

### Summit Valley Overlook

Summit Valley, Van Norden Meadow, is the headwaters of the Yuba River. Through this valley came Native Americans who left grinding rocks, wagon trains, freight wagons, the railroad, and the first transcontinental highway. It is today an important wayspot for migratory fowl. This sign sits across from Clair Tappaan Lodge. 39° 18.997N/120° 21.022W

### Sugar Bowl

Sugar Bowl was the first California destination ski resort and the site of the first chairlift in California in 1939, Sugar Bowl is a popular ski resort. This sign sits on Old Highway 40 just next to the parking structure. 39° 19.036N/120° 21.194W

### Magic Carpet

There were no roads into Sugar Bowl so people took tractor pulled sleighs until the Magic Carpet, the first ski gondola in California, was built. Skiers could ride to Sugar Bowl for 15 cents. Just east of the parking structure on Old 40. 39° 18.793N/120° 20.345W

### Mt. Lincoln - Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush"

It was the highest grossing comedy of its day. Charlie Chaplin filmed "The Gold Rush" partly on Mt. Lincoln. Sign sits on Old Highway 40 just next to the parking structure. 39° 19.036N/120° 21.194W

### Lodge at Sugar Bowl

The lodge was built in 1939 by William Wilson Wurster, the most "influential unknown architect in California." Sign sits on Old Highway 40 just next to the parking structure. 39° 19.036N/120° 21.194W

### Donner Ski Ranch

The first rope tows on Donner Summit were here and across the old highway. Donner Ski Ranch has been the site of many "firsts." Sign is in the parking lot. 39° 19.082N/120° 19.808W

### Airway Station and Beacon.

Donner Summit was part of the first transcontinental air route. The station and beacon helped guide early planes. On Old 40 at Donner Summit just up from Donner Ski Ranch. 39 19.007 N/120 19.619W

### Summit Hotel

This was Summit Hotel II, built in 1895. It was huge and attracted vacationers to Donner Summit for decades. It had a two story outhouse and just one bathtub. It burned in 1925. 39 19 017N 120 19 794W (At Sugar Bowl Rd./Old 40 intersection)

### Tunnel 6

Just across from Donner Ski Ranch is the road into Sugar Bowl. Tunnel 6, the longest tunnel of the Sierra crossing of the original Transcontinental Railroad is just below the overpass. It was an incredible feat by Chinese workers working for two years to hew the tunnel from the solid Sierra granite. They went at the job from four directions, from each end and down through the middle and out. There is a very good pamphlet about Tunnel 6 at the DSHS in Soda Springs. 39° 18.019N/120° 19.794W

### Roller Pass Wagon Train Route

One final hurdle before crossing into California: Roller Pass was so steep double teams of oxen hauled wagons up one at a time. Then it was all downhill to the emigrants' dreams. The sign is at Roller Pass on the Pacific Crest Trail, a two mile hike from the PCT trailhead just off Old 40. There is a brochure about the Emigrant Trail at the DSHS. 39° 17.627N/ 120° 19.226W

### Sugar Bowl Academy Building

This was the old highway maintenance building built in 1932 when Highway 40 was first plowed and became an all season highway. This is at the very top of Donner Summit on Old 40. 39° 18.999N/120° 19.572W

### Donner Lake Overlook

This is a wonderful view of Donner Lake, named for the ill-fated Donner Party located just over the Summit on the Rainbow, or Donner Summit Bridge pedestrian walkway. 39° 19.156N/120° 19.118W

### Transcontinental Railroad

The Transcontinental Railroad bound the nation together and allowed California to grow. Rainbow Bridge Parking lot. 39° 19.113N/120° 19.115W

### Rainbow Bridge

The 1927 Rainbow Bridge is the first bridge built with a curving elevation change, a "grand and compound curve." Across from the Rainbow Bridge parking lot. 39° 19.138N/120° 19.156W

### Petroglyphs

Native Americans crossed the Sierra for thousands of years before the coming of European Americans. They left interesting and mysterious petroglyphs. Just below Rainbow Bridge on Old 40. There is a brochure about Summit Native Americans at the DSHS. 39 19.056N 120° 19.232W

### China Wall

There would have been no transcontinental railroad

if it had not been for the Chinese workers. The China Wall was built without mortar by Chinese workers. Just down from Rainbow Bridge on the west side of the road. Walk up to it and look for old tool marks from 1868. 39° 19.048NB/120° 19.226W

### Snowsheds

It was thought snow would not be a problem on Donner Summit when the railroad was built. Snow was a problem and soon almost 40 miles of snowsheds protected the tracks from snowfall and avalanche. They also kept passengers from seeing any of the beauty of Donner Summit. This sign sits 4 curves below Rainbow Bridge on Old 40. You might want to pick up our snowshed brochure at the DSHS in Soda Springs. 39° 19.123N/120° 18.968W

### Along Lake Van Norden

The old Lincoln Highway, a dirt road, runs along the edge of Van Norden Meadow. You can access the dirt road from Soda Springs Rd. in Soda Springs. Turn off of Old 40 onto Soda Springs Rd. Just across the RR tracks are dirt parking lots. The Lincoln Highway, now a County road, is just to the left of the dam. It comes out some miles to the east at Sugar Bowl Rd. which is the road off Old 40 just opposite Donner Ski Ranch. You can, of course, start at that end too.

### Van Norden Dam

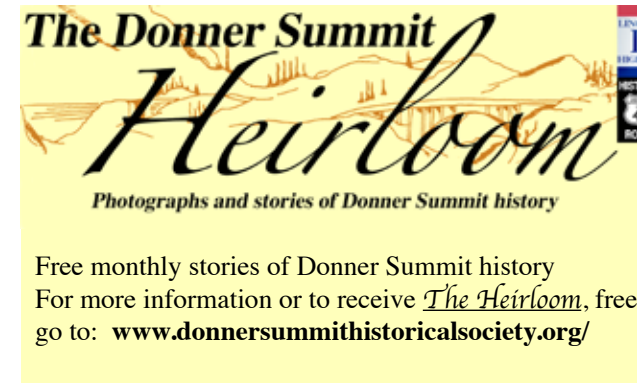
There has been a dam at Lake Van Norden since at least 1874. At one time 5800 acre feet of water was stored behind the dam in a beautiful lake. It was notched in 1976 for safety. 39°19 253N /120°22 39 653W

### Summit Valley Native Americans

Native Americans summered on Donner Summit for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived. They left petroglyphs and In Summit Valley they left dozens of grinding rocks and grinding slicks - the most modern kitchen appliances of the time. There is a Native Americans of Donner Summit brochure at the DSHS. 39 19 340N /120 22 26W

### Sheep Pens

Lake Van Norden filled each year with snowmelt. Over the summer the water was let out. As the lake receded grass grew and each Fall the meadow was ready for sheep. The sheep pens were the last stop before the sheep boarded the train for their final destination. In the 1940's one family shipped 100,000 sheep out of Soda Springs annually. By the 1970's the number was only 2,700. 39 18 841N /120 21 281W



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### Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd.

The Dutch Flat Rd. was built in 1864 to help build the railroad and it became *the* route over Donner Summit. The road carried so much traffic that its imprint is still easily seen in the meadow even though there has been no traffic on it in more than a hundred years. 39 19 008N /120 21 654W

### In Truckee:

#### Barbara Gordon

In 1935 Miss Gordon was the first woman to swim the length of Donner Lake. She was 17 years old. The sign is at the West End Beach.

### McIver Dairy

McIver Dairy sat at the Gateway to Truckee and was renowned locally for its dairy products, particularly butter. The dairy produced as much as 60,000 lbs a year. The McIvers donated the land under the hospital and the McIver Arena to Truckee. The sign sits across from the nursery and Gateway Ctr.

Explore all the 20 Mile Museum signs and read the many stories about Donner Summit in our newsletter archives: [www.donnertsummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnertsummithistoricalsociety.org)

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# 20 Mile Museum

## Take the Scenic Route Along Old Highway 40 on Donner Summit

