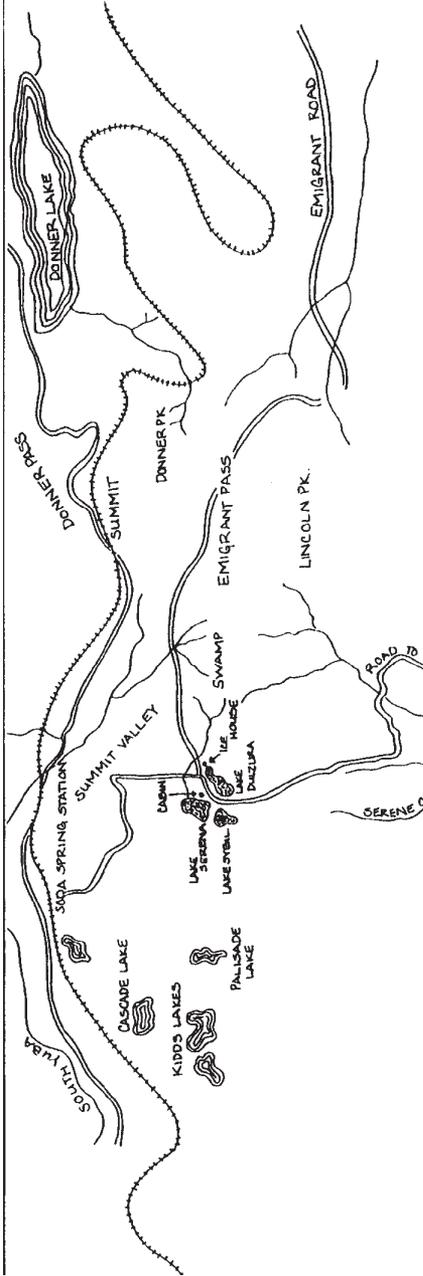


# The Ice in Ice Lakes (a.k.a. Serene Lakes)

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**Serene Lakes, 1889** source part of Placer County map Bancroft Library U.C. Berkeley (size: 4' x 3')

this booklet ©2002

# Introduction

**Y**ou are in Serene Lakes right now maybe sitting in Ice Lakes lodge looking out the lake side windows and enjoying the views maybe wondering about why the lodge is called Ice Lakes Lodge. This is a small community surrounding the two small lakes outside of Soda Springs at the top of Donner Summit. There are 600 or so homes, Royal Gorge cross country ski area, and Ice Lakes Lodge. It's a nice little community where there are small town activities like community BBQ's, a very traditional 4th of July parade, chile cook-off, and Serene Lakes Days. From time to time there have been big development ideas, but generally, it's been quiet and serene. There was a time though, when there was serious industry, if just for a few years, here at Ice Lakes.

For awhile the lakes were the site of ice harvesting. That lasted only a few years because of the horrendous amounts of snow that accumulate on Donner Summit. Just after the ice harvesting left for more hospitable climate in Truckee, the Truckee Republican said on August 26, 1872: "About a mile and a half from Summit Valley there are two beautiful little lakes, with some ice houses broken down by last winter's snow, and abandoned by the company who have moved to Prosser Creek where they have as much cold weather but not so much snow."

This booklet explores the short history of ice at Ice Lakes and the people involved.

# Ice History

**B**efore 1850 in California you'd have had to drink your Pepsi/Coke warm because there just was no ice. Whatever Baskin Robbins was selling then, it wasn't ice cream. In that year though, the first ice arrived all the way from Boston and immediately sold for \$12.50 per hundred pounds. Ice continued to arrive from Boston, the home of America's ice industry, but local merchants, seeing an opportunity, formed the Sitka Ice Co. which began shipping ice from Alaska in 1852 and selling it for \$75 a ton. Until 1869 most of the ice consumed in California came from Alaska.

It's ironic that ice had to be shipped from so far away and spend so much time melting at sea when fields of ice were only a few miles away on the Sierra Crest. Transportation was limited though, before the railroads came and the Sacramento Union opened in 1855 that the high price of labor, the inferior quality and "exorbitant freights and unreliable means of transportation..." prevented people from supplying ice from the Sierra.

Still, Sitka ice was expensive and so the California Ice Company challenged Sitka's ice monopoly. They harvested ice from ponds northwest of Georgetown and sold their ice for 7¢ a pound, which was 3¢ less than Sitka's price. Sitka immediately undercut California's price with 5¢ ice. Then Sitka bought the California company out and raised the price to 10 ¢ a pound.

Competition did grow and later the price declined to 4¢ a pound. That led people to look to the interior of California for cheaper sources of ice. As ice began to be produced in California, the amount of ice imported from Alaska declined. Still, without decent transportation, the natural place to harvest ice, the high Sierra, remained untouched. A railroad would solve that problem as well as others.

Though the railroad construction seems to be an obvious advantage to us, for lots of reasons more important than ice, when

## *Ice History*

the transcontinental railroad was proposed in 1862 not everyone was in favor. Many special interests were opposed such as the stage and steamship companies, telegraph companies, express and freight companies and the out of state ice harvesters. Fortunately, it appears their campaign contributions weren't big enough to derail the railroad. Congress passed the law and construction was on.

Sitka Ice Company's dominance of the market was crushed by the coming of the railroad. The company had netted \$75 a ton profit until the railroad opened the way to the Sierra lakes. In ice alone, with the coming of the railroad, San Francisco saved \$600,000 annually.

### **Ice Lakes**

The story of the ice at Ice Lakes starts in 1849 all the way back in Nova Scotia. A letter had arrived in Yarmouth touting the discovery of gold in California. People saw money to be made, but not just by mining the gold. Ebenezer Haley was leader of a joint stock company that was formed to buy a ship to go to California. The ship would be filled with cargo to sell to the argonauts. This, of course, made a lot of sense because looking back we know that very few gold seekers found their gold in the ground. The real riches were made in hardware, farming, and services to miners. Mining miners was very lucrative. Haley's principal collaborator was Fitz William Redding who was a merchant and shipowner in Yarmouth.

The joint stock company was organized into thirty shares, 11 for Redding and speculators, and 19 for Haley. The company bought the four year old schooner, Mary Jane, rigged it as a brigantine and gave it a coppered bottom. Apparently it was a good ship because it had an "established" reputation and the speed of a yacht.

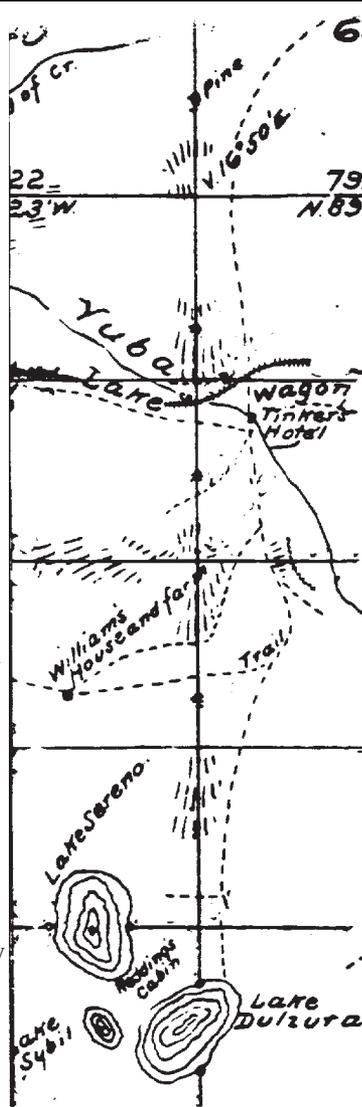
By mid-November 1849 the ship was ready and a cargo of house frames, shingles, wagons and hardware had been loaded. There were 19 in the party to sail the ship including Benjamin B.

# Ice History

Redding who was to act as super-cargo to look after the interests of the investors - the stay-at-homes. When the ship arrived in San Francisco, the crew members went their various ways to search for gold. B.B. Redding stayed in San Francisco to sell the company's goods. The cargo of wagons and hardware sold well, but the rest was a failure except for a load of turtles.

Eighteen years went by and B.B. Redding went from hunting gold to hard labor, to acting as a lawyer and then representative to government conventions, member of the assembly, state printer, mayor of Sacramento, secretary of state, and more. Not only was he interested in many things, by being so involved he was able to meet the important people of the day. By 1868 he was land agent for the Central Pacific Railroad with the job of taking charge of and organizing the sale of lands granted to the company by Congress. By then his father, mother and siblings had arrived in California with his father investing money in Central Valley farmlands, at least some of which he bought from the government.

Imagine you're B.B. Redding and you're the land agent for the CPRR, taking stock of railroad lands and preparing their sales. You have an entrepreneurial spirit and



When Surveyed  
 1866  
 October 11<sup>th</sup> 1866

### Serene Lakes 1866

from the first government survey map  
 source: Bureau of Land Management

## *Ice History*

you and your other railroad bigwigs are in the market for other commercial enterprises. You like ice in your drinks. Since you are also an avid fly fisherman you've explored the streams and lakes of the Sierra for years. On your peregrinations in the Sierra you've come across a couple of small lakes just over the hill from where the railroad will be - remember you have some advanced knowledge. These three lakes are beautiful jewels surrounded by forest and grasslands. Your brother, who is twenty years younger is also pretty adventurous and listens to your ideas. You suggest, or he suggests, or someone suggests that he settle on the the land these lakes occupy. One of the things this land, these lakes, may be good for is ice harvesting and ice is in great demand in the cities. So, in 1866, Fitz William Redding Jr., brother of B.B. Redding, settled on Serene Lakes and built a small cabin. The lakes look like a good bet for ice since they're presumably so cold in winter. Ice harvesting is a ways off though because transportation is the problem.

By 1867 the railroad had reached Cisco Grove and 1867 and 1868 saw the construction of the first tunnel in the Sierra. The first engines went over the summit in pieces in 1867 and 1868 so construction could continue on the flat lands to the east. Tourists had begun to arrive in the Sierra as well, taking the six hour train trip from Sacramento to Cisco. Excursions were offered from there, the end of track, to the old Soda Springs, below Serene Lakes where the Cedars is. It had become so well-known that a hotel was scheduled to be built in 1869 and Mark Hopkins had built his estate there.

In 1868 the Summit Ice Co. was incorporated and "commenced operations at Sereno (sic) Lake,... near the summit of the Sierras (sic). The company made improvements and erected buildings to the extent of \$50,000." They constructed a "substantial shed 450 feet long by 80 feet in width over the surface of a small lake. Three trustees were in charge: Fitz William Redding (the father), Samuel D. Smith, and Jacob Hoehn. In addition to those three, the other stockholders were B.B. Redding and W.E. Brown. (Brown and Hoehn would later be pall bearers for B.B. along with the governor of California and Mark Hopkins' nephew.) The com-

## *Ice History*

pany was capitalized at \$50,000 with 500 shares outstanding.

An idea of the scale of the operation can be gotten from the Summit Ice operations at Prosser which is where they moved after leaving Serene Lakes. Since their Prosser building was the same length as the Serene Lakes building and since it was built immediately after, it's reasonable to assume the rest of the operation was comparable. The Prosser operation in 1877, five years after Serene Lakes, had a building "450 feet in length by 50 feet in width with posts 24 feet in height. The walls are 1 foot in thickness and are packed with sawdust." 75-80 men worked there for \$2 a day plus board along with six horses. They harvested 8000 tons of ice a year or about 40-45 cakes a minute. That's 10,000 lbs of ice harvested per minute. Each cake weighed about 225 lbs.

We should remember too that an operation like that won't just consist of icehouses. The Prosser operation also had "a boarding house, store house, stables for the teams, a blacksmith shop and a tool shop.

### **It Didn't Last Long**

The elements were just too much for the company on the summit. "After expending about \$30,000 in the endeavor to construct buildings that would sustain the great weight of snow that fell upon and crushed them...the company located on Prosser creek [sic] in 1873 [it was 1872]". They had spent three years harvesting ice and battling Serene Lakes winters before calling it quits. The Truckee Republican said "It was found by experience, a somewhat expensive one, too, that the snow fell too deep at the summit to render the ice business profitable." The new location was "a paradise for icemen" "with subfreezing temperatures, reduced snow fall, purity of water, and the natural sources of the Truckee River System." One aspect of this relocation is interesting. They'd no doubt given up on Serene Lakes by the end of the winter of 1872. In the spring, the Truckee Republican reported that they were going to move, by summer the paper reported their buildings on Prosser, and in fall reported on their celebratory opening party. So, why did the company buy the property from one of the stockholders for \$800 In mid-summer?

## *Ice History*

The capital of the company was increased to \$100,000 in 1872. The money no doubt went for construction at Prosser Creek, which according to the newspaper was extensive and included a railroad siding.

So, Summit Ice Co. moved to Prosser Creek in 1872. To reduce competition, a number of ice companies united under the Pacific Ice Co. banner. Others had seen the opportunity for ice harvesting around Truckee as well and eventually there were at least 15 companies harvesting ice at Boca, Martis Valley, Prosser Creek, Truckee, Donner, and Verdi. In 1882, the year B.B. Redding died, a price war erupted and the icemen found a solution, joining their many companies together under the Union Ice Co. name. The Union Ice Co. was headed by E.W. Hopkins, another Central Pacific executive and nephew to Mark Hopkins, owner of the estate down at the old Soda Springs at the The Cedars.

The turn of the century saw artificial ice making plants make inroads and with home refrigeration coming the 1930's the last natural ice harvests took place in the mid 1930's. The Union Ice Co. continued to grow and prosper getting into the business of shipping fruits and vegetables, refrigeration, transportation, and other things. Then the company fell afoul of the 1980's. Its various parts were more valuable than the company as a whole and so astute financiers (corporate raiders) bought up controlling interest and sold off the parts. The Union Ice Co. was no more.

## *Ice History*

### Article Second

The name of the said corporation shall be  
“The Summit Ice Company.”

### Article Third

The said corporation is formed for the purpose of engaging in the and carrying on the business of manufacturing, preserving, cutting, selling, and exporting Ice and the buying of real estate containing lakes or ponds upon which lakes, Ice can be produced or manufactured, within the state of California, and in such other places as the company may determine

**From the incorporation papers  
of the Summit Ice Company September 7, 1868**



## *The Dreams He Had*

**I**n 1866 Fitz William Redding Jr., age 20, became the first permanent settler in Serene Lakes.

What an adventure living in such an exciting time, the middle of the 19th century. It must have seemed like the entire world was changing so rapidly and that all things were possible. People could communicate with such speed! You could send a letter all the way from Saint Jo to Sacramento in 12 days by Pony Express and the soon to be completed telegraph line would speed messages unbelievably faster. Already local telegraph lines let people send messages and get instant replies. The Transcontinental railroad was being built and soon you would be able to average ten or fifteen miles an hour cutting the months long cross country journey to days. People could even fly using balloons as they had demonstrated in the recent war. Clipper ships had made miraculously fast trans-oceanic runs. Steamboats showed that wind wasn't even needed as they plied the rivers and oceans and ships were being made of iron. Factories were being built everywhere changing how people earned their livings. Farm equipment made growing crops easier with less labor. The wilderness was being vanquished. Waves of settlers were conquering the continent and new wonders were being discovered. Cities were springing up. The United States was growing unstoppably it seemed in big chunks; having doubled in size and doubled again. There was so much in this rich land just for the taking. What an exciting time!

It was into this time that Fitz William Redding Jr. was born.

## *The Dreams He Had*

He came from adventurous stock his ancestors having left England for New England and generations later for Canada. His father was a merchant ship owner risking his wealth on the oceans. His brother, B.B. Redding, had left home at 16 to make his own way in life later leaving his new wife and infant son so he could head for the gold fields of California.

The stories Fitz William must have heard growing up about the trip around the Horn to California and about the experiences in the gold fields in the exciting new land and new state must have made him impatient for his own adventures. When the rest of the family came to California, Fitz William must have traveled the Sierra with his brother as his brother went about his business as land agent of the CPRR and serious fly fisherman.

On some of those trips to Donner Summit to view the new rail route or to see land Mark Hopkins was interested in, he came across three little lakes just over the ridge and west of the summit. What a spot. How did he convince his father he should be able to patent (buy) the land, that he should be able to settle on it and complete the paperwork once he turned the required age of 21? Did he keep asking over and over (teenagers then couldn't have been too much different from today's and parents likewise)?

Fitz William must have had a lot of drive and enthusiasm to want to settle in the wilderness alone, to be the first permanent settler in Serene Lakes. Being born into an age of wondrous and rapid change, what plans he must have had for his 160 acres. Add the optimism of youth and everything must have seemed possible.

He probably just wore his parents down. Besides his brother had left home at 16 to begin his own life so dad had already been through it once. In September of 1866 Fitz William Jr. built a small 12 X 12 plank cabin and cleared an acre or so of land where the two largest lakes came together. It was a good spot - lakefront southern exposure - no neighbors. There were no roads in the area yet so there were few people to bother him. He could have visited the various summit saloons, hotels, and

## *The Dreams He Had*

railroad construction workers' encampments when he wanted companionship, but returning to Serene Lakes, he'd have been absolutely alone except for the occasional hunter.

There was a lot of work for him as he conquered his part of the wilderness: hauling planks from summit sawmills and building his house, clearing an acre (visualize a football field) of trees. Maybe the trees went to the sawmills and came back as boards. There might have been some furniture to make. Certainly there was the daily search for food too.

Then - imagine this - he decided he needed fish in the lakes. He hauled back "three or four hundred trout" to be stocked in Serene Lakes - his lakes. No doubt the idea came from his brother who was really interested in fish, became a fisheries commissioner in California and wrote about fish culture (including how fish farming could refute the Malthusian theory) having studied the idea back east. Just how did Fitz William haul all those fish up and over the miles from either Donner Lake (where the first Sierra fish farms had just been built) or the Cedars down on the North Fork of the American? Since his brother later pulled one hundred fish out of the American in one day and it was only six miles away, it's a safe bet that's where they came from.

Besides farming fish he was also going to graze animals on the land (Summit Station became the second largest sheep shipping station in California), do some dairying (there were a number of dairies on the summit) and maybe harvest ice which looked like it could be a real money maker. What could be a better place?

Fitz William settled in for the winter of 1866-67 but must have been surprised by the snow - who isn't. By early November he'd gone to live with his father in Sacramento. The horses couldn't graze and even in November Serene Lakes snow collects in greater amounts than Nova Scotia snow does. Was there also a girl waiting? That would make a good story.

## *The Dreams He Had*

Fitz William returned in the spring and we can only wonder what he thought when he saw the snow depths as he climbed in altitude. Did he have to leave his horse behind and then hike over the snow to Serene Lakes? How hard was it finding his cabin? Did he spend days looking for it and then digging down to it? Was he sleeping on the snow getting cold and wet? Whatever the case, he soon became sick and returned to Sacramento. He died in June, 1867 just as the railroad was getting to Cisco Grove.

*“In Sacramento June 22nd Fitz William  
Jr. son of F.W. and Mary A. Redding,  
a native of Nova Scotia, aged 21 yrs + 6  
mths.”*

**Sacramento Union 6/24/1867**

Imagine the dreams he must have had!

# Consternation

Imagine the family's consternation after Fitz William died - beyond losing a son. What would happen to the land? F.W. Jr. had gone to a lot of work and maybe it was the only legacy for grieving parents to hold on to.

Dad was in Marysville within the week to file for the land in the name of his son attesting that he'd been 21 when he settled the land and that he was a native born American. Perceptive readers will have noted that Fitz William wasn't 21 when he settled on the land nor was he a natural born citizen - both requirements to be eligible for buying land from the government.

Then of course the parents inherited.

When Fitz William Redding took over the patent from his son in 1867, which was the 160 acres that is Serene Lakes, he didn't pay anything. In 1869, he finished the government paper work and paid \$400.00 or \$2.50 an acre for the land. Three years later, he prevailed on the Summit Ice Co. to buy the land for \$800.00 which they did, even though by then the company was constructing ice harvesting facilities down by Prosser and didn't need Serene Lakes. That Fitz William was a major stockholder and officer, and that his son was a director, probably didn't have a lot to do with the company purchasing dad's land at 100% profit.

# B. B. Redding

## **Benjamin Bernard Redding -**

*“... a man of great energy and decision of character.”*

**8/22/1882 Sacramento Union**

**B**.B. Redding, founder of The Summit Ice Company, was an interesting person and would deserve to be written about even if he had no connection to the Ice in Ice Lakes. Once California became a state, he became the first state printer. Later he was a member of the assembly from Yuba (which in those days included Placer) and Sierra counties, was elected mayor of Sacramento in 1856, secretary of state in 1863, and became land agent for the Central Pacific Railroad and then for the U.S. government. Along the way he was fisheries commissioner, prison commissioner, a regent of the university, president of the Academy of Sciences, and a newspaper publisher. He also set up the Summit Ice Co. at what is now Serene Lakes and helped run the company for the three years it harvested ice at Serene Lakes from 1869 - 1872. He remained a part of the company after its move to Prosser Creek outside of Truckee.

The first Reddings arrived in America in 1630, coming from England, and settling in Massachusetts. In 1760 the governor of Nova Scotia offered land grants to settlers and Benjamin Redding took him up on it. His son, Herbert moved to Gloucester where he became a ship captain and commanded a ship out of Salem. He died of yellow fever in 1799 in Jamaica leaving his wife and four kids, one of whom was Fitz William Redding. The family moved back to Nova Scotia. All of Fitz' brothers and sisters died without children, one being killed at

## *B. B. Redding*

sea during the war of 1812. Fitz William became a merchant and ship owner and had four kids, one of whom was our Bernard B. Redding.

B. B. Redding was born in 1824 and apparently his father was pretty demanding which made living with him hard. Relations between the two got more and more strained and finally at age 16, B.B. left home and headed for Massachussettes. There he went to work as a druggist's clerk and then for a grocer for \$4 a week. Learning the trade, and reconciling with his father, he decided, at age 19, to open his own store with a partner. They failed because, B.B. said, he wouldn't sell alcohol - and alcohol was considered a necessity by many in Massachussetts. As president of the local temperance society, he really couldn't sell alcohol of course. B.B. did get something out of the deal, though; he married his partner's sister.

B.B. wasn't done with business though. He found a couple of partners and they opened a chandlery and grocery. The chandlery business was probably a bit tame so when he was only 24 and a letter came to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia telling the news of the gold discovery in California, he was ready to go off to California. Almost immediately B.B.'s father and another man formed a joint stock company to buy a ship, fill it with cargo and send it to California. B.B. was to be supercargo to take responsibility for the cargo, leaving his wife with their young son in Nova Scotia.

Once the cargo was disposed of, B.B. went to the gold fields and after much searching, he'd earned the munificent sum of \$3.75. Gold digging being a bust, B.B. went to work at hard labor, moving rocks at Pittsburg Bar for \$10 a day. Living there, he became known for his steady, responsible, character. He wouldn't drink, carouse or take part in any other miner games. This was so at odds with miner life that a friend put a sign, "Saint's Rest", on B.B.'s tent. B.B. left it there.

A turn in his life came when a miner from Australia was

## *B. B. Redding*

accused of putting a pick through another man's head. B.B. defended him in a miner's court and got him off. As B.B. gained respect, miners began to use B.B. to draw up papers, represent them, and arbitrate disputes. He was elected to the county convention and from there went to the state convention.

In addition to his various duties, his active mind led him to investigate all kinds of things. He wrote articles and gave presentations on the "Sanitary Influence of Trees", arrowheads, sawdust, ice, artesian water, fossils, pre-historic man, history, weather, nitre, and immigration. One of his major interests was fish. He was an avid fly fisher (supposedly catching about a hundred fish in one 1872 afternoon down at the Cedars) and one of his many articles on fish refuted the Malthusian theory arguing that fish culture was increasing the food supply rather than increasing population outstripping it.

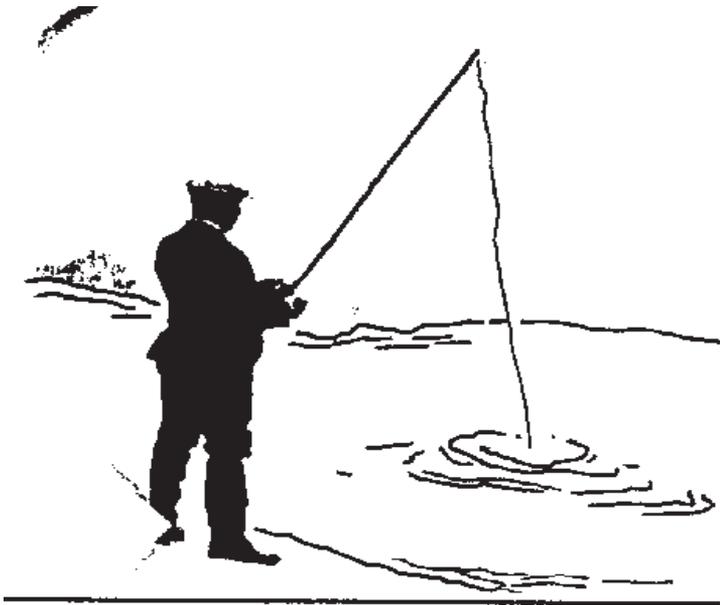
Because of his many contributions to California as an early pioneer of the state, the city of Redding was named for him.

As a land agent of the Central Pacific Railroad, we can imagine B.B. traveling the Sierra lands owned by the railroad. By 1866 his brother had built a cabin at Serene Lakes. In 1868, B.B. the entrepreneur, thought those ice lakes would make a good place for ice harvesting so B.B., his father and some friends started the Summit Ice Company building a couple of ice houses on the lakeshore. Serene Lakes was not a conducive place for ice production so the company moved to Prosser Creek in 1872.

B.B. arrived in California with virtually no money and earned very little in the first few years. By 1860 (census records are an amazing thing) his estate was worth \$6000 and his family included three boys. By 1870 his estate was worth \$19,000 and he had four boys. A small stroke in 1869 curtailed his activities and sent him on a year long trip of Europe. He continued his many activities afterwards and one morning in August of 1882, he felt a little nauseous after breakfast, so he took his newspaper and went downstairs to lie down and read in the study. There, only 58, he passed away of "apoplexy". His will left half his

## *B. B. Redding*

property to his kids, half to his wife and \$500 a year to his father. By 1882 he'd accumulated a lot of real estate, property, bonds and \$5000 in gold coins. His death was noted in all the major northern California newspapers and one of his pall bearers was the governor of California.



# Eulogy

“Here is one of character in fine proportions stands, well-born, being excellent, with noble heart and great sincerity, in love with generous service to mankind, who used his high intelligence to make things better than before, and lift his fellow to a loftier plane.”

“He loved the ‘breezy freedom of the hills’ and mountain peaks, and often climbed their slopes, for Nature he found in ample breadth. He knew the streams and all their tenants well; the paths that years ago the Indians trod. The trees and birds he greeted as his friends. He loved the monotone the breezes sing among the burry pines, and the sprightlier music of the favorite larks.”

**“In Memoriam. Benjamin B. Redding”  
written in eulogy for the  
California Academy of Sciences 1882**

# *The Journey of the Mary Jane*

**T**he idea was to do some mining of the miners. The limited stock company started by Ebenezer Haley and Fitz William Redding bought a fast ship, the Mary Jane, and filled it with cargo to sell in California. It was a close call though, getting to California and except for the good fortune of picking up a Massachusetts Indian in the Galapagos, there might have been no B.B. Redding in California, no city named Reddin, no ice harvested on Serene Lakes, and an empty booklet.

The organization of the ship's company was unusual since "All the officers, from captain to cook, and all the sailors were owners, and had an equal voice and vote..." (Sacramento Union 11/20/1878). "We were the most democratic-republican company that ever went in search of the Golden Fleece." Even though "the cook being an equal owner with the Captain, and the fore-castle having the power to out-vote the captain, discipline was observed."

Down to the equator the company had a normal voyage and must have been a really fun group since they held daily gatherings to sing temperance songs. They hit Cape Horn after 75 days at sea and got through after only a little trouble. At the Galapagos, the passengers took on water and beef and then hunted down a deck load of 50 immense turtles.

Trouble began when they were becalmed for 26 days west of Mexico. Food and water began to run short and were rationed, with water rationed to one pint per person per day. By April 9th the last of the water had been rationed out. There was no more. If some solution wasn't found, the ship's company would die of thirst. While at the Galapagos Islands, though, they'd picked up an Indian from Massachussettes who had been left there by a

## *Journey of the Mary Jane*

whaling ship when he'd become sick. He "had begged imploringly to be taken to California..." and the company was lucky they took him because as a boy he'd worked in a distillery. Using his knowledge, some of the crew was able to fashion a distiller. Using the cook's largest kettle and a gun barrel which passed through a keg filled with cold seawater, they distilled sea water into five gallons of drinking water a day. The problem wasn't completely solved and during the ordeal some interesting facets of human behavior became obvious giving B.B. the opportunity to write about some fascinating insights. Some people were generous, some hoarded, some spent their water trading for alcohol and tobacco, some wasted it, and some pooled their rations. Some of the crew demanded that the hoarders share their water since why should they have what they'd saved all to themselves? Before things came to a head though, the winds picked up. Then their chief worry, was not human nature, but "that all the gold would be exhausted from the mines before we reached them."

The ship finally pulled into San Francisco on May 25th, 1850 after six months at sea. Twenty five other ships were in port with like cargoes so the Mary Jane's cargo was not a success except for the hardware, wagons, and turtles. The turtles "sold like hotcakes." The Mary Jane herself sold for \$1300 and went off to the South Seas, unlike many other ships that were sunk, became stationary stores or even foundations for buildings.

# *How to Make Ice*

## **Don't stand still or you'll freeze fast.**

Famous 19th century ice harvesting advice

An authentic & rewarding method of ice production with apologies to the refrigerator industry

- Clear ponds of stored lumber (the summer activities).
- Boom out (clear) the ponds of floating debris.
- Each night the temperature falls below 0° you'll add an inch of ice.
- It will take a month after the first formation of ice to get harvestable ice.
- Wait until the ice is 12" thick. Anything less can't be stored profitably.
- Keep your ice free of snow - it retards ice growth, makes low quality ice, ice sinks under its own weight and it causes coagulation.
- Remove snow falling on your ice pond by hand until the ice will support horses.
- Scrape the ice with a shaving machine to remove snow.
- Exposed ice will glisten with a blue-ish hue. Really good ice is so clear you can read a newspaper through it.
- Lay out squares on your ice pond of 22" X 22"
- Use ice plows to incise the ice. Make repeated passes (you'll need 5-6) until you can use an ice saw.

## *Making Ice*

- All 30 teeth on your five foot long hand operated ice saw should be sharp.
- You don't have to saw all the way through. Ice forks and spades applied to the grooves will cleave the ice.
- Make your cuts uniform so the blocks end up 22" by 44". This makes for efficient storage. Each will weigh 250-300 pounds.
- Once the ice is cut, your workers called, face spudders and switchers, will use splinters, chisels, bars and pickeroons to separate the ice and guide it to the ice house. A good design will put your ice house below your pond (below a dam) so you can just slide the ice down a ramp into the building.
- Make sure your horses are wearing their spiked caulks so they don't slip.
- Store the iceblocks on their sides using sawdust in between for insulation and to keep the pieces separate.
- The ice must be stored immediately so it doesn't freeze together.
- Your ice house should be well insulated. Many ice house owners stuff their ice house walls with a foot of sawdust or newspaper.
- Well stored ice will last you two years and get you through a bad winter if necessary. Of course, you'd like to sell as much as you grow.

# Patenting Government Land

**W**hen America was new it was of course undeveloped and a major push by the government was not saving land but developing and populating it. So the government offered incentives to people to move west and settle.

Just in case you find yourself back in time with a few dollars in your pocket and some nice land in view, here's how to purchase public land from the government.

First, the terms:

- Patenting land means to buy it from the government.
- You'll have to wait for the official governmental survey. You can't buy before that.
- You may patent up to 160 acres.
- You must actually settle on the land.
- You may pay for the land and take title only after residing on it for a year.
- You must erect a residence and make improvements.
- You will be required to pay \$1.25 or \$2.50 per acre.
- Indians can't have any claim on the land.
- You must use the land for agriculture and not for trade.
- You must not own other land in the territory nor more than 320 acres elsewhere in the U.S.
- The land can have no valuable minerals or salt, nor can it be in a town or within a mile of a military fort.

All the money collected by the federal government was apportioned to the states by population.

# *How people first got land on Donner Summit*

## *Patenting the first lands*

**O**riginally, not counting Native Americans, all the land belonged to the federal government.

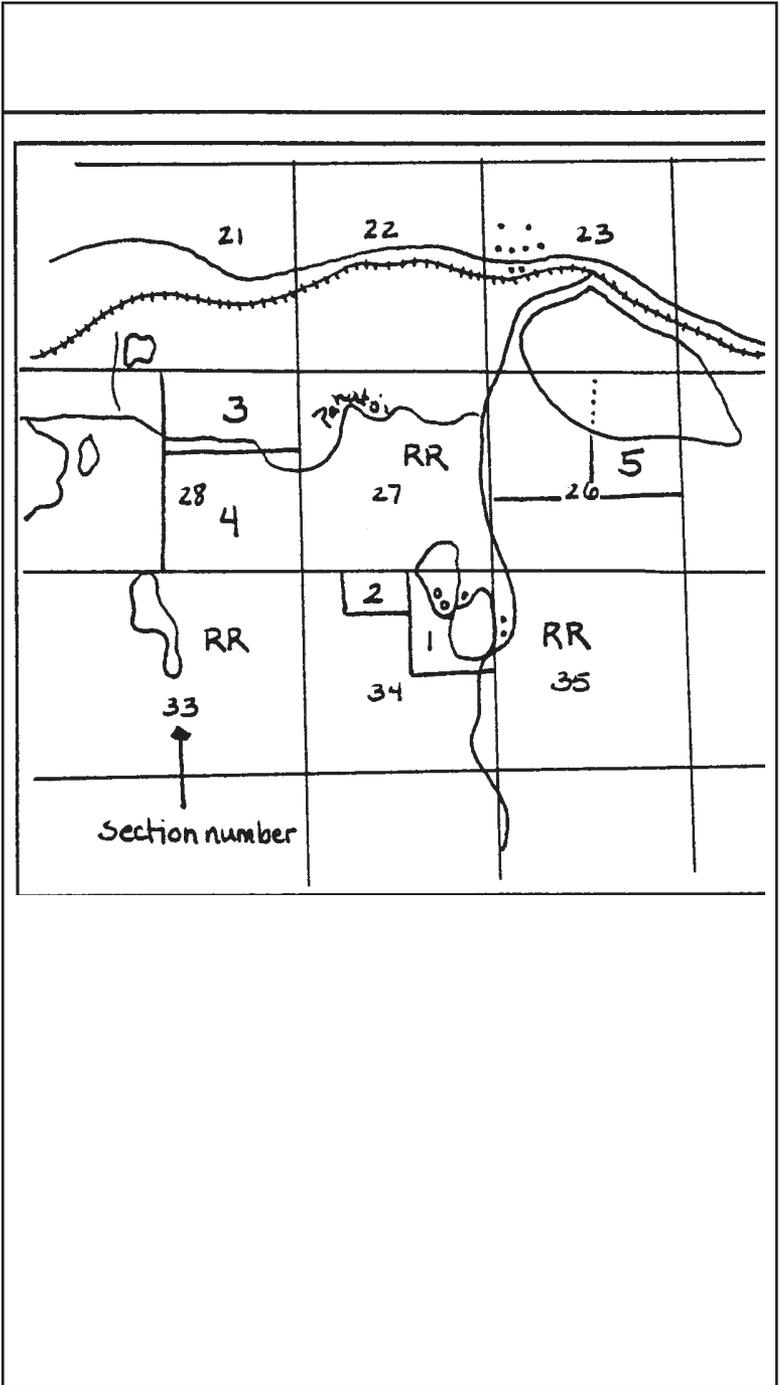
Various acts of Congress enacted methods for the public to get a hold of public lands. These acts encouraged settlement and development of course, but also served to reward people for services rendered. There are examples of all of those ways of transfer on Donner Summit.

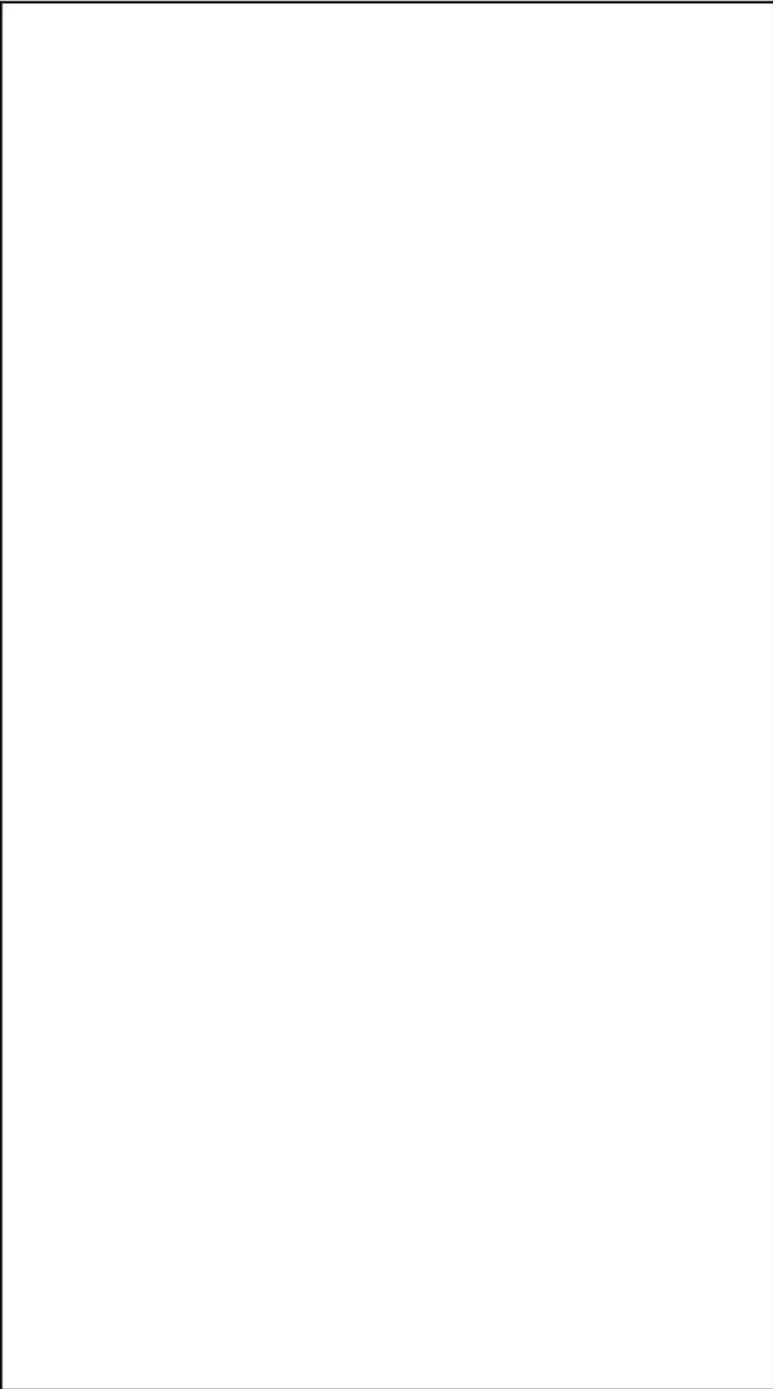
Finally, a third method of getting government land is evident on the summit. Part of what is now Van Norden meadow was issued to Adam Morgenroth as a military patent sometime before 1875 for his services in the military. Veterans could purchase land only if they had been honorably discharged, had been privates or non-commissioned officers, and if they had served a year or more. The idea was to encourage enlistment as well as settle the west.

A man named Elisha Wood bought Soda Springs ski hill in 1871 and George Sheriff bought 160 acres that looks like it might include the Soda Springs hotel land in 1876. We can make some guesses about what they were doing with their land without looking at the census data. Soda Springs and the summit was a going community in the 1870's. Lumber and sheep were shipped in abundance and a nascent tourist industry was building. It was the age when Mr. Tinker whipped his horses down Baker Ranch Rd. to the hotel at old Soda Springs.

The state of California also bought land on the summit from the U.S. government for \$1.25 per acre.

Land not patented remained in the public domain and became today's national forest lands.





# Ice Lakes

## — The Novel

**N**ow that we've got the bare facts, imagine the story we could write about the young man coming to Serene Lakes with his big plans in 1866. First there were his formative years - hearing about the big brother he barely remembered and his adventures in California. Then there was the family's trip to California and Fitz William's getting to know the new land and the Sierra during his travels through 1866 California.

Traveling along the transcontinental rail route then being built, he came upon those beautiful three serene lakes. How long did it take him to decide settling there was what he wanted to do with his life? What arguments and discussions were there with his parents and what was the final argument that got dad to agree not only to his moving there but to pay for the land? \$400 was a lot of money. Did mom finally approve or was she still against it, weeping as he rode off with his bedding and plans?

Imagine what it was like building the cabin and clearing an acre or so of land. Imagine the people he met on the Summit. With whom did he interact? Did he get into any card games? What were the hangers on of the construction crews like? He must have met some of the railroad bigwigs through his brother who was the land agent and friend of at least some. Perhaps he met the first government surveyors who surveyed the lands for patening by people like him. What was it like watching the railroad being built, seeing the exotic Chinese workers and their strange customs, meeting the first government surveyor the month after he settled (is that when he got the idea to buy - had he just been squatting - or had he staked it out just waiting for the surveyor?), seeing the beauty of the area, planning his dreams.

## *Ice lakes - The Novel*

Was there a girl down in Sacramento (named Serena with a twin sister named Sybil or Dulzura? - see the map on page 6) just waiting for him (all good novels have a love angle)? How did he transport fish to put them in the lakes? He certainly didn't herd them - although there was a lot of herding going on in those days. And what about the trip up? Was it getting late? Did he have to rush? Was he accosted by fish rustlers or hungry bear? Did his first try end with the fish dying for lack of oxygen?

How much was he influenced by his brother and his success? How much was he in competition with his brother who had already been mayor of Sacramento and secretary of state? Did he despair of ever measuring up? We know he must have listened to his brother who was an advocate of fish culture. What was it like living alone on the shores of Lake Dulzura? Whom did he see passing by? Did he go down to the Cedars with Mark Hopkins to the soon to become famous estate being built there? Did he have the same stormy adolescent relationship with his father that his brother had had? Was he worried about trespassers?

Then he settled in for the winter having gotten a lot done but probably not as much as he had wanted to, but did the snow rise too high unexpectedly or did he miss the girl in Sacramento, or was he just lonely? Returning from Sacramento in the spring of 1867 did he take the train to Cisco and what were his thoughts about linking the continent with the railroad's ribbons of steel soon? What did he find when he returned to his cabin? Could he find it? Did he have to camp out while searching for it digging down where he thought he'd left it, or had it collapsed? He returned to Sacramento one final time, apparently very sick and died, age just barely 21.

But the novel has to go on from there: the scramble to get title to the land, the coming of the ice houses, the snows, the stage to Mark Hopkins' hotel piloted by Mr. Tinker. We'd have to cover the mysterious railroad grade depression that runs the length of Serene Lakes' east side and up and over the hill to Soda Springs. Who built it for what and why?

## *Ice lakes - The Novel*

Maybe too we'd have to carry it further to pre World War I when Mips York lived alone on the shore and traveled to visit friends at the Cedars. We'd go on to World War II and the coming of the first lodge and with it the soldiers to guard the transcontinental railroad. After the war the lodge became an R & R spot of military personnel. Later there was the beginning of the Serene Lakes Club, a family camping enterprise with big plans for ski hills, horseback riding, archery, coffee klatches, etc. That failed. Then there were the lots sales in the mid-50's and the coming of the dam that reduced Serene Lakes to two lakes (goodbye Sybil), and finally the coming of you and me. Perhaps we'd go into the future dealing with Summit growth, new developments and resorts.

Here's a good part. Mrs. Fish (summer resident of the Cedars) says her aunt, age 93, remembers visiting an old old lady who lived alone at Serene Lakes in 1913 or so. Old topo maps from the 1950's show the Serene Lakes Lodge and three other buildings: the ice houses no doubt and on the location of Fitz William Jr.'s cabin, another building. There's nothing else. Just suppose Fitz had a girl. Spring of 1867 rolls around and he's headed back to the mountains but she can't go - because it would be unseemly of course for a well bred girl to... They hadn't married since Fitz wanted to get things going in Serene Lakes first - he's responsible of course - but he's enthralled her with stories of the beauty of the area, the deer drinking at the lakes at sunset, the bear that visits pawing the door. It's not that lonely - only a six hour train ride to Sacramento and there are a number of women on the summit running hotels as well as some families. Imagine her sorrow as he heads off again for the mountains - but hoping he'll soon be back - for her - no matter what her father says. Then her joy when she hears he's returned a few weeks later and her despair when she sees he's deathly ill.

He dies and she's heart broken. He was her one and only. She reaches 21 and, defying her father, moves to the cabin on Serene Lakes to be near his spirit and what gave him life. She's still there when Mrs. Fish's aunt visits on the way to the Cedars 47 years later.

*Ice lakes - The Novel*

It could have happened and she would have been very old. He name of course, would have to have been Serena.

**JACOB HOEHN,**

*Dealer in*

**ICE, COAL AND MINERAL WATER,**

**OFFICE, 149 I STREET,**

**Between Fifth and Sixth streets, Sacramento**

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***SUMMIT ICE COMPANY,***

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**ROCKY MOUNTAIN COAL COMPANY.**