Petroglyphs, Arborglyphs, Sheep, & the Martis - all in one article & a happy birthday

Here is an example of the difficulties of working for the DSHS. This article was written following explorations in 2015 but it’s been languishing in the computer for two years desperately wanting to be highlighted in the Heirloom. The problem is we have a very strict editorial committee at the DSHS, the Donner Summit Editorial Committee (DSEC). The DSEC sets the standards for the Heirloom, keeping its issues, among other things, from being “issues of length” a technical term for issues of too many pages. That leaves many, so far, untold stories. That also gives you, the reader (of which there are almost 800 subscribers not counting those who access via FaceBook or directly from the web) the expectation that there are still many stories out there uncovered of Donner Summit history. So as we go into our tenth year (this month is the DSHS's ninth birthday - happy birthday DSHS), you can rest assured there is still more to come such as piracy on Donner Summit, or going under Donner Summit from Lake Tahoe. If only the issues were longer.

Now the story:

Petroglyphs Below Long Lake
The Mobile Historical Research Team (MHRT) arm of the DSHS takes its mandate seriously to do on site exploration of Donner Summit history and then pass the research on. In this case the MHRT thought it high time to head out to Long Lake and examine the petroglyphs left by the Native Americans and then the arborglyphs on the aspen trees left by tourists and Basque shepherders in past decades.

Previously we’ve written about Native American petroglyphs on Donner Summit in our June and August (including an 1873 article from Overland Monthly), 2015 Heirlooms. The petroglyphs on Donner Summit are up to four thousand years old. None were made after about 500 A.D. Donner Summit petroglyphs, made by the Martis Culture, are all rectilinear abstracts. There are no depictions of humans (except in one spot on the river near the Eagle Lakes exit from I-80) or animals except ubiquitous bear paws.

Petroglyph grouping below Long Lake.
Photo is enhanced for visibility.
Story Locations in this Issue

New and improved map of Donner Summit.

This map takes in a little more area and has a little more detail than the last map.

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Unless otherwise noted, the photographs and other historical ephemera in The Heirloom's pages come from the Norm Sayler collection at the Donner Summit Historical Society
They are all on flat, not vertical, granite slabs and all have spectacular views of nearby peaks. The petroglyphs below Long Lake are a good example of a spectacular view sitting under Devil's Pk. The mountain must have had great significance for the Martis because they could have placed the petroglyphs just a little way away looking into the Royal Gorge, the deep canyon of the No. Fork of the American River. That's thousands of feet deep. The Native Americans were looking up though, at the peak and then maybe to the sky and the sun, moon, and stars. Devil’s Pk. had a special significance for the Native Americans beyond what other peaks might have represented because it was a good source of basalt which the Martis knapped, or shaped, into projectile points.

The meaning or meanings of the petroglyphs are unknown. They may be totemic (family – such as the bear clan represented by the bear paws), magical, historical (reporting past events), wishful or hopefully predictive, or shamanistic (religious or used by tribal shaman). Whatever they were they were probably not doodles. Granite is one of the hardest rocks on the planet and the incising of petroglyphs would have been a labor not indulged in lightly. The petroglyphs were also not done generally where there was camping (such as Summit Valley where there is a plethora of Native American mortars – see the Feb. '13 Heirloom) or living in summers. They were done in special and sometimes remote spots.

The petroglyphs below Long Lake are very hard to see. A little splash of water on them enhances visibility as does a change in the sun's angle as is the case elsewhere but the MHRT was out on a hot day with a walk of some miles to do still and did not want to use water for aesthetic or investigative purposes. Granite develops a patina on the surface as it’s exposed to the elements. The incising of petroglyphs carves through the patina leaving the petroglyphs lighter than surrounding rock. That makes them less difficult to see. The Long Lake petroglyphs have developed patina in the grooves making them exceedingly hard to see. That means the Long Lake petroglyphs must be very old, perhaps older than other summit petroglyphs which are more visible or less invisible because they have not developed as much patina. The petroglyphs at the Long Lake site also look older than other summit petroglyphs. They are more abstract with less discernable designs. That’s for petroglyphologists (a term we’ve proudly inaugurated) to make determinations about, not the MHRT. The Long Lake petroglyphs are so hard to see that in the DSHS photo lab afterwards, some photographs looked like they were just of granite slabs. The barely visible designs seen in the field seemed to have disappeared.

GPS coordinates of the petroglyphs below Long Lake: N 39° 16.832’ W 120° 25.847’. They are very faint. Please don't walk on them or touch them.

**Arborglyphs in the American River Canyon**

Down the trail is another set of “glyphs.” Arborglyphs are carvings into trees. In the Donner Summit area there is only one site of arborglyphs whereas there are dozens of petroglyph sites and many arborglyphs elsewhere. The arborglyphs below Long Lake were done by tourists and earlier, by Basque sheepherders.

The arborglyphs are off the Palisade Creek Trail that leads from Long Lake to the American River. They cover the area of about an acre and are spread all over. Look for the larger or fallen aspen since the "glyphs" were done decades ago. Some are simple initials. Others are more extensive, some wrapping around trees. Some have dates and some are artwork. There is one on the next page which shows successive visits since the "scribe" was considerate by dating his visits. One can imagine that the forested area now was open meadow sprinkled with aspen. Then you can imagine the sheep arriving for summer grazing on the way to Soda Springs. While you have the sheep in...
your mind you can see the Basque sheepherders, with time on their hands, decorating the trees to let us know they were there and to make their campsites more homey.

For the arborglyphs the approximate GPS coordinates are N 39° 15.782’ W 120° 25.683’.

**Sheep on Donner Summit**

Most of the various industries in Summit Valley disappeared with time: stagecoach stops, rooming houses, ice making, dairies, and lumber mills. Eventually even the dam stopped impounding water. One industry from the early days though, kept going even into the 1970’s.

The high Sierra valleys were attractive to sheep herders. There were more live births, more multiple births, sheep remained healthier, and the wool remained cleaner. Each spring mostly Basque sheepherders would begin the long annual journey to the Sierra Crest where the sheep would fatten up at summer’s end before going off on their final journeys via the railroad and later via trucks.

The sheep industry took advantage of the annual processes at the dam in Summit Valley. Each winter and spring the lake would fill up with snowmelt. As summer progressed the waters of lakes lower in elevation in the canal and reservoir system were drawn out for irrigation and electrical generation (see April, May, June, 2013 Heirlooms). As the lower lakes’ water levels dropped the water behind Van Norden dam was let out. As Lake Van Norden’s water level dropped the upper meadow area was exposed and grasses began to grow. By summer’s end most of the meadow was exposed and grasses had grown tall. When the sheep arrived, they arrived to a luxuriant meadow full of forage. They must have been ecstatic as they crested the ridge to the south but that’s speculation for another Heirloom.

Basque sheepherders camped in Summit Valley and watched their flocks. The tinkling of bells on lead sheep was a common sound according to old timers like our chief proofreader, Pat Malberg. The valley was so attractive to sheepherders that in the...
Those are not available on the Sierra Crest though.

craft tools and projectile points. Basalt cannot be crafted into the finer and lighter points

values changed. For example, the Martis had worked almost exclusively with basalt to

have changed culture. Maybe new prayers were needed. New skills were needed. Maybe

Native Americans. The new weapon had more power, greater accuracy, and greater range.

The Martis occupied Summit Valley until about 500 A.D. when the climate became drier.

Lake Tahoe filled and overflowed down the Truckee River. Game increased and the Sierra became

descended, who their descendants are, or where they went. The Martis Culture arose

archeologists can make hypotheses, no one knows for sure from whom the Martis were

The Martis have left evidence of their presence in many areas of the Summit in the form of

and retreating to the foothills on both sides of the Central Sierra in the winters. The

first known residents of Summit Valley were a group of Native Americans called the

Martis Culture. They were only semi-permanent, occupying Summit Valley in summers

and summering for thousands of years, you can read the book by Willis Gortner (see page 7)
or for more abbreviated information, go to the exhibits pages on the DSHS website, http://

www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/exhibits.html. You will find several dozen

exhibits including three having to do with the Martis ("Petroglyphs", "Native Americans,

and "Bedrock Mortars... ").

The Martis Culture

Native Americans

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and "Bedrock Mortars... ").

The Martis occupied Summit Valley until about 500 A.D. when the climate became drier.

Maybe more importantly, simultaneously, the bow and arrow was developed by the area’s

Native Americans. The new weapon had more power, greater accuracy, and greater range.

It must have changed hunting methods and the kinds of food that could be acquired. It may

have changed culture. Maybe new prayers were needed. New skills were needed. Maybe

values changed. For example, the Martis had worked almost exclusively with basalt to

craft tools and projectile points. Basalt cannot be crafted into the finer and lighter points

needed on arrows so with the change to bows and arrows, chert and obsidian were valued.

Those are not available on the Sierra Crest though.
Getting to Long Lake

To get to Long Lake, turn south on Soda Springs Rd. at the blinking light in "downtown" Soda Springs. Almost to the top of the hill, after you pass Soda Springs Ski Area, is Pahatsi Rd. which is the second right. Turn right onto Pahatsi and stay on it even after it becomes dirt. Keep going a few miles. You will pass the PGE campground at Kidd Lake on the left and then go around Kidd Lake and over the dam. Go up the hill after leaving Kidd Lake and you'll come to a Royal Gorge warming hut named, "Devil's Outlook Warming Hut." That is an intersection. After passing the warming hut on your right, the road heads west and then splits. The steep left will take you to the parking area for the Palisade Creek Trail. The right split descends to the Lower Cascade Lake Dam where the memorial (or grave marker if he's there) to the Donner Party's Charles Stanton is.

When you come to the end of the road, park. Take the trail downhill to Cascade Lakes and keep going. You'll get to Long Lake and you'll be on the Palisade Creek Trail.
One Intriguing Petroglyph Idea

We don't know what the petroglyphs mean. We can only know that they must have been very important to the Martis culture because they were hard to craft and were incised only in special places - with great views of nearby peaks. In the case of the Long Lake petroglyphs they are in the shadow of Devil's Pk. which is a remarkable geological feature.

Not knowing their meaning(s) has not prevented people from making guesses. One intriguing idea comes from Willis Gortner who wrote *The Martis Indians Ancient Tribe of the Sierra Nevada* and *Ancient Rock Carvings of the Central Sierra*. Both are out of print but both are in the Truckee library (and reviewed on our book reviews web page). Gortner had a house at the Cedars around which there are many petroglyph sites and he studied them extensively. He too could only posit possible meanings but he did make a remarkable discovery.

Looking at petroglyphs like the one above below Long Lake, one just scratches one's head. Why go to so much trouble to incise those in granite? Looking at petroglyphs like that and others that looked like branches, he thought they looked like maps. So he copied the petroglyphs and then drew current maps on acetate. When he overlaid the copied drawings onto the acetate, they matched in some cases. Maybe some of the petroglyphs are maps.

Others are more clear. The one on the left is a bear paw and those are almost ubiquitous among the various sites. Were those records of successful hunts or prayers for successful hunts? Were they family totems, the Bear clan was here or stakes this place, or were they prayers for bear strength? We don't know and there are no Martis to ask.
Last month our lead article was entitled, "1867" describing Donner Summit 150 years ago. There was more to 1867 and there is still more (see next month). Here is a description of Albert Richardson's trip to Donner Summit in 1867 during the building of the railroad. This first appeared in his book Beyond the Mississippi

At Gold Run a six-horse coach awaited us. Our day's ride was up a graded winding road, commanding an endless sweep of dense forest and grand mountain, among graceful tamaracks, gigantic pines and pyramidal firs.

Immense barns beside the mountain houses attest the length and severity of the winters. At many points we found the surveyors awaiting our coach to receive their letters and newspapers. The American pioneer can dispense with his dinner, but not with his mental pabulum.

We reached the summit two hours after dark, when its wild, gloomy grandeur is far more impressive than by day. It is boundless mountain piled on mountain—unbroken granite, bare, verdureless, cold and gray.

Through the biting night air we were whirled down the eastern slope for three miles to Donner lake, blue, shining, and sprinkled with stars, while from the wooded hill beyond glared an Indian fire like a great fiendish eyeball. The lake is an exquisite body of water, though less impressive than Tahoe; and the reflections of snowy peak, pine forest, clear sky, and minute twig and leaf in its depths, seem almost miraculous. The illustration as faithful to nature as artist and engraver can make it, is far less vivid than the original photograph. In that, concealing the boat, figures and trees in the foreground water, it is almost impossible to decide which side up the picture should be—which are the real hills, snow and forest, and which the reflection.

Donner lake is named from the Donner party of sixty [sic] Illinois emigrants, en route for Oregon [sic], snowed in here in 1846. Knowing nothing of the climate, they attempted to cross too late, and were imprisoned by inexorable winter. The logs of one of their cabins; and stumps, twelve feet high, of trees which they cut off at the snow-surface, are still seen. Many ate human flesh; and about forty perished from starvation. Several yet live to tell their horrible story.

We slept at the Lake House[hotel at Donner Lake]; and spent the next day with the surveyors among the precipitous granite ledges, and visiting Lake Angela, a lovely little mountain gem. It was like picnicking at the North Pole; for snow lined the higher ravines and icicles hung from the water-tanks on the stage-road [Dutch Flat Rd later to become the Lincoln Highway]. Here during the previous winter they [Chinese railroad workers] were engulfed by a snow-slide. Seeing it approach they stepped behind a tall rock; but it carried them fifty feet deep. In spring their bodies were found standing upright, with shovels in their hands. For several miles the track must be roofed to slide off the snow. There will be less than a mile of tunneling, all near the crest. The cost of the most expensive mile of road is estimated at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. From the summit the line descends to the desert by the valley of the Truckee; and is easy of construction to Salt Lake City. Thus far the work is admirably done, comparing favorably with our best eastern railways.

On the second evening in our tavern parlor, there was a long earnest conference, to determine upon the route near the summit. The candles lighted up a curious picture. The carpet was covered with maps, profiles and diagrams are held down at the edges by candle-sticks to keep them from rolling up. On their knees were president, directors and surveyors creeping from one map to another earnestly discussing plans of their magnificent enterprise. The ladies of our excursion were grouped around them, silent and intent, assuming liveliest interest in the dry details about tunnels, grades, excavations, ‘making height’ and ‘getting down.’ Outside the night-wind moaned and shrieked, as if the Mountain Spirit resented this invasion of his ancient domain.
Pacific Railroad Unopen

Robert Harris wrote a story for Overland Monthly called, "Pacific Railroad Unopen" in 1869 which was partly about a walk he took on Donner Summit in 1867, 150 years ago.

"Ah! no one will be impressed by the sublimity of this scenery, when whirled through it at twenty miles per hour – a wall of rock on one side, and empty space on the other. What! We are nearing the summit, and there you shall see mountains of granite, sheer and clear, and shall ride along the verge of precipices, where a tossed stone will bound and bound again until it strikes one thousand feet beneath…. Look far beneath you at those puny pine-trees. They are six feet in diameter and one hundred and fifty feet high! Then, look up, far up, a thousand feet or more, at Lincoln Peak, whose granite breasts has faced storms which have crushed and rended these forests. On this crest of Lincoln Peak, the chief Engineer of the road, Mr. S. S. Montague, as if prophetic, raised a white flag on the very day of Lee’s surrender. Surely, this railroad will be a bond of peace and unity."

“The wagon-road below is lined with slowly moving teams, the drivers cracking their whips, and smacking their lips at the prospect of supper. The loud, sharp reports of blasts as of large rifled guns seem to crack the very mountains.

…. 

“as I wended my way down this mighty cleft path, with crags ranging 1,500 to 2,000 feet above me on either side, their crests and slopes covered with timber. …this was the last of the timber;” what will the future train traveler think “on this natural grandeur so beautifully fringed and trimmed with evergreen… No! Ere the iron rails connect with those pushing from the East, the whole regions will be denuded of timber. These monarchs of the forest will lie low; and, buried in the desert sands, will give in their short decay more practical benefit than in their lengthy lives... Those immense piles of wood which the indefatigable choppers are piling up--- where will they travel? What Indians and game will they frighten, as they feed the rushing, fiery demons?”

Actress Janet Leigh
Discovered at Sugar Bowl

Founded in the late 1930s, Sugar Bowl featured the first chair lift in California and only the second chairlift in the United States, Sun Valley having built the first one a year earlier. Due to Walt Disney being one of its early investors, Sugar Bowl hosted a number of movie stars, one of whom discovered Janet Leigh, who was a daughter of employees working there.

Janet Leigh, later married to Tony Curtis, was best known as the murder victim in the shower in Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho” though she also starred in many Hollywood films of the time. Born Jeanette Morrison to parents Fred and Helen Morrison, in 1946 her parents took jobs at Sugar Bowl Lodge. Fred worked as a receptionist and Helen as a waitress in the dining room. Norma Shearer, then a leading actress, was a guest at the Lodge, when she noticed a photograph of the Morrison’s beautiful young daughter, Jeanette. She asked for a copy to show friends, and though then retired, was a large shareholder in MGM, and convinced the studio to hire her.

Young Jeanette changed her name to Janet Leigh, and the rest is history! Other famous Hollywood stars who were early guests at Sugar Bowl included: Claudette Colbert, Charlie Chaplin, Errol Flynn, and Greta Garbo.

Nick Chickering

Nick Chickering and his family own the old Hopkins Estate which is down the Soda Springs Rd. from the summit. The estate is where the original Summit Soda Springs Hotel was and the actual soda springs is. A future Heirloom will cover that. Nick’s parents were one of the four original founding families of Sugar Bowl (see the Heirlooms in October-December, 2009 which include an interview with Nick’s mother, Jean Chickering.)
Norm Sayler, president of the DSHS, loves to explore on EBay for Donner Summit historical photographs. A few months ago he came across this album. Who made it we don't know but the pictures are of Soda Springs and the back of the old hotel. Norm thinks the photos date from the Early 40’s and are not after WWII because after WWII so many people wore WWII parkas and no one has one here.

In the pictures at the top of the two guys, Bob Schreiber of Alpineer Ski Club is on the left.

The sign behind the two women and the single woman says "Soda Springs Ski Hut Everything for the Skier Sales and Rental." The building is the Soda Springs Hotel.
From the DSHS Archives

Here is another of Norm’s EBay finds, the weather station that used to sit on Donner Summit. Foundation remains are still there. For more information about the station see the July, ’11 Heirloom and/or our 20 Mile Museum sign for the weather station (along Old 40 at the summit, north side, or on our website).

On the back of the 1933 photograph:
WATCH YOUR CREDIT

INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTOS – SAN FRANCISCO BUREAU
SLUG (AIRWAY STATION)
HIGHEST AIRWAY STATION
SUMMITT [sic], CALIFORNIA… AT AN ALTITUDE OF 7200 FEET AT
SUMMITT HERE THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY CROSSES THE SIERRA
NEVADA MOUNTAINS IS THE HIGHEST MAN OPERATED AIR
RADIO STATION IN THE WEST. HERE SIX MEN ARE ON TWENTY-
FOUR HOUR DUTY SENDING OUT SIGNALS AND WEATHER REPORTS
TO THE TRANS-CONTINENTAL AIR LINERS ON WHAT IS ONE OF
THE MOST TREACHEROUS STRETCHES OF THE AIRWAY SYSTEM.
ON ACCOUNT OF HEAVY WINDS THE BUILDING IS HELD DOWN
WITH STEEL CABLES. ALL SUPPLIES MUST BE SNOW-SHOED
IN DURING THE WINTER. MATERIAL FOR THE HOUSE HAD TO
BE CARRIED IN ON MEN’S BACKS DURING THE BUILDING OF
THIS, CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LIGHTHOUSES
OF THE MAIL SERVICE.
PHOTO SHOWS AIRWAY STATION AT SUMMITT, CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Register August 10, 1931

AVIATORS RECOVER FOLLOWING CRASH

AUBURN, Calif. Aug. 20 – UP
Two aviators were recovering here today from injuries received late yesterday when their plane crashed into the Donner summit at the 7000-foot level.

Michael E. Lackey, Penryn, second lieutenant in the air corps reserve, until recently stationed at Crissey field, San Francisco, pilot of the plane, received a crushed leg and broken arm.

Fred A. Rupley, Auburn automobile dealer, escaped with minor cuts and bruises. He was owner of the plane, which was completely wrecked when it crashed into the huge granite boulders within a short distance of the state highway and in view of a score of motorists.
Book Review

Camp of Death
The Donner Party Mountain Camp 1846-47
J. Quinn Thornton

96 pages 1848

This book is an artifact. It is a primary source and the first reporting, besides newspaper accounts, of the Donner Party tragedy. J. Quinn Thornton interviewed some of the survivors so he had first hand accounts of the winter at Donner Lake. That also was problematical because some of the interviewees were self-interested. Thornton also clearly used some of what had been written in the newspapers at the time and those were very sensational and not factual. The world would have to wait for Charles F. McGlashan’s History of the Donner Party, some decades later, for a more balanced view. Nevertheless, if you’ve read any Donner Party histories you will recognize Quinn’s descriptions of episodes. Later writers must have used his book as starting points.

Thornton, who would later become Oregon’s first “supreme judge,” traveled west in 1846 and until the Donner Party took the Hastings Cut-off, traveled sometimes near them as part of larger groups of wagons.

The short volume covers the tribulations of the Donner Party after they took the Hastings Cut-off. Quinn interviewed Wm. Eddy and so focused on his travails (see picture below). One ox died. The next day, cattle under guard, were stolen when the guards left off guarding to have lunch. Eddy had no more oxen. He cached his goods and then he and his family had to walk, he carrying one child and some sugar, and his wife the other child. That’s not really covered in other treatments and with that focus one gets closer to the tragedy. Imagine being in the position of one of the Eddys walking through the desert to California with virtually nothing. No one would help them carry anything or even give them help. The Donner Party was really a party of separate parties. The descriptions of the Eddys are more evocative that in other portrayals and so makes the story more human.

The book continues, really, as a diary of events day by day. There was an escape attempt from Donner Lake on November 12. It was unsuccessful. There was another on the 22nd. Here the folly of some of the participants is exposed. They got to the top of the pass with a couple of John Sutter’s mules. They could go no further with the mules. Charles Stanton, who’d promised to bring the mules back, refused to go on without the mules. They went back to the lake. Presumably they could have made it to Sacramento, gotten help, and returned. Stanton died later.

Then there’s bad judgment. Wm. Eddy wanted...
to kill the mules for food but others refused, afraid they’d have to pay Sutter for the mules. The mules were covered by snow and lost.

Here is one weakness. Quinn clearly interviewed Wm. Eddy and some of the story is told through his eyes. One can sympathize with him, losing his cattle, having to cache his goods, and having to carry his children. One can cheer when he kills some ducks and then a grizzly. We can see how the party acted too. Mr. Eddy had no gun and so had to borrow one to hunt. He had to give half of what he shot to the gun’s owner. Eddy had nothing, arriving at Donner Lake with only his wife, two children, and a little sugar. He never mentions getting food from anyone else and had to give up half of what he hunted. But Mr. Eddy is perhaps not the best source because, according to Quinn’s account, Eddy was the hero of each event and had the best advice. He was the one who saved the Forlorn Hope by covering everyone with blankets during the three-day storm. He was the one person who would not eat human flesh. He is the one who kept Wm. Foster from killing anyone else for food.

The 19th Century prose is evocative too. “The wind blew in fearful and terrific blasts from the east. The cold was intense: the wretched sojourners were nearly naked, and almost without food: the snow had now become so deep as to make it increasingly difficult to get wood for fuel. They were completely housed up, and were cut off from all the world, and sympathies of life. The few cattle that had lived up to this time, and the horses, and Capt. Sutter’s mules, were all supposed to be lost in the snow, and none now cherished the least hope of ever finding them… They found it very difficult to obtain enough wood to cook their now nearly putrid beef, rescuers’ arrival at Donner Lake are vivid. “… the sufferers were seen coming up out of the snow-holes, from the cabins, which were completely covered, … They tottered toward their deliverers, … some wept… some laughed… Many of them had a peculiarly wild expression of the eye; all looked haggard, ghastly, and horrible. The flesh was wasted from their bodies, and the skin seemed to have dried upon their bones. Their voices were weak and sepulchral;… Fourteen had already died from starvation, and many more were so reduced, that it was almost certain they would never rise from the miserable beds upon which they had lain down… The annals of human suffering nowhere present a more appalling spectacle than that which blasted the eyes and sickened the hearts of those brave men [the rescuers]…” The prose is wonderful and you have to read it for yourself. Pg 49

On December 16 the Forlorn Hope left for California. Some days later the description is vivid, “About 11 o’clock that memorable night, the storm increased to a perfect tornado, and in an instant blew away every spark of fire. Antoine perished a little before this from fatigue, frost, and hunger. The company, except Mr. Eddy and one or two others, were now engaged in alternatingly imploring God for mercy and relief. That night’s bitter cries, anguish, and despair, never can be forgotten.” Pg 27
You have noticed our monthly book reviews. You might want to do some reading of your own.

Stop in at the DSHS. Norm Sayler has a large collection of books for perusing, buying, or checking out.

You might even want to do a review for us.
Just for fun an 1880 map of Donner Summit, part of a map of Nevada County.
Then & Now with Art Clark

The Weather Station on Donner Summit

If you want to access the site park along the road at the top of Old 40, near the gray building. Take the Pacific Crest Trail north for just a bit and then head to the small peak. You will find steel posts that used to guide people to the station and drill holes in the granite for posts that are long gone. When you get to the pinnacle look for foundation remains and the holes in granite that anchored steel cables the prevented the station from flying away in storms.

For more clues about exactly getting to the site consult the 20 Mile Museum sign nearby on the north side of Old 40.
Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

This is part of a series of miscellaneous history, “Odds & Ends” of Donner Summit. There are a lot of big stories on Donner Summit making it the most important historical square mile in California. All of those episodes* left behind obvious traces. As one explores Donner Summit, though, one comes across a lot of other things related to the rich history. All of those things have stories too and we’ve been collecting them. Now they’re making appearances in the Heirloom. Last month we covered the stone houses at Cisco on Old Highway 40. This month, it's a grave.

Go to Big Bend and take the Lincoln Highway (dirt road) turn off, just west of the garage that is opposite the fire station. Follow the old highway around past old houses and take the fork to the left at the Forest Service sign. A half mile up on the left is the grave of the “unknown pioneer.”

There is no official record of the grave or its occupant. There is a question about whether it is truly an “unknown pioneer” there who may have been an emigrant. The emigrant trail did not take that route generally. Maybe it’s another kind of unknown pioneer, someone who moved in later? Maybe it’s the grave of a railroad worker? We do know the Forest Service made the memorial but they also have no record. Why is the grave all alone so far from anything?

@ the Museum

Visitors to the DSHS see a remarkable sculpture on the inside front door. To some it may even remind them of something they’ve seen before.

Visit the Donner Summit or Rainbow Bridge, which is just below the pass on Old Highway 40 on the east side, and you’ll see a handsome commemorative plaque on the pedestrian walkway (near our 20 Mile Museum sign). The original heavy bronze plaque was installed on the bridge in 1925 to commemorate the completion of the bridge (see the December, ’08 Heirloom). The plaque depicts wagon trains, gold miners, Donner Lake, and other scenes from summit history.

The plaque was stolen from the bridge and was later “discovered” but by then a duplicate had been made to protect the original and that duplicate was installed on the bridge. The Truckee Donner Historical Society ended up with the original and generously loaned it to the DSHS for display. There it is on our inside front door. Come by and touch history.

*Native Americans; first wagon trains to California; the first transcontinental railroad, highway, air route, and telephone line, etc.
Take the Scenic Route: Donner Summit’s Old Highway 40

Pick up or download the brochure

46 interpretive signs along Old 40
It's summer and you may want to do some history walking.

Walking Through Donner Summit History is still available at the little store in Soda Springs, at the actual DSHS, on our website (http://www.donnerrummithistoricalsociety.org/pages/store.html), at the visitors' center at Donner Lake and at the California Welcome Center in Auburn.

You can see the contents at the web page above.
The Donner Lake area is not only an exciting place to live and adventure, but also has lots of interesting history. The story of the Donner Party crossing over this amazing and majestic mountain range (1847) has spread through the area. The Donner Lake area, however, started out as a railroad stop, not a place to live. During the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad (1869), the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd. followed the approximate route of the emigrant wagons and was used to transport materials for the building of the railroad and as a toll road. Later, this trail became the Lincoln Highway (1913) and then Highway 40 and was used for tourists crossing over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to get to Donner Lake and Truckee, not just for transporting materials or goods. Eventually, this little railroad stop became more and more populated and with more people visiting and staying, it came to be a bigger town. As the town grew, and more people started to visit, the Donner area became a town that is now known as Truckee, California.

During her rescue from Donner Lake, Mrs. Graves, a member of the Donner Party, couldn’t carry her family’s money anymore. She was just too tired. She buried her money near this spot and three days later she died on Donner Summit at what became named “Starved Camp.”

In 1891 the money was found by a prospector. There were 116 silver coins worth between $300.00 to $500.00. There are conflicting stories about what happened to the money.

Swimming in the emerald green waters of the Donner Lake is always refreshing. Kayaking, boating and jet skiing through glassy blue waters and paddle boarding under the full moon are the best. Walking to Rainbow Bridge or hiking to the train tunnels and seeing the beautiful scenic overlook is incredible; the sights will amaze you. Putting one foot in front of the other while exploring the forests of Donner Lake, hiking on the rock mountains above Donner Lake, and catching big fish are always a blast. Fourth of July fireworks are a treat, seeing the beautiful colors explode over Donner Lake. Smelling the scent of sizzling hamburgers in the breeze is nice when you’re on the beach, and camping in the warm summer weather is a blast. Playing on the beach is always enjoyable and feeling hot sand in your toes is pleasant. Playing with your family and friends is fun every time. All of these adventures await you; you should definitely visit again.

The DSHS has 46 20 Mile Museum signs mostly along Old Highway 40 from Auburn to Truckee. Here we have sign #47 researched by the 4th and 5th graders at Sierra Expeditionary Academy in Truckee along with their teachers, Ms Brisbin and Ms Akers. The students looked at old pictures and explored old newspaper articles in order to get the "history" and "good story" sections and then brainstormed what to put in the "things to do..." section. They spoke at a Rotary meeting to get some sponsorship. Most of the sponsorship of the sign comes from the Allen family in memory of their father, Oliver Allen. The family owns the land where the sign will be placed. It will be installed when school starts again at the intersection of South Shore and Donner Pass Rd. at the west end of Donner Lake. Truckee students of Ms Brisbin also designed in previous years, the 20 Mile signs for the McIver Dairy in Truckee and the petroglyph sign one turn below Rainbow Bridge on Old 40.
DONNER PARTY HIKE
OCTOBER 14 & 15, 2017

Learn secrets of the Sierra as you hike with local historians.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
info@donnerpartyhike.com
donnerpartyhike.com

Register early and get your commemorative baseball cap!

Explore scenic Donner Summit with local historians on interpretive walks and hikes. As you trace the steps of the emigrants, imagine the clip-clop of oxen and the rumble of wagons of the countless pioneers who scaled the mighty Sierra Nevada in search of a better life.

SATURDAY HIKES—Choose from one of six hikes ranging from 3.5 to 6 miles with varying degrees of difficulty. Explore the trails, see petroglyphs on the Chris Wall. Scroll through meadows or discover hidden Sierra lakes. Price includes guided hike, commemorative hat, hamburger lunch and afternoon presentation. SATURDAY HIKE: $75 per hiker ($85 after October 3rd)

SUNDAY WALKING TOUR—Learn about the grueling mishaps of the Donner Party and the archaeological finds that remain. Then, it’s on to all new Donner Memorial State Park to view the Murphy Cabin Site and Pioneer Monument. Price includes guided hike, commemorative hat, hamburger lunch and afternoon presentation plus the Sunday interpretive walks. SATURDAY/SUNDAY TWO DAY PACKAGE: $100 per hiker ($110 after October 3rd)

LODGING PACKAGES—Area lodging packages are available for participants.

REGISTER TO SECURE YOUR SPOT IN TIME—Tour size is limited. Reserve your spot on the trail by October 3rd for early savings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
info@donnerpartyhike.com
donnerpartyhike.com
Valor and Sacrifice

In the long and bitter prelude to war, southern transplants dominated California government, keeping the state aligned with Dixie. However, a murderous duel in 1859 killed “Free Soil” U.S. Senator David C. Broderick, and public opinion began to change. As war broke out back east, a golden-tongued preacher named Reverend Thomas Starr King crisscrossed the state endeavoring to save the Golden State for the Union. Seventeen thousand California volunteers thwarted secessionist schemes and waged brutal campaigns against native tribesmen resisting white encroachment as far away as Idaho and New Mexico. And a determined battalion of California cavalry journeyed to Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley to battle John Singleton Mosby, the South’s deadliest partisan ranger. Author Richard Hurley delves into homefront activities during the nation’s bloodiest war and chronicles the adventures of the brave men who fought far from home.

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Richard Hurley was born in Upstate New York and lived there until he was nine. His family moved to Europe, where he attended Italian schools and a British school in Switzerland. After high school in California, he went to Harvard, where he pursued medieval European history and visual studies. He was elected to the literary board of the Harvard Lampoon. He worked for three years on the design staff of the Oakland Museum of California, restoring artifacts and preparing exhibits on California history. He returned to school for a Master’s degree in Architecture from UC Berkeley, then left the Bay Area for the Sierra Foothills and a career in CAD and computer-based multimedia.

Richard has been an avid history buff since the age of ten, when he visited a recently opened Etruscan tomb. He is also interested in languages and is probably the only writer to recite “Cædmon’s Hymn,” the oldest surviving poem in English (or Early West Saxon, actually), during an NPR radio interview. Richard is coauthor (along with T.J. Meehans) of the historical fiction Queen of the Northern Mines, finalist for the 2012 Independent Book Publishers Association Ben Franklin Prize for historical fiction. Richard and T.J. also guest-curated an exhibit entitled “California and the Civil War” for the Folsom History Museum and have presented multimedia shows on historical topics at museums, libraries, and historical societies across Northern California.

For an online look at some of the stories covered in California and the Civil War, visit California Educational Multimedia’s history page.