

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

May, 2020 issue #141

## The Lincoln Highway, 1916

The January, 2016 issue of [Scientific American](#) had a note about “A National Highway” in the “50, 100 & 150 Years Ago” section. That talked about a fellow in 1916 who took his “annual vacation in the form of a trip by automobile to the Pacific Coast over the Lincoln Highway [put together in 1913]. Two years ago, when I made this same trip, I was doing something out of the ordinary, one of perhaps 50 tourists who took the same journey. This spring I do not believe it an exaggeration to state that I was but one out of 5,000 who essayed to reach the Pacific Coast by motor, and did reach it after a series of experiences which would make the writer of the modern popular thriller blush with shame for his lack of imagination. It is the best road, the only road, leading from the Atlantic to the Pacific.”



"Stopping amid the snow banks of the Sierras [sic] before dipping down into sunny California"

That summary, above, looked interesting, since the Lincoln Highway went over Donner Summit. A hasty Google search turned up the original article in the original [Scientific American](#) which did not mention Donner Summit but did have a picture of the route over Donner Summit. We felt that was enough of a Donner Summit historical connection to share it with [Heirloom](#) readers.

The [Heirloom](#) has covered the Lincoln Highway before, in October and November of 2010 and December of 2008 with some other references to it in other issues (check the indices on the [Heirloom](#) pages on the website). This article shows the importance people felt about the new national highway.

Until the Lincoln Highway was completed (or rather designated by putting together mostly existing road sections) the average

American could only “see America first” by traveling by train. It was very difficult to do so by automobile but the Lincoln Highway reduced the difficulties. One still had to be a “sportsman or woman” and had to deal with road conditions, where to sleep and where to get food. Crossing America by auto could be a great experience, “Let him who believes that romance and adventure are things of the dead past get a motor car of any make or stage of decrepitude that his pocketbook will permit and, donning his most ancient suit, head his car west on the Lincoln Highway with the determination to reach San Francisco ‘or bust.’ His desire for adventure, experiences, action, color, thrills, scenery, fresh air and exercise will be well rewarded....driving across the

# Story Locations in this Issue

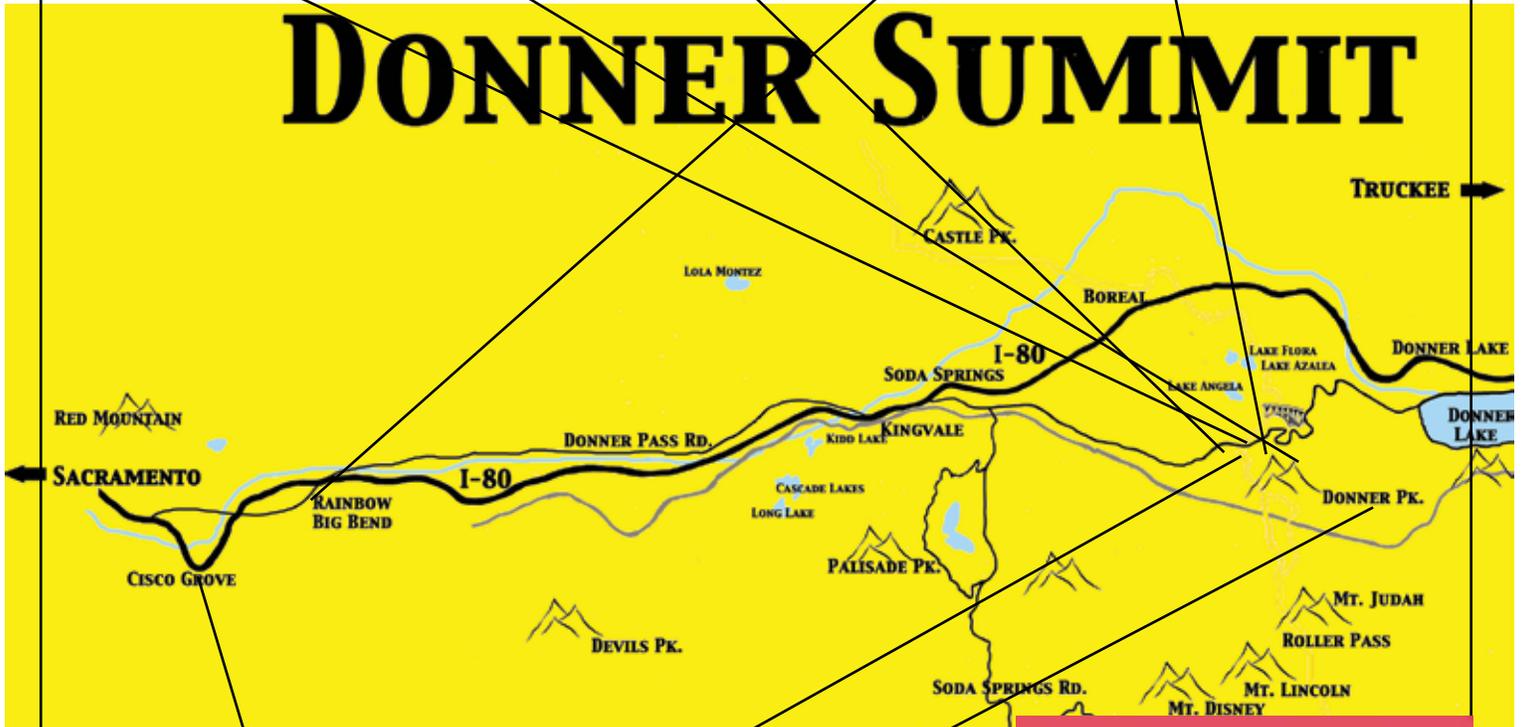
picture pge 1

Underpass pge 5

Articles 7/8

Rainbow Lodge pge 9

pictures pge 12



stone building pge 19

picture pge 16

picture pge 18

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LINCOLN  
L  
HIGHWAY

Lincoln Highway.... is a sporting proposition and will be for some years to come.”

Now we meld the 1916 article with today’s commentary: The Lincoln Highway, the reader must understand, was developed through the evolution of travel routes dating back to the earliest settlers. In the case of Donner Summit, the route dated back to the Native Americans who used Donner Pass to travel back and forth from the high Sierra to today’s California or Nevada lowlands. They left evidence in the form of petroglyphs on the granite slabs just down from the Donner Summit Bridge, and grinding rocks and basalt flakes from projectile knapping in Summit Valley. Then, of course, the Stephens Party used the same route to get half their wagons over the summit (see the [Heirlooms](#) for July, ’12, November, ’13, the review of the video “Forgotten Journey” in July, ’11, and the review of [Truckee’s Trail](#) in the February, ’09 issue.)

Back to the article: ever since 1913 (this article was written in 1916) the attention of the country was focused on the Lincoln Highway. The amount of work done, since 1913 was “unbelievable.” It was “a lesson in what Americans can accomplish on an undertaking so enormous that in the aggregate it is actually beyond comprehension.”

The Lincoln Highway took one to “America’s great natural playground. From this great, bounteous, healthgiving [sic] wonderland of far spaces, glorious scenery, revitalizing air and inspiring vistas of mountain, stream, and forest....”

Before the Lincoln Highway all of the West, except that accessible by train, was closed off to the rest of the country by “mud” every time it rained. People forgot about the wonders of the west and instead went to Europe where they improved European economies to the tune of \$200,000,000. In 1916 of course Europe was closed with a “mailed fist” and people were exploring the “home resources.” (America did not enter WWI until 1917.) Thousands were answering the call to visit California and the west and the “two expositions” (one was the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco).

Even with the new highway conditions were tough. When it rained pleasure drivers stopped until the roads dried out and were “dragged to that boulevard smoothness which characterizes the Lincoln Highway in dry weather.” Drivers like the author kept on making maybe 25 or 35 miles a day with “prodigious expenditure of gasoline and effort, driving eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, constantly sunk to the running board in a mud called gumbo,.. and which has been characterized as being eight per cent pure glue.. You can go on , wet, cold, sleeping when you can in ditches or wherever you may happen to be stuck when night falls., eating when

you can of anything edible procurable at luncheon counters or mediocre restaurants, and subjecting your car to a usage which ordinary driving would not give it in years.”

The Lincoln Highway was improving travel with regular maintenance and better accommodations, “With any luck, you can sleep in a bed every night of your journey... but you must not be squeamish if you want to do it.” One can



**Following the Truckee River between Truckee and Tahoe Tavern**

only imagine what that meant. Two years before, “the transcontinental driver prepared to camp out every night...”

The improved road was not just good for drivers. The author came across an old Pony Express building and stage stop in Utah which has been kept in repair since 1853. Horace Greeley and Mark Twain stopped at the stage stop. In June, 1913, 52 cars passed by. In June, 1916, 225 cars passed by and that day the author visited, 18 people were crowded inside and six cars were parked outside. Everyone stayed for the night. They all took supper, bought gas and some bought oil.

During the 23 days of the author’s trip across the country he said there were at least 5,000 men at work on the highway and he never went more than 50 miles without encountering road work.

By 1916 following the road was easy with red, white and blue markers all along. Two years previously, he had to use a compass; the “Lincoln Highway was only an idea”.

The highway was becoming concrete because people were realizing that leaving them as dirt made them the most expensive they could be since there was constant maintenance. Workers were leveling hills and filling valleys before permanently “hard surfacing.”

The author did not mention Donner Summit in his crossing, although he included a couple of pictures. He did visit Lake Tahoe (see right), "AA Ruskin or a Whistler is required to fitly portray the wondrous beauty of the drive around Lake Tahoe, that little jewel of lakes that lies on the border between Nevada and California fed by a hundred tinkling crystal streams of icy water, which flow from the eternal snows of its encircling peaks; surrounded by mighty forests of virgin fir and pine. It lies in the bottomless crater of some pre-historic volcano, it's pellucid depths of Mediterranean blue reflecting the fleecy California clouds. I have driven a great deal in many parts of the globe, and have seen most of the famous beauty spots of both the old and the new world, but I have yet to experience a sight more wonderful or a drive more inspiring than this trip over the Lincoln Highway around Lake Tahoe. California Roads are in the main perfect. The Lincoln Highway from Reno west is in really wonderful condition."



On the Lincoln Highway between Tahoe Terrace and Tahoe, Lake Tahoe, California

Seeing America and the Lincoln Highway  
Necessity of National Cooperation

The big issue was maintenance for the Lincoln Highway. It is the biggest problem facing the Lincoln Highway Association, of which the author, Henry B. Joy, was the president at the time. It was one of the greatest problems facing the country and the west could not solve the problem. The west needed the economic activity from tourists and commerce but could not do the job itself. The road had been marked out two years before but the job had to be finished. Travelers could not be expected to travel only in fair weather. The road needed improving and finishing. That was an issue for 60 million Americans but "Patriotic Americans" would do it. "Seeing America in a motor car ten, or even five years from now will not be an exploit for the adventurous, but an everyday trip of interest and enjoyment to millions."

If you want to find the article you can use the URL below or just type one of the quotes into a search engine. One quote to use is, "Two years ago, when I made this same trip, I was doing something out of the ordinary".

Or you can use the URL:

[https://books.google.com/books?id=aom3AQAA MAAJ&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=%22it+is+the+best+road,+the+only+road,+leading+from+the+Atlantic+to+the+Pacific%22&source=bl&ots=jRCvXx3g18&sig=MdKnxWy-MsQnyvVzISfMjxngvrg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwii2\\_nS\\_uHJAhuBziYKHbSkAY8Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=%22it%20is%20the%20best%20road%2C%20the%20only%20road%2C%20leading%20from%20the%20Atlantic%20to%20the%20Pacific%22&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=aom3AQAA MAAJ&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=%22it+is+the+best+road,+the+only+road,+leading+from+the+Atlantic+to+the+Pacific%22&source=bl&ots=jRCvXx3g18&sig=MdKnxWy-MsQnyvVzISfMjxngvrg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwii2_nS_uHJAhuBziYKHbSkAY8Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=%22it%20is%20the%20best%20road%2C%20the%20only%20road%2C%20leading%20from%20the%20Atlantic%20to%20the%20Pacific%22&f=false)

**Cook in a cool kitchen**

A good oil stove will do away with the swelter and discomfort of a blazing hot range. Get an oil stove this summer and do your kitchen-work in comfort. The

**New Perfection OIL COOK STOVE**

does all that any wood or coal stove will do. It bakes, broils, roasts and toasts perfectly. The long chimneys concentrate the heat just under the utensils. It is not wasted or thrown out into the room. The New Perfection doesn't smoke or smell; doesn't taint the food. It burns kerosene, the clean, cheap fuel. Think of the comfort—no coal or wood to lug; no ashes to dirty the kitchen. Ask your dealer for the New Perfection.

**Standard Oil Company**  
California  
Truckee

FOR BEST RESULTS USE PEARL OIL

Truckee Republican June 4, 1914 (to go with the next page)

# New Underpass Comes to the Summit

Taking the road down to Truckee (in reverse chronology: before I-80, before Old 40, and before the underpass) could be hazardous. Get on the old Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. at the summit and you almost immediately have to cross the railroad tracks and go through the snowshed, but that's easier said than done.

You've got to open up the barn door - wait, shut off your engine first so you can hear (trains coast silently on the downhill) - listen for any trains. Cross the tracks and walk a hundred yards. Open the opposite barn door. Listen for any trains. Hurry back, start the car, drive through the snowshed, stop the car, close the doors, and continue on your way. Be glad no trains were coming. With the coming of the Lincoln highway and the attendant publicity more and more people were crossing the tracks and there were accidents (see page 13 of the November, '19 [Heirloom](#).) In 1913 that was soon to be fixed.

Truckee Republican October 16, 1913

A road crossing at the East end of Tunnel 6, near Summit, will in the near future be a thing of the past. A subway is under construction at a point one hundred feet East of Tunnel 7 and the road will be graded up to it so that automobiles and all conveyances can pass under the track, thus doing away with the attendant dangers of grade crossings. The S. P. Co. has a gang there now doing the work under Foreman C. Northev.

Truckee republican June 4, 1914

Work has been started at the Summitt [sic] subway last Monday the rocks taken out will be used o-fill [sic] up the road. The cattle corals 'at Soda Springs are nearly completed, the corral is equipped with all modern improvements, this improvement means a good deal to cattle shippers in this district.



Before underpass completion in 1914 travelers opened barn doors to go across the tracks and one hundred yards along inside the snowshed.



After underpass completion; snowsheds are on top. This picture is about 1921.



The underpass today full of Margie Powell Hike hikers (a DSHS annual event) and thoughtfully placed graffiti.

# More Underpass News

As you know, the advent of the subway on Donner Summit was a boon to drivers, making it easier to get from the summit down to Truckee and vice versa. Here is a little amusement on that subject.

Truckee Republican May 28, 1914

The first auto to cross the snow capped peaks of the Sierras [sic] reached Truckee at 9.45 o'clock Monday morning after one of the hardest trips taken by automobilists, when Howard Davis agent for the Metz car in Auburn and Doctor J. G. Mackay in a 22 and a half horse-power Metz reached this place on their way to Tahoe Tavern, stopping here about fifteen minutes and they arrived at the tavern at 11 o'clock thereby winning the Tahoe Tavern cup.

Gross and McGee the two parties who have won the cup for the past two years, were only five hours behind Davis and Mackay in their Buick, but were unable to make the crossing. Between one and five feet of snow was encountered for six miles on the west side of the Summitt [sic] from Tamarack to Soda Springs.

Mackay and Davis left Auburn at 9.30 Friday morning, taking over three days to make the trip. Snow and rain continuously beat in their faces. Gross and McGee have been on the way over a week. The running hoard of the machine had to be cut off on both sides of the machine to allow it to go through the subway under the snowsheds at the summitt [sic]. The automobilists state that it will be two weeks before the road will be passable.

## Many Automobiles Have Crossed

Truckee Republican June 10, 1915

The road over the summit is now open and in first class condition for automobile traffic. During the past two weeks the Chamber of Commerce have had a number of men working on the road at different times together with teams donated by James McIvar [he ran the dairy in Truckee], for the purpose of breaking the road. Thursday E. M. Baxter State Highway Commissioner put a large crew of men to work on the road and they will have the new road on this side of the subway open tomorrow night for automobile traffic. He was looking for men to go to work for him Wednesday night and as a result Thursday morning about twenty men left for the mountainside to shovel snow, besides the crew already at work.

At least 150 machines have passed through Truckee on their way to Lake Tahoe from the east during the past week, and prior to that time, a great deal larger number have shipped over the summit [by train], both going to the exposition [the San Francisco Panama Pacific Exposition] as well as coming from the exposition. The Truckee route will prove to be the popular one to the tourist[.] [T]ravel[ers] will come up the Truckee river [sic] from Reno then from Truckee go around Lake Tahoe over the State Highway and thence through Placerville to the exposition. This is the route that has been boosted in practically all of the different eastern papers and magazines.

Truckee Republican June 4, 1914 just to add interest to the page

**My Wife Says it is Beautiful  
but I am Going to See For Myself.**

**Aluminum Ware**

FRUIT  
BERRIES  
CHERRIES  
RUHARB  
APRICOTS  
APPLES

**Vegetables**

FRESH DAIRY  
LETTUCE  
RADISHES  
NEW POTATOES  
STRING BEANS

PRICES ARE THE LOWEST. THE SERVICE IS PROMPT.

**C. E. Smith The Grocer.**

# Chamber of Commerce Working Hard to Get Summit Road Open

## Or, retitled: **The Fun They Must Have Had**

This answers the question of what people did before jogging, working out in gyms, playing video games, watching television, etc.

Every May, before the highway was plowed in winter, some version of the headline above was printed in The Truckee Republican. Truckee had been shut off to automobile travelers for the whole winter since an average of 34 feet of snow falls each winter on Donner Summit. Many strategies were employed by Truckee and Lake Tahoe business owners to get the road open as soon as possible. Volunteers were recruited, men were paid, there were snow shoveling bees, and ashes were collected in town and spread on the snow.

In 1932 the State started plowing Highway 40 and the annual Truckee road opening "festivities" were at an end.

### **COMMERCIAL CLUB WANTS VOLUNTEERS**

Many Have Signified Their Intention of Going to Summit Saturday Night

### **ROAD WILL BE OPEN NEXT TUESDAY**

Special Car Will be Added to Train No. 20 to Carry Workers to Snow Line -  
There Will Be Room for You

Enthusiasm over the prospects of taking a trip to the high Sierra snow line Saturday night is running high among business men and all who are interested in the early opening of the road over the Auburn-Truckee summit.

Over fifty men will board a special car which is to be attached to train No. 20 Saturday night and go to shovel snow which covers the road to a depth of many feet in drifts at the subway on the other side of the mountains and below Donner Peak.

The party will be made up of men from Sacramento, Roseville, Rocklin, Loomis, Penryn, Newcastle, Auburn and Colfax. All will board the special train Saturday night and arrive at the summit at 10 o'clock.

Shoveling snow in the high Sierras —How does it sound to you? It isn't hardly believable that drifts of snow 30 feet in depth lie on the highway in Placer county [sic], is it? Nevertheless it is a fact. With the thermometer ranging from 90 to 100 degrees in Auburn, immense banks of snow lie on the ground less than 70 miles distant, where the weather is cool and refreshing.

It will be an enjoyable outing to go with the crowd next Saturday night and spend Sunday and Monday helping to open the road over the Sierras [sic] for automobile travel. If you cannot be there Saturday night, go up on Sunday night and come back with the crowd Monday night. If you can only go for one day, go up Saturday night and come back Sunday night.

Manpower is needed to get the road in a passable condition. Shovels will be furnished by the Commercial Club—who is arranging the affair. All you need is a good pair of shoes for working in snow and an extra pair for use after you come out of the snow.

The work will not be excessively hard and if you are not used to handling a pick and shovel do not let that deter your going, because there will be plenty for all to do, and anyway, it will not be the same as shoveling rock. A good time is assured all who go up and as the cause is a worthy one. Everyone who can should attend.

The writer, accompanied by W. M. Jones, secretary of the Auburn Commercial club, has just returned from a trip to the summit and when we say that the weather is perfect up there it is indeed putting it mildly. You will enjoy every minute of the time. You

might play hooky if the occasion arose and “sneak out” a few speckled beauties—if you can get away from the crowd long enough and you are fortunate enough to have a fishing pole and line along with you. Because there are lots of trout and they are good, too.

Arrangements are being made to have one of the weekly news motion picture companies go up to take moving pictures of clearing the road from snow... and undoubtedly you will have an opportunity to see yourself in action later—on the movie screen.

Everyone who goes will have to pay his transportation. “Grub” will be furnished by the club and arrangements are now under way to furnish sleeping accommodations. (Auburn Journal.)

Truckee Republican May 20, 1920

That ad, above from 1920 must have worked. Look at what the newspaper said the next year about the previous year's efforts.

In the near future a delegation of snow shovelers will be secured to remove the snow from the worst strips of road. Last year 1500 feet of drifts were removed in two days, and the road across the Summit was opened on June 4. Instead of cutting a channel through the snow drifts large enough for machines to pass through, as has been the habit in former years, it is proposed to cut a narrow ditch through the snow, which will enable the air to enter and cause the snow to melt quickly. This system will be tried out by the Placer county [sic] snow shovelers when they attack the road from Soda Springs Flat to the subway just beyond Summit.

The Truckee Chamber of Commerce has cindered the snow from the subway to Donner Lake, and report that this has caused the snow to melt at the rate of eighteen inches a week. Rock salt has also been used, but it is claimed that this melts itself before doing any great damage to the snow.

Truckee Republican April 14, 1921

# SUMMIT SNOW TO BE REMOVED

## Annual Snow Shoveling Carnival Due Late In April

Truckee Republican April 14, 1921

The Truckee Chamber of Commerce have been working hard to get the Summit road open for automobile traffic. In March they sanded the road from the old mill above Donner Lake to the Summit Hotel. This has practically opened the road, except a number of places where the snow drifted many feet deep over the highway, and also a snowslide between Summit Hotel and the subway.

The chamber of commerce of Truckee has asked financial help from the Commercial Club of Auburn, Colfax and Reno. It is a fact that all of the road work has to be done in Placer county and Auburn and Colfax have not as yet responded; in fact have not even replied to letters sent them from the local chamber. Reno as usual, came forward, at once, with a hundred dollar donation, and this will enable Truckee to do quite a lot of work with what we have already done and if Auburn and Colfax would show the proper spirit we would have the road open by next Sunday, but perhaps these Placer county [sic] towns would just as soon see the travel go via Placerville instead of through their city.

C. B. White, secretary of the chamber of commerce [sic], took a number of men with shovels and lunches on No. 209 to Summit to work this way and sent another bunch of men by auto to work on this side of the Summit.

Truckee Republican May 22, 1919

Remember when these were playing?

Truckee Republican May 20, 1920

## Donner Theater

**SATURDAY**

OWEN MOORE in  
"Picadilly Jim,"  
Prizma picture and a Lyon & Moran Comedy

+

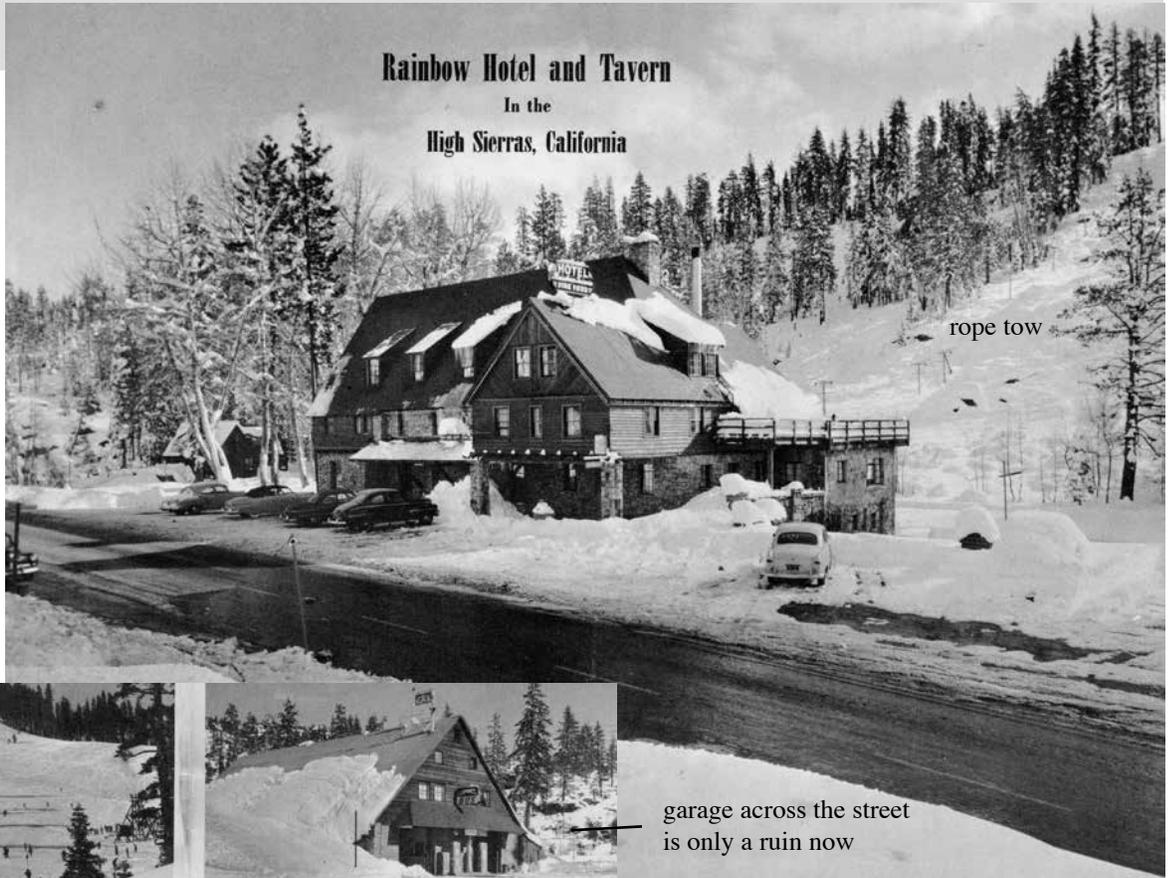
**SUNDAY**

DUSTIN FARNUM in  
"A Man in the Open"  
Also a Pathe News and a Mack Sennett Comedy

**TUESDAY**

MABEL NORMAND in  
A Sunshine Comedy, "His Naughtly Wife"

# From the DSHS Archives



Rainbow Hotel and Tavern

In the

High Sierras, California

rope tow

Donner Ski Ranch



Ski Slope near Donner Summit



The Yuba River



Garage across from Tavern

garage across the street  
is only a ruin now

This is a brochure for the sale of Rainbow "Hotel and Tavern" sometime in the early 1950's.

Note the location is on "all-year U.S. Transcontinental Highway No. 40. There are two rope tows out back for "beginners and professionals." There is a natural pool, a 40 car garage across the street with two apartments, 53 rooms, and a dormitory. Note too that to call the phone number is Rainbow 2 or Soda Springs 2641.

The rope tows are gone. Highway 40 is not Highway 40. The pool is gone. The 40 car garage is gone along with the apartments above. There are only half as many rooms and there's a modern phone number. The dormitory is gone, although the building is still there.

The dining room, cocktail lounge and bar are still there. The Yuba River is still there and Sugar Bowl is still not far away. With sales over the years the property is now about 144 acres. It's not open to the public except for special events but if you ever get the chance to go inside, take advantage of the opportunity.

## TABLE OF FACTS

**LOCATION:** In the heart of the High Sierras on all-year U.S. Transcontinental Highway No. 40, 7 miles west of Soda Springs, Placer County, California. Nationally known ski resorts of Squaw Valley, Sugar Bowl and others within a few miles; Reno, 52 miles; Truckee, 19 miles; Sacramento, 86 miles; San Francisco, approximately 160 miles. Grammar and high schools at Truckee with school bus service at door; S.P. train stops at Soda Springs; Greyhound bus depot at hotel, delivery service from Sacramento 4 times weekly.

**LAND:** Approx. 400 Acres, average elevation 5,300 feet. U.S. Highway No. 40 bisects property for approx. 1 1/2 miles. Yuba River traverses property 1 1/2 miles. Land ranges from open to pine-covered slopes. Directly back of the tavern, served by a "J" bar and rope tow ski lift, are a beginners' slope, bunny hill, and 1,200 ft. professional run. Ski season from Dec. 1 through mid-April. Hiking, riding (corrals and horses leased), fishing and swimming in natural pool in river during summer. Two trout pools. **Water:** 50,000-gal. open top concrete spring fed reservoir, gravity flow to building, 8,000-gal. buried oil storage tank.

**OPERATION:** All-year operating season. 37 rentable bedrooms with accommodations for from 75 to 100 overnight guests during peak of season. Ski chalet with dormitory for 22 overnight guests. Average number of employees, 12. Approved by American Auto. Ass'n., Duncan Hines and Ford Magazines.

**MAIN LODGE (HOTEL and TAVERN):** 53 Rooms (37 rentable bedrooms), 3 floors, Swiss Chalet style, built 1929 with subsequent additions, remodeled and redecorated 1948-50. Stone and timber construction on full concrete basement; cedar shake roof; steel casement windows; tile, hardwood and pine floors; galv. iron and copper plumbing; knotty pine and paneled interior finish. Large oil-burning, steam-circulating furnace; radiators; oil-burning water heater. PS electricity with stand-by auxiliary system. Own sewage disposal plant.

**MAIN FLOOR:** Large Reception Hall with Hotel Office; Lounge with fireplace; manager's or owner's 2-Room Apartment with Kitchenette and Bath; Dining Room (52 capacity), large view windows; completely equipped Cocktail Lounge with bar and tables. Private Dining Room; men's lav.; efficient Kitchen with hotel-size oil-burning range, 2 walk-in refrigerators.

**SECOND FLOOR:** New Wing: 10 de luxe Bedrooms, each with full Bath. Old Wing: 7 Bedrooms, each with washbasin. Public Bath. **THIRD FLOOR:** New Wing: 15 semi-de luxe Bedrooms, each with washbasin and stall shower. Public Bath. Old Wing: 7 Bedrooms, each with washbasin. Public Bath.

**BASEMENT:** Full, concrete; 7 Help's Bedrooms; 2 Public Baths. Ski Shop, Furnace Room, several large food and liquor storage rooms, separate outside entrance.

**SKI CHALET:** Same construction and style as main building, 3 floors. **First Floor:** Lobby with large fireplace; Kitchen, 2 lavs. **Second Floor:** 3 large Bedrooms, dormitory style, containing 22 beds. **Third Floor:** Motor for ski tows. Note: This building is usually rented to clubs, groups, etc.

**3-STORY GARAGE:** Directly across highway from Hotel. 40-car capacity, 2 electric and 1 hand-operated Associated Gas pumps, stock of auto accessories (ties, tubes, spark plugs, etc.) and GM fully equipped tow truck. **Second Floor:** 4-Room Apt. (2 bedrooms). **Third Floor:** 2 Bedrooms; Bath.



PRICE: \$195,000

Fully equipped, stocked and furnished. (Included are such items as \$14,000 liquor stock, on sale and off sale liquor license. Linens, bedding, utensils, Monterey style furniture, Simmons mattresses throughout. Complete inventory available.)

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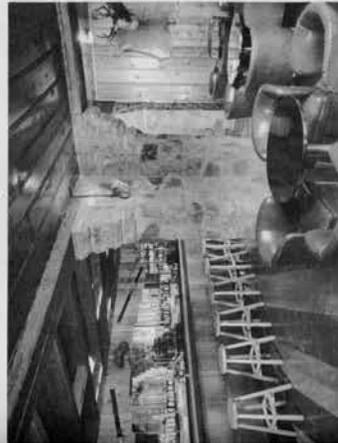
Front of Tavern — Ski Chalet at Left

## Famous Year 'Round Resort Hotel-Tavern

400 Acres, 1 1/2-Mile Frontage on U. S. #40  
In the Heart of California's Finest Ski Country

Strategically situated on all-year U.S. Transcontinental Highway No. 40, the Rainbow Hotel and Tavern is nationally known as one of the outstanding year 'round resorts in the High Sierras. Sturdily constructed of fieldstone and cedar, this 3-story combination hotel and tavern is beautifully appointed, completely furnished and equipped. It contains a total of 53 rooms with 37 de luxe and semi-de luxe bedrooms, a dining room accommodating 52, an attractive cocktail lounge and bar and reception lounge. In addition there is a ski chalet with dormitory for 22 overnight guests and, directly across the highway, a 40-car

Reception Hall



Cocktail Lounge and Bar

OWNER: Brant M. Chaplin, Rainbow Hotel and Tavern, Soda Springs, California. Telephone: Rainbow 2 or Soda Springs 2641.  
PROPERTY: Rainbow Hotel and Tavern, U.S. Highway No. 40, 7 miles west of Soda Springs, Placer County, California.  
INSPECTION: By appointment with owner on property or through Previews Inc., 68 Post Street, San Francisco 4, Calif. Tel.: DOUGLAS 2-3006.

No. 70392  
12/51

garage with two apartments above. The 400-acre property fronts for approximately 1 1/2 miles on each side of the highway. The Yuba River, affording summer swimming in a natural pool, traverses the property for the same distance. Directly to the rear of the hotel are slopes for beginners and professionals served by two ski tows, while within 7 miles are the famous Soda Springs and Sugar Bowl ski areas with numerous slopes and tows.

Successfully and continuously operated since 1929, it has recently been remodeled and redecorated, is in excellent condition throughout and is offered completely furnished and equipped.



Rear of Tavern and Chalet



Dining Room



Ski Chalet and Tow



Owner's Bedroom

CUT ON THIS LINE  
MORTGAGE: \$90,000 at 4%,  
10 year, amortized yearly.  
TAXES: Approx. \$2718.00

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# Book Review

Imagine – this photographic revolutionary and free thinker was on Donner Summit – many times

## **Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography,**

Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, 9/29/18-1/27/19  
Ann M. Wolfe  
394 pages large format

## **Songs of a Pagan**

Anne Brigman  
93 page 1949 & 2018

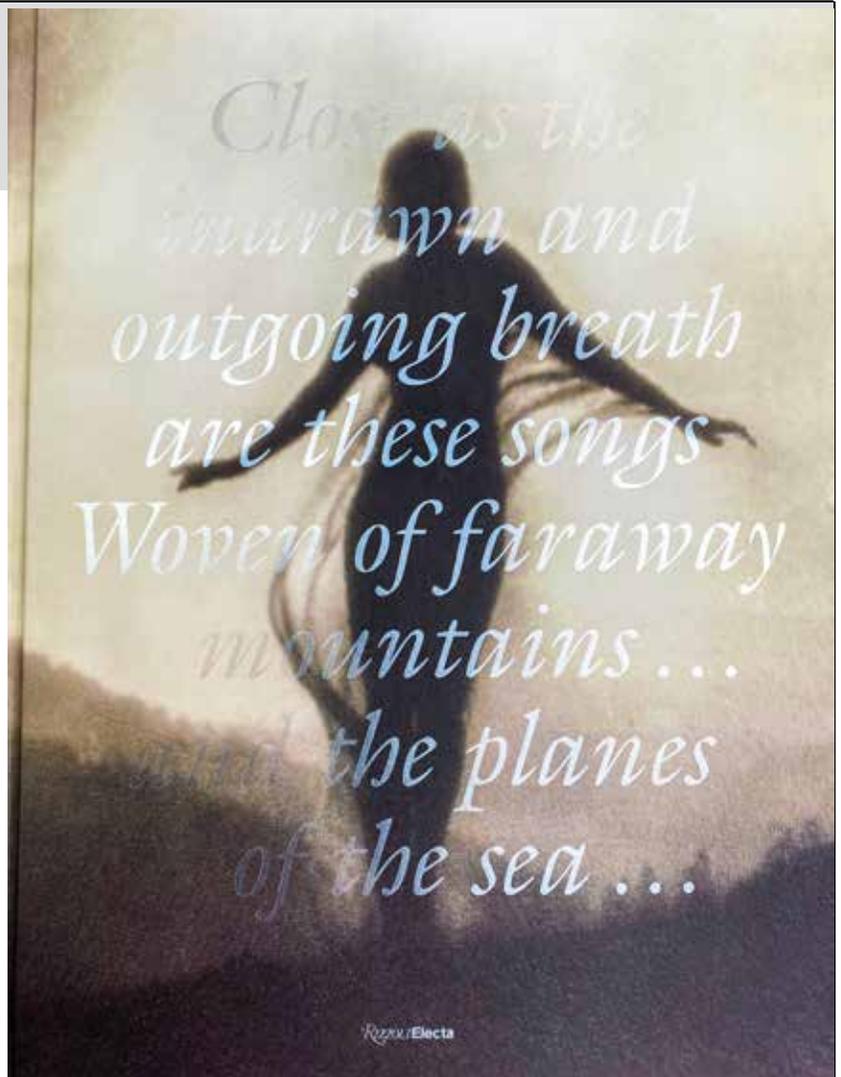
In late 2018 and early 2019 the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno hosted an exhibition of photography and poetry by Anne Brigman. That would ordinarily occasion no interest from the Donner Summit Historical Society except that Brigman had visited Donner Summit in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and used it as an inspiration for some of her photographs and poems. Brigman was very interesting, an artist in a long line of artists and photographers who visited and captured the beauty of Donner Summit. The Summit was not her only Sierra subject though. She liked Desolation Valley and Yosemite too but she showed excellent taste by photographing some of Donner Summit using the Sierra granite and Sierra Junipers for backdrops. (for Sierra Junipers, see the October, '13 [Heirloom](#) and look in our [Heirloom](#) picture index for more).

The book is large format and 1½” thick. It’s also quite heavy and comes in its own box. It is primarily an art book, suitable for coffee table display and paging through from time to time, but there is a lot more. It is full of Brigman’s photographs and includes her quotes and some writing, her poetry, and essays defining Brigman by others. It came with a smaller book, [Songs of a Pagan](#), which is a collection of her poetry illustrated by her photographs. Some of her poetry is reproduced here.

Brigman was born into a missionary family in 1869 in Hawaii and was the subject of all of the constraints that background would suggest and which were overlain by the societal constraints for women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. She moved to California from Hawaii at 16 and married a much older man at 25. He was a member of the merchant marine and Anne initially traveled the world with him. They later split in 1910. They had a house in Oakland and there, in 1901 at age 32, Brigman took up photography, producing traditional images. By the next year she was already exhibiting her photographs and making a mark.

“I slowly found my power with the camera among the junipers and the tamarack pines of the high, storm-swept altitudes. Compact, squat giants are these trees, shaped by the winds of the centuries like wings and flames and torsolike forms, unbelievably beautiful in their rhythms.”

From the third essay "Hard to Reach: Ann Brigman and California Mountaineering" by Heather Waldroup



Timothy O'Sullivan  
"Donner Lake, View from  
Donner Summit", 1867

Note the snowsheds and  
tunnels of the Central  
Pacific Railroad on the  
right and the Dutch Flat  
Wagon Rd. on the left.



"Dawn", Anne Brigman, 1909 (Donner Lake is in the background)

Rather than focus on the man-made railroad tunnels and snowsheds as male photographers had in the past, Brigman positions her nude body in the foreground of her image as if to reclaim the legendary summit as her own.

Susan Ehrens in the first essay, "Laid Bare in the Landscape"

I wanted to go and be free. I wanted the rough granite flanks of the mountains and the sweet earth. I wanted the staccato song of wind around rocks and juniper branches. I wanted to forget everything except that I was going back to heaven...back to heaven in my high boots, and trousers, and mackinaw coat.

Anne Brigman

She won a major prize at the Panama Pacific Exhibition in 1915 for a set of photographs for example. In 1906 she was the only photographer west of the Mississippi to be named a "Fellow" in the "Secessionist" movement. That naming was an honor bestowed by Alfred Stieglitz.

Brigman led an independent life in Oakland and connected with a vibrant, creative Bay Area community of actors, architects, artists, and writers. She was friends with Jack London and landscape painter Wm. Keith, for example. The connections encouraged self-expression. Brigman was not just a photographer; she was also a thespian, an advocate for suffrage, and a writer. In 1929 she moved to Southern California and there she focused on the sea and a different kind of photos such as abstracts caused by the sea on the sand.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Brigman's photography career was well established (for example, see the article to the right) and at that point she began to break societal conventions for what was acceptable for photography and especially for women in photography, possibly rebelling against the constraints placed on her by her family and certainly by society. She began making photographs in places women didn't go and of subjects women didn't photograph. Brigman described what she wanted in a magazine article, "I wanted to be free... that was all I wanted." She used her art in her quest for freedom.

Most of her photographs clearly break the mold of traditional photography at the time (for example see the previous page) but maybe more than that, what society thought women should be photographing. Brigman's photographs are of gauzy scenery with nudes complimenting the foci or becoming integral parts of the photographs.

Brigman said of her work in a 1908 article in Camera Craft that her images "hold, in pictorial form, stories of the deep emotions and struggles or joys of the human soul in the form of allegory." These ideas were very different from the traditional photography of the time.

I wanted to go and be free... That was all I wanted.

Anne Brigman

San Francisco Call  
November 11, 1909

*Mrs. Annie W. Brigman, Oakland photographer, who preaches gospel of absolute freedom.*

“Absolute freedom is the philosophy of Mrs. Annie W. Brigman, artistic photographer...”

San Francisco Call  
June 8, 1913

Brigman was part of a self-identified group of photographers who called themselves the Secessionists (a group that included Alfred Stieglitz). They believed in going beyond the mechanical in developing photography.

The San Francisco Call, on July 14, 1907, described the Secessionist movement as,

“These devotees to art for art's sake, art for truth's sake, art for humanity's sake... Their aim is identical with that of the painter or sculptor— to discover under the conventional mask of nature, whether it be in guise of human being, landscape or trees, the living spirit, and to make permanent that revelation.”

The Secessionists wanted to turn photography into “an art, possessing that exquisite sense of the beautiful.” (San Francisco Call October 18, 1908) That caused controversy between this new school of thought and the traditional photographers (See the headline and story on the next page).

Another aspect of Brigman's photography can be seen in this quote from an essay in the book, “Nature was paramount in Brigman’s life: it was the source of her strength, personal liberation, and spiritual quest.” She was an artist of images that conveyed the feelings of the philosophers/ environmentalists: Muir, Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson, etc. She celebrated nature but was “defiantly daring” in adding the nude female form to her natural images.

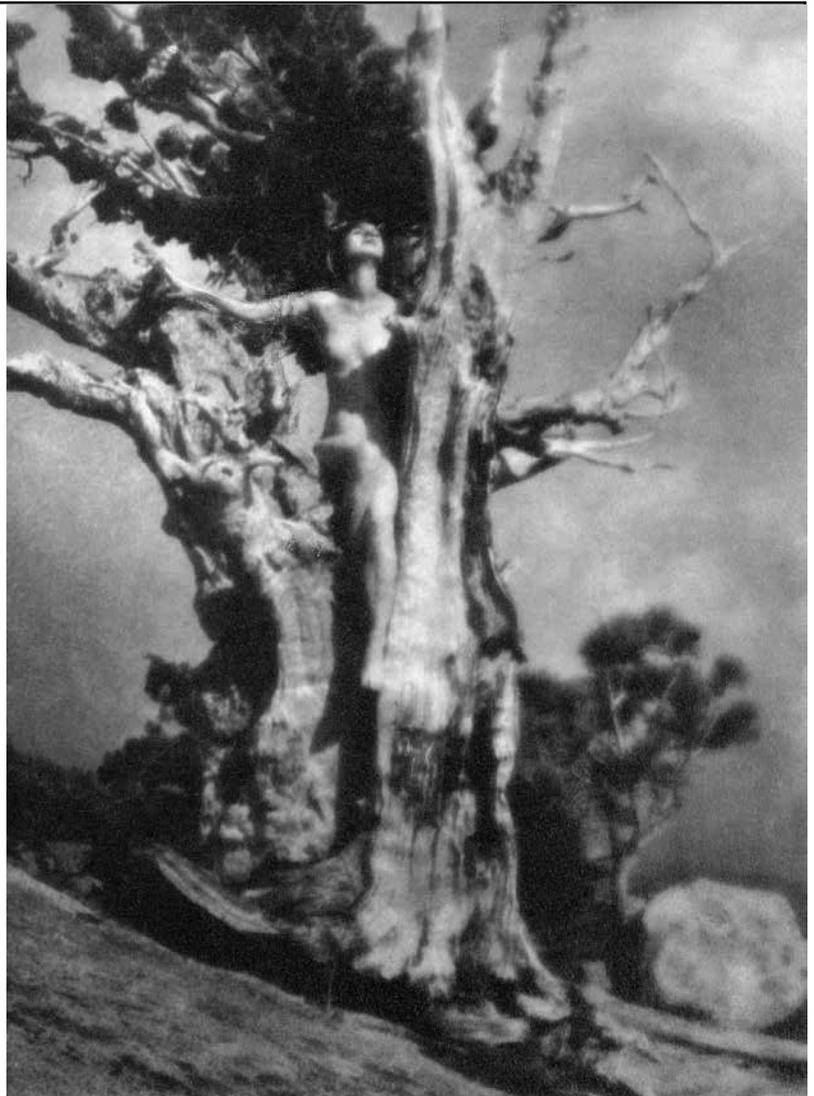
Anne Brigman fell into obscurity after World War II and the later advent of the protest era. She died in 1950. Her radicalism had been overtaken by others.

The book includes five long and sometimes esoteric essays that provide a biographical view of Ann Brigman, talk about her inspiration, how she inspired others, analyze her poetry, and compliment the photography collection.

The first essay, “Laid Bare in the Landscape” by Ann Wolfe, who put the book together, places Brigman in the context of whom she influenced (including Imogen Cunningham), other photographers, and budding feminism.

The second essay focuses on Brigman’s professional life and inspiration from nature and describes Brigman’s technical work on her negatives.

The third essay is about Brigman’s relationship with the Sierra as an inspiration for her work and analyzes both her spiritual and casual photographs. The fourth is about Brigman’s ten months on the east coast in 1910 and the conflict with Alfred Stieglitz over the meaning of her art. One quote maybe encapsulates the West Coast idea in Brigman’s art from the San Francisco Call in 1907,



#### Invictus

One day on one of my wandering I found a juniper - the most wonderful juniper that I’ve met in my eighteen years of friendship among them. It had the glorious strength, the uplift, and the wind-kissed motion of the Victory of Samothrace... Storm and stress well borne made it strong and beautiful. I climbed into it. Here was the perfect place for a figure; here the place for the right arm to rest... I could see and feel where the feet would fit perfectly into the clefts that went into its base.

Anne Brigman

“the spirit of the west made visible in mystic symbolism, the west in its freest, most illusive guise, not the dynamic west, nor the ‘wooly west’, but the breezy, gleaming, singing west, where the spirit of nature by turns glooms and exults.” To that Brigman would add that the “process of making the negatives in the thin air of the upper heights,... generated a heightened, mystical experience ... for the viewer.” Brigman was aiming at “awakening a higher consciousness” with her images. There were stories in Brigman’s photographs, as reflected in her titles. By contrast the East Coast secessionist movement, headed by Alfred Stieglitz, took a more hedonistic view of her nudes. In the East the Sierran stories were not relevant. In the East her colleagues focused on the photographs as “studies in pure form” with no additional stories attached.



"The Soul of the Blasted Pine" 1906

Not everyone was enamored by Anne Brigman's artistic photography. The San Francisco Call on October 18, 1908 reported on a controversy that erupted from criticism of Brigman's "The Soul of the Blasted Tree" (above). The headline is to the right. The newspaper quoted another famous photographer critiquing Ann Brigman, “Mrs. Brigman takes an unclothed scrawny dame who looks as if she had not jerryed to the square meal for a month, fixes her upon a piece of macadam somewhere, photographs the thrilling scene and calls it the ‘The Squeal of the Rocks.’”

Brigman replied, “Jackson is pitifully jealous of any work that dos not conform to his own ideas, and besides he is no gentleman. This petty attempt to belittle my work, ‘The Soul of a Blasted Pine,’ is quite Jackson.”

PRICE FIVE CENTS.

# ARTISTS IN CLASH OVER FAIR NYMPH

Edwin R. Jackson's Criticism of Mrs. Brigam's Picture Brings Trouble

“Spirit of Blasted Pine” Is Called “Squeal of the Rocks” by Harsh Realist

Ranks of Art Society Exhibiting at Idora Park Rent by Bitter Strife

Idealists Gain First Victory in Securing Right to Pick Spots for Pictures

Screenshot

# Poems from Songs of a Pagan

## Wild Trees that Stand Apart

I love wild trees that stand apart and start...  
Beaten by wind and rain and stinging hail...  
Nurtured by centuries of sun. and dark  
Of countless nights. Trees that withstand the flair  
Of lightnings and the bellowing thunder's roar...  
Aloof...supreme...unmindful of the storms.  
Instead, the rhythms of their lines pour  
Like flowing sap within their valiant forms  
Until, like flames against the wind, they sway  
In upward thrusts and convoluting sweeps...  
Breasting the tempest...peaceful in the day  
Of breeze and the immeasurable deeps.

For grace and courage in this human life...  
Grant us the beauty, trees have found through strife.

## Invocation

When I am very ancient  
God give me wits that I shall not be garrulous...  
But like the high-crest junipers  
On storm-worn peaks...  
Whisper with deep-laid quiet in myself  
Of the gone years.... nor tell a racing world, gone mad...  
That having lived a short eternity  
Bound in this human form...  
That I have found that love is good  
And Work and Play... and Grief.



Donner Peak, Castle Peak in the background  
There is no annotation in the book.



We should note that the newspaper articles and headlines and some of the quotes do not come from the book, but rather from the San Francisco Call.

Editor

Self portrait

With the advent of Annie W. Brigman a new note is introduced into modern pictorial photography. Living amidst the wonderful nature beauties of California, far from the noise and wrangle of cliques, she has quietly evolved an arts that is expressive and thoroughly individual... In Mrs. Brigman's work, the human is not an alien, has not yet become divorced by sophistication from the elemental grandeur of nature; rather it serves as a sort of climactic point, wherein all that nature holds of sheer beauty of terror or mystery achieves its fitting crescendo."

J. Nilsen Laurvik in *Camera Work*, 1909



From "What 291 Means To Me"

You remember, too, the long steep trails that lead zig-zag, mile after mile, away from trees and brooks, up, up into the heat of rocks blessed by the sun, where your lungs ache and your heart hurts from the struggle - and then you find it - the Vision! - the glory of the things beyond.

The memory and the wonder of it goes with you to the lowlands, into the daily life, and you are glad that you had the courage.

Anne Brigman

"291" refers to Alfred Stieglitz's gallery in New York

### Mrs. Anne Brigman Heroine in Mortal Combat With Snake

OAKLAND, July 20.—Mrs. Anne Brigman, the distinguished photographic lens artist, is heralded among her friends here as the heroine of a thrilling battle with a monster rattlesnake which invaded her camp near Castella, Shasta county, last Friday. When the artist-heroine returns to town she will exhibit the skin of the reptile as a trophy of her adventure.

Mrs. Brigman nearly stepped upon the snake before she discovered its presence through the terrifying whirl of its rattles. But, defying all feminine precedent, instead of screaming hysterically or taking to inglorious flight, the plucky woman picked up a stick and engaged the monster in mortal combat. Mrs. Brigman's husband returned to camp a few minutes later to find his wife coolly skinning her subdued adversary. The snake was nearly four feet long and had 13 rattles.

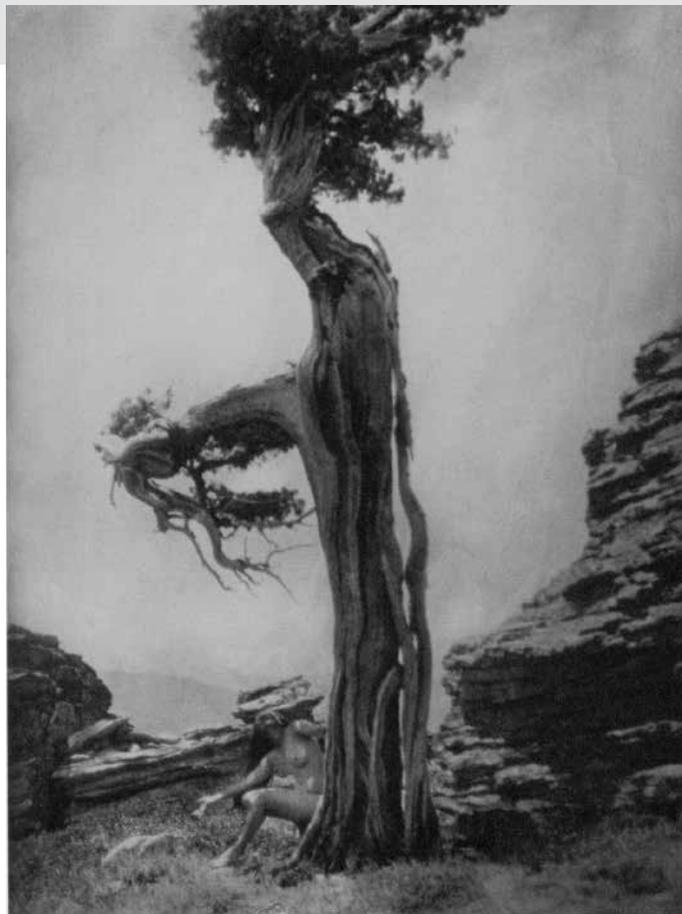
San Francisco Call July 21, 1909

Women are, and always have been, afraid, and ordinarily they do not know what they are afraid of. They fear lest some of the little things of their domestic drudgery will go wrong and lead to some little inconvenience. They are afraid of their families when they are present and when they are absent. They fear to make changes and that is why they do not change... Part of the cure of fear in women is making changes. A man gets change by going down town to his daily work, but a stay at home woman doesn't and she suffers and grows afraid of things being different than what they are, or what she thinks they are."

Anne Brigman

from San Francisco Call 7-14-07

"...this California secessionist dreams her dreams of beauty. The winter and spring she spends illustrating poems and taking portraits, including studies of rising or famous men and women who live or sojourn here for a time. But during summer and fall this poet of the lens no longer confines herself to recording personal dramas in the human face, or to illustrating the poems of other bards, but she dwells in the deep solitudes of the mountains, making pictures that are poems in themselves. Her realm is the portrayal of the spirit of the west made visible in mystic symbolism, the west in its freest, most illusive guise, not the dynamic west, not the 'woolly west,' but the breezy, gleaming, singing west, where the spirit of nature by turns glooms and exults. One of her studies most prized in the exhibit last fall at 'the Little Galleries' in New York was called 'Echo.' It represents an illusive spirit emerging from the deep gloom of a cave, the print so deep toned that at first you see only a shadow embossed on shadow. The exquisite figure of a nymph materializes before your gaze, and you feel that she is slowly coming toward you. Her 'Dryad,' a playful woodland spirit, escaping fearsomely through her native pine trees from mortals who are intruding on her domains, strikes the keynote of her nature dramas — the sensitive spirit that will not be subdued. A long gaze at it reveals the inner truth it makes; one sees visions, as good music does. The more deeply tragic struggle for life in nature is shown in the conflict of the titanic forces of nature. When her 'Cry of the Rocks,' a silhouette of a gaunt human figure that seems a section of the great boulder broken apart and lifting lean arms to heaven was published some said 'It isn't pretty!' Others, 'It isn't majestic like the rocks.' So it wasn't, but it had the deeper beauty of the tragic struggle of the dumb forces of nature through their evolution of a higher consciousness. Last March Mrs. Brigman received from the Birmingham photographic society the highest award given at their exhibition, open to all photographers



"The Wind Harp" Donner Pk.

"These devotees to art for art's sake, art for truth's sake, art for humanity's sake...

"Their aim is identical with that of the painter or sculptor— to discover under the conventional mask of nature, whether it be in guise of human being, landscape or trees, the living spirit, and to make permanent that revelation."

## 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.

# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



You've seen the stone buildings at Cisco Grove right next to Donner Pass Rd., Old Highway 40. But, did you ever stop and look inside - right. The fireplace hearth, face, and chimney are all made from petrified wood brought up from Dutch Flat. That petrified wood is the remains of a prehistoric forest of a previous Sierra. Volcanic activity 25-30 million years ago from the east flowed west swallowing the forests, leaving the petrified remains to be discovered only relatively recently. That previous Sierra had rivers running to the Pacific like today's and when the gold miners of '48 finished the gravels of the current rivers they turned to the gravels of the prehistoric rivers for gold using hydraulic mining techniques.

Before I-80 the heavy traffic on Old 40 was serviced by many stores, lodges, service stations, etc. The coming of I-80 was the death knell for those businesses. The stone buildings at Cisco used to be the Forest Gift Shop. Of course we have a 20 Mile Museum sign there (below right) which goes into more detail (you can also see it on our website).



This is part of a series of miscellaneous history, "Odds & Ends" of Donner Summit. There are a lot of big stories on Donner Summit making it the most important historical square mile in California. All of those episodes\* left behind obvious traces. As one explores Donner Summit, though, one comes across a lot of other things related to the rich history. All of those things have stories too and we've been collecting them. Now they're making appearances in the Heirloom.

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

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

## Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass

Forest Gift Shop, Cisco Grove

### History

Before the coming of I-80 all traffic crossing Donner Summit came right through here. Cisco Grove was an active trade center, centered in highway traffic. If you look closely here you will see the ruins of foundations of the various commercial establishments that included a gift shop, lodge, restaurant, grocery store, gas station, bookkeeping office, bar, and ice cream.

Just a few hundred yards up the road was the Auburn Ski Club with its rope tows, ski runs, ski jumps, and lodges. The Auburn Ski Club prospered and helped popularize winter skiing and was responsible for opening Highway 40 to winter travel. Later I-80 went right through the club's ski runs and ski jumps and the club moved up to the Sierras where it exists to this day.

These interesting stone buildings are the remains of the Forest Gift Shop which supplied travelers with locally produced necessities. Best sellers were and always have been preserves and pine nut and cranberry preserves. Next door, the fruit stand sold ice cream, orange juice, fruit, and orange candies.

The gift shop was built in 1938 by John H. Wagner and built owned by Don Gould Sr. with the necessary done by Lester Hammond. The Forest Gift Shop was later burned for ten years until WW2 and a decision to traffic reduced business. After the war the shop reopened as the Sierra Gift Shop which lasted until the arrival of the freeway.

The coming of I-80 changed Old Highway 40. Lamentably only along the two-lane highway were a string of the gift shops that prospered along the new highway at high speeds and tourists no longer wanted to stop before reaching their destinations. The many small stores, cafes, lodges, service stations, and ranches, disappeared and a way of life ended.

### A Good Story

James Gould originally bought the Cisco Grove land from the Central Pacific Railroad. The land then became the start of a 27 mile home and ditch of the Gold Rush and Mormon company. The mine was the way in which they used hydraulic mining. In 2008 the Gould Family donated all the building and park to Cisco Grove.

### Things to do right here

Go across the road to Grand Park and walk along the river. Explore along the road on both sides for the scenic views of mountains. Go west from here, past a view to the right hand turn before the intersection. That road winds up and up past waterfalls and good hiking spots. A really good, though challenging, hike is Red Mountain. The trail heads to two miles up the dirt road. Go to www.explorations.com and click on activities and then click on the link to see how to do it and to see Red Mountain's story.

Respect the Past, Preserve the Future.  
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Pick up the brochure at the DSHS  
or download it at:  
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