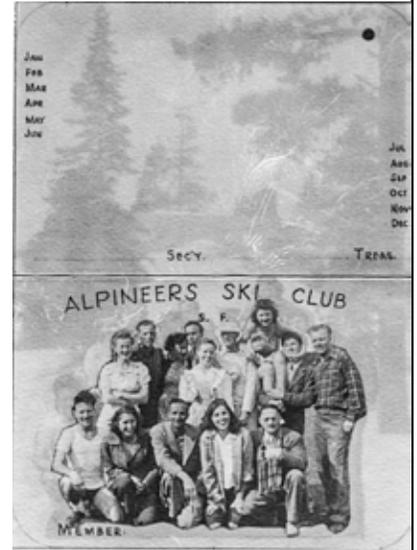
Two things developed enthusiasm for what was basically a new sport to the San Franciscans. The first was a ski school in San Francisco headed by a fellow named Oliver Kurlein who wrote a regular ski column for the San Francisco Examiner. He wrote about instruction, equipment, waxing, etc. Snow trains to the Norden area helped this aspect giving actual practice to the newspaper column instruction.

The second event was the 1941 movie, "The Art of Skiing" starring Walt Disney's Goofy (mentioned in our January, '10 Heirloom) which was shown at the Fairmont Hotel. This cartoon apparently inspired the new skiers to follow Goofy's example of unparalleled style on the slopes. The yodeling in the cartoon was by Hannes Schroll who was Sugar Bowl's founder (see our October-December, '09 Heirlooms). That movie pointed the Alpineers at Sugar Bowl and Norden.

To keep in shape off the slopes the club members did a lot of dancing (Charleston, Tango, waltzes, and polkas) and indoor skiing. Indoor skiing consisted of skiers skiing on cocoa mats in an old building in San Francisco. The first and second floors had been removed and a "curved-slope" floor with cocoa mats was installed. The new ski run ran from the second floor to the basement and had a vertical rise of about 70 feet. This allowed skiers to work on their skills, called "bend ze knees" (also a term Hannes Schroll used) without having to deal with gas rationing that made travel to the Sierra hard.

World War II affected the club. Men went off to war. The club did not stop but operations were curtailed. After the war the club re-grouped and snow trips resumed. Members went all over to ski but on Donner Summit "THE popular hangout" was "Ski-Hi" "located ¼ mile west of Donner Summit (it burned down).

Ever since the beginning of the club members had talked about a ski lodge of their own and with their coffers bulging with \$100 it was decided to get started – raising money. Ski trips were run using 9 passenger jitneys "crammed with skiers" and apparently skiers paid. By the end of 1947 there was \$300 in the "kitty."



First membership card 1941 or 42



Construction work party, 1947. That's the way lodges were built in the old days.

Just at that time the USFS was making land available and the Alpineers picked up a 99 year lease on Donner Summit. Work on the lodge began in the summer of 1947. That same year the "Macintosh Lodge came up for grabs" and the Alpineers leased it while they built next door.

Money was raised and went for 50 cases of beer, war surplus bunks (mattresses were a dollar extra), and food for the Macintosh Lodge. The lodge opened for skiers that winter of 1947-48 and it became a success raising money for the lodge under construction.

More money was raised via weekly Alpineer folk dancing parties in San Francisco which were also sponsored by the Viking and Oakland Ski Clubs. (The Oakland Club is next to the Alpineers and the Viking Club is just next to Donner Ski Ranch.) Admission to the dances was 50 cents and 75-100 people showed up each week. The dance money went into building materials on Donner Summit. In 1949 the foundation was done and "Operation Lodge" began in earnest with the construction of the actual building. According



Above, Donner Summit, 1951.



Left, Macintosh Lodge, 1948, just after the Alpineers moved in. The small shed to the right is still there. Macintosh was burned down in fire fighters' exercise.

# Ski at SODA SPRINGS

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

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

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Good Food  
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"Added FREE Parking Area!"



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

**NIGHT SKIING**



**Soda Springs Ski Corporation**

to the history the design was finalized after the foundation was laid. Things were a lot looser back then.

For three years members stayed in the Macintosh Lodge sharing housekeeping, skiing and partying while building the Alpineer Lodge. Members could "buy" tickets that gave them lodge food and lodging in return for work on the lodge.

The Alpineers had to move into their still unfinished lodge when the Forest Service decided to turn the Macintosh Lodge into the Travis Lodge for returning service members from the Korean War.

If you've got some ski lodge histories, let us borrow them.

Soda Springs Ski Area ad, 1952

# What's in Your Closet?



## Sleuthing Pictures at the DSHS

Here's an example of the DSHS Photographic Investigative Team (PIT) at work. Norm picked up this picture on EBay and then (the guy has an amazing eagle eye)... look at what he found. Many people have historical pictures and they look nice but beyond looking nice they may also have interesting details.

In this case the picture is from 1933 and first appeared in the [Heirloom](#) in August, '17 along with the wire service copy on the back and directions for visiting the spot. This is the weather station that sat atop Donner Summit and was used to guide airplanes on the transcontinental route. The upper arrow points to the steel cables that were stretched over the building and anchored into the granite (the bolts are still there) to keep it from flying away in the high winds that can blow over Donner Summit. The lower arrow is an even better detail. Part of the transcontinental air route was weather stations and emergency air strips. Another part was beacons to guide aircraft. There is still one on Signal Pk (the red tower on the main Donner Ski Ranch hill) and that was why Beacon Hill in Soda Springs was called Beacon Hill. In this picture Norm spotted the beacon that sat atop Donner Pk. This is the only picture he's been able to find of the beacon and something he's been looking for for a long time. The view here is looking southwest towards Donner Pk. and Sugar Bowl.

Maybe you have some historic pictures that would benefit from the DSHS PIT's analytical skills.

# Book Review

## 50 Years of Flight Ski Jumping in California 1900-1950 Ingrid Wicken 176 pages

Before the advent of modern skiing winter sports consisted of some cross country skiing and exhibitions of slalom skiing and ski jumping. It was about spectating and not participating. Winter sports took off with the development of improved techniques, improved teaching methods, improved equipment, and ski lifts.

50 Years of Flight is about, mostly, the time when winter sports was about spectating, when people came to the snow to watch ski jumping.

“Ski jumping in California is long forgotten now, but it was a key force in the awakening of winter sports possibilities throughout the state,” says Ingrid Wicken in her introduction. So it’s a worthy subject of a book chronicling the ski jumpers whose feats made front page news and who were a popular public attraction. The book takes us back into another era.

Wicken starts with Northern California, which of course includes Donner Summit and Northern California takes up more than half of the book which seems suitable. Truckee, the Auburn Ski Club and Lake Tahoe along with small ski areas make up most of that.

Truckee is first up, blessed with 200” of snow each winter and that encouraged the first winter carnival in 1896. That would have been an interesting event to visit with its ice palace built of water sprayed on a huge frame frozen into a building shape. Inside was a skating rink. Nearby was a tower that was the start, at fifty feet off the ground, of a toboggan run that was a quarter of a mile long. Ski exhibitions and jumping, later, also became part of the early Truckee winter carnivals.

As time went by there were more carnivals and locals met visitors’ needs with more skis, skates, and toboggans for rent. As popularity increased there was more development and toboggan runs got longer and higher. Truckee also developed a system to move people up the hill. It had a cable 2,000 feet long that pulled skiers and tobogganers up the hill. It was the first mechanical lift in the west.

Wicken has lots of good pictures to peruse and harvests quotes from timely periodicals. For example, the carnival was a complete success “flying feet, flying hats, flying snow, men’s and youth’s shouts and women’s screams combined here Sunday to make the real opening day of Truckee winter carnival a source of pleasure thrills and enjoyment for hundreds of people.....” That quote leads to, “Truckee is destined to be a second San Moritz—or Montreal. Its location and altitude combined with the forest and hill, make it a place of rare winter beauty. It surely adds one more to California’s already long list of wonders....”

As carnivals increased in popularity more people were attracted and with more people there was more ski jumping and so in 1914 Truckee built a “ski jump platform.” By 1932 the jump was 68 feet high and 80 feet long and made of old railroad



## 50 Years of Flight

Ski Jumping in California 1900-1950



Ingrid. P. Wicken

timbers.

The Truckee carnival history is chapter one and the Auburn Ski Club history is chapter two. Those two chapters are general history and makes one wonder about the title of the book because there is little about ski jumping. Both chapters are the most interesting parts of the book, maybe because they are local. For example, the Auburn Ski Club chapter describes efforts to popularize winter sports with ski jumping exhibitions in Berkeley and Treasure Island during the 1939 World's Fair. "By 1930, the Auburn Ski Club had established itself as the premiere club in the state and was probably the most aggressive in promoting and planning winter sports programs." As part of the Auburn Ski Club history there is also a nice summary of how Highway 40 came to be cleared in winter which of course allowed access to more winter activities. See the sidebar here.

Following those two chapters though, the book focuses on ski jumping in northern and southern California. That occasions long lists of names, who won what, the dates of ski exhibitions, etc. It's interesting in general but can get tedious.

Besides the focus on names, and there's really no other way to do a history like that, there are some weaknesses. For example "The awakening of winter sports throughout California began in 1928 and it was this awakening that spurred renewed interest in winter carnivals." That's an interesting observation but there is

nothing behind it. Then people just started holding competitions. Why? What drove the popularity? Where's the context?

The pictures, good quotes, advertisements, and general history are good reasons to pick up this book. There are a couple of copies at the DSHS you can purchase.

## The Clearing of Highway 40 in winter

The Auburn Ski Club was instrumental in popularizing winter sports. To do that they needed access to the higher elevations where more snow was. Their first club location was just above Baxter at Canyon Creek. Up higher there would be more snow but the highway was only cleared as far as Baxter. People had to walk or ski up to the club's site and conditions were not the best. If only the road could be cleared. People could drive right up to a better site. Then the State realigned the Lincoln Highway right through the club's ski area. The club enlisted the help of state legislators and on January 18, 1931 legislators and State officials were ferried in 56 cars to Canyon Creek. Hundreds of other automobiles followed bringing along spectators. "Many had no knowledge of snow or winter sports. They were treated to exhibitions ski jumping food and refreshments." State officials saw the increasing popularity of winter sports and its possibilities. "They saw thousands of people skiing on one packed hillside; they saw 2,461 automobiles jammed into the dead end of a highway blocked with snow. The lawmakers borrowed skis from ski club members and descended the slope in a manner unbecoming senatorial dignity. They put on the Auburn Ski Club sweater and posed for snapshots." There was a huge traffic jam. Legislators voted to keep the highway open in winter. The next winter the road was only closed for thirty-five days.

SEASON 1913-14  
**Winter Sports**  
At Truckee  
Commencing December 19, 1913  
TOBOGGANING  
SKIING, SKATING, SLEIGHING



"The Fiesta of the Snows"

**Southern Pacific**



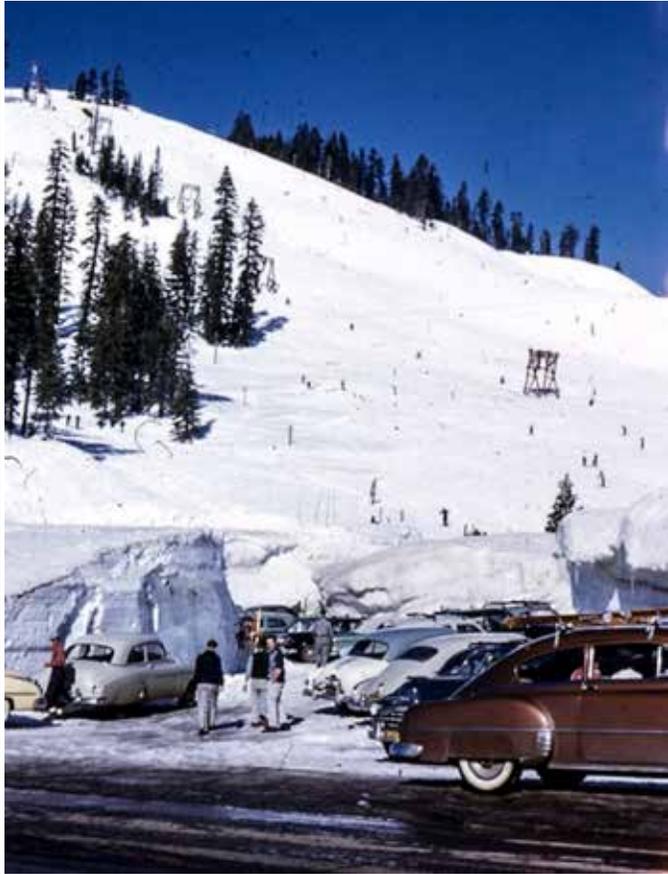
Above, The Truckee ski jump had a unique canopy top and was a landmark until it was removed in 1950. Left, the Southern Pacific helped popularize winter sports as a way to increase business.

## Note:

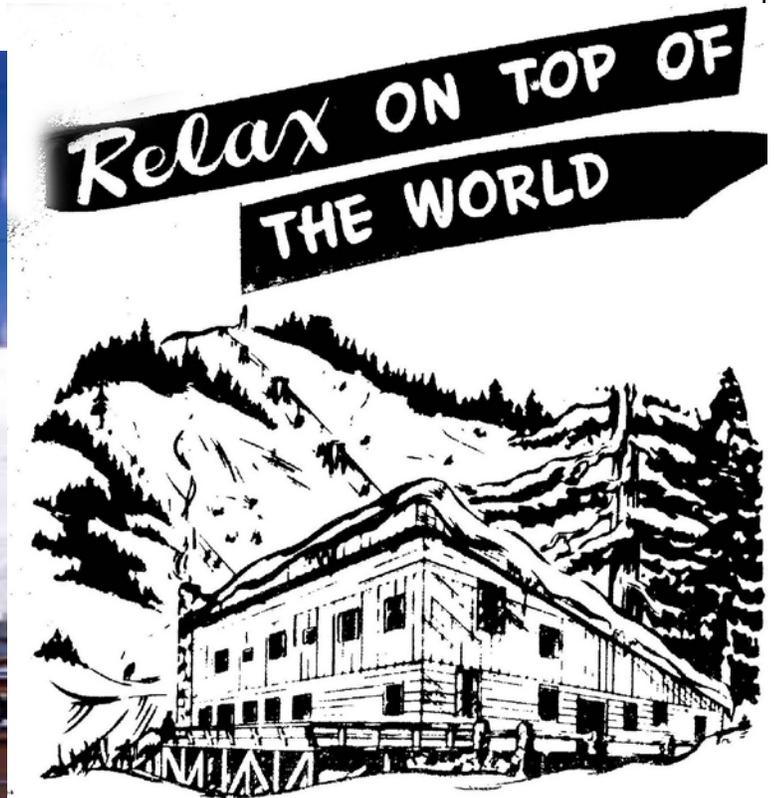
You have noticed our monthly book reviews. You might want to do some reading of your own.

Stop in at the DSHS. Norm Sayler has a large collection of books for perusing, buying, or checking out.

You might even want to do a review for us.



Also from the Pearce Alpineer album. 1952  
- Donner Ski Ranch



NEW dormitory accommodations;  
NEW complete ski shop;  
NEW rope tow to beacon;  
NEW beginners hill;  
NEW ski trails

**DONNER SKI RANCH**  
**ON DONNER SUMMIT**  
**CAFETERIA — COCKTAILS**  
**—ARO— SKI SCHOOL**  
**POST OFFICE**  
**SODA SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA**

# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

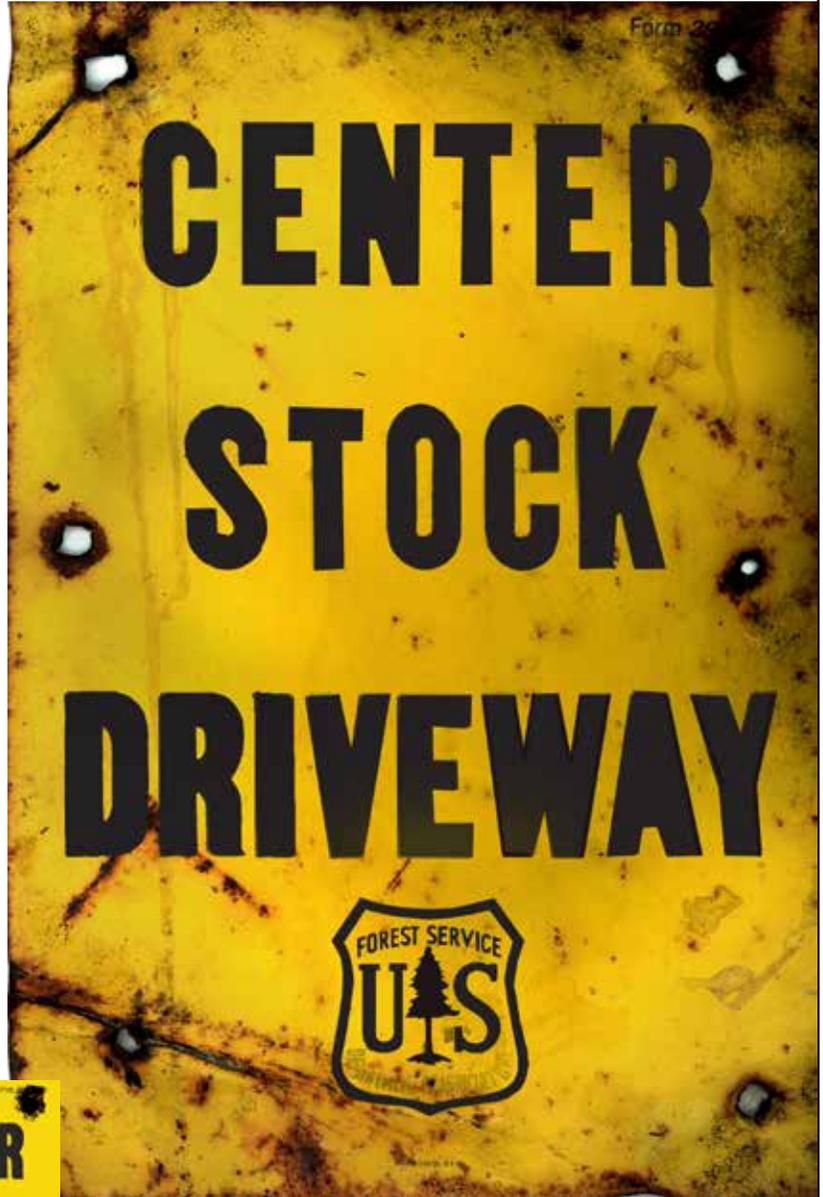
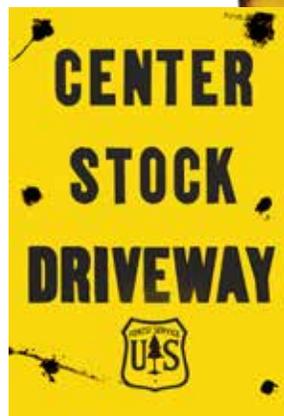
This is part of a series of miscellaneous history, "Odds & Ends" of Donner Summit. There are a lot of big stories on Donner Summit making it the most important historical square mile in California. All of those episodes\* left behind obvious traces. As one explores Donner Summit, though, one comes across 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](#).

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

We covered arborglyphs, sheep, and the sheep underpass recently so it made sense to pull this out too. The summit was good for grazing. Sheep was a big industry but there were also dairy cows and cattle too. The Forest Service identified routes for herders to take their animals. This is one of a number of signs still on trees in the Serene or Ice Lakes area. These signs are 7" x 10" and this one, of course, has been run through the MX-1000 Historical Rejuvenator set at "low" since some readers think some of our rejuvenations are fake when set on "high." The cynicism of some people is simply shocking.

Below is the original before rejuvenator and below that is another sign. Then, below right,

for non-cynics, is the same sign with the rejuvenator set to 95% and to the "except rusted nail holes" mode. Some scars have been left for comparison by doubters.



# A Marshall Fey Expedition

Marshall Fey is an eminent trail historian who has written many times for the Heirloom (see our indices on our Heirloom web pages). You can also read a review of his book, *Emigrant Trails* (the April, '11 Heirloom or the book review page on our website).

Marshall was taken by the Heirloom articles, "A Tale of Two Signs" which came in two parts in the October, '16 and May, '17 Heirlooms. He wanted to see the signs Pat Malberg knew about above Lake Mary, where she and her husband Don, have had a cabin for decades. (Parenthetically the cabin was partially made from used railroad snowshed timbers but that's a story for another Heirloom.)

Marshall came up to Donner Summit this past summer and was enthused. So enthused was he that he set up an expedition to go to the top of Coldstream Pass and rehabilitate the emigrant trails marker there. Marshall enlisted the help of the DSHS MHRT (Mobile Historical Rehabilitation Team – not to be confused with the Mobile Historical Research Team).

On a very cool September morning Marshall, some of his hiking buddies, Pat and Don Malberg, and Bill Oudegeest headed up the Sugar Bowl roads. Once at the top, rehabilitation began and now the marker stands proudly where the emigrants crossed the Sierra.



Above:  
Marshall Fey,  
his son Augie,  
and Ron  
Bradley.



Below:  
Marshall Fey.



Above: Rehabilitation  
accoutrements



From left: Bill Oudegeest, Ron Bradley,  
Denise Moorman, Jim Moorman, Don  
Malberg, Pat Malberg, Marshall Fey,  
Ron Bradley. Not pictured: Wally Free  
- he had gone off hiking.

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
[www.donnersummithistricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistricalsociety.org)

Membership

I/we would like to join The Donner Summit Historical Society and share in the Summit's rich history.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ New Membership MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewing Membership CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

(Please mail this card with your check payable to DSHS to Donner Summit Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, Norden, CA 95724)

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership - \$30

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership - \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Friend Membership - \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor - \$250

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron - \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ Benefactor - \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_ Business - \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ Business Sponsor - \$1000

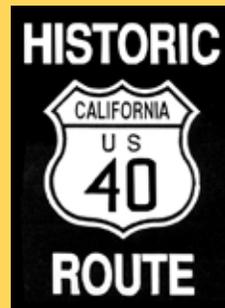
Donner Summit Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

If you would like monthly newsletter announcements, please write your email address below VERY neatly.

\_\_\_\_\_



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



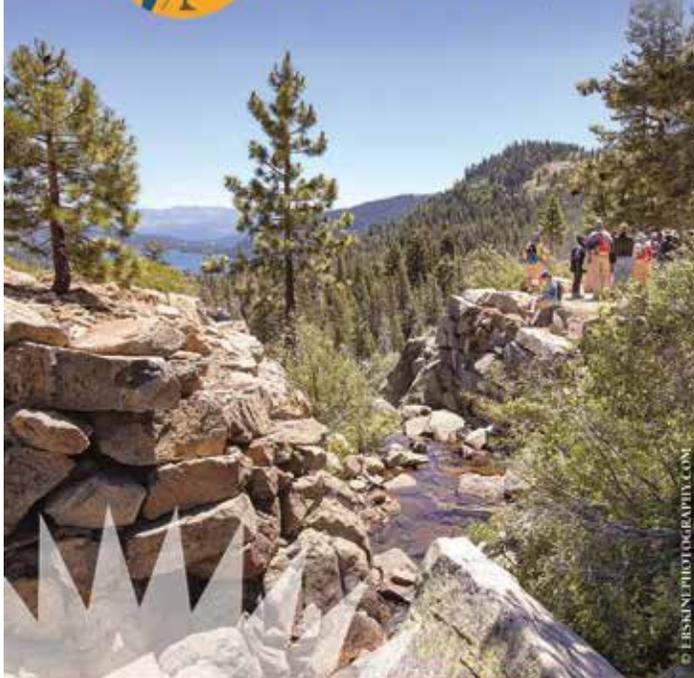
Pick up or download the brochure

**46 interpretive signs along Old 40**  
<http://www.donnersummithistricalsociety.org/pages/20MileMuseum.html>



# DONNER PARTY HIKE

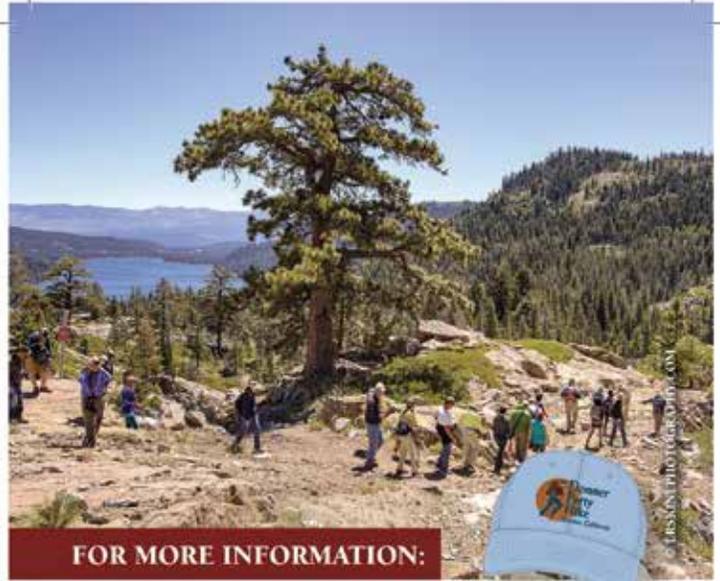
OCTOBER 14 & 15, 2017



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*Learn secrets of the Sierra as you hike with local historians.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
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*Register early and get your commemorative baseball cap!*

**E**xplore scenic Donner Summit with local historians on interpretive walks and hikes. As you trace the steps of the emigrants, imagine the clip-clop of oxen and the rumble of wagons of the countless pioneers who scaled the mighty Sierra Nevada in search of a better life.

**SATURDAY HIKES**—Choose from one of six hikes ranging from 3.5 to 6 miles with varying degree of difficulty. Explore the trails, see petroglyphs or the China Wall. Stroll through meadows or discover hidden Sierra lakes. Price includes guided hike, commemorative hat, hamburger lunch and afternoon presentation. **SATURDAY HIKE:** \$75 per hiker (\$85 after October 3rd)

**SUNDAY WALKING TOUR**—Learn about the grueling mishaps of the Donner Party and the archaeological finds that remain. Then, it's on to all new Donner Memorial State Park to view the Murphy Cabin Site and Pioneer Monument. Price includes guided hike, commemorative hat, hamburger lunch and afternoon presentation plus the Sunday interpretive walks. **SATURDAY/SUNDAY TWO DAY PACKAGE:** \$100 per hiker (\$110 after October 3rd)

**LODGING PACKAGES**—Area lodging packages are available for participants.

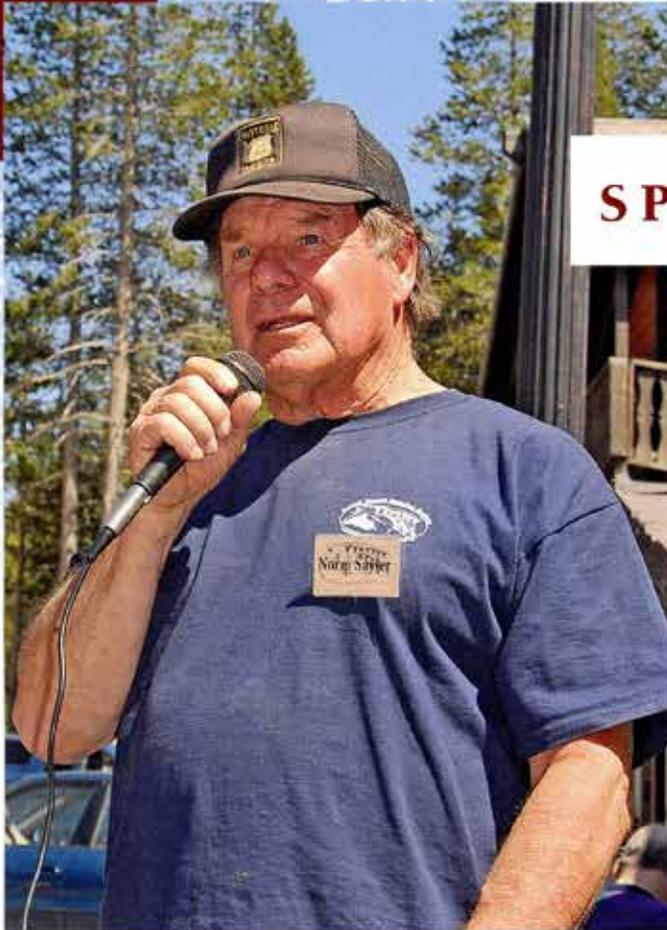
**REGISTER TO SECURE YOUR SPOT IN TIME**—Tour size is limited. Reserve your spot on the trail by October 3rd for early savings.



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**DONNER PARTY HIKE**  
OCTOBER 14 & 15, 2017



**SPEAKER SERIES**

*Donner Summit History with Norm Saylor*

Saturday, October 14, 2017 | 5:30 p.m.  
Donner Memorial Visitor Center  
12593 Donner Pass Rd., Truckee

5:00 P.M. DOORS OPEN

5:30 P.M. PRESENTATION STARTS

*Cheese and crackers served and beverages will be available for sale.*

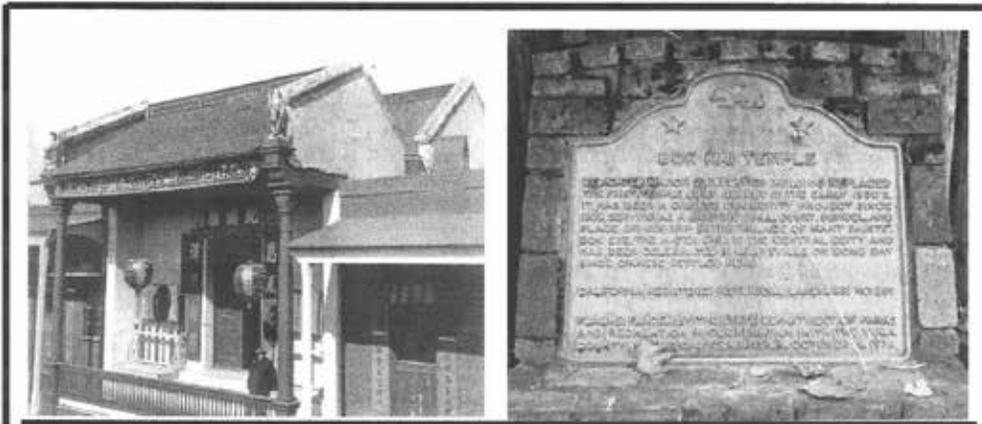
**M**ore than 60 years on Donner Summit, Norm Saylor is an original. Join us as he recounts the history of the area with the aid of old photography. His stories are compelling and give a unique perspective to our area history.

His presentation will include numerous photos from the last 60 years and he will share his vast knowledge of the area. Questions will be encouraged from the audience.

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY:**



**For more information:** [info@donnerpartyhike.com](mailto:info@donnerpartyhike.com) | [donnerpartyhike.com](http://donnerpartyhike.com)



# Joss House Museum Fall Bus Trip

*Sunday October 22, 2017*

**\$69 per person--R /T Bus Fare;**

**Tours:**

**Oroville Chinese Temple & Museum**

**Bok Kai Temple, Marysville**

**....and more.....**

**Chinese Luncheon at CHINA MOON**

*Bus departs from Nevada St. Placer County Domes /*

*Library parking Lot at 08:00*

*Returns about 5:30 P.M.*

**Call: 530-346-7121 .. or...**

**E-Mail: [Auburn\\_Joss\\_House@Live.com](mailto:Auburn_Joss_House@Live.com)**

**to reserve your seat**