

The Donner Summit

Heirloom



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

October 2024 issue #194

Given Donner Summit's many attractions it's not surprising that many movies have been made here. One of the most famous actors who starred in a movie shot on Donner Summit was Goofy. In addition to the location which everyone would want to see, the movie is full of ski advice from technique to equipment. The Heirloom featured an article about the movie in 2010 but then Judy DePuy, of the Truckee Donner Historical Society wrote a good article in 2024 for a local paper. Hers is more complete and appropriate for advanced readers of Donner Summit history.

Goofy and The Art of Skiing

by Judy DePuy

Set against the Alpine backdrop of Sugar Bowl, Walt Disney's short cartoon highlights our hero, Goofy, learning how to ski. With lots of fresh powder and Goofy's infectious yodeling, you can feel the challenges facing our novice hearty outdoorsman.

"The Art of Skiing" was released in theaters on November 12, 1941. This short film (less than 8 minutes) is clearly set in Sugar Bowl because you can see the "Sugar Bowl Lodge" sign in the opening frames on the bottom left. Walt Disney's renowned character goes to Sugar Bowl to see what skiing is all about. The writers brainstorming sessions around the cartoonists table must have been hysterical as they decided what stunt Goofy would try next.

Disney historian and Donner Summit Historical Society contributor, Jeff Pepper, shared his thoughts on these exploits: "The cartoon opens with a panoramic sweep of snow-covered mountains, eventually focusing in on a rustic ski lodge, within which the Goof is awakening and subsequently preparing for a day on the slopes." Goofy's foibles go from trying to put on his ski clothes, boots and skis; riding the chairlift and getting off; kick turns and turning in general; and the ski jump.

Disney Involvement

Walt Disney had long been interested in outdoor recreation, sports and



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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.

editor:
Bill Oudegeest
209-606-6859
info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Proofread by Pat Malberg, Lake Mary, Donner Summit



adventure. In the late 1930's he met Austrian skiing champion Hannes Schroll while vacationing at Badger Pass. Schroll led the Yosemite Ski School and the two became good friends. In 1938 Schroll and other business partners wanted to purchase land at the crest of Sierra near Donner Summit and the small town of Truckee. Their plan was to build a ski resort around Hemlock Peak and Mount Lincoln. Schroll asked Walt for financial assistance to buy the land since funds from his native Austria had been appropriated that spring when Hitler annexed the country. Disney was out of town when the June cable came in so Schroll had to find others to advance the needed funds for the land purchase. He bought the 700 acres of land from the Pilcher sisters in March 1938 for \$6,740. A year later, Schroll was seeking additional investments to build the resort. He again reached out to Walt who wrote him a check for \$2,500. To honor Walt's support and partnership for the newly christened Sugar Bowl Resort, Schroll changed the name of Hemlock Peak to Mount Disney. Note that the resort is named for the fine, crystalline snow which looked like sugar.

Goofy's Yodel

The now famous "Goofy yell" originated with Hannes Schroll. Schroll was an accomplished yodeler and recruited by Walt to record material for the cartoon. Although Walt turned away from skiing in later years, he still remained an active part of Sugar Bowl for some time. He sponsored events for children and several ski runs are named after Walt or Donald Duck. Walt continued his interests in winter sports in the 1960s. He was the chairman of the pageantry committee for the 1960 Winter Olympics held at Squaw Valley (now Palisades Tahoe). At the time of his death, he was formulating a plan for a ski resort at Mineral King Valley near Sequoia National Park. Due to environmental issues this project never materialized. Disney Corporation tried to do the same at Independence Lake near Truckee, CA but that too did not come to fruition. In 1986, although not Disney, Sunstream Ski company attempted to build a huge ski resort in Coldstream Canyon which also did not materialize. Truckee has worked hard to maintain its identity as a historical mountain town.

Skiing Today

The sport of skiing was now firmly established in the Sierra. Sugar Bowl's first year of operation had trainloads of people coming up from San Francisco on Southern Pacific's 'Snowball Special'. Visitors got off the trains in the Norden snowsheds and then loaded onto tractor-drawn sleds, where after traveling a mile and a quarter, they would arrive at the resort.

Goofy and I have a lot to share. I learned to ski at 19 years of age. Getting out of a warm bed to face unimaginable terrors is something I can relate to. Leaning and facing downhill goes against my wanting to hug the mountain. When our kids passed me in skiing ability then I knew I had to up my game. My parents learned to ski at 50 and used to trip the other one getting off the chairlift. If they could face the extreme elements and enjoy hot chocolate at the end of the day then I knew I could do this too. And you can learn to ski at any age. I just find that having

a lower center of gravity and being able to bounce back makes it a bit easier.

In parting here is some advice from Henry Ryerson, Snowsports School Director & Skier, Sugar Bowl: "To learn to ski; remember to eat a good breakfast and dress warm. Keeping your shin on the boot by bending your ankles will keep you standing. The most important thing is to have fun trying. And if you're having trouble gliding...try jumping. Sugar Bowl is a great place to learn, just like Goofy did. We can't wait to see you up here!"

Movies Shot at least partly on Donner Summit

And <u>So</u> They Were Married		
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In the above sidebar from our article index pages on our website, the first number is the page number and the second set is the Heirloom. i.e. "12/13" is December 2013

Goofy and the Art of Skiing video is available in many places for you to watch on the Internet including <https://gripped.com/gripped-outdoors/watch-cartoon-goofy-in-art-of-skiing-film-from-1941/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYDLIYrFiC0>

About the author:

Judy DePuy is a volunteer with the Truckee-Donner and Donner Summit Historical Societies. She is a board member for the Museum of Truckee History and lives in Tahoe Donner with her husband, Dave, and their dog, Morticia.



Left: the Sugar Bowl lodge. Above: inimitable style.

Last Auto to Make Trip Over Summit

The last automobile to cross the summit this season was the Pierce Detroit driven by N. Chatfield of Los Angeles, who went thru Truckee to Reno a few days ago. It was a three cylinder car and the only injury sustained was the tearing off of a tire. The car plowed thru two feet of snow between Soda Springs and Summit,

Truckee Republican December 21 1911

That must have been quite a trip on the Dutch Flat Rd. This was two years before the Lincoln Highway would come into existence.. That an article about the last car crossing Donner Summit was important enough to make it into the Truckee Republican shows how important the route was to the locals. With the road closed due to snow the only access for Truckee and No. Tahoe to the outside world to the west was by railroad. In the spring there would be articles about the first autos over the pass and about people helping clear the road of snow.

In 1931 the State Legislature appropriated money to keep Highway 40 open year 'round.



Contemporary view
of Castle Pk. from the south

A Man in Paradise

In our April, May and June '24 [Heirlooms](#) we displayed a lot of Donner Summit art from the 19th Century. Most of that was visual art. Donner Summit is magnificent and so there is no shortage of subjects for artists then and now. It's not just the visual art of Donner Summit though. There's also what we chose to call "Painting in Prose" which is almost poetry when applied to descriptions of Donner Summit. That was the clever follow up in our May and June issues with all the quotes about magnificent Donner Summit in the article, "Painting in Prose" and "Painting in Prose II."

This month we have a nice excerpt from a rather long article called "Summering in the Sierra" part 2 which was in the [Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine](#) in February, 1874, written by Benjamin Avery. Incidentally, you can read some excerpts from Mr. Avery's Part 1 in our June, '11 [Heirloom](#). 19th Century writers had such a way with words that we 21st Century residents can't duplicate. Our attention spans are too short and we have so much more competing for our attention than our 19th Century forebears had. They seemed quite willing to concentrate for long periods to get the wording just right. So we'll just take some of what Mr. Avery had to say describing Donner Summit. Here is a man in paradise with exceptionally good taste. He was, of course, on Donner Summit and in this excerpt begins with Summit Valley.

"It's upper end, still a green meadow leads to the base of peaks 10,000 or 12,000 feet high [he was exaggerating by a couple of thousand feet], whose light-gray summits of

granite, or volcanic breccia, weather into castellated forms, rise in sharp contrast to the green woods margining the level mead [sic]. A little apart from the noisy [train] station, the woods are beautiful... and the boulder-strewn [sic] earth reminds one of the pasture dotted with sheep. On the northern side rises the square butte of Mount Stanford, [Castle Peak] 2,453 feet above the valley, and 9,237 feet above the sea. Its volcanic crest is carved into curious resemblance to a ruined castle, and hence it was named, and is still popularly called, Castle Peak. ... the... climb afoot, up a very steep slope of sliding debris, is arduous but short, and is repaid by a superb view, embracing at least a hundred miles of the Sierra crests, their numerous sharp peaks streaked with snow, and lying between them intervals the many lakes of the region, including the flashing sheet of Tahoe... On one side of this characteristic peak the foot-climber stops to rest on a depression where grass and flowers grow luxuriantly, and the swarms of humming-birds hover over the floral feast, their brilliant iridescent plumage flashing in the sun, and the movement of their wings filling the air with a bee-like drone. Above all this beauty frown the bare volcanic cliffs and pinnacles that top the mountain – Eden and the desert side by side. The upper Sierra is full of contrasts and surprises. After tedious walking over rocky barren, or toilsome climbing up slippery gorges, in the very path of recent torrents, one comes suddenly on little bits of wild garden and lawn, where butterfly and bird resort, and the air is sweet with perfume. At the base of cliffs which looked forbidding at a distance, cold springs will be found, painting the ravines with freshest green; red lilies swing their bells; lupins [sic] and larkspurs call down the tint of heaven;



ferns shake the delicate plumes, bright with drops of dew; and the rocks offer soft cushioned of moss... the delighted pedestrian lingers as such oases, loth [sic] to go forward...

Next month Mr. Avery goes through the snowsheds on Donner Summit.

In case you want to see the original:

Benjamin Avery, "Summering in the Sierra," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 12:2 (February 1874): 175-83.



"The foot-climber stops to rest on a depression where grass and flowers grow luxuriantly..."

"After tedious walking over rocky barren, or toilsome climbing up slippery gorges, in the very path of recent torrents, one comes suddenly on little bits of wild garden and lawn,..."



Dangerous Highway 40 – Pt II

We last talked about Dangerous Highway 40 in the August Heirloom

In the August, '24 issue of the Heirloom our lead article was about the dangers of driving on Highway 40 in 1931. There were no guard rails and cars plunged off the side with regularity. The Truckee Chamber of Commerce had written to the Division of Highways in October of that year asking that “some suitable safe guard be installed to prevent further accidents.” Two cars had plunged over the side that week alone. That was 1931 and we appreciate Heidi Sproat of the Truckee Donner Historical Society for finding the articles in the Truckee Republican.

Heidi wasn't done though. Next she turned to 1945. It doesn't seem that much had been done to improve safety.

In January three cars were hit by a speeding Converse Trucking Co. truck near the Norden Store. After hitting the three cars the truck continued its skid and “mad plunge” off the highway. A Highway Patrol officer was parked nearby and witnessed the whole affair.

In February a Greyhound bus “crashed into the rear of a Divisions of Highways truck two miles west of Soda Springs.” A push plow had been forced to stop when it came upon a stalled truck. The bus came over the hill and was unable to stop.

March 15: Car crashed into a trailer carrying fuel.

April 19: Car hit a snow bank and completely overturned resulting in three passengers having only minor injuries. The driver was trying to avoid a head on collision with a truck. Another car had been left parked on the roadway and there was not enough room on the road for the three vehicles.

May 10: A woman's brakes failed on the Donner Grade. The car went off the road and overturned. Coincidentally maybe, the same paper reported that 12% of all vehicles checked by the Highway Patrol “were found to have defective brakes.”

May 17: “A car skidded and plunged off the right of way and overturned several times in the mass of heavy boulders.”

This was between Rainbow and Emigrant Gap.

May 17: A truck driver driving down the Donner Grade lost control and ran into a small car. The truck went over the side and “rolled 200 feet down through the brush and rocks.” The driver was thrown out and died.

June 21: A truck was hit by a car at Cisco as it was making a left turn across the highway. Both cars were “badly wrecked.”

July 5: A “huge Pacific Intermountain Express Company” truck was wrecked when the trailer broke loose and overturned along with the tractor. Another driver “dozed at the wheel” and ran off the highway.

September 6: A Colfax man ran off the highway on the Donner Grade and “plunged 175 feet into the canyon.” The driver was thrown from the car as it left the road on a curve.

October 4: a speeding driver ran into a truck at the Beacon Hill Lodge.

October 18: A “huge cattle truck and trailer” ran over an automobile in front of the Donner Summit Lodge. Both the driver of the auto and his passenger were killed. The two had been drinking and the car was weaving back and forth across the road. The



truck was trying to avoid the car which “suddenly cut directly in his path.” The collision was head on. Cattle were spilled onto the road killing four. The deputy coroner “said it was one of the most unusual and spectacular vehicle accidents he has ever witnessed.”

October 18: poor brakes sent a car with four women in it over the side of the Donner grade.

November 1: An accident on the Donner Summit Bridge when two vehicles collided. That automobile driver did not see the division of highways truck before the collision.

December 13: “Icy Roads Cause Many Wrecks in Week in District”
Seven Injured in Accidents On Nearby Highways In Seven Days.”



A “dozen or more” motor vehicle accidents had been reported in the previous weeks. There were various causes including speed and driving without chains. A couple on their way to Reno to be married were on the wrong side of the road when they crashed into another car.

An interesting June 21 article blamed the increase in auto accidents across the country to World War II’s rationing. Cars and tires were getting older and more unreliable. The article cautioned people to remember “that the old bus and tires are not what they were three or four years ago. Take it easy.”



A car over the side of Highway 40 above the bridge

6 PEOPLE AND NONE WERE HURT

Wild Truck Hits Four Cars; Two Hurt At Norden

Gautsche Saves State Car
From Damage In Freak
Vehicle Accident

TWO ARE INJURED
WHEN BUS HITS
TRUCK IN STORM

TWO INJURED AS
CAR RUNS INTO OIL
TRUCK ON GRADE

THREE INJURED IN
SUMMIT ACCIDENT
AS CAR OVERTURNS

CAR WRECKED AS
BRAKES GIVE AWAY

COUPLE INJURED IN
AUTOMOBILE WRECK

Summit Wreck Proves Fatal To Sacramento Man

Second Man Injured When
Car, Truck Collide
On Grade

COLFAX MAN'S CAR
PLUNGES OFF GRADE

THREE ACCIDENTS
BY CARS REPORTED

Women Escape Injury As
Car Turns Over on Grade

1945 Truckee Republican headlines.

**No One Injured In Crash
Near Beacon Hill Lodge**

**Lack of Chains Brings
Citation To S.F. Driver**

December 27, 1945 Since 1869

**Storm Halts Cars
As Crews Battle
To Clear Roads**

Precipitation Nears Record
Set In '37; 13.52 Inches
Over Normal

**LANG DRIVER KILLED
IN CRASH AND FIRE**

**Two Are Killed
As Cattle Truck
Hits Car On Hill**

**Patrolmen Find Evidence
Of Drinking In Death
Vehicle**

**Icy Roads Cause
Many Wrecks In
Week In District**

Seven Injured In Accidents
On Nearby Highways
In Seven Days

**Driver Cremated
As Trucks Crash**

The most serious accident was reported in the November 1 edition. Two oils transport trucks crashed on the eastern slope of Donner Summit. The blazing trucks closed the highway tying up traffic for miles. One truck had stalled and the other was unable to stop. One of the drivers survived. The other died and possibly a "soldier hitch hiker- was cremated." Investigation

of the wreck reported in the next week's paper said that the driver of one of the trucks attempted to pass an automobile going slowly down the road towards Donner Lake. Another car was approaching so the driver tried to pull back to his side of the road. He lost control and ran into a tree. The truck burst into flames and killed the driver. The Second truck could not stop in time and overturned catching fire. The automobile driver who was going slowly apparently stalled. The fire from the trucks blistered the paint on his car until he could get it restarted upon which he "calmly drove out of danger."

In Other News

The September 13, 1945 Truckee Republican reported that with the lifting of restriction on travel and the end of gasoline rationing "Snow sports will flourish this year." The Auburn Ski Club was "expected to resume its activities on a large scale" Sugar Bowl lodge and chalet was expected to open and both the Donner Summit Lodge and Beacon Hill Lodge were being expanded. On October 25 the paper reported that Sugar Bowl was opening. Its manager had been away at war for three years. A new ski instructor had arrived. Ryden Skinner had been in the navy, had graduated from Harvard Law School had taught skiing in various places and was a talented painter and pianist. The assistant manager was also due back from military service.

In More Other News - Teenagers

In other news, January also reported that the manager of the Beacon Hill Lodge was fined \$250 for selling liquor to a minor. A constable had been called to the lodge following a report "that a large group of teen age children were in various stages of intoxication and were misbehaving." When the constable arrived he found thirty kids in the bar and lobby drinking. Investigation brought to light that it was common knowledge in Sacramento that under age drinkers could be accommodated at Beacon Hill Lodge. The liquor license belonged to Elmo Moriano who was serving in the armed forces overseas and was "not in any way responsible..."

The next week the Nevada County Grand Jury was expected to weigh in but the paper had to go to press before there were any results. The next week the paper reported that the Beacon Hill manager, Herman Wenzke, was out on \$1000 bail for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Two weeks later Wenzke pleaded not guilty even though he'd previously pled guilty to a justice of the peace and paid a \$250 fine.

Several weeks later Mr. Wenzke was convicted on three counts. Sentencing would be the next week. There were no follow up reports.

Truckee, Nevada County,
**Wenzke Indicted
After Grand Jury
Completes Probe**
Bail Reduced As Summit
Man Freed After
His Arrest

**Resort Manager
Fined \$250 For
Minor Rum Sale**

Investigation Is Opened In
Case To Determine
New Action

**Wenzke Pleads
Not Guilty To
Morals Charge**

Youths Testify at Hearing
Before Referee For
State Board

**WENZKE ASKS FOR
PROBATION AFTER
LIQUOR CONVICTION**

**F. J. MAUPIN AND R. L. DOUGLAS ARE HIT BY A
FREIGHT TRAIN LAST SUNDAY NIGHT AS THEY
WERE ATTEMPTING TO GO THROUGH THE SNOW
SHEDS IN A NEW 1914 STUTZ AUTOMOBILE**

"E. J. Maupin, a mechanical and electrical engineer of Fallon, [NV] was taken home from Reno last Monday morning suffering from injuries received on Sunday afternoon near Soda Springs, when the automobile in which he and R. L. Douglas, capitalist, politician, banker and rancher of Churchill county, Nev., were riding was struck head on by a west-bound freight train and demolished. That Douglas and Maupin escaped being killed instantly is considered almost miraculous. Douglass escaped without a scratch and Maupin's injuries consist of a dislocated collar bone, a sprained ankle and a sprained wrist, in addition to bruises and a severe nervous shock. The men entered the snowsheds at Soda Springs intending to follow the railroad track in their car and get over the hill, the snow which was two feet deep making it impossible to follow the county road. They had proceeded about one hundred yards when they heard a freight train approaching at an alarming rate of speed. Douglass jumped in front of the automobile and managed to wedge himself in between the snowshed timbers, and escaped injury in this way.

"Maupin was driving the car, a seventy-five horse power Stutz racer just purchased by Douglass, and jumped behind it. Just at that moment the locomotive struck the machine. Maupin was dragged about thirty feet before the engineer could halt his train. Maupin says he thought 'his whole front was caved in' when the crash came but found that he was not seriously hurt when he was taken from the wreckage of the automobile and revived sufficiently to realize his condition.

"A light engine was sent out from this place [Truckee] immediately upon receipt of the news of the accident with Dr. Bernard and several others on board who went up to see what they could do for the victims of the accident. The injured man was made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and was placed on No. 24 and taken to Reno.

"Parts of the wrecked automobile were sent to San Francisco and Douglass says he thinks that portions of the engine may be used to put into another machine. Monday morning Douglass received a telegram from Maupin's people at Fallon directing him to bring the injured man home and they left Reno on No. 6.

"The steering wheel, or what was left of it, of the demolished automobile was taken to Reno by Douglass. Only half the rim remained and the spokes were broken out of that. It will be kept as a memento of the experience.

"The men say they had no knowledge of any train having left Summit when they entered the sheds. Trains travel silently after leaving Summit going west and the locomotive was almost on top of them before they knew it.

"Douglass says that portions of the locomotive were torn away as a result of the collision and the snow-sheds were torn down for a distance of fifty feet."

Truckee Republican November 20 1913

Mr. Douglas/Douglass' name was spelled variously in the article.

What's in Your Closet?



From time to time we get letters and emails from people with Donner Summit items. Of course we accept, or copy, all contributions.

In this case Rick Soehren sent an email about a picture that had been hanging in his family's cabin. He included this reminiscence about the family cabin at Cisco, pictured below. The picture shows the Lincoln Highway coming down from the summit.

When I was a boy we borrowed the cabin of a friend of my dad's. The cabin was adjacent to the tracks at Cisco, on SP land. Another cabin in the little cluster of them was leased from SP by Emma Blackford, the elderly widow of an SP worker. She used her cabin in the summer, lived in the Bay Area in the winter. (Cabins couldn't be used in the winter because the gravel road from the highway, later interstate, was not plowed. Plus, our water system was apparently leftover from the days when steam engines needed to get more water at Cisco. The system was ancient, and had an old pressure-regulating float house about 10 feet square made of thick planks halfway down from the source, SP Lakes. Part of the system was assembled each spring and dissembled each fall by cabin owners.)

Around 1968 Mrs. Blackford became too old to come up, and sold her cabin, her barn, and all contents to my parents. I think the price was \$800. I was in high school at the time. The barn held dozens of tools that the late Mr. Blackford had, ahem, borrowed from the SP and neglected to return. We used several of the railroad car jacks to jack up our rotting cabin when we rebuilt it. The barn also held many wood stoves. I was told that these were hauled out to tent platforms in the woods for summer campers to use. I remember one or two of these ancient wooden platforms that still existed when I was a boy (probably late 1950's, before we bought our place).

I don't know the age of our cabin, but it was built largely from recycled snow shed lumber. You could tell because when you peeled back wallpaper, one side of the boards was covered in soot. We found old newspapers under the linoleum dated, as I recall, 1926. I was told that they were added during a renovation, not construction but I don't know for sure.

Even back then I was a packrat (not unlike the builders of huge nests full of curiosities that we found in the barn). I don't know the story of the photo, but it was hanging in the old cabin, I liked it so I kept it. Took me many decades to find the right spot with the right focal length lens to re-do it.

I never took it out of its frame to photograph it, so my best image may not be great. It is 6.5 x 28 inches, with a few water (or rat urine) stains.

Other random details: the station house and adjacent stationmaster's house in standard railroad mustard color were still there when I was a small boy. My recollection is that the railroad eventually demolished them. There was a big flat area where I was told there had been a hotel and ski resort until it burned in the 1940s. Curiously, there were none of the nonflammable elements that you would expect after a devastating fire such as nails, so I am not sure. There was also the concrete remains of a railroad turntable near there, and evidence that there had been other long-gone spur tracks.



As I said in my Facebook post, we searched for the old town dump that must have existed, but never found it. There was a safe in the barn, and plenty of bottles in the woods.

Rick Soehren

The cabin was above where the gas station is today. Check out the [Heirloom](#) article and picture indices for more about T.C. Wohlbrock, the photographer of the picture on the previous page.

Book Excerpt

Morford's
Scenery and Sensation Hand-Book
of the
The Pacific Railroads
And
California
1878

If you find the following descriptions of Truckee and the Summit in 1878 interesting and want to read more the book is available on the internet at the following URL. The number at the end of the URL is a page number so you can substitute what you want. This is not a book review; it's a collection of passages describing train travel

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015074396725&view=1up&seq=149>

For this article we'll pick up with passages as the train reached Truckee and Donner Summit - after the quick introduction. Which governor the author is talking about I have no idea.

WHY THE GOVERNOR WENT TO CALIFORNIA, AND WHY OTHERS SHOULD GO.

I believe that, since the completion of the Pacific Railroad, it is the admitted duty of every resident of the Eastern slope, possessed of leisure and means for travel, to go to California. Europe, however, is irresistibly attractive, now that our passenger-steamers have become palaces in equipment and marine railway-carriages in celerity; so far, there is not so much *éclat* attendant on having "done" the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, as the Alps and Pyrenees; it is not so great an achievement to have inspected the Indians of the plains and the Chinamen of San Francisco as the Communists of Paris and the lazzaroni of Naples; and, apart from the natural propensity to defer to that convenient "any time" the pleasure as

Truckee... all the special California features of such a place including go-ahead energy, bowie-knives and revolvers, very little regard for that abstraction known as law, occasional uncalled for benevolence, a bit of violence... and a vigilance committee.

MORFORD'S
SCENERY AND SENSATION
HAND-BOOK
OF THE
PACIFIC RAILROADS
AND
CALIFORNIA.

By HENRY MORFORD,

AUTHOR OF THE "SHORT-TRIP GUIDES" TO AMERICA AND EUROPE, "OVER SEA," "PARIS IN '67," &C., &C.

WITH FULL PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE ROUTES

well as the duty lying specially near, it must be confessed that the question of cost has yet by no means been decided in favor of the new trans Continental travel, as contrasted with the established trans-Atlantic.

Truckee 133

Truckee somehow impressed the Governor, from the first view, as being only a sort of enlarged and overgrown mining-camp, with all the special California features of such a place, including go-ahead energy,

bowie-knives and revolvers, very little regard for that abstraction known as law, occasional uncalled for benevolence, a bit of violence when it suited some irascible person to indulge in it, and a vigilance committee always ready at summons by the ringing of a big hand-bell or a flying visit from some longboot-

ed and red-shirted Malice of the modern mining day. Such was the first idea: the official beforementioned, one of whose destinations was Lake Tahoe, spent a couple of evenings in the town, one of them that of Sunday, and did not alter his opinion in any important particular, though he may have left it a shade wiser than he arrived.

The crowd at the Truckee barroom

There was a train standing at the door, as he came out from a late supper at the hotel that evening—one so cool, though in late June, that a wheelbarrow-load of wood was blazing in the colossal box-stove of the bar-room, while around it were gathered thirty or forty of those who looked as if they formed the "society" of Truckee. All male, of course; as not even Una, with her lion, would have been likely to go among such a crowd, though she might have sought another of more eclectic character and possibly fared worse. Beards general, if not universal; long boots, perhaps one-third; coats, rather more than fifty per cent; slouch hats, the rule, without any exception; undoubtedly the knife or the pistol, ditto. except with one melancholy reservation, but all concealed, and not even a single bowie-knife used for paring the nails or picking the teeth; much straddling on chairs and lounging whenever a box or counter offered opportunity for that accomplishment;

Up to the summit as to make the idea as capital as atrocious. The recollection comes vividly to one's mind, going up the Sierra from Truckee to Summit; for, to say that the scenery-view, over that portion of the road, principally consists of snow-sheds and tunnels, is merely stating a plain fact in an odd manner. Of those forty-two miles before spoken of as dotting the Central Pacific, the fourteen miles of road between the two points named, making an ascent at the same time of nearly one hundred feet to the mile, must have at least ten miles of those obstructions, against which I have already debarred myself from saying anything ill-natured, by pointing out their necessity and the liberal judgment supplying them.

Anything ill-natured? No: how could anything ill-natured be uttered, enjoying or remembering the beeps with which this portion of the road is enriched? Peeps and glimpses of endless variety and quite corresponding beauty; while entirely out of the reach of comparison with any others in memory, from the entire want of materials to construct it. Sudden views, coming, going, changing. narrowing, broadening, and provoking constant exclamations of delight, mingled with those of momentary pettishness as the interruptions--over the grand Sierra peaks, snow-swaled, granite-ribbed, and pine-clad, though by no means pine-covered; over tremendous precipices. yawning fissures, broad canons, mountain streams, nestling cabins and small settlements, all so varied, changed. and continually renewed, by the curves and altering positions of the road, that each object of interest becomes at

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least a dozen for the purpose of view.

LOOKING DOWN ON LAKE DONNER.

Then the great glimpse of all, broken into two or three portions, but without doubt or exception one of the very finest in the world--that, very soon after leaving Truckee, over that beautiful blue eye of the Sierra, which seems ever looking up to a heaven of azure cloudness as its own, from the covert of such lashes and fringes as have few eyes even in the imaginative world--the girding pine-forests crowding to the very edge as if eager to stoop and be reflected in the blue. Of course I am speaking, in this rhapsodical manner, of Lake Donner, or "Donner Lake" as they seem determined to call it, for the sake of a culminating inelegance.

Then a little garbled Donner Party history: "Two of a party of emigrant from Illinois, a Mr. Donner and his wife, starved or froze to death at a spot which has since been know as 'Starvation Camp,' near the bank of the lake." Not only did they have the "distinction of perishing there, but of being eaten by

the sole survivor in approved cannibal fashion..." So we can see that fake news is not a new thing.

So much of what Lake Donner is and has been. What it seems, from the railway, is quite another matter. I doubt, as before intimated, whether another sheet of water on the round earth has quite the same charm, when looked down upon from a thousand feet above its very edge--just as I am very sure that scarcely another can be found, outside of Switzerland, so situated as to allow the test. The opportunity for this down-look occurs two or three times, not long after leaving Truckee; and words would, indeed, run wild, that should quite describe the effect thus produced on the true scenery-lover. A thousand feet is quite a steep height from which to look down on water so nearly beneath the observer; and at that distance even the waves tumbled up by a rough north wind would be invisible--all merged in the prevailing and wonderful blue. A wonderful blue it is, quite equalling that of Tahoe, on which one cannot look down from a car-window, or without climbing some snowy peak of the Sierras: and around Donner is close drawn that belt of fadeless evergreens, with only here and there a whitish gleam of dead branches and fallen timber coming up to the eye as a reminder of the wildness and primitive nature among which it lies. Bierstadt some years since painted it, with wonderful force and equally wonderful fidelity--the picture quite equalling his type-work, the " Rocky Mountains," and conveying to the spectator who has never seen the original, a really excellent idea of the reality, in spirit as well as form. In that picture (painted for Mr. C. P. Huntington and for exhibition at Vienna) through a gorge the spectator is looking eastward, lengthwise of the lake, from a point very near the railroad, which is seen at the right, clinging to the side of the Sierra, with the tip of a snow-shed, and a puff of the smoke of a locomotive creeping up the snow-touched ravines and rough crags. In the immediate foreground, at the left, a clump of nobly-painted tamaracks well develop the arboreal features of the Sierra, while even nearer some wild-flower-dotted undergrowth gives tone and color to that portion of the picture. Still farther to the left, from the tamaracks, two little mountain tarns, too small to be called lakes, look up blue to the morning sky, with the only touch of humanity in the occupant of a canoe paddling over the nearer one. Below, in front, the height slopes away, with the old emigrant-road seen creeping down toward the lake. Beyond stretches the lake itself, rather indicated than shown--so hot is the glare from a morning sun full in the face, and so thick are the mists rising from the water. Yet beyond, the hills of the Sierra rise in broken lines, until the picture closes with a range of the higher peaks, far away eastward, a few glints of snow (scarcely enough for the

privilege sometimes conferred) touching the tops of the higher and more distant, and carrying up the eye finely to the warm American sky bending over all.

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A LITTLE SNOW AT SUMMIT.

Summit--and we were, as indicated by the name, at the highest point of the crossing of the Sierras--a little over seven thousand feet above the sea-level, though still some twelve hundred feet below the highest point of the Rocky Mountain crossing. Grand snow-peaks showed at both the right and left, (north and south,) as we made the breakfast halt at Summit--no doubt the sky-piercing crowns of Castle and Crested, culminating points of the range in this latitude. There had been more or less of [sic] snow beside the sheds, and even under them, all the way up, since far eastward of Truckee; but Summit, on this occasion, justified its name by such remaining banks and drifts, at the very edge of the railway-track, as I had never before seen and never expected to see in any locality laid down with iron and ascended by a locomotive. Some of the drifts yet remained twenty, thirty, forty feet deep, though pouring down young rivers from their melting bases: what must they have been, in the way of a route for the foot travel of a paralytic, about the middle of the previous winter? Residents at Summit said that they covered the telegraph poles in many places, so that the wires were rendered useless for want of insulation, as they would have been if submerged in a lake: that may or may not have been true, as "telegraph reports" are generally to be taken at a discount. But the snow was there, in such quantities that they had no excuse for tepid drinking-water in the dark breakfast-room under the shed at the Summit Hotel; and it is equally sure that the Kanuck and the Governor, a little chilled by the frost of the early morning in that altitude, fell into schoolboy snow-balling among the drifts at the road side, and fought out any supposable ill-feeling on the fishery question, between the Great Republic and the Dominion; just as the same Governor and his travelling companion, Johannes Taurus, had snow-balled out the Alabama controversy between England and America, one summer during the conflict, among the white drifts on the top of the Swiss Splugnerberg.

Then down the snow becomes less and the snowsheds peter out although the sheds still "flourish luxuriantly at and about Cisco"

At Cascade a few miles below Donner Summit

The place is worth the pause, especially during the season of melting snows; for prettier, madder, more joyfully leaping and roaring waters of the cascade type, are not easily discoverable, while the scenery in the neighborhood is increasingly grand and notable. Nearly the whole twelve hundred feet gained in height from Truckee to Summit, is lost again by the time of reaching the flourishing little railroad hamlet of Cisco. Snow-sheds still flourish luxuriantly at and about Cisco;

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



Two men under the "nose" about 1870

This is Edward Muybridge (spellings vary) #700 Rhino Rock on Boreal Ridge. You might want to check our article and picture indices to read about Mr. Muybridge.

How Mr. Muybridge found Rhino Rock is a wonder. It would have taken a lot of exploring on the ridge where you will also find Crater Lake. October is a very good time to go out exploring yourself to see if you can find the rock.

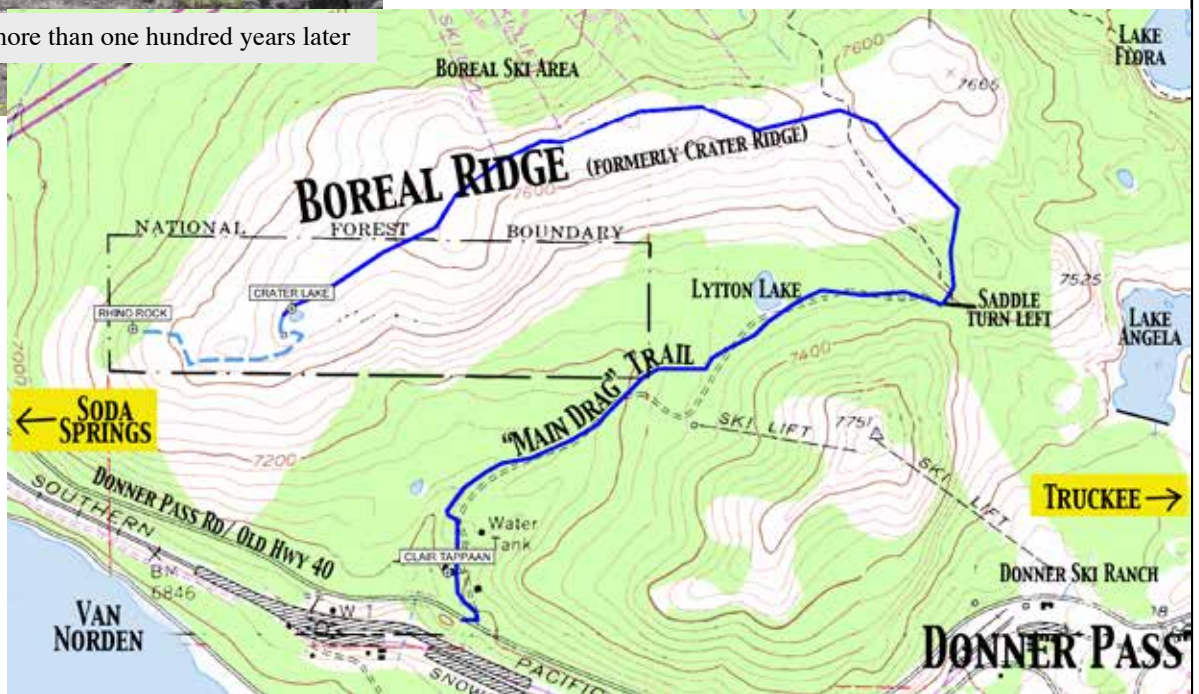
Below right is a contemporary with Art Clark and his twin, Art Clark, enjoying a rest and the view from the rock. You can see we have a lot of fun on Donner Summit. We think Lake Flora, on the right, was named for Muybridge's wife. The name was first applied by Muybridge to Crater Lake maybe 1/4 mile from the Rhino.



Art Clark and friend more than one hundred years later



To get started park in the large Clair Tappaan parking lot across the street from their sign. Take the dirt road to the front of the lodge where you can pick up the "Main Drag".



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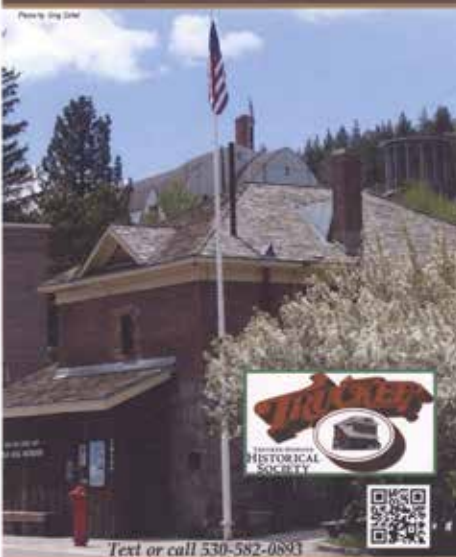




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