

The Donner Summit

Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society and the most historically significant square mile in California.

February, 2024 issue #186

Cisco Revisited I

We've written about Cisco and Cisco Grove a few times over the years. A quick look at our article index page (on each [Heirloom](#) page on our website) shows it's an eclectic collection of articles and then we've also published lots of pictures (see the picture index also on each [Heirloom](#) page on our website). One would think we were done with Cisco and Cisco Grove.

The Donner Summit economy has been on a downward slide for the decades following the completion of I-80 (which is also something the [Heirloom](#) has covered). In the last ten to fifteen years the Donner Summit Historical Society and the Donner Summit Association have been in a quest to turn that around. That was really the impetus behind the 20 Mile Museum for example. There's been a kind of contradiction, however. No one would build infrastructure to deal with visitors without more visitors and more visitors would not come without infrastructure (bathrooms, parking, signage, etc.) The 20 Mile Museum was developed to be an attraction without the costs of building and so it has turned out to be. Then too, over the past decade we've applied for and won grants from Placer County to build the entry monument opposite the gas station (two grants, I to design and II to build), develop a recreation plan (two grants, I and II to get it done), build the Lamson-Cashion Donner Summit Hub (two grants, I and II for the two phases), and even investigate the viability of a visitors' center (two grants, I to see about viability and II for design). Recently we've been focused on bathrooms (it's a complicated and expensive business) and visitors information at the west end of Van Norden and at Gould Park at Cisco. All that would seem to have nothing to do with the [Heirloom](#) and Cisco but it serves as an introduction. Keep reading.

Cisco articles in the [Heirloom](#) archives on the DSHS website, donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

article	month/year
Cisco Grove Pt I	11/17
Cisco Grove PtII	12/17
The Boat Sled at Cisco	12/11 and 2/12
Murder at Cisco	3/18
Naming Cisco	4/18
Summering in Cisco	7/10
Mart Twain at Cisco	7/15
The Upski	12/11
We Go in... 1939	11/12



Gould Park sits at the north side of the freeway at Cisco Grove and goes across Donner Pass Rd./Old Highway 40 to the stone buildings. It includes a bathroom (pit toilet), some randomly scattered picnic tables, and the ruins of buildings from Cisco Grove when the little community was on the transcontinental Highway 40. That would be a good gateway to Donner Summit if we could provide amenities in the form of information about Donner Summit like we have at the the Lamson-Cashion Hub. We'd have to make it attractive enough to get people to visit but given the success of the Hub that won't be a problem.

Story Locations in this Issue

Cisco and Cisco Grove WPA pictures pg 15, picture page 17 picture page 18

DONNER SUMMIT



Finding Your Way Through Donner Summit History

We're closing in on two hundred issues of the Heirloom: thousands of pages, thousands of pictures, and hundreds of subjects. You've probably begun to realize that you cannot keep all the history in your head. Even if you remember it all, retrieval is difficult.

Fortunately one of the choices we made back at the birth of the DSHS was to index all our Heirloom articles and pictures. We've diligently kept up the indices so that they are many pages long, full of alphabetized titles and subjects. Go to our website and to any of the Heirloom pages (one for each year) and you'll find links to the Heirloom indices.

One of the strengths of the DSHS is the incomparable historical photograph collection. The collection is thousands of pictures and again the sheer number makes finding anything in particular, difficult. Avoid the long URL by going to our website and clicking on the "photographs" link and then to the "historic photo collection link." A third link, to the Flickr URL will take you to those thousands of searchable historical photographs of Donner Summit. Have fun.

Find us on the the DSHS YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJenAxPCb47Y14agmVGI-zA>
Find us on FaceBook where we place a new historical picture daily.

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Find us on 

 YouTube

Right: the Lamson-Cashion Donner Summit Hub at the top of Donner Pass.

Below right, the stone buildings, formerly the Forest Gift Shop on the north side of Old Highway 40 at Gould Park (Cisco exit from I-80)

Below left the view east on the Yuba River at Gould Park which is on the left and right of the picture



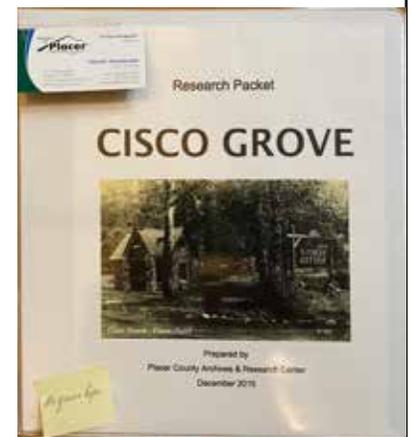
In order to make some headway the Donner Summit Association president, Pat Malberg, set up meetings with an architect, Placer County Recreation, and Placer County Museums. We met at the Placer County Archives in Auburn and there, serendipity. Kelsey Monahan is in charge there now and she sat in on the meeting holding a large white one-inch thick binder labeled, "Cisco Grove." Kelsey has become our new best friend after loaning the binder, full of text, newspaper articles, and pictures. It was interesting to note in the binder that at least four of the sources about Cisco Grove history were Donner Summit Historical Society [Heirloom](#) articles and a 20 Mile Museum sign. It's nice to see that we're taken seriously. Aren't you glad you subscribe?



That was really serendipity. Here was more Cisco and Cisco Grove history, much of it fresh. So in this [Heirloom](#) issue we embark on more about Cisco and Cisco Grove. We should note that the binder was compiled by Kelsey's predecessor at the Placer County Archives, Bryanna Ryan in 2015. We don't want her to get lost as we pull things from the binder. She did an impressive job. There's the binder to the right below.

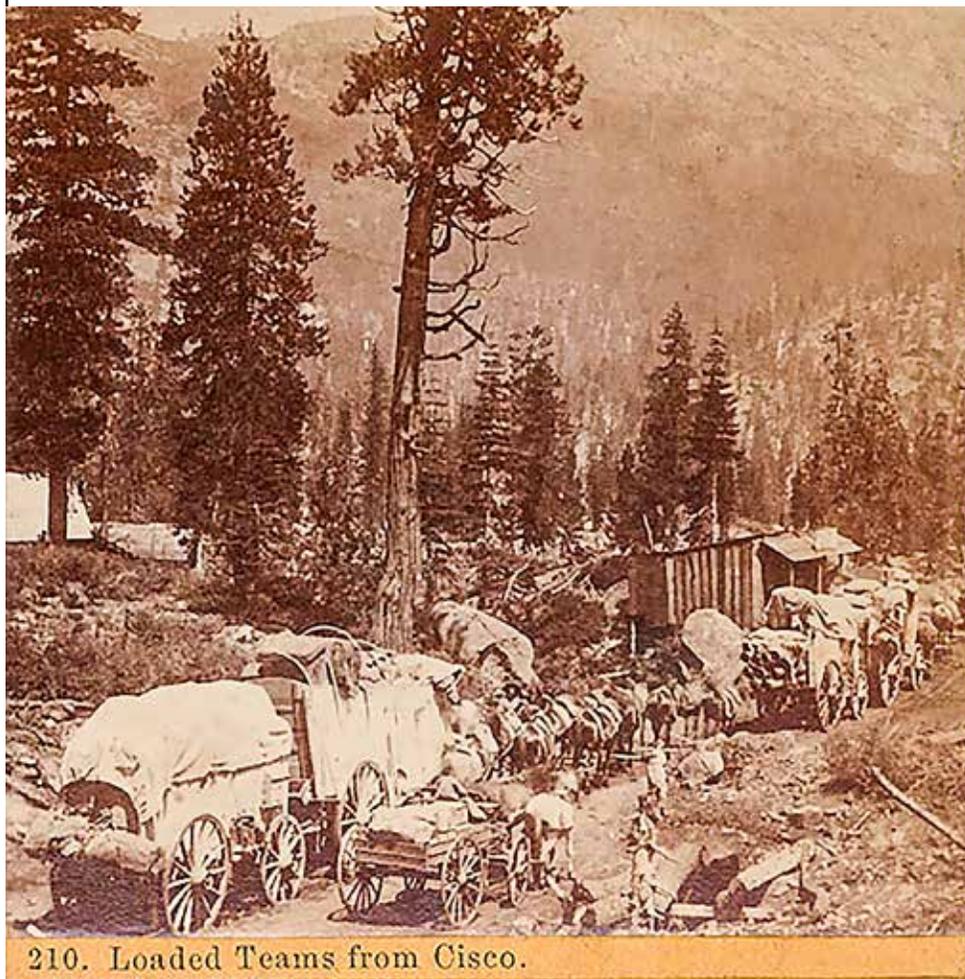
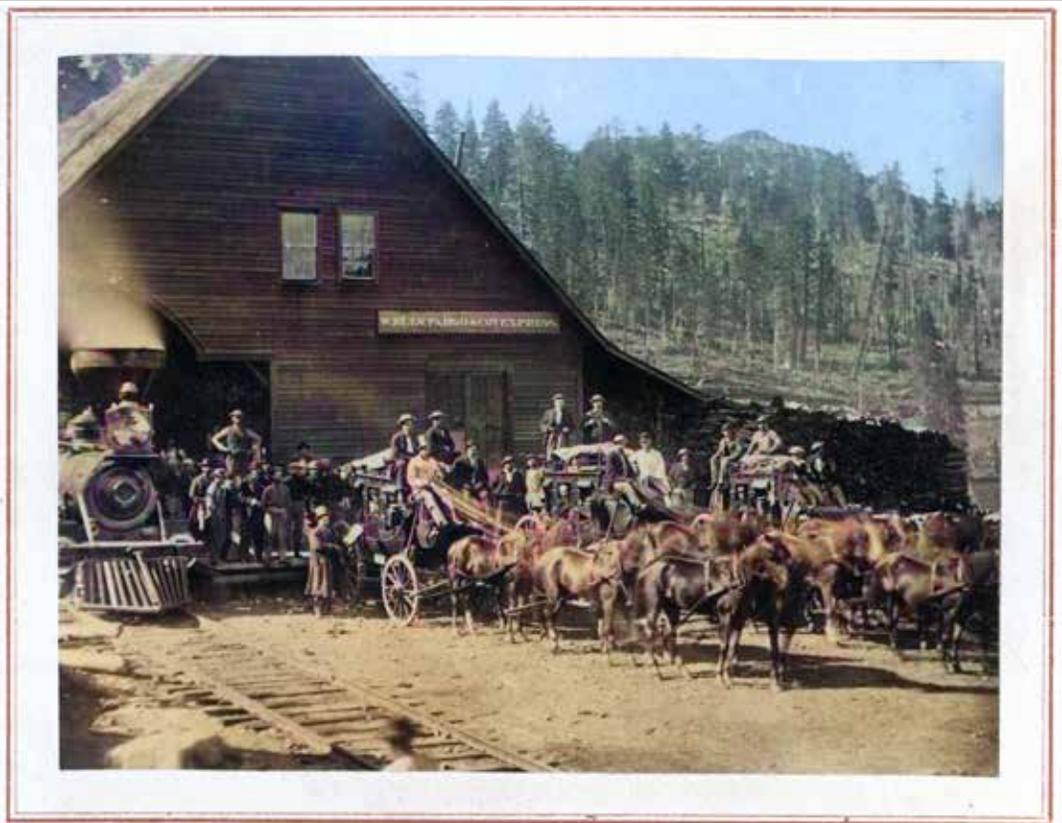


Cisco/Cisco Grove is really three communities from two different times. The original Cisco, which was Upper and Lower Cisco, sat south of the freeway and up to the railroad tracks. It was a vibrant community while the tunnels were being completed on the Summit. Cisco then was end of the track and at its heyday in 1867-57 train car loads were unloaded onto freight wagons for the trip over the summit. Then there were also passengers disembarking from the train and continuing on



All Aboard for Cisco, Alfred A. Hart #217 colorized by George Lamson

When Cisco was "end of track" during the tunnel construction on the summit trains would leave passengers who would get on stage coaches to continue their journeys. Here is the Wells Fargo & Co. Express depot with three stagecoaches full of people, even on top.



Alfred A. Hart #210
Loaded Teams from
Cisco. The freight
wagons are on the
Dutch Flat Donner
Lake Wagon Rd. head-
ing away from Cisco.
Note the traffic.



Mule teams and freight wagons on the Dutch Flat Rd. ca. 1867. Imagine what travel must have been like.

stagecoaches, travelers on horseback, sheep, and cattle. For a year or two Cisco was also the jumping off point for Meadow Lake (see below). It must have been a continual hive of activity. Once the transcontinental railroad was completed Upper and Lower Cisco disappeared and along with it the largest population center on the summit even up to today.

Cisco Grove came along decades later to serve travelers on another transcontinental route, the Lincoln Highway and later, Highway 40. Cars were not so reliable in those days. The road was two lane and traffic went more slowly. Cisco Grove provided opportunities for gasoline and oil, water, souvenirs, snacks, and lodging. The coming of I-80 closed the businesses and James Gould, the owner, destroyed the buildings to save on taxes. He donated fifteen acres in 2004 to the County for Gould Park. Today Cisco/Cisco Grove is a collection of second homes and two businesses.

As we delve into the binder we'll cover all that and more.

Bryanna Ryan's introduction to her binder covers quite a bit,

"...story of Cisco Grove touches on several significant themes in the history of California and popular culture. It is most notably connected to the development of transportation and infrastructure in the State and how that transformed the way people interacted with and recreated in the Sierra Nevada. Themes including land development in the post-mining period, New Deal projects, highway snow removal, winter sports, car culture, and camping during the Great Depression and Baby Boom eras, are just a few of the larger topics a discussion of Cisco Grove may lead."

Cisco, along the railroad and the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd., sprang into existence in 1866 when the area was the end of track. Cisco remained until 1868 when trains began using the tunnel. At its height Cisco had a population of about one thousand. The population quickly evaporated, except for railroad personnel, after the tunnels were done. By 1880 the population was 73 (or 100 in 1883 depending on the source) and we can assume that the buildings had been taken down with the parts used elsewhere as was common in those days. By 1932 the railroad was petitioning the railroad commission for permission to close the station at Cisco since there was not enough business to justify its continuance.

Regarding that, the Auburn Journal (4/14/32) reported that the commission's meeting about whether to allow the station at Cisco to be closed was being postponed. The meeting was to be at the Cisco Hotel. The Journal advocated that all property owners show up to protest the closing. At the same time and in the same issue fishermen were looking forward to May 1 and the opening of fishing season. "The streams are abundant with fish and guests are already making the reservation at Hotel Cisco for the summer season." At the same time the San Francisco Racing Pigeon Club was planning their annual races of racing pigeons at Hotel Cisco. The pigeons would be set loose to fly the 180 miles back to San Francisco. A cup would go to the winner. It was noted that pigeons fly a mile a minute and "believe in monogamy." Those are good kinds of facts to keep just in case you might need them.

Once the Dutch Flat Rd. was completed in 1864 to serve as a toll road over the Sierra and to serve the under-construction Transcontinental Railroad little communities sprang up along the road providing travelers with inns and hotels. The original Cisco was called Heaton Station for the person who

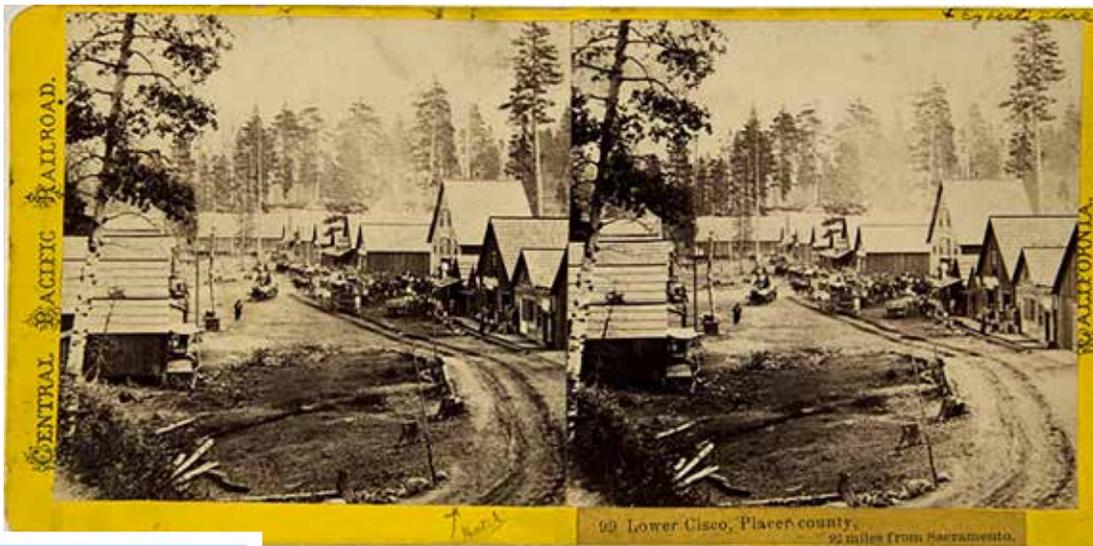
established an inn there. Besides being end of track for the railroad construction Cisco was also a jumping off point for the mines including to Meadow Lake (see our [Heirloom](#) article index on our website) before it was discovered that the gold could not be easily extracted.

Meadow Lake, at its height, had a population of six thousand and all of those people had to have services and goods. In Clarence Wooster's reminiscences about a winter in Cisco (see the 12/17 [Heirloom](#)) he said, transportation to Meadow Lake was all by mule train,

“which seemingly had no beginning or ending. Fifty miles in a line under one management was not uncommon. A coffin containing a corpse would go by on a mules' back, with the head of the corpse pounding audibly against the coffin in unison with the step of the mule.”

“A hotel and capacious freight house stood at Cisco, and there was a row of small steep-roofed houses there. At lower Cisco [see below], on the Yuba River, stood a miner-fashion town of about a thousand people. This town was inspired by the activities at Meadow Lake City and was devoted principally to the maintenance of the mule train drivers and their animals, as well as road building. Saloon keepers were the most numerous class of businessmen. They occupied small, rough lumber, board and batten, shake-roofed cabins, built on a line with a board or log sidewalk.”

Cisco was renamed Cisco in honor of John J. Cisco, treasurer of the United States in 1866.

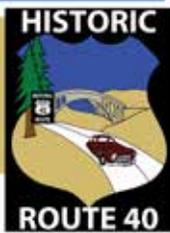


Lower Cisco about 1868

Old Time Sunday Drive

**Next Time
Take Scenic
Old Hwy 40
instead of I-80**

- Historic Towns
- Interesting Scenery
- Fascinating History
- Picnic Spots
- A Slower Pace



Take a look at our guide to Old Highway 40 turn by turn instructions from Sochlis to Truckee, broken into four legs and including pictures and history. Available on line on the brochure page of donnersummithistoricalsociety.org, at the DSHS (at the blinking light in "donnerstown" Soda Springs, or the visitors' centers in Truckee and Auburn.



And while you are at it, check out the 20-Mile Museum - interpretive signs from Truckee to below Donner Summit on Old 40. Information at www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Next month we'll continue with the binder from Placer County Archivist moving on to Cisco Grove, Snowshoe Thompson, Auburn Ski Club, and Red Mountain.

From the Placer County Archives

Postcard addressed to:
"Miss Millie Macy,
Auburn, Placer Co., Cal."
Postmarked: Cisco, Cal.
Dec. 25, 1908

"This is the ?...? 'Folks,
Well we arrived home
safe and sound and hope
mame(?) keeps well we had
lots of pretty things waiting
for us will write to love to
al good night."



Here is Upper Cisco in 1908. The town of thousands is mostly gone. This is going to be the Auburn Ski Club's location - but wait for next month.

This picture looks almost from the opposite direction as the one on the next page. The "house" noted in the inscription on the next page is the bulding at the right edge of this picture. The hotel is to the left of the "house."

The pictures on this page and the next Courtesy of Placer County Museums



CISCO CA. APPROX. 1910

There are two of this postcard in the Placer County Archives binder but with different messages on the backs.

Postcard-View of Cisc. Ca. No date- Inscribed on the back:

This is Cisco in full, and what I mean it is some what slow. The little house to the north [left of center with the "x" on the roof] of the hotel is where we live."

Signed Ivan.

-- one cent stamp Buildings on mountian side by railroad. (Postmarked) Cisco, Cal. Jul 25 1914--Ethel Parish, Auburn, Placer Co.

Written on reverse:

Dear Ethel, Your postal received this morning funny you don't get my mail, I am going over to Walker mine on the American river we quit where we was Floyd is going to Truckee to look for ---???

Letter to the Editor from Nick Chickering whose family was one of the founders of Sugar Bowl

Bill, a few thoughts on this issue:

The Norden Store was the principal source for groceries for us at Sugar Bowl, as they would have them delivered to the cabins at Sugar Bowl. Lena and Herbert were like family in those years, my parents always stopping there to visit and buy food items. They lived there till one year some nasty robbers broke into their store and slapped them around to the point where they no longer felt safe being so isolated, sold the store, and left the area. I don't recall anyone else keeping the store going, and it morphed into a residence.

The trip into Sugar Bowl on sleds pulled by tractors, later via "weasels" (WWII vehicles with tracks, not wheels, steering was via vertical sticks in the cab), from the railroad sheds below Norden Store, where at one time there was a Chinese restaurant to serve the passengers. Long steps led from old Highway 40 down to the sheds and pick up point for the sled or weasel ride into Sugar Bowl. (I think you know all this!)

As to the spelling of the proprietor's name of the Summit Hotel, I see that here it is Joseph Cowling, but more often I have seen it as Joseph Gowling, and even Joseph Goulden. "Goulden & Jacobs" also ran the old Summit Soda Springs Hotel in at our place from a lease with Timothy Hopkins, and earlier with the railroad. Our hotel, as you well know, operated from 1873-1898, when it burned down, along with a number of the outbuildings in the meadow.

Stagecoach Interlude

As we were writing about Cisco being "end of track" where passengers left the train to embark on stagecoaches to continue their journeys over the mountains we thought it would be fun to include a description of stage travel in those days. Here the [Heirloom](#) came to the rescue. The July '14 issue (available on our website) contained a review of [Cavalry Life in Tent & Field](#). The book chronicled the life of Mrs. Orsemus Boyd as she followed her army husband. It's a fun book. In 1868 she arrived in Cisco and got on the stage to go meet her husband out somewhere east past Virginia City on the route of the railroad being built.

Mrs. Boyd took the steamer to Sacramento and then the new soon to be transcontinental railroad to the end of track at Cisco. From Cisco the journey was by sled "in the midst of a blinding snowstorm, that compelled us to envelop our heads in blankets."

Not long after the passengers were transferred to a stage-coach for the trip over the summit.

The stage-coach was "a large vehicle with thoroughbraces (leather straps that support the coach) instead of springs, and a roomy interior that suggested comfort. Alas ! only suggested ! Possibly no greater discomfort could have been endured than my companion and self underwent that night. Those old-fashioned stage-coaches for mountain travel were intended to be well filled inside, and well packed outside. But it so happened that instead of the usual complement of passengers, one other woman and myself were all.

"A pen far more expert than mine would be required to do justice to the horrors of that night. Though we had left Cisco at noon, we did not reach Virginia City, on the other side of the mountains, until ten o'clock next morning. As long as daylight lasted we watched in amazement those wonderful mountains, which should have been called 'Rocky,' for they have enormous precipices and rock elevations at many points ; from the highest we gazed down into ravines at least fifteen hundred feet below, and shuddered again and again.

"...We peered into endless precipices, down which we momentarily expected to be launched, for the seeming recklessness of our driver and extreme narrowness of the roads made such a fate appear imminent.

"Our alarm did not permit us to duly appreciate the scenery's magnificent grandeur ; besides, every possible effort was required to keep from being tossed about like balls. We did not expect to find ourselves alive in the morning, and passed the entire night holding on to anything that promised stability. An ordinary posture was quite impossible : we had either to brace ourselves by placing both feet against the sides of the vehicle, or seize upon every strap within reach.

"Long before morning all devices, except the extreme one of lying flat on the bottom of the coach and resigning ourselves to the inevitable, had failed. Every muscle ached with the strain that had been required to keep from being bruised by the constant bumping, and even then we had by no means escaped.

"We had supped at Donner Lake, a beautiful spot in the very heart of the mountains, made famous by the frightful sufferings of the Donner Party, which had given the lake its name, and which has been so well described...It proved an unfortunate prelude to our eventful night ; for in the midst of our own suffering we were compelled to think of what might befall us if we, like that ill-fated party, should be left to the mercy of those grand but cruel mountains, which already seemed so relentless in their embrace that although haste meant torture yet we long to see the last of them."

Mrs. Boyd left Virginia City "gladly... knowing that soon after we should emerge from mountain roads, and on level plains be less tortured.

"We were not... quite prepared for the method that made jolting impossible... we were greatly surprised [on re-embarking on the stage after breakfast] to find our coach almost full of passengers ; but we climbed in, and for five days and nights were carried onward without the slightest change of any sort.... Whenever in the course of the succeeding five days and nights it was needful to move even our feet, we could only do so by asking our vis-à-vis to move his at the same time, as there was not one inch of space unoccupied."

Passengers sat "bolt upright" day and night, "Vainly trying to snatch a few moments' sleep, which the constant lurching of the stage rendered impossible...." The rest of the mid-winter stage journey was just as unpleasant; "clinging mud," "meals...conspicuous by their absence," breakfast at midnight, dine in the early morning, meats sodden with grease, which disguised their natural flavors so that I often wondered what animals of the prairies were represented..." It got so bad Frances would "gladly have welcomed some mountains..."

"Sleep was out of the question, and consequently nights seemed endless." "One night we made eight miles in fifteen hours, and the next day fifteen miles in eight hours."

Imagine traveling across Nevada, sitting bolt upright, unable to move, night and day, for five days.

From the DSHS Archives

This [Sacramento Bee](#) article (june 8, 1916) came to us from Mike Monahan via FaceBook. We appreciate the find and his willingness to share what he found.

STATE ROAD SUPERINTENDENT E. M. BAXTER and his party on the road over Auburn-Truckee summit. Baxter was the first to drive a machine over the summit this season, accomplishing the feat Sunday.



It was a big deal each year for the first automobile to conquer Donner Summit. The annual feat garnered newspaper reports which encouraged others to try and signaled the end of seasonal isolation for Truckee, Tahoe, and Reno. The opening of the road meant travelers and tourist dollars. It was such a big deal that workers were hired to speed the clearing and melting by digging trenches in the snow exposing more snow to melting, spread ashes on the snow to speed melting (and there were ash collections in Truckee), and shoveling. For some years a silver cup was awarded by the Tahoe Tavern for the first auto.

In 1916 we have this news article. The men above are standing on snow.

"STATE ROAD SUPERINTENDENT E. M. BAXTER was the first to automobile over the Auburn - Truckee summit this season, arriving In Truckee Sunday afternoon after a trip over the snow.

"Baxter left Towles at 3 a. m. Sunday and with a gang of men removed the drifts along the highway. The summit was reached at noon, where a crowd of Truckee workers were clearing the road from that side of the hill. The rest of the trip to Truckee was made by 3 o'clock." Today the drive on a clear highway from Towles (above the community of Baxter) to Truckee is about 45 minutes.

Book Review

The WPA Guide to California

1939

Federal Writers' Project 635 pages

A year or two ago as it looked like we were approaching the end of our Donner Summit history stories our editorial staff queried the readers. What should we do? One suggestion was to look into the WPA, Works Progress Administration, and what they may have been doing on Donner Summit during the depression to make work for people. We don't have publicly owned bridges and sidewalks on Donner Summit, the kind of construction projects you can find elsewhere, nor would one think that Donner Summit is the kind of place where one would put murals as the WPA did in Depression era post offices, or where books would be written (as they did with the Federal Writer's Project). It looked like a dead end until a more thorough search turned up the WPA Guide to California. Surely there'd be something about Donner Summit there and that would make the book eligible for Heirloom attention. Maybe we'd have a slice of life of 1939 when the book was published.

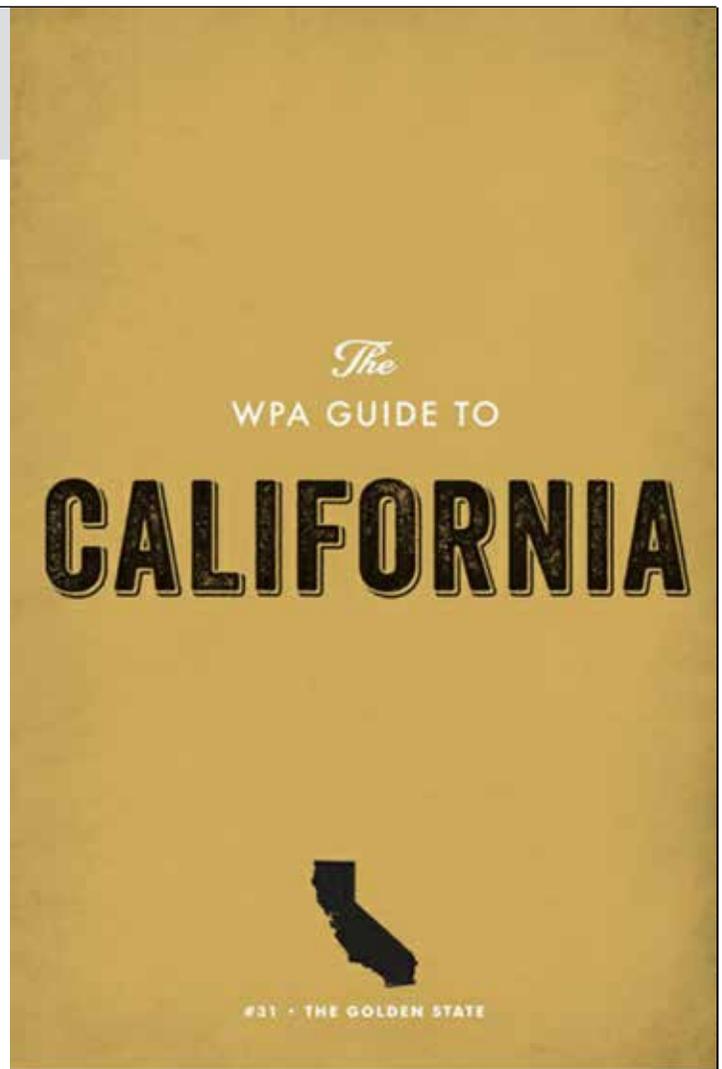
Trinity University Press (www.tupress.org) reprinted this book and said at the beginning, "This book was first published as part of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project, a United States federal government project to fund written work and support writers during the Great Depression. It has been published in various editions, but this edition replicates the original..." We picked up the Kindle edition.

The editors, in their 1939 preface, said they'd covered every mile of California making a book to be read, "not only be those to whom California is still an unseen and fabulous land of sunshine and oranges, but also by those who will look in these pages for something new and little-known about the very California in which they live and work." They certainly did.

Initially I thought this was a tourist or driving guide to California but it's much more than that covering every aspect of California before coming to the various tours that cover the entire state, one of which goes over Donner Summit.

This book is a slice of California life in 1939 where speed limits were fifteen or twenty miles an hour in some instances and forty-five "under all other conditions." Everything appears to be listed: annual events state-wide, museums, aviaries, aquariums, art collections, national parks and monuments, observatories, zoological gardens, sports stadiums, horse racing, polo golf, football, and many recreation activities.

There follows a lot of history of the four hundred years leading



up to the book's publication in 1939, punctuated by many writers including Robert Louis Stevenson,

"All the passengers ...thronged with shining eyes upon the platform," exulted Robert Louis Stevenson as the train that had carried him across the continent headed down the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. "At every turn we could look further into the land of our happy future. At every turn the cocks were tossing their clear notes into the golden air and crowing for the new day and the new country. For this indeed was our destination-this was 'the good country' we have been going to so long."

There is also a lot of general information about the geography, geology, landmarks, climate, plant and animal life, natural resources, Native Americans, history and even paleontology of California. That's all pretty general and mostly has not changed over time; we have the same geographical landmarks, flora and fauna, for example. An exception is the description of the treatment of the Native Americans which has changed since 1939. The mistreatment of the Chinese and Japanese is better described from our point of view. Naturally there's a large section on agriculture. There are

also various 1939 controversies and topics: labor, industry, (e.g. the ten hour vs. the eight hour days), the press, radio, movies, education, arts, literature

Times change as we can see from this quote, "the work of the padres, measured by the number of Indians reclaimed from their free life in the wilderness and put to tilling fields, was for a time successful.

There follows descriptions of various cities, general information and points of interest including, for example, the addresses of the homes of Hollywood stars and then the tours of the state. The book is really almost encyclopedic.

We're of course, more interested in Tour 9 from Reno to Truckee, Auburn and on to San Francisco on US40, 219 miles. Compare the various descriptions, such as of Truckee and Donner Summit, with today.

Tour 9 (actual wording)

(Reno, Nev.) -Truckee Auburn Roseville Sacramento--Vallejo San Francisco; US 40.

Nevada Line to San Francisco, 219.9 m.

Paved roadbed throughout, with easy grades in mountains; usually free from snow.

Route paralleled by Southern Pacific R.R. between Nevada Line and Sacramento and at intervals between Sacramento and Carquinez Bridge. Accommodations plentiful; many resorts and camps in mountains.

US 40, most traveled artery between the East and central California, hurdles the sheer, rocky wall of the Sierra Nevada into the valley that stretches to the Golden Gate. From the Great American Basin it climbs to the granite heights of Donner Pass, traverses the boulder-piled Yuba River bottoms, coasts toboggan-like through forests and along river gorges offering hazy vistas of mountain ranges. It passes the half-ruined mining camps of the gold country and the titanic upheavals of the hydraulic workings. In the foothills where orchards appear in forest clearings, it wriggles between rolling evergreen knolls, then strikes across the great Sacramento Valley, and crosses the low Coast Range to San Francisco.

Section a. NEVADA LINE to SACRAMENTO, 124.9 m. US 40.

The mountain heights were a forbidding barrier to the pioneers. With prodigious labor they forced their lumbering ox-drawn schooners over tortuous trails and through brush-choked canyons, over knifelike ridges, between gaping chasms. Often, when a sheer cliff blocked the way, oxen had to be unyoked so the ponderous wagons could be lifted or lowered with ropes. The devious California Trail through Truckee Pass ran a few miles distant from what is now US



MAP OF CALIFORNIA, DRAWN IN 1666

40, crossed it near Donner Lake, and recrossed it at Emigrant Gap. Over this trail in the autumn of 1844, 81-year-old Caleb Greenwood, mountaineer and trapper, led the 12 wagons of the Stevens-Murphy Party, first caravan on wheels to cross the Sierra. Others followed with terrible hardship in the autumn of the next year--the Swazey-Todd Party of horsemen; trappers on foot; the Grigsby-Ide Party of more than 100 men, women, and children led by Greenwood; and John C. Frémont on his third exploring expedition. In October 1846 the Donner Party, acting on vague advice, made the Salt Desert crossing and, arriving too late to scale the terrible pass that now bears their name, were caught by the snows.

A saga of transportation fully as exciting followed in 1864-66 when gangs of Chinese coolies swarmed the mountain, laying the rails of the Central Pacific eastward in a race with the Union Pacific, pushing westward from Omaha, that culminated in the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in Utah (1869). In June 1864 the "Big Four," Stanford, Hopkins, Huntington, and Crocker, had opened the Dutch Flat and Donner Lake Wagon Road. A road had reached Colfax, head of "wagon navigation," as early as 1849 and Dutch Flat a few years later; now the way lay open to the Comstock Lode mines in Nevada. For a brief interval stagecoaches raced over it, bearing passengers and freight; but as the Central Pacific was pushed forward--reaching Clipper Gap in June 1865 and Colfax in September--it killed all competition.

US 40 crosses the State Line, 0 m., 15 miles southwest of Reno, Nev., following the Truckee River, which is bordered by steep, craggy slopes. Frémont, camping at its mouth in January 1844 with his second expedition to the Far West, named it the Salmon Trout River because of the fine fish the Indians brought him. Later in the same year, the Stevens-Murphy Party gave it the name it now bears- that of the Paiute chief who guided them out of the burning alkali desert to the river's banks and pointed out the pass into California. His answer to all questions was "truckee," his equivalent for "okeh."

The boundary of TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST is crossed at 0.5 m.; the road runs for more than 50 miles through the forest. A reserve of more than 1,000,000 acres, it embraces an ever changing panorama of Sierra grandeur.

...

TRUCKEE, 19.8 m. (5,820 alt., 1,525 pop.) at the junction (R) with State 89 (see TOUR 5b), straggles along the banks of the river. Roundabout, pine forests cover the slopes with deep green, but Truckee itself, once a lumbering camp, now a railroad and stock-raising supply center, lacks even a sprig of green. Its ramshackle frame houses and weather-stained brick buildings sprawl over rocky slopes. On Saturday nights the cheap saloons and gambling halls overflow with lumberjacks, cowpunchers, and shepherds. In winter, when great glistening drifts fill the streets, the nearby snowclad slopes resound with the shouts of skiers. The first California ski club was organized here in 1913. There are a variety of slides, a 1,000-foot toboggan slide with a power pull-back, and an ice rink illuminated for night skating. During the season are the weekly ski-jumping programs and the annual Sierra dog derbies. Often during the winter film companies work here.

At 20.8 m. is the western junction with State 89 (see TOUR 10a).

....

Emigrant Monument and Donner Party description

US 40 curves around the edge of gleaming blue DONNER LAKE, 22.7 m. On August 25, 1846, Edwin Bryant, with eight companions, found the going so boggy here in many places that the mules sank to their bellies in the mire. The arresting outlines of CASTLE PEAK (9,139 alt.), rise (R) at the head of a long draw. Bryant, in the journal of his California trip, marveled at its "cyclopean magnitude, the ... apparently regular and perfect ... construction of its walls, turrets, and bastions."

In long curves US 40 begins to scale the all but perpendicular wall of granite that lifts ahead beneath the rock-ribbed crowns of DONNER PEAK (8,315 alt.) and LINCOLN PEAK (8,403 alt.). Blasted through solid rocks, the road twists in and out between overhanging ledges. Up the sheer precipice wriggles the long black caterpillar of the railroad snowsheds, worming at intervals through granite tunnels.

To young adventurers like Edwin Bryant and his companions, these heights offered a challenge; but they dismayed those

who faced the passage with cumbersome, ox-drawn wagons loaded with belongings and women and children. Old Caleb Greenwood, however, guiding the StevensMurphy Party over the mountains in November 1844, exercised rare judgment and skill. They struggled upward until a rise of 10 or 12 feet blocked the way. Greenwood discovered a narrow crevice; through it the oxen were half pushed, half dragged, with men below and ropes above; the household goods were carried up piece by piece. Then, with the use of levers, log chains, and six or eight ox teams, the wagons were lifted over the face of the cliff. With inconceivable labor, several other barriers scarcely less difficult were conquered in the same way.

The highway climbs to the summit of DONNER PASS (7,135 alt.), 28.9 m. Here on an exposed point, where the wind seldom stops blowing, a UNITED STATES WEATHER BUREAU OBSERVATORY makes records of wind direction and velocity for the aid of air navigators.

In Summit Valley is LAKE VAN NORDEN (L), an artificial reservoir dotted with decaying stumps, and the winter resort of NORDEN (hotel), 30.2 m. (6,880 alt.), an ideal locale for winter sports because of its heavy snowfall, long season, and open slopes. SODA SPRINGS, 31.7 m. (6,784 alt.), is a handful of rustic resort cabins around a hotel.

Left from Soda Springs on a dirt road, through a mountain wilderness, to a junction with a dirt road, 8 m.; L. here 2 m. to SODA SPRINGS (5,975 alt.), long known as Hopkins's Springs, the resort that Mark Hopkins and Leland Stanford opened in the 1870's. A trail leads upstream about 1 m. to PAINTED ROCK, on the south side of the river, which shows prehistoric Indian pictographs.

At 18.2 m. is a junction with a dirt road; R. from this junction 5 m. to LAST CHANCE (4,500 alt.). A group of prospectors pushed their way to this place in 1850 and lingered on, greedy for the rich gold deposits, until their provisions were exhausted. Staking all on a last chance, one of the men went into the forest and, as luck would have it, shot a large buck. The camp survived. By 1852 it had grown into a real town, and by 1859 it had three lodge halls. Remnants of its short-lived glory appear in the old hotel and the scattered cabins that still shelter a handful of miners in this isolated wilderness.

US 40 runs through the canyon of the South Fork of the Yuba River, past a string of vacation camps, inns, and public camp grounds. The stream cascades down broken granite slopes; deep among the bordering conifers are piles of gray-white granite, ground from the mountain flanks by ancient glaciers. Here and there tiny meadows, bright with alpine flowers, soften the austerity.

At 44.8 m. is a junction with State 20.

The guide continues with description along US 40 to Sacramento and then San Francisco and the Golden Gate International Exposition (which ran from February to December, 1939). It cost ten cents to cross the Bay on a ferry. The bridge toll was fifty cents round trip for a car with five occupants and five cents for each additional passenger. Admission to the Exposition was fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children.

A long appendix is filled with dates followed by a very long bibliography

This book was first published as part of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project, a United States federal government project to fund written work and support writers during the Great Depression.

Text of the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939

Admission to Exposition Grounds: 50¢ for adults, 25¢ for children.

Accommodations: Transportation on island by motor caravan, rickshaw, and wheel-chair, small charge; nursery for children, small charge; restaurants, all prices.

Special Events: Among the special events scheduled for most of the Exposition's 288 days are celebrations in commemoration of the holidays of the United States and foreign nations, of visiting organizations and conventions, of cities, counties, and States. Scheduled events include the All-World Beef Cattle Show, Feb. 18-28; Japanese Doll Festival, March 3; Army Day, Apr. 6; Pan American Day, Apr. 14; San Francisco Day, Apr. 18; Northern California Friendly Indian Pow-Wow, Apr. 22; Wild West Show and Rodeo, May 13-22; British Empire Day, May 27; Night Horse Show, June 30-July 9; Bastille Day, July 14; American Kennel Club All-Breed Dog Show, July 15-16; Alaska Day, Aug. 17; Welsh Eisteddfod, Sept. 2-3; Admission Day, Sept. 9; Central American Day, Sept. 15; China Day, Oct. 10; National Dairy Show, Oct. 21-30; Navy Day, Oct. 27; California Night Horse Show, Nov. 25-Dec. 2.

THE GOLDEN GATE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION, situated on man-made Treasure Island, north of Yerba Buena Island in San Francisco Bay, is America's official World's Fair of the West - "A Pageant of the Pacific." With eleven western states as its sponsors and the San Francisco Bay cities as its host communities, the exposition includes exhibits of 30 foreign nations and more than 350 industries. It is, in essence, a "travel fair," assembling the vast recreational resources of the Pacific Basin and displaying them as spectacular background for industrial progress.

The exposition is the third held in the San Francisco Bay region. The California Mid-Winter Exposition of 1894 was staged in Golden Gate Park; the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, in San Francisco's Marina district, celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal; the 1939 exposition commemorates

completion of the Golden Gate and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridges.

The exposition's island site rises from the solid foundation of rocky shoals, once a menace to mariners, that stretch north of Yerba Buena Island 26 feet under water. The first step in reclaiming this watery waste was to build great embankments out of 287,000 tons of quarried rock, outlining the island's boundaries. A fleet of dredgers next went to work dredging 20,000,000 cubic yards of mud and sand from the bottom of the Bay and piling it within the embankments to a height 13 feet above sea level. Over the mud and sand, "unsalted" by a leaching process, was spread a top dressing of loam brought by barges from the mainland. When the island-builders had finished their work, a 400-acre island appeared in the Bay, a mile long and two-thirds of a mile wide. A 900 foot paved causeway joined it to Yerba Buena Island and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Ferry slips and landings for small craft and flying boats were constructed at the island's edges. A 3,000,000-gallon reservoir was blasted in the rock of Yerba Buena Island and water piped to it from San Francisco over the bridge.

...

The illusion of magnitude and splendor planned by the exposition's designers is heightened by the use of flaming banners, huge cylindrical lanterns, translucent glass fabric pillars, pylons with torchieres streaming flames of vapor. The buildings are finished in cement stucco mixed with vermiculite, a mica-like substance which, when applied to the wet stucco, gives the wall surfaces a radiant color, antique in texture, yet sparkling with a new brilliance. The colors used throughout are soft. An effective system of indirect lighting with thousands of floodlights accentuates the stepped set-backs and sculptures of the exhibition buildings, creating the illusion at night of a "magic city" in amber white and pastel shades of shimmering light, floating in the Bay. By daylight the grounds are colorful with green lawns, flowering bulbs and plants, lush tropical foliage bordering the fountains, radial walks, and broad avenues. Most colorful of all is the 25-acre "Persian Prayer Rug" of 1,500,000 cuttings of ice plant (*mesembryanthemum*) in pink, red, yellow, and orange shades laid out along the western waterfront.

The main entrance to the exposition is through the Portals of the Pacific, flanked by pyramidal entrance towers rising to the height of 12-story buildings and crowned with the colossal elephant heads which are a dominant decorative form. The entrance leads into the central Court of Honor, where the 400-foot Tower of the Sun lifts its pinnacled spire, topped with a golden phoenix (O. C. Malmquist, sculptor) symbolizing the rise of San Francisco after the fire of 1906. From the Court of Honor radiate formally landscaped concourses, bordered by the main exhibit pavilions.

[Here follows a description of buildings at the Exposition which we'll leave out.]

The courts and buildings of the major group are adorned with sculpture and mural paintings executed by some of the most noted Western artists. Among these is Ralph Stackpole's colossal statue Pacifica, symbolizing the unity of the Pacific nations, standing 80 feet high in the Court of the same name. Other notable sculptures include Ettore Cadorin's Evening Star, a figure of Venus in the Court of the Moon; a bold relief mural, The Peacemakers, by Margaret, Helen, and Esther Bruton, crowning the entrance towers of the Portals of the Pacific; the balancing bas-reliefs, finished in gold, Dance of Life by Jacques Schnier, and Path of Darkness by Lulu Hawkins Braghetta; the winged figures surmounting the pylons in the Court of the Seven Seas representing the Spirit of Adventure, by P. O. Tognelli; the fountain groups in the Court of Pacifica, by Jacques Schnier, Brents Carlton, Adeline Kent, Sargent Johnson, Carl George, Ruth Wakefield, Cecilia Graham, and Helen Phillips. Another group in this court is Haig Patigian's Creation. In each of the four main exhibit buildings are

sculptures by Raymond Puccinelli, Ettore Cadorin, and Carlo Taliabue. In the towers flanking the South Gardens are symbolic murals by Helen Forbes, Franz Bergmaun, and Nelson Poole; in the Pacific Building are eight great relief maps by Miguel Covarubias; and on the walls fronting the Court of the Flowers are six murals by Millard Sheets.

Treasure Island, once the exposition has closed and its temporary structures have been removed, will serve as a terminal for trans-Pacific flying clipper ships, which will take off and land in the sheltered lagoon between its southern edge and Yerba Buena Island. The three permanent structures built with Federal aid--the \$800,000 administration building and the two \$400,000 steel and concrete hangars, each 33 5 feet long and 78 feet high will remain to serve the airport.

[Of course Treasure Island ended up being a naval base when war came a few years later.]

Coincidentally as we were including the WPA book we also got into the Placer County Archives binder (see page 1) which included two pictures of a WPA (Works Progress Administration) camp on Donner Summit at Cisco Grove from 1939. We include them here. On what projects were they working?



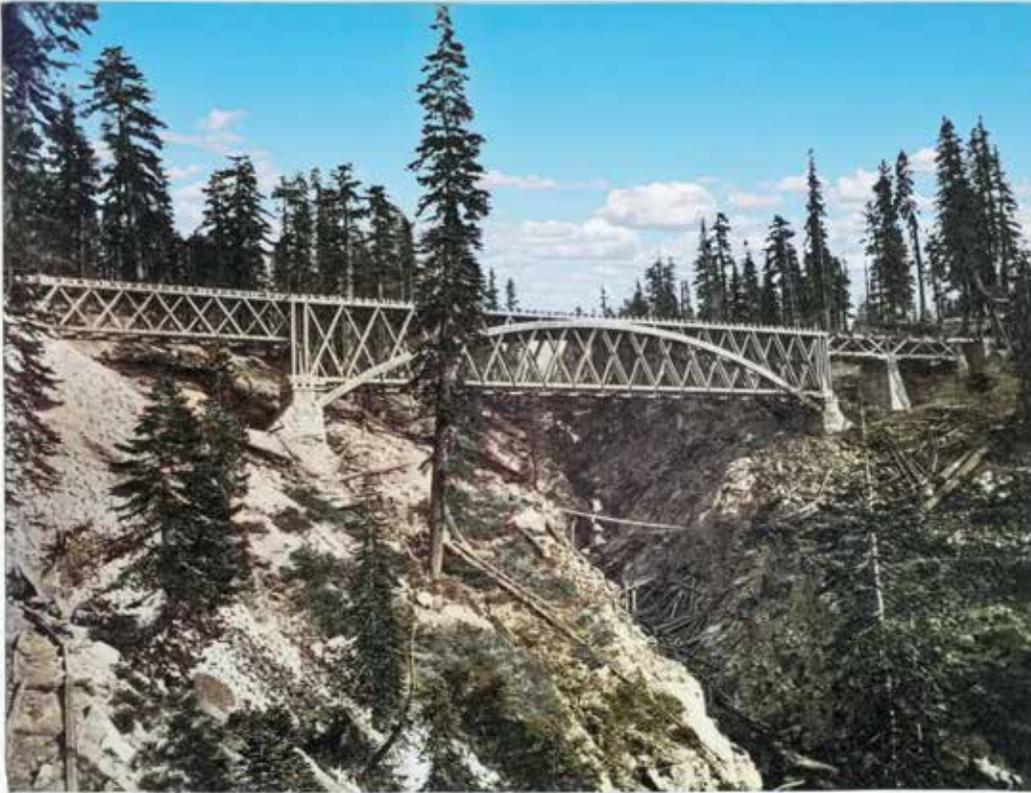
The two pictures on this page Courtesy of Placer County Museums

Courtesy of Placer County Museums

W.P.A Camp at Auburn Ski Club Nov. '38

Making History Colorful

SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS.



249. Lower Cascade Bridge,

above Cisco.

SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS.



249. Lower Cascade Bridge,

above Cisco.

Today, due to advances in computer graphics technology, there may be a solution to the color limitations of our historical black & white images. Computers are remarkably adept at manipulating photographic images. Algorithms developed for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning have been adapted to image technology to give almost magical results such as the colorization of black & white images. Algorithms are “trained” by looking at millions of color and black & white versions of photos to “learn” how to add back colors to a black & white image. The algorithms learn how to find a sky and make it blue, find a face and make it flesh colored, find a tree and make the leaves green. They develop highly sophisticated models that can do amazing transformations. Amazingly this technology is now available on desktop computers.

George Lamson

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



If you don't think this "Odds & Ends" picture is fitting for the subject then take a look at the next page.

Here we have the route up Summit Canyon from Donner Lake. The wagon trains in 1844, 45, and part of 46 came up here. The rescuers of the Donner Party and the rescuees came up here. So did the first transcontinental telephone line and the first transcontinental highway. Tunnel 6 and the railroad route are off to the right as is the current old road over Donner Summit/Donner Pass. This was taken in January, 2014 with the idea of showing what the Stephens Party saw as they climbed up from Donner Lake in November, 1844. They pulled half their wagons up the pass over the snow.

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.

Donner Summit Historical Society

www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

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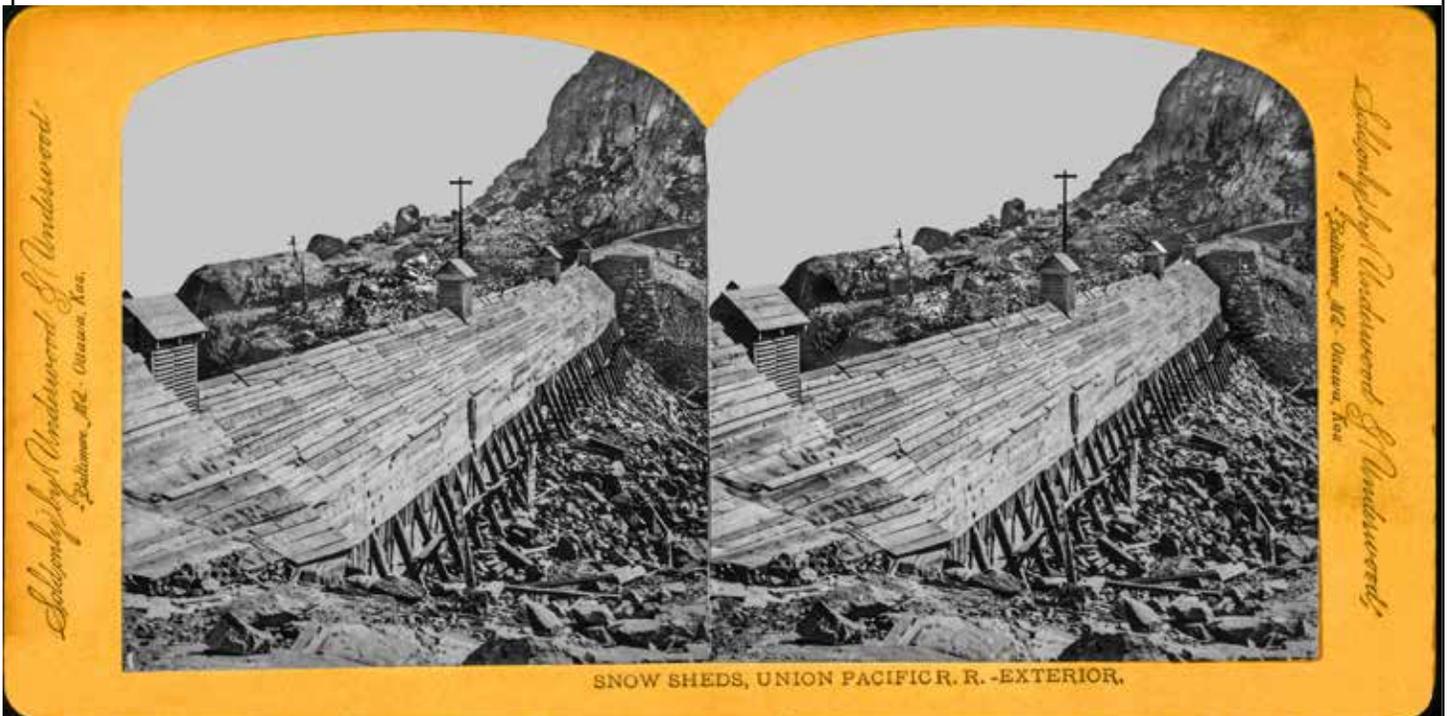
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If you would like monthly newsletter announcements, please write your email address below VERY neatly.



Usually something else sits here in the Heirloom but this beautifully detailed photograph of the snowsheds with their chimneys between tunnels 7 and 8 was sitting around.

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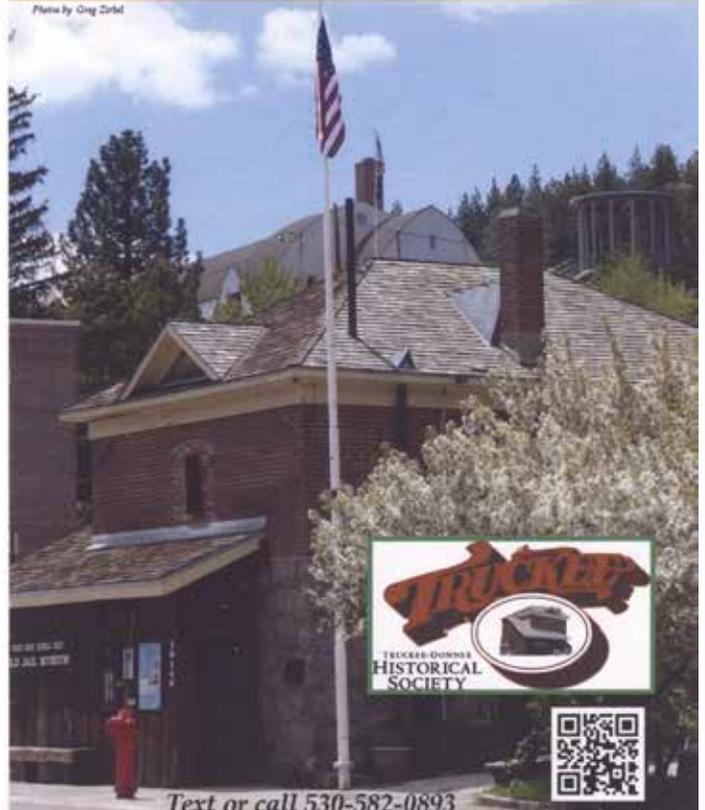
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Photo by Greg Dinkel



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Donner Memorial State Park &
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Museums are 100% volunteer 501(c)(3)s