

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

February, 2014 issue #66



## Crossing Donner Summit by Rail - 1871

Since we have a review in this issue of the Heirloom of an old railroad book, it looked like this would be a good place to use a quote our historical quotes, or HQ Department, has had in its computer. This comes from A Trip Across the North American Continent dated 1871, just two years after the railroad's completion.

With books like this people who could not make the journey west and see its wonders, could take the trip vicariously. This quote is about crossing Donner Summit and the pictures from the book are from nearby.

"Still we continue our long ascent, leaving Donner Lake like a lost diamond in the depths below us ; we enter the long line of snow-sheds which leads to the first tunnel ; we plunge through the gathering shadows of the tunnel, and finally emerge at Summit (1671 m.), 7017 feet above the sea, the highest point of the railway, the highest point, except Sherman, reached as yet by the iron horse and the iron road in any quarter of the world. We are not, however, at the summit of the Sierra Nevada range, but only the elevation of the mountain-pass which the railroad closely follows. The prospect is one, nevertheless, unequalled for extent and grandeur. We stand on the watershed of several mountain-torrents which, after taking the most irregular and capricious fancies, and winding by rock and valley, pour their tribute at last into the one great receptacle of the Sacramento River. Towering mountain-peaks are all around, their brightness contrasting with the mysterious shadows of profound ravines; while the murmur of falling waters is on the ear, and ever and anon comes the flash of a mountain lake, like that of a diamond, set in an emerald ring.

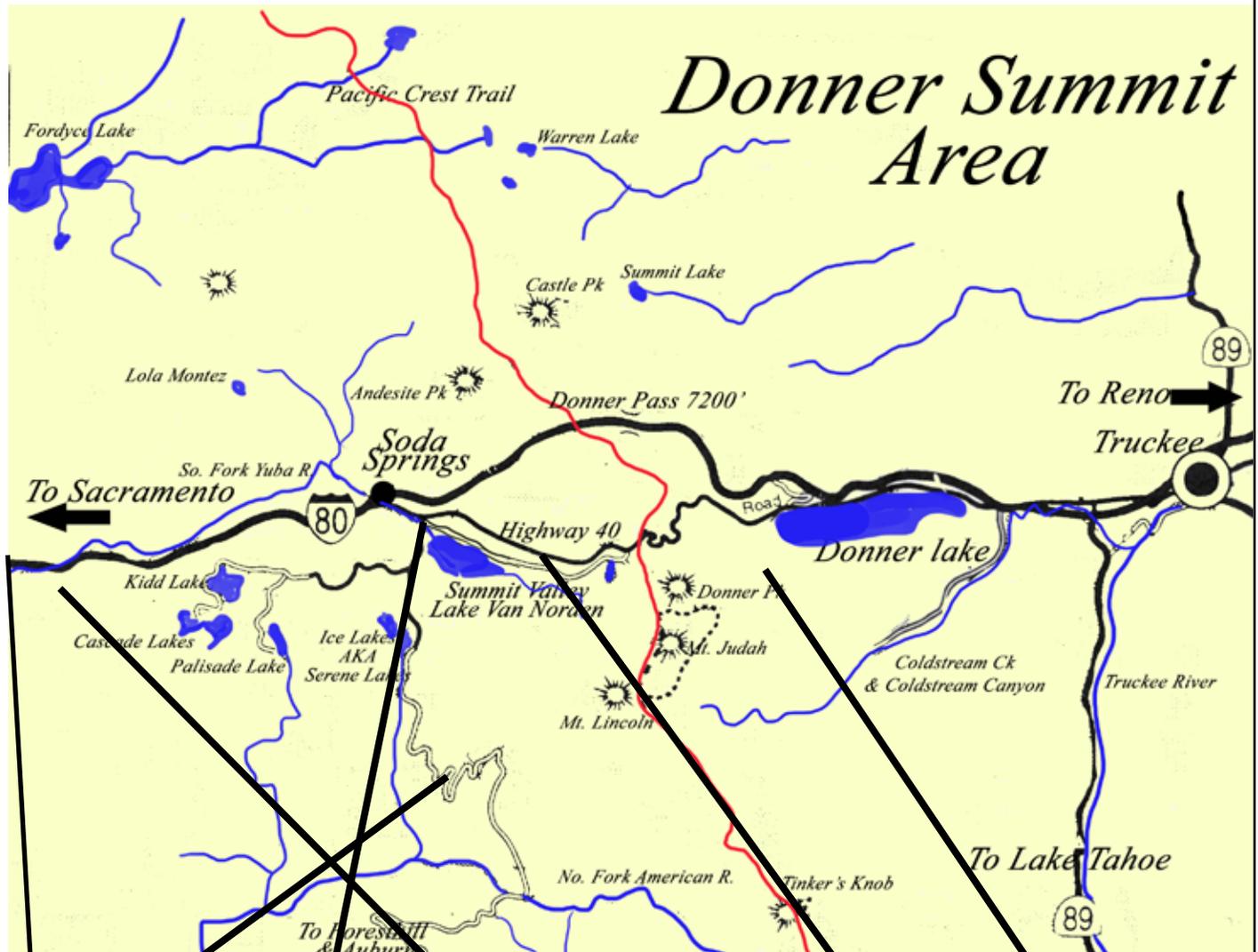
"From the moment we reach the high ground of the Summit, the railroad strikes through a succession of tunnels and snow-sheds, so closely connected that for miles it seems all tunnel. The longest of these measures 1700 feet."

Nelson's Pictorial Guidebooks Central Pacific Railroad A Trip Across the North American Continent from Ogden to San Francisco 1871

The pictures here: Donner Lake, Summit Station and the Summit Hotel (incarnation I - it burned in 1895 and was replaced by Summit Hotel II) and the snowsheds are drawings from contemporary photographs - a common practice in those days.



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Unless otherwise noted, the photographs and other historical ephemera in The Heirloom's pages come from the Norm Saylor collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society

# HISTORY: SUMMIT SODA SPRINGS

Summit Soda Springs was Mark Hopkins' choice for his summer residence and his "Summit Soda Springs Hotel", a resort he built on the headwaters of the North Fork of the American River which operated from 1873 to 1898 and whose Hotel Register was preserved to this day. Several of the original buildings are still intact including his log cabin, Timothy Hopkins' iconic stone and timber lodge, 2 hotel guest cabins, a barn, and other buildings from the late 1800s.

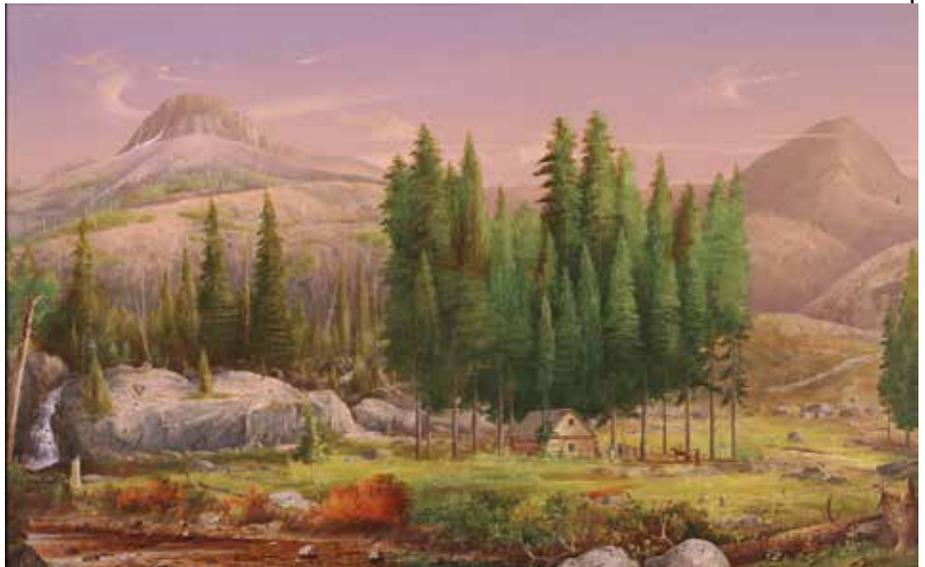
The location is between Donner Summit and Squaw Valley, 10 rough road miles from the present town of Soda Springs behind locked gates 1.5 miles away. The two original developed soda springs are still there, whose healthful properties were a magnet for more than 2,700 guests in the 1800s. (The present day town of "Soda Springs" took its name from these.)

In 1978 Summit Soda Springs' historic buildings were officially placed into the National Register of Historic Places in Washington D.C., though remains private property without right of public access.

In 1862, the first white people to inhabit "Summit Valley", as it was then known, were prospectors who built a "block house 26 x 18 ft.". Three men, Smith, Webber, and Benedict, constructed the cabin and sent "several tons of rock to Summit City or Meadow Lake" for crushing. Despite promising geology, no significant minerals were uncovered, with the nearest commercial operating mine being located many miles downstream of this headwaters valley, and those mines were not opened till 25 years later. This early cabin is undoubtedly the cabin seen in the 1868 painting by Norton Bush on permanent collection in the Crocker Gallery,

in Sacramento. Bush's painting is the oldest painting of the Valley known to exist today.

Others who painted or photographed there were William Keith, William Jackson, and Carleton Watkins. An old hotel brochure also says that Albert Bierstadt painted there.



Soda Springs, 1872 Norton Bush

In 1863, work commenced on the transcontinental Central Pacific Railroad which crossed over Donner Summit and was completed at Promontory Point Utah May 10, 1869. In 1866 a rough dirt road was built from the Forest Hill mines out to the Dutch Flat Road at Tinker's Station on the Central Pacific Railroad. Tinker's Station changed its name to Soda Springs Station in 1874, and became known simply as Soda Springs after the soda springs in Summit Valley.

Tinker's Station and the mountain above the cabins, Tinker's Knob, were both named after "the hard drinking, hard driving" stage driver, J.A. Tinker, who carried supplies to the Hotel and freight and mining equipment out to the Forest Hill divide mines from the railroad. Tinker used two wagons, one hitched to the other, and drove a span of 8 horses while riding the left hand 'wheel' horse and guiding the team with a single jerk line."\* The mines on Foresthill Divide were Lost Emigrant, Fat Goggins, the Ralston, Chalk Bluff, and The Last Chance. Tinker's Knob was earlier named "Berkeley Peak", and is depicted in several Carleton Watkins' photographs as such.

On July 4, 1869, an "A Anderson" carved his name in a tree in the meadow below the present cabins, which carving is preserved and sits on the piano in the Hopkins log cabin. (This is probably the man after whom Anderson Peak was named.) If you look southwest from Truckee, you can see both Anderson Peak and Tinker's Knob on the Western skyline.

One of the "Big Four", Mark Hopkins, discovered the Valley through the services of an Indian, (or Bill Derrick, whomever you choose to believe). Mark was a recluse who wanted to get away from The City and the pressures of being Treasurer of the Central Pacific Railroad. He built his log cabin there in 1875, but he first built a hotel where he and his friends stayed so that,



as the story goes, his wife, Mary, would not be lonely.

The Sacramento Union reported that in 1872 Alexey W. Von Schmidt built 2 cabins in the valley while he was planning a water line and tunnel to be built from Lake Tahoe to the Sacramento Valley. This is the same Von Schmidt who surveyed the famous Von Schmidt Line as California's eastern boundary and appears as

a guest in the Hotel Register.

In 1873, the Hotel was finished and commenced business with its first manager being William Jones, a partner of Tinker. In 1893, the managers became Joseph Goulden (aka "Joseph Golding") and Silas Jacobs, who also ran the Summit Hotel located near Old Highway 40 at Donner Summit. Guests would arrive by train at the Summit Hotel, and take a 4 hour stage coach ride in to the hotel at Summit Soda Springs. A concrete fountain was built near the hotel in 1877 and still remains. At its peak, the Hotel could accommodate 105 guests, and operated for 25 years before burning down in August, 1898. Guests were a Who's Who of the era: Guggenlime, Mackey, Stanford, Folger, Huntington, Crocker, Redding, Gallatin, Dwinnell, Flood, Hearst, Ghirardelli, Comstock, and of course Hopkins, amongst many other prominent Californians.

In 1875, Mark Hopkins finished his log cabin just above the Hotel. At that time a croquet court was built east of the log cabin where the stone Lodge now stands.

Mark Hopkins died in 1878. He and his widow, Mary, had adopted one of the children of a servant, who then took the name, Timothy Hopkins. Timothy inherited Soda Springs after a law suit with Mary's second husband, Edward Searles, and Timothy went on to become the Treasurer of the Central Pacific Railroad and owned personally 600 acres, which is now the City of Palo Alto. One of his homes, in San Francisco on the northeast corner of Washington and Spruce Streets, sold a few years ago for \$11 million. The Seller was Gwin Follis' estate (formerly Chairman of Standard Oil of California).

Around 1895, the two existing lower cabins were constructed as guest houses for the Hotel.

In 1897, Timothy commenced construction of the stone and timber main lodge, and it took 3 years to complete. The granite was hauled by wagon and train from the granite works in Rocklin, and the stone mason was Matt Herbinson, who later became a noted botanist. They supplemented granite as needed from the granite benches above the house, where blast marks in the rock are evident.

In August, 1898, a kerosene lamp tipped over, and The Soda Springs Hotel burned down and was never rebuilt. Guests reported they barely had time to get out with many sliding down boards with splinters, but no deaths reported. Long time hotel guests mostly migrated to Lucky Baldwin's Tallac at Tahoe, but 4 hardy souls wanted to stay in the Valley, bought some land 2 miles downstream, and in 1901 formed the North Fork Association ("The Cedars"). The Cedars thrives today with more than 90 families being members and own ca 6,400 acres plus another ca 2,000 acres owned by one of its members.

In 1908, a phone line was put in over Mt. Lincoln from Donner Summit. Also, in 1908 there were newspaper reports of many break ins at the cabins.

In August, 1910, the Lost Emigrant Mine burned and Fenelon Heath became the caretaker first at The Cedars for two years, then at Summit Soda Springs for many years. Heath had founded the Lost Emigrant Mine and was its first President. He lost a daughter and a son in the Valley, one drowned in waterfalls at the cabins, and the other died of scarlett fever. Both are buried in the area.

Another character in the Valley was Bill Derrick, who worked there in 1899 and at The Cedars until sometime during Josiah Stanford's ownership. Mary Chickering Erdman knew him when she stayed with the Stanfords during their ownership. His life story is poignant: Young Bill Derrick was 10 years old when his family came across the prairies in a covered wagon. One day in what is now Utah, he took his rifle out to shoot a prairie chicken (sage hen), and became disoriented from where they had stopped for the night. His parents were frantic when he didn't come back and spent three days looking for him, all in vain. Finally, the family decided that he probably was taken by Indians, and they pushed west, taking the fork in the road to Oregon. Meanwhile, young Bill apparently waited patiently on the road which led to California, and when his parents never arrived, gave up and was taken to California by a passing wagon train. He grew up an orphan and never saw his family again, landing in Summit Soda Springs where he remained in his later years.

In 1914, Timothy Hopkins sold the original 80 acres to Josiah Stanford, a wealthy central valley farmer and nephew to Leland Stanford. Mr. Stanford's daughter, Helen, and Mary Chickering were best friends, and Mary came to stay with the Stanfords for a month every year thereafter. At the end of her stay, Mary's father, Allen L. Chickering, would come up from his home in Piedmont and pick her up to return home. Allen Chickering thus became acquainted with the Stanfords and told Josiah that if he ever wanted to sell to please call him. [Note: The first Chickering to visit the Valley was Allen's mother, Mrs. William Henry Chickering, who appears in the Hotel Register in 1894, along with her children.]

In 1928, Josiah Stanford became too ill to return to the Valley and sold the 80 acres to Allen and Alma Chickering, whose family has owned it ever since. The Chickering's added to the original 80 acres all of the railroad land upstream in the headwaters and some land south into the Squaw Creek drainage, which he acquired to preserve the wildflowers from the devastation of sheep grazing. Later, due to the impacts of the new summer tramway at Squaw Valley, in 1975 the family sold off a 1/4 Section with Shirley Lake to Squaw Valley Ski Resort. Their property now encompasses 1,800 acres. Allen and Alma Chickering and their family have been deeply committed to preserving the valley and determined to insure its preservation by first buying up the private land to protect against sheep grazing and logging. Later his two sons, Allen and Sherman, dedicated all but the area around the cabins as a Conservation Easement for research to the University of California Natural Lands Reserve System in the mid 1970s. The conservation easement does not allow public access, but they did earlier dedicate a foot and horse trail easement for those who wanted to access Squaw Valley and points south via a long hike from the old Soda Springs Road "Painted Rock Trail". Trespassing off the trail is not permitted.

Allen L. Chickering (1877-1958) was a prominent attorney in San Francisco, who also was a well known botanist to whom Philip Munz's landmark book on wildflowers, "A California Flora", was dedicated. He was the founding editor of U.C. Berkeley's "Daily Californian"; the first white man, with Walter Starr, to explore the Sierras from Yosemite to Kings River Canyon in 1895 -96; and was co-founder of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, and Save-the-Redwoods League, as well as past President of the California Historical Society (1934-42).

Six generations of Chickering's have stayed at Summit Soda Springs, and the property is now owned by Allen's grandchildren and great grandchildren. The family asks that the public respect its long term commitment to the conservation of the valley untouched

by logging or development, and respect that there is no access to the buildings or the grounds surrounding.

-written by Nick Chickering who used many sources including books and newspapers, many of which can be found in the State Library in Sacramento. (Updated 8/22/2013).



Both Stereographs here are by Carleton Watkins Summit Soda Springs near Summit Station for the CPRR

# Eric Johnson - Summit Artist

In the January, '11 [Heirloom](#) we first introduced Eric Johnson exhibiting some large cartoons in the collection of Starr Walton Hurley and we talked about how the Apré Ski culture has changed over time.

In July of this year Eric Johnson's third wife came in to the Historical Society and donated a collection of Eric's work which we reproduce in much smaller form here.

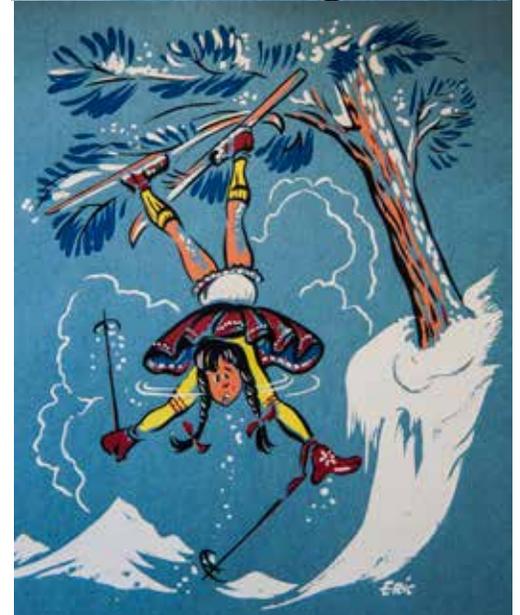
Eric was a representative for various commercial entities, he helped start several small ski areas, taught skiing at Donner Ski Ranch, and he hung out at Soda Springs Hotel in the 1950's. All that time on Donner Summit enabled him to gather ideas for his cartoons at DSR and elsewhere. He is pictured at right.



There is also a gallery of Starr Hurley's collection on the DSHS website.

The Pro

The Schussboomer



Folk dancers

Spring Skiing

The Bar Skier

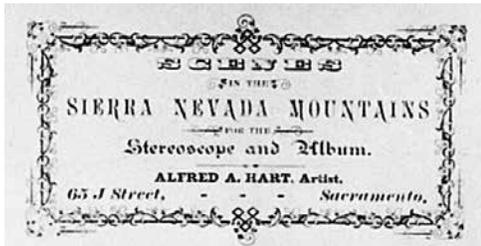


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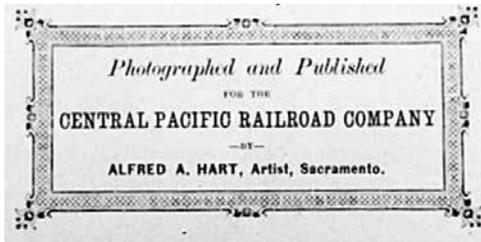


# Alfred A. Hart Photographs

Last Month, the [Heirloom](#) reviewed Alfred A. Hart Artist. Hart was the railroad photographer for the Central Pacific Railroad. We did not have enough room for everything though so a little has been carried over to this month. On this page there are two examples of his work for the railroad which also exhibit his skill in landscape photography along with some labels. On the next page is the title page from [The Traveler's Own Book](#) which was a railroad guide book Hart Published, an excerpt, and how Hart did photography.



Hart 179 Old Man Mountain near Meadow Lake



## Interesting facts

In 1854 locomotives had great mileage: 16 miles to the cord of wood.

On each tunnel face while constructing their 15 Sierra tunnels the railroad used 150 lbs of candles per month per face and 1500 feet of fuse.

Hart 174 below Cisco and Crystal Lake. Note the RR trestle in the center left.

# How Photography Was Done in Those Days

Today we blast off a series of digital photos without even giving it a thought. Today's film is so inexpensive and the effort revolves mostly around pressing a button and downloading or uploading images. It was not so simple for the 19th Century photographers. The work involved for just one image from hauling the large camera and tripod around to preparing plates, exposing, developing, and mounting was long and involved. We should be glad they did what they did so we can see what they saw.

Meade Kibby described Hart's photo preparation and development process over ten pages in *The Railroad Photographs*... and shows how sure photographers had to be of their composition, exposure time, focus, and scene. There was a lot of effort required for each shot. The photographer had to really want the view. Kibby also goes on to analyze lens sizes, exposure times, stereograph production and labeling, and viewing.

Hart used a special camera that took two images simultaneously. The lenses were 2 5/8 inches apart. He used the wet collodion system which consisted of glass plates which were coated with gun cotton, alcohol, and ether. The plates were then dipped in silver nitrate to sensitize them. The coating, sensitizing, exposing and developing had to be done before the plates dried which gave the photographer five to ten minutes of latitude. The sensitizing and developing had to be done in the dark. To expose the pictures a dark cloth was held over the lenses and removed to expose the plates. Exposures lasted one second or more. The silver nitrate stained the skin.

Although it's a cumbersome method it was the best system going, having displaced the daguerreotype method that had been in use.

Hart used the 35 mm equivalent of 30 and 65 mm lenses, a heavy camera and bulky tripod.



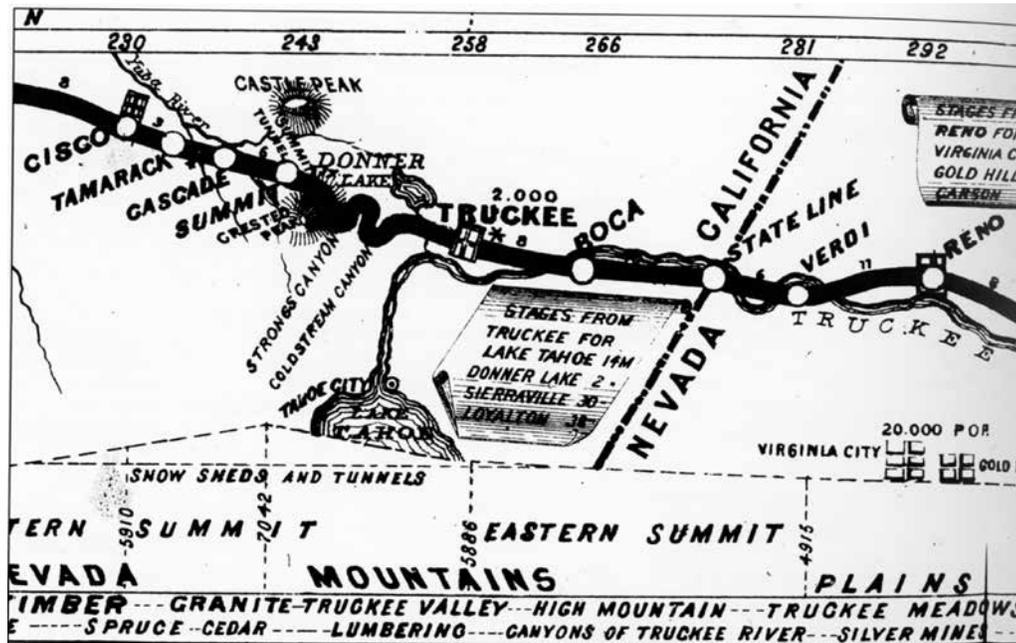
From Alfred Hart's *Traveler's Own Book* 1870 a 4 x 6 tourists' guide

"...we arrive at Truckee Station. Here, we are in the valley, which is inclosed [sic] between the eastern and western summits. No traveler should miss the interesting point. Two miles, and Donner Lake is reach by stages; fare, \$1.00. Here also are stages for that greatest of mountain lake – Tahoe – 15 miles distant up the beautiful river; fare, \$3.00. At Tahoe City is a fine hotel – plenty of boats – also a small steamer running to various interesting points around the lake. The view from Tahoe City is very beautiful. There is also a good road around the eastern shore of the lake.

"Leaving Truckee, we commence our ascent of the western summit. Upward on one side of a long canyon, where we can see on the opposite side, high above us, the railroad as it winds around the mountain side and enters a tunnel. Soon we are to that higher point, and can look far down across the canyon to the spot where we so lately passed. Emerging from the tunnel – far below us lies Donner Lake; a moment and it is gone, as we once more ascend another canyon, which runs at right angles to our direct course. Again the lake would be seen, but the immense snow galleries which we are passing through, hide all the scenery. Here, running around the side of the steep rocky mountain, with Donner Lake 1,100 feet below, we pass through to these stupendous snow galleries and rocky tunnels, by which a pathway is always kept open for the iron horse. These snow galleries are built of timbers 12X14 inches, and placed 20 inches apart – 18 feet high, and have a lean-to roof, covered with 4-inch plank – all firmly secured and bolted to the mountain side. The avalanches which descend from Crested Peak are thus thrown off harmless.

"The snow covering extends from near Truckee to Blue Canyon, a distance of 35 miles.... Passing through the Summit tunnel –cut in solid granite- 1,666 feet long, we stop at Summit. Here all is rough and rocky and those who with adventure, it is just the place, as it is easily reached, has fine accommodations, and grand scenery of easy access.

"Rattling onward once more, we commence to descend into the valley of the Sacramento. Here is where the storm king ruled for ages in all the glory of absolute power; but now he finds a rival, whose triumphant voice echoes a note of defiance to all the powers of that ancient monarch, whose ice domains are thus ruthlessly invaded by a modern king, who brings and carries in his train all the comforts and luxuries of civilization. We now pass through Summit Valley. Here the snow falls very deep, - from 10 to 15 feet on a level, and in some places 40 to 50 feet deep. Passing through a country heavily timbered...."



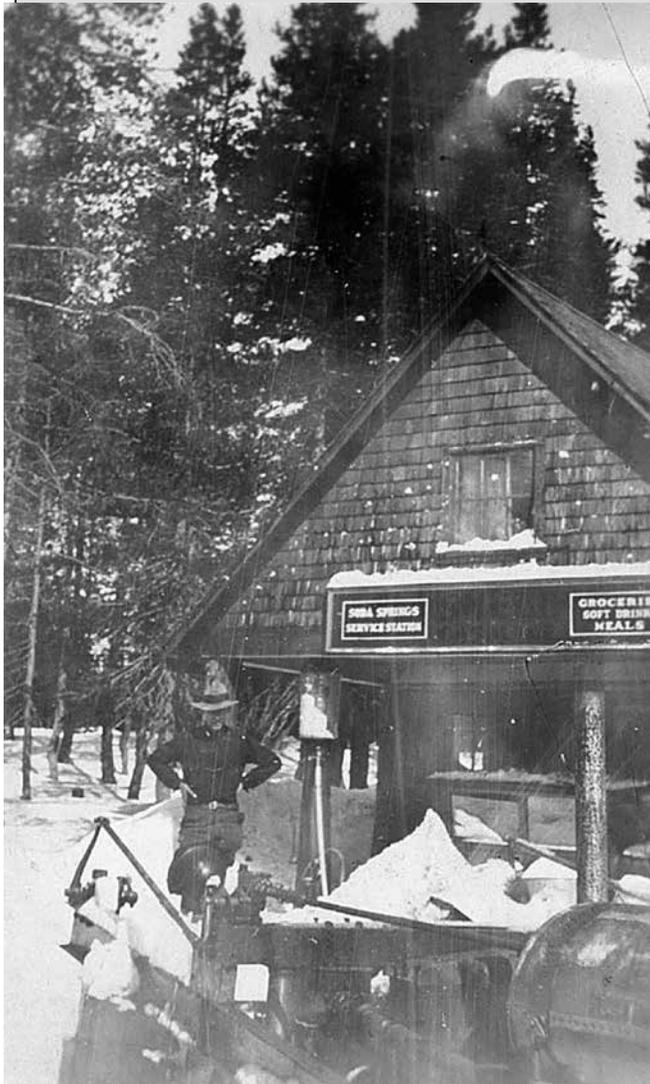
On this page both items come from Alfred A. Hart's Traveler's Own Guide. Above is a map showing the railroad stops around Donner Summit and the stage lines. To the right is a table to help travelers keep the right time as the train traveled across country.

| LOCAL AND RUNNING TIME. |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| 8:58                    | SAN FRANCISCO   | 12:00                                   |
|                         | Western Pacific Railroad.<br>Sacramento Time.                     | 5 minutes faster.                       |
| 9:03                    | SACRAMENTO  | 12:05                                   |
|                         | Central Pacific Railroad.<br>Sacramento Time.                     | 1 hour and 5 minutes faster.            |
|                         | Utah Central Railroad.<br>9:40-SALT LAKE-12:42<br>Salt Lake Time. | 37 minutes faster than Sacramento Time. |
|                         | Union Pacific Railroad.<br>Ogden to Laramie.<br>Laramie Time.     | 37 minutes faster than Sacramento Time. |
| 10:08                   | LARAMIE   | 1:10                                    |
|                         | Union Pacific Railroad.<br>Omaha to Laramie.<br>Omaha Time.       | 37 minutes faster.                      |
| 10:45                   | OMAHA   | 1:47                                    |
|                         | C., B. & M. R. R. R.<br>Chicago Time.                             | 34 minutes faster.                      |
| 11:19                   | CHICAGO   | 2:21                                    |
| 12:00                   | WASHINGTON  | 3:02                                    |
| 12:12                   | NEW YORK  | 3:14                                    |

Traveling Westward, set your watch slower, according to this Table.

Traveling Eastward, set your watch faster, according to this Table.

# From the DSHS Archives



Soda Springs Service Station Groceries, Soft Drinks, Meals circa 1930. It used to sit opposite the current store and east on Old 40 a bit.

## GREAT REGISTER OF PLAGER COUNTY 1906 PLAGER COUNTY INDEX TO Summit Precinct

| No. | Name.                            | Age. | Occupation.     | Address. |
|-----|----------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------|
| 1   | Aldinger, John William           | 24   | Cigar Maker     | Donner   |
| 2   | Andree, Rudolph Henry            | 49   | Dairyman        | Donner   |
| 3   | Baxter, Sidney Leslie            | 26   | Operator        | Donner   |
| 4   | Birch, Ralph Waldo               | 29   | Brakeman        | Donner   |
| 5   | Butterfield, John Henry          | 37   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 6   | Dawson, Robert James             | 48   | Clerk           | Donner   |
| 7   | De Bock, Gus                     | 29   | Trainman        | Donner   |
| 8   | Dougherty, Charles Harvey        | 29   | Foreman         | Donner   |
| 9   | Ennis, George "W"                | 37   | Marine Fireman  | Donner   |
| 10  | Gowling, Joseph                  | 61   | Hotel Keeper    | Donner   |
| 11  | Howe, Charles                    | 26   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 12  | Irish, Owen Gilbert              | 35   | Miner           | Donner   |
| 13  | Jalcks, Robert                   | 42   | Miner           | Donner   |
| 14  | Kearns, Owen                     | 30   | Engineer        | Donner   |
| 15  | Lord, John                       | 33   | Conductor       | Donner   |
| 16  | Meyer, William Henry             | 26   | Brakeman        | Donner   |
| 17  | Morebest, Theodore Charles, Jr.  | 26   | Agent S. P. Co. | Donner   |
| 18  | McSherry, Harry James            | 23   | Trainman        | Donner   |
| 19  | Peterson, Andrew Jackson         | 37   | Carpenter       | Donner   |
| 20  | Plaggi, Robt. John               | 32   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 21  | Reed, John Robert                | 54   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 22  | Richardson, James "W"            | 28   | Carpenter       | Donner   |
| 23  | Sangmaster, William August       | 61   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 24  | Shepard, Jonathan                | 40   | Laborer         | Donner   |
| 25  | Sheurer, William                 | 24   | Lineman         | Donner   |
| 26  | Smith, James Edward              | 30   | Electrician     | Donner   |
| 27  | Thayer, Jesse Burnham            | 56   | Bookkeeper      | Donner   |
| 28  | Van Harlingen, Ernestus Her- man | 26   | Signalman       | Donner   |
| 29  | Wagner, Albert Constantine       |      |                 | Donner   |



Norden Store, 1930's



Cisco Grove 1930 or so

# From the DSHS Archives



group picture about 1948 at the Donner Ski Ranch Chuck Wagon. Bob Mcnee left Stan Walton (Ski Ranch founder), center, and Gladys Buek

In the background is Starr Walton, now on the DSHS board.



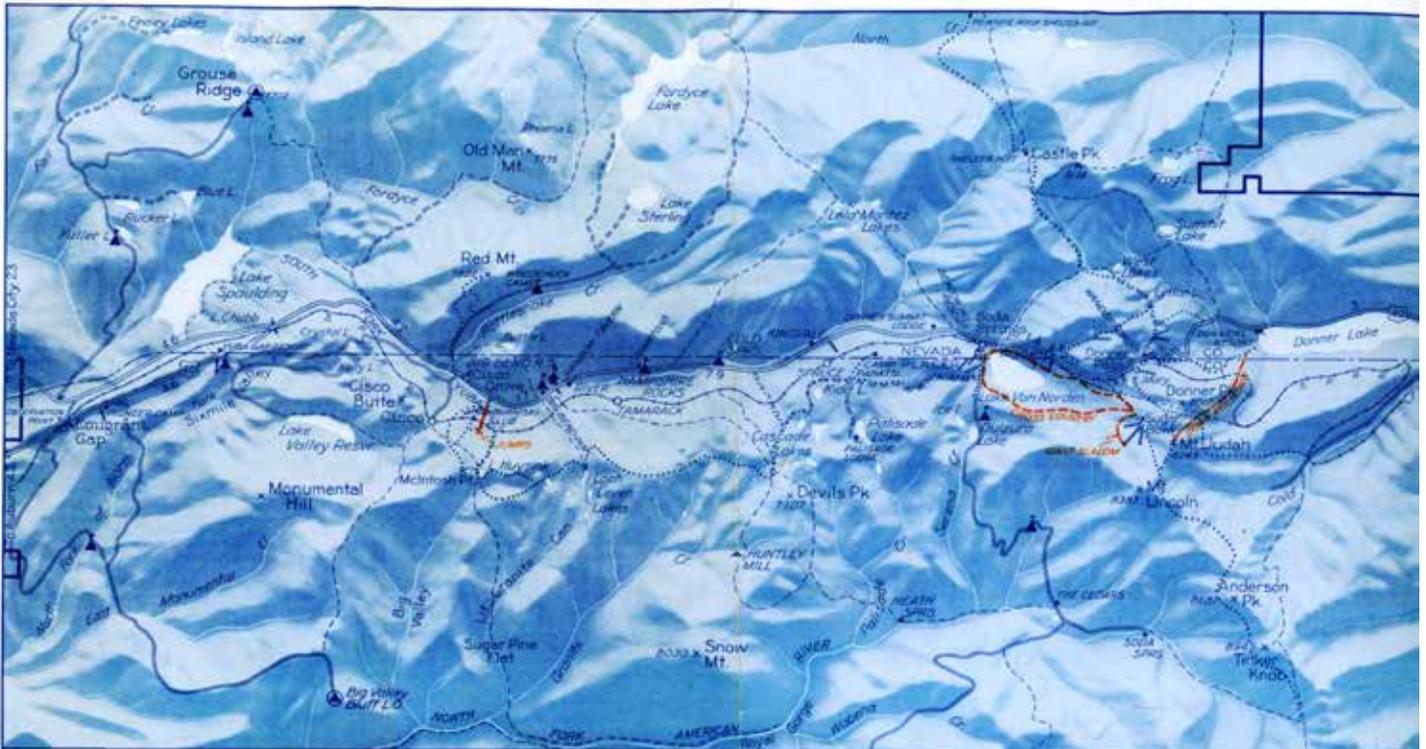
Soda Springs Hotel, Winter, 1930



Soda Springs, outside the hotel, 1930's



Soda Springs Ski Area



**DONNER TRAIL RECREATION AREA**  
TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST  
CALIFORNIA REGION

**NATIONAL FOUR-WAY SKI CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS**  
(Events shown in red)  
March 20, 21 & 22, 1947

- Sponsor: National Ski Association  
Hosts: Auburn Ski Club, Sugar Bowl Ski Club
1. JUMPS at Auburn Ski Club if snow conditions are unfavorable there, jumps will be held at Sugar Bowl.
  2. CROSS COUNTRY race will circle Lake Van Norden, starting and finishing at Sugar Bowl.
  3. GRANT SCALDRI race above Sugar Bowl.
  4. DOWN MOUNTAIN race from Mt. Judah to Donner Lake.

**WINTER SPORTS GUIDE**

**DONNER TRAIL RECREATION AREA - TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST**

**Truckee:** 6000 feet. **Location:** Adjoining town of Truckee on U.S. Highway 40. Adequate parking. Private land operated by Truckee Outing Club. **Tows and lifts:** 1300-foot rope tow. **Ski runs:** Short alternate runs. **Ski trails:** Truckee to Bald Mountain, 4 miles roundtrip. Truckee to Tahoe City, 1 1/2 miles one way. **Ski jumps:** Class B. **Shelter:** Warming hut on area. **Equipment:** Warming hut and Truckee. **Instruction:** Available. **Meals and lodging:** Restaurants, hotels and rooming houses in Truckee. **First aid:** Truckee. **Forest officer:** Truckee Ranger Station, 1/4 mile from ski grounds.

**Tahoe City:** 6250 feet. **Location:** 1/4 mile W of Tahoe City off State Highway 89. Private land operated by Tahoe Ski Club. **Tows and lifts:** 1200-foot rope tow. Ample parking. **Ski runs:** One 3/4-mile and several short runs. **Ski trails:** Tahoe City to Truckee, 1 1/2 miles one way; Paige Meadows Ski Trail 3 miles roundtrip. **Ski jumps:** Class B. **Shelter:** Tahoe Ski Club. **Equipment:** Tahoe City Inn. **Instruction:** Tahoe City, limited. **Meals and lodging:** Tahoe City, also Truckee. **First aid:** Tahoe City and Truckee. **Forest officer:** Truckee Ranger Station, 15 miles N.

**Donner Resort:** 6100 feet. **Location:** On U. S. Highway 40, six miles W of Truckee. Operated by Donner Resort Company. **Tows and lifts:** None. **Ski runs and trails:** North Donner Ski Trail, 2 miles, and Middle Donner Ski Trail, 2 1/2 miles, both terminating in vicinity of Donner Resort. Beginning can be reached via highway near summit. **Ski jumps:** None. **Shelter, equipment, instruction, meals and lodging:** At Donner Lake Resort. **First aid:** Truckee, 6 miles E. **Forest officer:** Truckee Ranger Station.

**Donner Summit:** 7100 feet. **Location:** 66 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. National forest and private land. **Tows and lifts:** Two 800-foot rope tows. **Ski runs:** Numerous open slopes, moderate to steep terrain. **Ski trails:** South Donner Run and Sierra Crest, 4 miles. **Ski jumps:** None. **Shelter, equipment, instructions, meals, lodging and first aid:** Vanderford's Resort. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

**Sugar Bowl:** 7000 feet. **Location:** One mile from Norden Southern Pacific Station by snow sleds or one mile S by ski trail from Vanderford's Resort on Donner Summit. National forest and Sugar Bowl Corporation land. **Tows and lifts:** Two 800-foot rope tows and one 3/4-mile chair lift. **Ski runs:** Several good runs, including open practice slopes. **Ski trails and jumps:** None. **Shelter, equipment, instruction, meals, lodging and first aid:** All at Sugar Bowl Hotel. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station 7/8 on highway.

**Norden:** 7000 feet. **Location:** 65 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. Southern Pacific Company snow playfield. **Tows and lifts:** 600-foot rope tow. **Ski runs, trails and jumps:** None. **Shelter and equipment:** Norden Southern Pacific Station. **Instruction, meals and lodging:** Norden Resort. **First aid:** Norden Resort and Southern Pacific Station. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

**Soda Springs:** 6600 feet. **Location:** 6 1/2 miles E of Auburn on U. S. Highway 40. Private land. **Tows and lifts:** 1400-foot J-Bar tow; two 1000-foot rope tows. **Ski runs and jumps:** None. **Ski trails:** 1-mile adjacent to hotel; 9-mile cross country trail. **Equipment:** Soda Springs Hotel and Donner Summit Resort. **Shelter and instruction:** Soda Springs Hotel. **Meals and lodging:** Soda Springs Hotel, Donner Summit Resort and Ice Lakes Resort. **First aid:** Soda Springs Hotel. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

**Rainbow Tavern - Crampton's Resort:** 5800 feet. **Location:** 57 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. National forest and private land. **Tows and lifts:** 1400-foot J-Bar at Rainbow Tavern. **Ski runs:** 1600-foot run at Rainbow Tavern; short run at Crampton's Lodge. **Ski trails and jumps:** None. **Shelter:** At resorts only. **Instructions:** Rainbow Tavern. **Equipment, meals, lodging and first aid:** Rainbow Tavern and Crampton's Lodge. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

**Big Bend:** 5600 feet. **Location:** 55 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. National forest land. **Ski runs:** 2 miles of public ski trail and short runs. **Tows and lifts, ski trails, jumps, equipment and instruction:** None. **Shelter, meals and lodging:** Big Bend Resort. **First aid:** Big Bend Ranger Station and Auburn Ski Club. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station adjacent to area.

**Auburn Ski Club - Cisco Grove:** 5500 feet. **Location:** 52 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. National forest and private land. **Tows and lifts:** 1 rope tow at Cisco Grove and 3/4-mile rope tow at Auburn Ski Club. **Ski runs and trails:** 3-mile intermediate run on Mt. McIntosh and 2-mile race trail for experts on Red Mt. **Ski jumps:** Class A, B, and C jumps; also special student section. **Shelter:** At resorts on highway. **Equipment:** Cisco Grove Resort and Auburn Ski Club. **Instruction:** Auburn Ski Club. **Meals and lodging:** Cisco Grove Resort. **First aid:** Cisco Grove Resort and Auburn Ski Club National Ski Patrol Unit. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station, 3 miles E on highway.

**Yuba Gap:** 5600 feet. **Location:** 48 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. National forest land. **Tows and lifts:** 400-foot rope tow. **Ski runs:** 3 downhill runs and snow playfield. **Ski trails, jumps, and instruction:** None. **Shelter, equipment, meals, lodging and first aid:** Nearby at Whispering Pines Resort. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

**Carpenter Flat - Emigrant Gap:** 5500 feet. **Location:** 42 miles E of Auburn on U.S. Highway 40. Private land. **Tows and lifts:** One rope tow. **Ski trails:** None marked. **Ski jumps:** None. **Shelter:** At resorts along highway. **Equipment:** Laing's Pioneer Camp. **Instruction:** None. **Meals and lodging:** Emigrant Gap Hotel and Laing's Pioneer Camp. **First aid:** Arrangements pending. See Auburn Ski Club, 10 miles E. **Forest officer:** Big Bend Ranger Station.

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ENJOY YOUR NATIONAL FORESTS

HELP KEEP THEM CLEAN AND GREEN

# Book Review

## Westward by Rail

The New Route to the East

Wm. Fraser, RAE 1835-1905

1871 391 pages

Most likely you are not going to read this book so I've tried to give you a flavor of a 19th Century transcontinental train trip was like in 1869 through the eyes of an English visitor.

Wm. Fraser decided on an adventure. He would travel from England to the United State and then across the continent by the new transcontinental railroad. First he had to travel by steamship across the ocean but being parochially oriented here at the Donner Summit Historical Society and with space constraints, that will be something you'll have to read about in the book.

One remark is worth noting. The sea 1869 journey ended in Jersey City and what greeted the passengers when they first came close to land was not the Statue of Liberty as there is today, but the New York Herald building, "...a towering edifice, imposing in outline and white in colour."

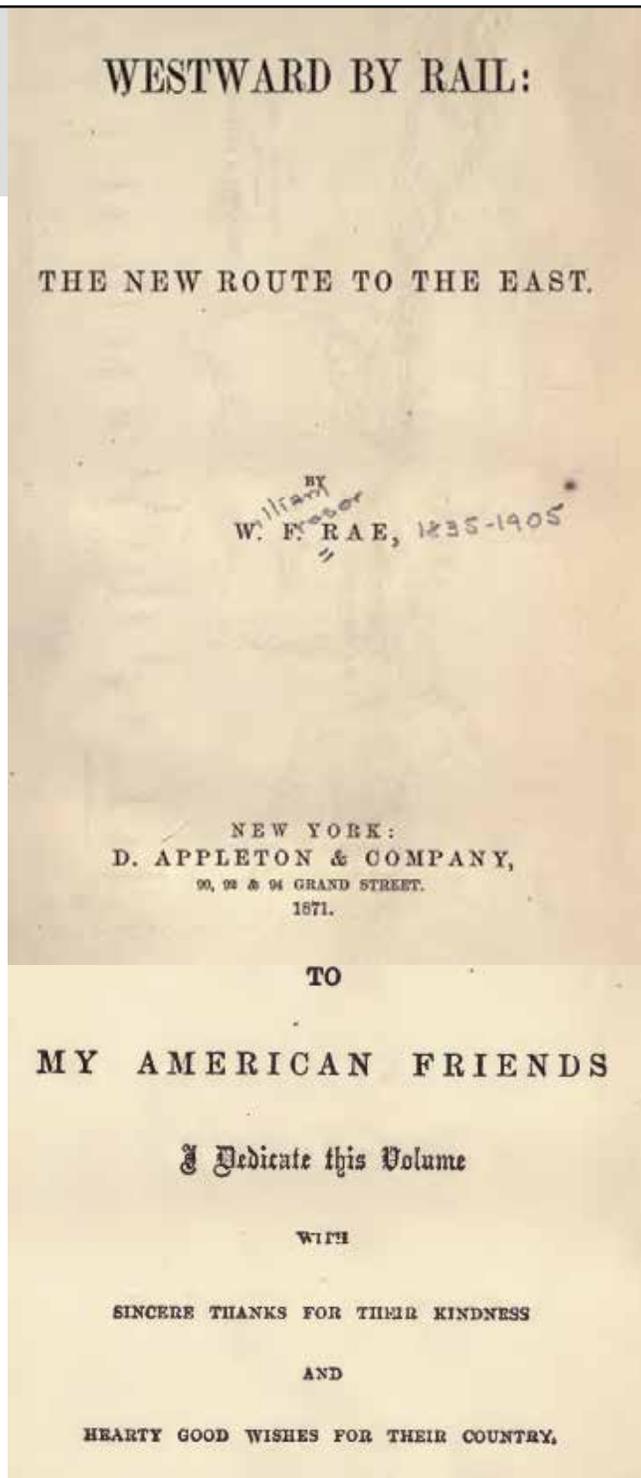
In New York "the purity of the air is delicious" and "all nationalities seem to have sent their representatives" and the women were "dressed after the latest French mode" but this review should focus closer to home. Suffice it to say that in Mr. Fraser's mind the "excellencies" of New York outweighed the "drawbacks."

Mr Fraser embarked on his cross country rail tour. He had heard of Pullman Palace Cars but was "unprepared for the reality." Using one is an "Epoch in a traveler's life." "No Royal personage can be more comfortably housed than the occupant of a Pullman Car..." One of the cars on his train had staterooms, a kitchen with "every appliance necessary for cooking purposes," water tanks, a wine cellar, an ice-house and orders for five kinds of bread, four kinds of cold meat, six hot dishes, eggs cooked seven ways, seasonable vegetables and fruit are taken.

The train sped along at 30 MPH and reached Chicago which Fraser describes as a vibrant city of 100,000 people "In every quarter hundreds of workmen are labouring at the erection of new houses" and natural obstacles are "confronted and overcome." Chicago was a "city of note." Then it was across the prairie to connect to the Union Pacific Railroad.

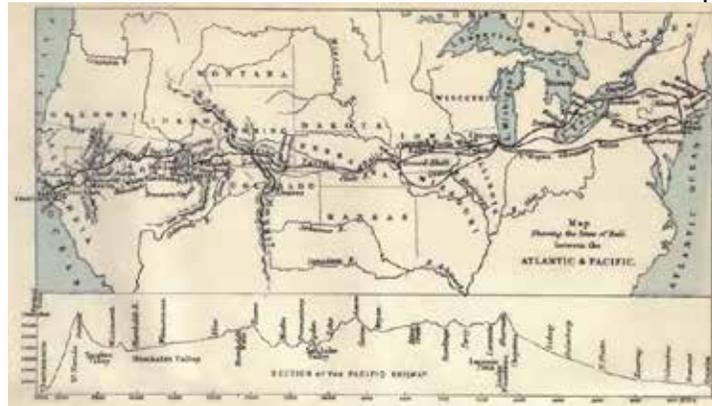
This was another ride on a Pullman Car, "a combined drawing-room, dining-room, and bed-room on wheels." The springs "are so well adjusted that the oscillation,... is reduced to a minimum." Double windows eliminated noise, dust, and cold. The cars "revolutionize train travel." During the day one sat in a seat and at night "the seat is folded down...blankets, clean sheets, and pillows are arranged...a curtain is drawn in front and a sleeping berth is thus formed."

During the trip over the prairies and Rockies Fraser was impressed. He described the surroundings including the first sight of Indians bedecked with "wisps of hair...trophies...cut from the heads of vanquished foes." Fraser said the Indians advancing



to civilization was just their adoption of the revolver over the scalping knife and so their “acquaintance is more to be avoided than courted.” “How to deal with the Indians is one of the most complex among the problems with which the Government of the United States has to deal.”

Moving west the new rail journey “takes on the character of a daring enterprise.” Stories about the line being constructed too hurriedly, wild Indians attacking passengers and accident are passed around. Buffalo were not to be seen and Fraser warned of their coming extinction. Further on the scenery was “tame and uninteresting.” The limitless plains were broken only by herds of antelope, some Rocky Mountain sheep, and dead oxen left by emigrant wagon trains.



At the Rockies they had ascended to 8,000 feet and the “purity of the air was extreme” and the lungs had difficulty becoming “fully inflated.”

A large portion of the book, seven chapters covers Salt Lake City and the Mormons. He was not impressed. “The territory of Utah is a scandal to America” and “The Mormons are selfish, as well as very illogical.”

Not far from Salt Lake City the train reached Promontory. When Fraser arrived they had not yet settled the point of junction for the CPRR and the UPRR so the companies were compromising with a station at Promontory. Each company had been anxious to earn as much of the Government subsidy as possible they so they’d “carried their respective lines as far as an hundred miles to the east and west of Promontory.” “These unfinished roadways are still to be seen side by side of the completed line.”

Passengers had to change trains at Promontory, going from UPRR trains to CPRR trains to continue on to California. They moved their luggage, got new sleeping berths and got a meal. They also had time to stroll through the town and see the sights in the town made “partly from canvas of wood.” The sights were less than picturesque although one wooden dwelling that attracted notice had muslin curtains “within the window.” That house had “two or three smiling females” ready to welcome all who would enter. It turns out that was a “characteristic of all these rude settlements... the abode of women with few scruples to overcome and no characters to lose...” There were many saloons but only one gambling “hell.”

To help the town economy agents were sent up the rail lines to take the trains back to Promontory. On the trip they would talk to the passengers and upon arrival at Promontory the agents would take their new friends to try their luck. That gambling hall was an open-air affair only a few yards from the rail line. Then Fraser described 3 Card Monte and how it was conducted to the disadvantage of the train travelers. Fraser said the game could be considered perfectly fair if fairness consisted of uniform winning on one side and uniform losing on the other.

Unfortunately for Fraser the travel by Pullman was over upon changing to the CPRR. Their “silver palace cars” were very inferior. The Pullman had a conductor and “coloured servants.” to wait on passengers. The CPRR cars had only a “coloured man” who was in charge and was attendant. Service was bad on the CPRR but the condition of its rails was vastly superior to the UPRR.

One little story is interesting. Everyone knows of the Golden Spike at Promontory in 1869 when the railroad was connected east to west. The spike was removed of course but souvenir hunters “hacked the sleeper [tie] in the course of a few minutes.” They attacked the “last rail with a vigour which had the effect of rendering it worthless.” The sleeper had to be replaced three times and the rail once in the course of a week.

Fraser then describes Elko, the Chinese, prejudice. Americans were very caste conscious he said, a “thinly disguised aristocracy of birth.” The Comstock Lode and riches of Nevada descriptions of Nevada and a mine

### Upon Reaching the Sierra

“the wearying sight of plains covered with alkali and sage-brush was exchanged for picturesque views of mountain slopes, adorned with branching pine trees, and diversified with foaming torrents. This was a gratifying relief...”

After a couple of hundred miles of more monotonous scenery after leaving Elko, it was across the Sierra Nevadas. The train ran into a herd of cattle while crossing Nevada and the engine derailed. It took eight hours to get going again, so while they waited the passengers made use of the beef then lying alongside the rail and the sage brush nearby.

It took two engines to haul the train up the Sierra and there Fraser found wooden sheds of about a thousand feet long to protect against snow slides. Unfortunately the sheds interrupted "the view of some of the most romantic scenery on the line." This was just the beginning of snowsheds. They would eventually extend to 40 miles of interrupted scenery. (Parenthetically, stay tuned for articles about the snowsheds, a new brochure about said edifices, and some exhibits - all in production now).

Fraser was taken with the Sierra scenery. "The glimpses one gets are just sufficient to tantalize and not prolonged enough to satisfy. The view of Donner Lake is the most charming of them all." Above Summit Station "the peaks of the mountains tower cloudwards. The scene is one of unprecedented grandeur."

Done with the Sierra the train continued to Sacramento and then San Francisco. Here Fraser was introduced to some charming California customs such as "drink as often as possible." He describes Sacramento in 1869 and excerpts speeches, descriptions of culture and the improvement of life in town since the Gold Rush.

Fraser took a steam ship to San Francisco and gives an interesting description of that travel mode. On the way he describes the effects of the then current hydraulic mining and the "soil that will grow anything."

Then he arrived in "San Francisco a city of wonders,... it seemed to my eyes a city of magic, such a city as Aladdin might have ordered the genii to create in order to astonish and dazzle the spectator."

"If this spectacle be poetry the landing is prose. The din and bustle soon recall the errant mind from aerial flights of fancy to the harsh realities of terrestrial life. A Babel of tongues rises from the crowded landing-stage as soon as the steamer has been moored. Hardly has the passenger set foot on shore than he becomes the prey of men intent upon earning a gratuity by doing, or professing to render, him a service. The importunities of the touters, porters, and cabmen are not only quite as tormenting as those of their brethren at Calais or Boulogne,..."

He then describes the city, the Vigilance Committee, the Bay as a center of trade, the labor shortage, the value of money, prices, the hills, manufactory, the many cultures, wines (not "palatable and pleasant... disagreeable and disappointing"), the profusion of food in the markets, the Chinese, the character of Californians, and more.

Fraser liked his trip so much he took the train back to the east coast.

Fraser's book about his trip is a window on the 19th Century America and his commentary about the scenery, Indians, Mormons, Californians, prejudice is interesting as is his description of 19th Century train travel including the recovery from a derailment due to

### **From the Sierra Summit to Sacramento**

"The velocity with which the train rushed down this incline, and the suddenness with which it wheeled round the curves, produced a sensation which cannot be reproduce in words... The speed... seemed terrific. The axle-boxes smoked with the friction, and the odour of burning wood pervaded the cars. The wheels were nearly red hot. In the darkness of the night they resembled discs of flame."

### **Coming down the Mountains to California**

But a few hours ago we were passing through a region in which desolation reigned supreme ; a region of sage brush and alkali dust, of bitter water and unkindly skies. Still more recently the icy winds of the snow-crowned Sierras had chilled us to the bone. The transition was sudden and the transformation magical. The sun descended in a flood of glory towards the Pacific Ocean, while the train was spinning down the ringing grooves of the mountains. The canopy of azure overhead, unflecked by a cloud and spangled with myriads of brilliant stars, surpassed in loveliness the brightest and most serene sky which ever enchanted the dweller on the luxuriant shores of the blue Mediterranean. No Italian air was ever more balmy, nor evening breeze through vineyard or olive grove more grateful to the senses than the soft wind which, tempered by the coolness of the distant ocean and odorous with the rich perfumes of the neighbouring plains, now fanned our cheeks and gave a fresh zest to life."

a herd of cattle. It can get a bit tedious to the modern reader but the tedium can be resolved by putting the book down or skimming.

Westward by Rail is available in libraries but more easily on the internet in various forms. I read a PDF version.

### Who Would Not Be a Californian?

California, a young giant refreshed with new wine... our skies vie in beauty with those of far-famed Italy ; our valleys surpass in richness the famous Valley of the Nile ; our plains in productiveness the sunny plains of France ; our Sierra Nevadas, for beauty and grandeur of scenery, surpass those of the mountains of Switzerland. Who would not be a Californian ? , Why, sir, we have the bravest men, the handsomest women, and the fattest babies of any place under the canopy of heaven.'

Lieutenant-Governor Holden  
quoted in From Westward by Rail, 1871

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\_\_\_\_\_

# Then & Now with Art Clark



Bierstadt 1249 - Snowshed between Tunnels 7 & 8 -

This view was taken by either Charles, Edward, or Albert Bierstadt. They all took photographs, and Albert painted many scenes of the west and his native New York. It is cropped tight to show the extensive work needed to make the sheds rugged enough to endure the winter. Viewing the scene in person it's hard to concentrate on just this, and not take in the lake, the rocks and the distant mountains.

Photo location 39° 18.946'N 120° 19.307'W

SSnowshed between Tunnel 7 & 8  
Compare to Bierstadt 1249



SSnowshed between Tunnel 7 & 8  
Compare to Bierstadt 1249

Art and Janet

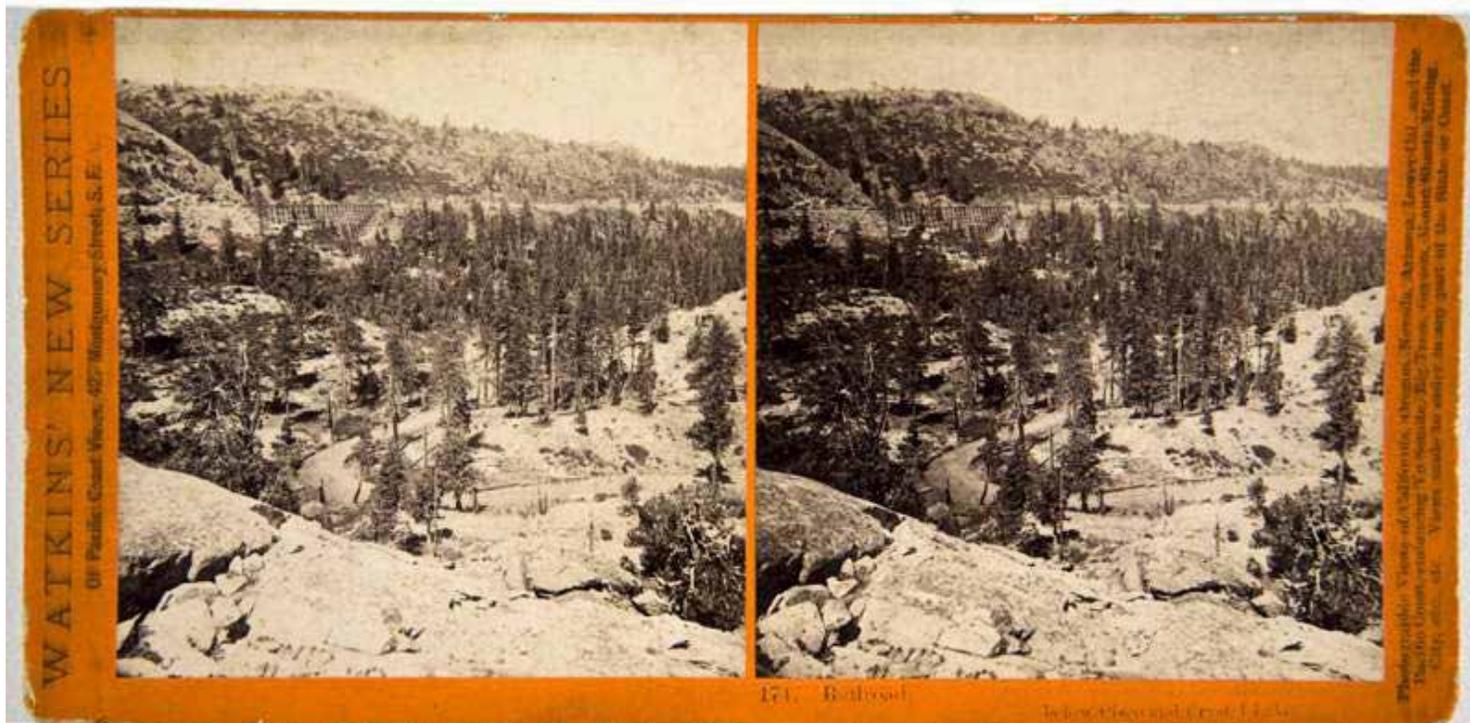
# Then & Now with Art Clark



Alfred A. Hart 174 - Railroad, between Cisco and Crystal Lake

The caption on this card is a little vague on location, since it's about two miles between Cisco and the Crystal Lake crossing. Maybe Hart just couldn't think of anything to say. He doesn't mention the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road, just below. You can access this road today from the Eagle Lakes exit off I-80. Just out of the picture on the right the old road disappears and the Interstate takes over.

Photo location 39° 18.828'N 120° 33.355'W



# Memories of “The Bowl”

When I was a child, in the late 1940's and early 1950's, Sugar Bowl was the ski resort where my family went almost exclusively, since our cabin on Lake Mary is close. We would say that we were going to “The Bowl”, with “to the” sounding like one word.

Some may remember the old single chair [pictured right in front of Sugar Bowl's lodge That is an actress on the single chair]. It was rickety, mean and ugly (that's how I remember it). The on-ramp was a long way from the lodge which meant either a lot of herringboning to get there or a long walk in uncomfortable boots with those heavy skis on the shoulder. When the snow was low, the ramp itself was a steep sidestep climb for a little kid. The chairs always hit us (hard) in the back of the legs, so that when I went back to school on Mondays I had big bruises on my calves. The lines on weekends were long, often extending to the base of the Nose run, and there was a lot of elbowing and sneaking that made for a challenging wait time. One was lucky to get in 25-30 runs in a day, what with those long lines and the slow ride up.

Sometimes the ride up was more than slow. The lift was not designed to withstand the high winds that are typical of Donner Summit. One instance remains vivid in my memory; I must have been about 9 years old. The cable had jumped off the tower wheels somewhere near the top, so the lift was stopped, not just for awhile, but for the rest of the day while the repair was made. There were skiers in every chair who somehow would have to be taken off. My chair was right on the steepest section of the nose, between about the fourth and fifth towers. I had to wait for the ski patrol guys to come with their rope, during which time my fear mounted. By the time they came, I was shaking with cold and fright, and even though one of the many tosses of the rope landed right in my lap, I let it drop back down onto the ground. Those patrolmen were very patient and kind; eventually they were able to get me to hook myself up and they lowered me safely down onto the snow, but it took awhile!

Ah, the good old days...

Pat Malberg

Pat Malberg and family have had a cabin at Lake Mary since the 1940's. Pat is president of DSAA.

If you would like to read more about Sugar Bowl's early days go into the Heirloom's archives on the DSHS website. A quick perusal of our on line index shows that the Heirloom for 12/09, 11/09, and 10/09 all have articles and pictures.

