



# Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass

## Summit Hotel ●

### History

The coming of the railroad made it easy for well-heeled tourists to visit Donner Summit and with the building of a large hotel, they came. Whole families came to enjoy the summit and stayed for weeks at a time.

The first Summit Hotel was built in 1870, the year after the railroad was completed, and was called the Cardwell House. It sat right next to the railroad and not far from Tunnel 6. It burned in 1892 and a new hotel was immediately built a little west on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd.

The original Cardwell House had 78 bedrooms, sitting rooms, ladies parlor, a dining room, and saloon. The new Summit Hotel had 87 rooms, a very nice billiard room, and could accommodate 320 guests at one time in the dining room. In addition to the hotel, it had a grocery store, meat market, post office, postal telegraph office, and a dry goods store. It had one bathtub and a two story red painted outhouse (ladies on the second floor and gentlemen on the first). It took one man, full-time, to deal with all of the oil lamps and wood stoves. The hotel had its own sawmill to keep it supplied with wood for heating and cooking. Eventually the hotel got its own Delco Electric Plant when it switched to electricity.

### Summit Hotel

"This Hotel is the finest Summer Resort in the State of California...For Invalids no better resort than this can be found in the world, as the air is always pure and invigorating."

*Sacramento Daily Union* Sept. 17, 1870

The hotel employed dozens of workers: chambermaids, bartenders, a stable man, a roustabout, milkers, teamsters, a blacksmith, cooks, kitchen helpers, a man in the harness shop, servers, and two stage drivers.

To bring more guests special trains ran from Sacramento bringing revelers to regular dances.

That hotel burned in 1925 and was not rebuilt.

### Things to do right here

"Last Wednesday... a party...united in a picnic expedition to Donner peak. ...some engaged in gathering flowers, and others, admiring the grand scenery of the summit peaks, towering up like some grand castle, far above the snow shed... lunch was served out under pine trees which aided the mountain air as an excellent tonic for sharpening appetites. The party then proceeded up the mountain trail near the summit of Donner peak, passing over a large bank of snow. Here a gay game of snowballing was indulged in by the entire company. After fully ascending Donner peak some grand scenery was presented to view. In the distance could be seen Truckee, Martis Valley, Tinker's Knob, Castle peak, Summit Valley, Red Mountain, Devil's peak and six lakes. From off this peak fair Donner reminds one of a mirror spread out beneath amid the mountains."

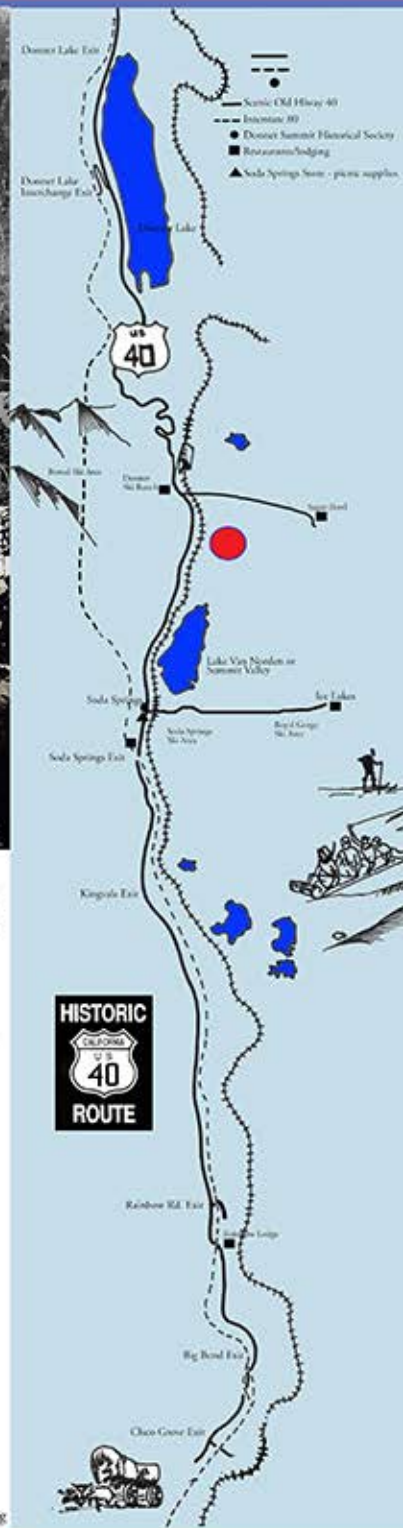
*Sacramento Daily Union* July 31, 1885



**Pictured top:** The first Summit Hotel attached to the snowsheds. Note the snowsheds leading to Tunnel 6, center, and the round house with the cupola, center.

**Center,** the second Summit Hotel. (It sat in the forest to the left from this spot).

**Bottom,** the view to the front door of Summit Hotel I through the snowsheds.



This sign sponsored by the Truckee Donner Land Trust which was primarily responsible for the 2013 acquisition of 3,000 Donner Summit acres for public use.

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