

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom



History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

February, 2020 issue #138

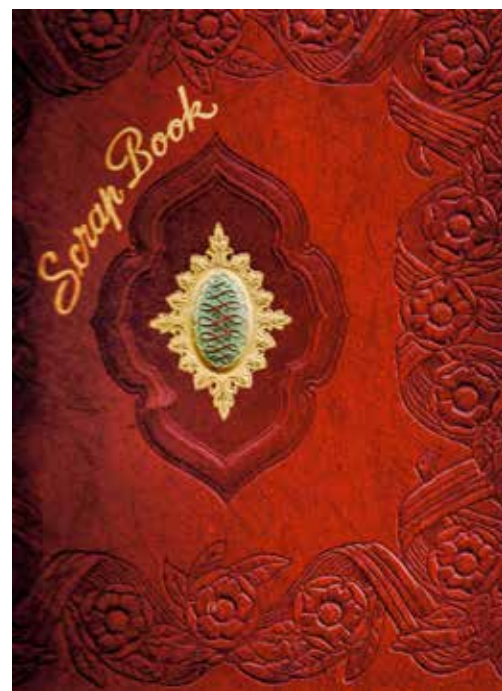
## What's in Your Closet? XXVI

“Closet” is just a metaphor. For Hank Goodrich of Cisco it was a drawer full of 1952 pictures of Donner Summit (See the December, '19 [Heirloom](#)). For Ingrid Wickin of the Southern California Ski Library\* in Norco, California it was finding glass slides of mid-1920's Donner Summit at an Oakland flea market (see the January, '20 [Heirloom](#)). For Oren Horst, who used to own and run the Soda Springs Store and sell real estate, it was a collection of Donner Summit pictures from the 1950's that had been sitting around in his Florida home. That collection was sent to us by a nephew. For others they were old albums which may or may not have been in closets. Wherever they've been, we appreciate their arrivals at the DSHS. We encourage you to come by with yours.

Here we are at the 138<sup>th</sup> issue of the [Heirloom](#) and we've run “What's in Your Closet” stories a couple of dozen times and under different titles, a few more times. People have been bringing in Donner Summit history, mostly photographs, ever since the DSHS opened in 2008. Artifacts get added to the collection of Donner Summit ephemera (it's nice to be able to use high quality words like that) and pictures get added, or copied and added, and we get stories to share.

There are lots of examples of these donations. There's the fellow who came in with a 1955 [Reno Gazette](#) validating Norm's turkey story (April and December, '10 [Heirlooms](#)). Jim Wiggins, who lives next door to the Rainbow Lodge, came in with 1935 newspaper articles about a Rainbow Tavern murder (January, '20 [Heirloom](#)). (He also has a story about keeping an eye on Norm who was enlarging Jim's pond, just in case Norm came across some gold which is another Rainbow Tavern story - April, '14 [Heirloom](#).) Starr Walton has donated a lot of material to the DSHS about her grandfather, parents, and uncle (who built the Soda Springs Hotel, Donner Ski Ranch, and Soda Springs ski hill respectively).

Then there are her reminiscences of the Silver Belt in "Starr's Story" (December, '09 [Heirloom](#)). Jean Chickering's (one of the original founders of Sugar Bowl) reminiscences showed up in the December, '09 [Heirloom](#). The Crampton (Crampton Lodge at Rainbow) album (above, right) appeared in the May and June, '16 [Heirlooms](#). Nick Chickering allowed us to look at and copy from the hotel at the original Soda Springs (one day that will be in the [Heirloom](#)). Then there was another serendipitous find when we obtained a collection of pictures in an album of two guys bicycling over Donner Summit in 1901. Someone had



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\*Her forthcoming book will be about lost ski areas of Tahoe and Donner  
URL for the Ski Library: <http://www.skilibrary.com/index.html>

# Story Locations in this Issue

Stanton Memorial pg 22   Soda Springs, pgs 5-7   Donner Pass, pg 8   Turkey Story location pg 3   Cramptons Location



hotel register for Summit Soda Springs Hotel pg 4   pictures pgs 16 and 17   painting and picture pg 20



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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

found it in a garage sale in 1965 and Scott Wall, patrolling eBay, came across it decades later. The album went through a couple of people before ending up at the DSHS (see our March, '14 [Heirloom](#)).

This month we have two good stories of how this works: a kind of “behind the scenes at the DSHS” story. Judy Hitzeman was perusing the DSHS FaceBook page and commented on some Donner Summit pictures. That occasioned a conversation with our FaceBook administrator, George Lamson, which turned into sending us copies of pictures her mother and friends took during a 1947 visit to Donner Summit. All she asked in return for our adding them to our collection and putting some in the [Heirloom](#) was to credit the Judy Hitzeman Collection.

## Sierra Nevada Resort Owner Murdered By An Employee In Dice Game

from Jim Wiggins, actual headline in the [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#) January 27, 1935 see the 1/20 [Heirloom](#).

me about the fun he'd had (a little customer comment is always good advertising) and to say that his grandfather had crossed Donner Summit by automobile in 1915 and he had pictures. Wow. Then he contributed the article that follows.

So, just in case there are some old artifacts (perhaps a redundification?) or photographs sitting in a closet, or a drawer, as a story in your head, or on a table at a flea market, we'd be really interested in seeing what you've got or discovered. We don't have all the Donner Summit history there is. More appears from time to time and what would be more heroic than you finding something lost until now and saving it by sending it to the Donner Summit Historical Society? We'd really appreciate it as would our current and future visitors, our 900+ current readers, and posterity.



Jean Chickering sharing her memories as one of the founders of Sugar Bowl. See the 12/09 [Heirloom](#). That's Alcatraz in the background out her living room window. She was fun.

CARE — COURTESY  
DRIVE SAFELY

Nevada State Journal  
PAGE FOURTEEN RENO, NEVADA, FRIDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1955

**2,500 Law Breakers Steal  
28,600 Lbs. of Turkeys**

**Freight Truck  
Plummets Over  
200-Foot Cliff**

**Three Dist. Courts  
Mark Up Lively Day**

**Jubilee Burglars Plead Guilty; Woman  
Sentenced; Probation Revoked**

**Bids Are Opened  
For Cave Park**

**ELDERLY** Mr. and Mrs. George Michl were presented with...  
tured, left to right, are Capt. Walter S. Meyer, J.P., coronator...  
Michl, and Judge Clark A. Gault who represented the Michl's...  
and Mrs. Michl have lived on their ranch for 36 years.

More Than 16 Tons  
Of Thanksgiving  
Fare Lost

An estimated 2,500 law-breakers were created yesterday when a truck and trailer loaded with frozen turkeys plunged over Donner Summit just above the observation point.

The trailer virtually "exploded" as it plummeted down a 200-foot granite cliff, scattering more than 28,600 pounds of its precious cargo over a wide area.

Washoe County's district court may have set some kind of a record yesterday in handling criminal cases. In all, ten persons appeared before three judges during the day.

**Jubilee Burglars**  
Four persons charged with the burglary of Club Jubilee on September 10 appeared before Judge Grant Brown. Three of the suspects pleaded guilty to the charge and fourth asked for time to enter his plea.

Pleading guilty to first degree burglary were Louise Grant, Samuel P. Stewart, and Michael P. McShane, all of whom were...

The real Donner Summit turkey story, November 4, 1955 in the [Reno Gazette](#) brought in to the DSHS and so validates Norm's turkey story. See the 12/10 [Heirloom](#).

Then there was another serendipitous “find.” We do the Donner Party Hike event each year on Donner Summit in mid-September. People choose among many different hikes, during which they get lots of Donner Summit history stories. In 2019 one of the participants, Rich Chamberlain, approached me to tell



Crampton Family Album Yuba River flooding in 1950 - see the 5/16 [Heirloom](#)



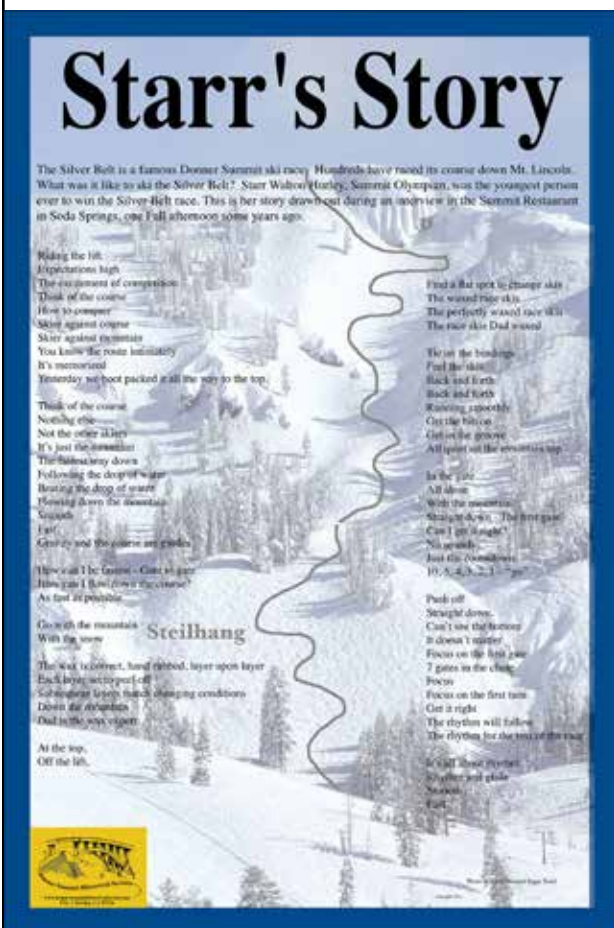
# Some more illustrations of What's in Your Closet stories from previous Heirlooms



from Chickering materials: Alexis Von Schmidt signed in to the Summit Soda Springs Hotel (original Soda Springs) register on 7/3/1881. To read about Alexis you'll have to keep up your Heirloom subscription and wait for a coming issue.



Album found at a flea market containing pictures of two bicyclists crossing Donner Summit in 1901. See the 3/14 Heirloom



One half of Starr Walton's reminiscences of the Silver Belt at Sugar Bowl. See the 12/09 Heirloom

## Examples of What's in Your Closet

- Knezovich Collins Album 3/17
- Rainbow Lodge Sales Brochure for 1951
- Kirkham Family Album
- Crampton Family Album
- Kirby Miller artifacts
- Erin Seay's photos of Donner Summit
- Len and Ditty Smith's pictures
- Pat Malberg family pictures
- Dartmouth Outing Club albums
- Clair Tappaan historic pictures
- Hutchinson Lodge pictures
- Roberta Pearson iron chain seine
- Unidentified donor of 1952 movies of Donner Summit
- Jim Wiggins pictures
- Milli Martin albums
- Starr Walton albums and artifacts
- Mike Pechner RR pictures
- Alpineer Ski Lodge story
- Oakland Ski Club story
- Hank Goodrich albums
- Hart Corbett Albums
- Goicoechea albums for Ski Inn
- Daniel David stories and pictures

# From FaceBook to the Heirloom

Judy Hitzeman commented on a picture posted on the DSHS FaceBook page. George Lamson, our FaceBook administrator replied and that led Judy to sending us copies of the pictures her mother and friends took of a trip to Donner Summit in 1947.



Elnida Wolbig above.

This is Soda Springs Station, the railroad stop for Soda Springs.

Right, left to right: Rita (Mom), Rosa, and Elnida



"The images belonged to my mother, Rita Hitzeman (nee Heinz), who was born in San Francisco to German immigrants in 1925. She attended St. Paulus Lutheran School in San Francisco, as did most of her friends pictured in the images. Mom graduated from St. Paulus in 1938, and then from Girls' High School in 1942.

"My mother worked for Southern Pacific Railroad at their San Francisco headquarters from 1942 to 1950, and lived at 24th and Harrison Streets in the City.

"The pictures depict one or more trips to ski at Soda Springs in the late 1940s; I am guessing about 1947, before she and her girlfriends were all married in 1948/49. Mom was 22 years old in 1947. Her school and church friends depicted were Dorothy Hahn, Elnida Wobig, and Rosa Raff. I've identified them with their photos below.

"The other woman pictured was Eyona Schrader. Mom was friends with her from St. Paulus Church but did not go to school with her. Eyona's sister Gladys (not pictured here) married my Dad's brother and thus became my aunt.

"The pictures were in my mother's possession from the time they were taken until her death in 1994. They have been in my possession since then. I am formerly from San Francisco, but now live in Vallejo, CA."

Judy Hitzeman



Left, Elnida and friends, Soda Springs Hotel in the background





Eyona Schrader.

The RR tracks are in the background left. The hill in the background right is the west end of Boreal Ridge. The buildings sat in what is now the parking of Soda Springs ski hill on the east side of Soda Springs Rd. The buildings are no longer there.

The picture is labeled "Eyona in the snow." The bridge in the background crosses the Yuba River at the Soda Springs ski hill, with a building there in the background, left.



Below, Soda Springs Ski Hill, 1947



Pictures on pages 5-7 courtesy of Judy Hitzeman



Above, it looks like the railroad tracks in the background. Van Norden must be to the right of the "skiers." That's Rosa on the left.



Above, the crossing at Soda Springs. People don't generally ski like this anymore. Dorothy is on the back of Rosa's skis.



Above, the rear of the Soda Springs Hotel, 1947. The sign on the end of the building says, "Soda Springs Ski Shop."

Beacon Hill Lodge, 1947



Dorothy Hahn on Skis



# Stanley Steamer Journey Over Donner Summit, 1915

## Leon Hoyt Chamberlain's Trip from Truckee to Oakland in 1915

Transcribed Oral History with Additional Information Provided by Richard Hoyt Chamberland and Dr. Curt Brohard.

### **PART 1: Introduction and background information**

In 1915, William Edward Chamberlain purchased a 1906 Stanley Steamer, which is the subject of this narrative. Edward, as he preferred to be called, had just graduated from Medical School. The car was already 9 years old when Edward bought it. The picture, right, shows the Stanley Steamer as it looked when Edward purchased it. It is the only picture in the family photo album that shows the original body design. Edward is the driver and Ray Rheem, a friend of his from Ann Arbor, Michigan, is sitting in the passenger seat at the left side of the picture. The picture was taken at 2938 Webster St., Oakland, California in front of the home of the Owen family.



Edward married Genevieve Owen on June 22, 1915.

Genevieve wrote in the family photo album that Edward's brother, Leon Hoyt Chamberlain, Ray Rheem, and Bob Newell "worked hard with Edward to modernize the 1906 Stanley Steamer, which Edward bought for our adventurous Honeymoon into the Sierras." [sic]

Another note in the photo album indicates that the photograph below was taken at Webster Street just "two weeks later."



Although the 1906 Stanley Steamer now had a more streamlined body, the engine, boiler and wooden carriage frame remained the same. The picture shows Genevieve and Edward when they were leaving for their honeymoon trip. Note the wicker baskets for extra storage over the rear wheels.

A few facts about Stanley Steamers may be helpful in fully appreciating this remarkable vehicle. Most of the "horseless carriages" at that time were built with the steering wheel on the right hand side of the vehicle. The 1906 Stanley Steamer purchased by Edward was a 'Racer' and it had the steering wheel on the left hand side, as most cars do today. The Stanley brothers, Francis Edgar and Freelan O. Stanley, began developing their steam-powered cars in 1897. The Stanley Motor Company competed in racing events from 1902 to 1909 and their steam cars always won the races. The steam cars were eventually put in a separate racing class in order to give the gas engine cars a chance of winning. It is especially significant that in 1906 a Stanley Steamer 'Racer' set the world's speed record at Daytona, Florida. The Stanley Steamer 'Racer' traveled a measured mile in 28.2 seconds,



corresponding to a speed of 127 miles per hour! On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in the year 2006, there was a gathering of all Stanley Steamer owners at Ormand Beach, north of Daytona, Florida, to commemorate the time when the Stanley Steamer was the fastest vehicle on Earth.

One reason that the 1906 Stanley Steamer 'Racer' was so fast was that it had a good power to weight ratio. The car was small and light weight. Most of the body and frame of the car were made from wood. The vehicle only had two passenger seats with a box behind the seat that contained the kerosene and gasoline fuel tanks and a water tank for adding extra water to the boiler. The steam engine weighed about 100 pounds and was located next to the rear axle. The engine had two long cylinders with double acting pistons in each cylinder. Steam chambers at either end of each cylinder alternately pushed the pistons in the middle back and forth. Although the steam engine in the 1906 model Stanley Steamer was rated at only 20 horsepower, it was capable of producing greater torque or pulling power than most modern gasoline engines do today. The boiler in the Stanley Steamer weighed about 400 pounds and was relatively light-weight in comparison to other steam cars at that time. The boiler was a sheet metal cylinder about 2 feet 10 inches in diameter that was located under the front hood of the car. The relatively thin walled boiler was able to resist the pressure of the steam because high strength piano wire was wrapped around the cylinder. In order to let the heat from the kerosene burner plate go through the boiler, there were over 200 tubes connecting between the bottom and top of the boiler. This type of boiler is commonly called a 'fire tube' boiler.

Edward's nine year old Stanley Steamer had several mechanical problems. Many of the fire tubes in the boiler were leaking when he bought the car. To retain the water in the boiler, the leaking fire tubes had to be plugged with screw "cones" at the top and bottom of each tube. Edward kept a bag full of the cones under the passenger seat for use as needed. Leon Chamberlain said that about half of the fire tubes in the boiler had been plugged with cones; therefore the efficiency of the boiler to produce steam was diminished. Another problem with the car was that the kerosene burner plate had a large crack in it, which occasionally caused the flame to blow out. A third problem involved the "Stevenson Linkage", which was designed to save steam under certain driving conditions. Stanley Steamers can go into reverse when the Stevenson Linkage becomes worn. Leon says in his story that "he forgot to keep his foot behind the reverse pedal" to keep it from flying into reverse. However, current owners of Stanley Steamers are not advised to put their feet behind the reverse pedal because the steam pressure can cause the reverse pedal to snap down with enough force to injure their feet. One other significant problem with the car was that the parking brake was not working or was not strong enough to hold the car on a steep hill.

Despite the Stanley Steamer's mechanical problems, Edward Chamberlain and his new bride, Genevieve, drove the car on their honeymoon during the summer of 1915. The pictures below show Edward driving the 1906 Stanley Steamer in the mountains during their honeymoon trip.



They drove from Oakland to Yosemite and then up north through the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the family's cabin, which is located on the Truckee River about seven miles from Lake Tahoe. Edward spent so much time making repairs to the Stanley Steamer during the honeymoon trip that he decided to leave the car at the cabin and take the train home to Oakland with Genevieve.

In September of 1915, Leon Chamberlain, Edward's brother, took the train up to Truckee and the narrow gauge railway up the Truckee River to the cabin. The cabin had been built by the family in the summer of 1911. When the cabin was completed, Dr. Nelson Chamberlain and Mabel Rahm Chamberlain paid "Datsolalee", a renowned Washoe Indian basket maker, to come to the cabin and give it a name in the Washoe language. As Datsolalee stood on the porch of the cabin overlooking the Truckee River, she spoke the name "Watawangawa". The family was told that this means "Pretty View of Running Water". This fact is mentioned because Leon Chamberlain uses the name of the cabin in his narrative in Part 2.

Leon Chamberlain was just 17 years old when he started this trip. Edward had asked him to bring the Stanley Steamer back to Oakland. He had originally planned to drive the Stanley Steamer back with a family friend, Allan Morrow. However, at the last minute, Allan's parents insisted that he drive back with them and Leon was forced to make the trip alone - and his story begins here.

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The transcript in PART 2 is from a tape recording made in 1976, in which Leon Hoyt Chamberlain described his journey in 1915 driving over Donner Summit in Edward's 1906 Stanley Steamer.

### **Part 2: Transcript of Leon Hoyt Chamberlain's Narrative of his 1915 Trip with the Stanley Steamer.**

Allan<sup>1</sup> was up at Watawangawa on vacation with his parents and they insisted upon him driving them home. So it was impossible for him to go with me. I took the train up and jumped off the old narrow gauge<sup>2</sup> in the usual manner and went up and started working on the car. They left soon after that and I was left alone. I finished up the repair of the car in that day. The next morning early, I started off and everything went pretty well until I got about two-thirds up the steep grade from Donner Lake to the summit.



**View of Donner Pass looking east, circa 1914.**  
**This picture shows the railroad sheds, Victory Highway as an unpaved road and in the left foreground, remnants of the old Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Road.**

Now the fire had been on continuously and it so happened that there was a crack in the burner plate. We had worked it over and tried to seal it with asbestos cement, but it never made a good repair. So we just left it there and gradually as the flame got hotter and hotter and the burner plate got hotter, it would finally ignite the mixture in the tubes and blow out the fire all together. So that happened about two thirds up that grade and here I was with 500 pounds of pressure, rapidly diminishing. I was trying to figure out a way to get a rock by the side of the road, where I could put it easily under the rear wheel.

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1 Allan Morrow

2 At that time a narrow gauge railway ran along the Truckee River from Truckee to Tahoe City



But I lost my timing and I neglected to keep my foot in back of the reverse pedal, which was necessary because of the fact that the Stevenson Linkage wasn't working properly and the reverse would fly on during a long slow pull. So, first thing I knew – I took my foot out from in back of the reverse pedal and into reverse she went and I found myself going backward down the center of the road rather rapidly. It was ten feet on one side down to the bottom of the ditch and on the other side it fell off a hundred feet or so. Naturally, to back off the road I took the ten-foot side and hit a few rocks and the car came to a stop. The boiler had bent the angle holders so that it slid down to the front axle and the steam pipe to the engine broke and the whole boiler shot off its load of steam and there I was with a dead car.

So the first thing I did was take out the rear axle and beat it on some rocks to straighten it out as near as possible. And then I dismantled the car, those parts that needed repair and welding, and I got them together and started up to the Summit Hotel. When I went up, I went the road, which passed over the tunnel and came down to the Summit Hotel and blacksmith shop. Well, the blacksmith did a good job of welding things together and making the necessary repairs and then he asked me how I came up. I told him I came up the road. Well, he said, "You will save a lot of time going through the tunnel" [that would be Tunnel 6 - ed.]. He directed me there and I started off. But then as an after thought he said "Be careful though because they're blasting in the tunnel because the tunnel is so small that the freight cars are hitting the sides of the tunnel and they have scaffolding up there."

So I went in and walked about a third of a mile through the tunnel and a man came running from the other direction and told me to lay down along the side of the tracks because a train was coming. Then I didn't notice, unfortunately, that he had placed something on the tracks where I had laid down. And so, when the train came in, it exploded a torpedo that he had put on the tracks and it deafened me for some time. Then the train stopped and filled the place up with smoke and I just continued to lay down and decided I'd wait it out -- wait for the train to go on. My friend, however, he scrambled underneath the cars and found his way out. So, I waited for the train to go on and then I passed through the rest of the tunnel and went down to the car with my parts.

With the help of some galvanized wire that I got from the telephone company wires nearby, I tied the boiler up and fixed the burner plate again with asbestos cement. I finally got things fixed up pretty well, but there I was off the road. I hadn't seen another car all day, but fortunately a car came by with a tow rope and towed me back out of the rocks onto the road.

So I steamed up to 500 pounds boiler pressure and started up towards the Summit Hotel. I made up my mind I wouldn't release the throttle until I got to the Summit Hotel. When I was going up that steep inclined road that crosses just in front of the tunnel, a tire blew out and left the rim and flew off the side of the road down amongst the granite rocks - I never saw it again. I kept going on the rim and finally got to the Summit Hotel, where I stayed overnight. Now my dad<sup>3</sup> had somehow or other learned of this trip, although I hadn't told him about it. He was on the phone, apparently, to several places along the line, because he was worried about me. I hadn't gotten home as early as he had expected. So I spoke a few words with him and told him I was O.K.

The next morning, early, I got started down towards Sacramento. Several stops were required by broken pipes and so forth. The chief offender was the oil pipe that fed the oil into the steam pipe as it entered the engine. And of course when it broke, it prevented lubrication. So it was necessary for me to carry a higher water level in the boiler in order to get "wet" steam, which helped with the lubrication of the engine. However, each time, I got under the car and fixed the oil pipe. By the time I got down, I was pretty grimy because of the dirt and oil that I had been in so frequently under the car. So I started towards Sacramento. When I got to Auburn, I got off the road, because there were at that time so many different ways to get from Auburn to Sacramento that we rarely took the same road. I got lost in the middle of the night, being pitch black, and found myself in a field. But fortunately, because of the lights of the town, probably, I was able to find myself another road and I got finally to the wharf at Sacramento.

I started the car up the ramp from the railroad yard to the wharf, when I found that I hadn't been careful about keeping my foot in back of the reverse pedal and it flew on again and here I found myself going backwards down the ramp. But a train was coming, so I had to leave the ramp - go off the side and drop about three feet. Of course that caused quite a bit more damage to the car. But I just gave up then and went up the ramp and asked two of the men at the wharf office to help me push it up, which they did. So we pushed the car and got it up on the wharf and I booked it to San Francisco. Then they gave me a bucket of hot water and soap and I washed myself and got cleaner than I had been for some 10 or 15 hours.

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3 Dr. Nelson Hoyt Chamberlain

Then I took the train down to Oakland and arrived at home while the family were eating breakfast. Ed asked "where is the car?" I said, I put it on the river boat at Sacramento and he said "Why didn't you drive it down?" I said, "I got tired of trying to drive it." "Well," he said "you and I will go over and get it at the wharf in San Francisco this afternoon." "Not with me," I said, "you can get somebody else, I'm not going to look at the car any more." So Ed and a friend of his from college went over and got the car and brought it home. It stayed in the yard for some time until they decided to go over it again and remake it for their try at the Examiner prize for the first car over the summit.



Left: Hoisting the White Steamer on the elevator at the Sacramento wharf to put it on the riverboat for passage to San Francisco.

Above: Edward Chamberlain (left) and Leon Chamberlain (right), removing the boiler from a 1912 model Stanley Steamer at garage at Watawangawa

### Part 3: Additional Information on the 1906 Stanley Steamer

After Leon's trip in the Stanley Steamer from Watawangawa to Sacramento, he said that he never drove the car again. Edward picked up the car from the steamboat in San Francisco. He made the necessary repairs to make the car operational, but the burner plate with the crack in it was never fixed. Leon said that Edward would sometimes race the car on the beach at San Francisco and that it could go over 70 miles per hour. Leon described how the car could be moved to a position where the double acting pistons were both at "dead center" in the cylinders. Then Edward would allow the steam pressure to build up in the boiler to the maximum safe pressure. When he wanted to go, all he had to do was give a slight nudge to one of the tires and the car would accelerate like a rocket. The Stanley Steamer did not require a transmission, since the torque of the engine with full boiler pressure was great enough to drive the car forward at very low engine speeds.

During the time before World War I, Edward Chamberlain was serving his residency under Dr. Saxton Pope in San Francisco. Dr. Saxton Pope is famous as the attending physician for "Ishi", the last Yahi Indian, who lived at the Museum of Anthropology in San Francisco. Ishi was suffering from tuberculosis and Edward helped take care of Ishi. He would drive the 1906 Stanley Steamer up the steep hill to the hospital. Leon said that the old Stanley could negotiate the steepest hills in San Francisco without any problems, unless the wheels got stuck or slipped on the trolley tracks. The final adventure with the 1906 Stanley Steamer was a race sponsored by the San Francisco Examiner for the first car over Donner Summit in the spring. Apparently this race had been an annual event for several years and many of the participants knew tricks and techniques to help them over patches of snow. Some of those entered in the race carried large planks of wood in their cars to place on top of the snow. Other drivers had winches and apparatus that enabled them to get their cars on top of the snow sheds for the trains. Edward didn't know about these tricks, so despite the speed of the Stanley Steamer, he didn't come close to winning the race over the summit.



After the race, Edward left the Stanley Steamer at Watawangawa. Eleanor Chamberlain Drake said that she and her cousins used to play in the old Stanley as children. In a letter dated May 5, 1996 Marion Morrow Stott (daughter of Pauline Chamberlain Morrow) wrote: "I do vividly remember spending hours playing with Owen and Eleanor in the old Stanley Steamer parked in that little spot opposite the garage at Watawangawa. We adored it and at that time, probably about 1925-1928, it was in quite good condition. We pretended to be going on trips, packing our bags and lunch and having a wonderful time. The brass fittings were still in good order then. The last I remember, it was down the hillside."

Indeed, the 1906 Stanley Steamer was eventually pushed down the hill towards the Truckee River. It was pushed on top of a 1901 Knox automobile that had previously been dumped down the hill. The Knox had a single cylinder air-cooled gasoline internal combustion engine that had been used to pump water to the cabin from the Truckee River. Over time, both the 1901 Knox and 1906 Stanley Steamer were almost completely buried under a thick layer of pine needles. The boiler rolled all the way down into the Truckee River, with a little help from William (Bill) Chamberlain and Buddy Morrow. According to Leon, Edward removed the Stanley Steamer engine from the car before it was pushed down the hill, and he took it with him when he moved to Pennsylvania in the late 1940's. Richard Chamberlain excavated all the Stanley Steamer parts he could find in the 1970's, and brought them up to a level display area that was cut into the hill above the cabin's parking lot. In the summer of 1976, Richard Chamberlain made an 8mm sound movie with Leon describing the various parts of the car that had been saved. Unfortunately, after the movie was filmed, Leon had a bad fall down the hill on his way back to the cabin and broke his leg.

In 1996, the family sold the remaining parts of the 1906 Stanley Steamer to a friend of the family, Dr. Curt Brohard. It was Dr. Brohard's intention to restore the car to its original 1906 condition at the time it was manufactured at the Stanley Brothers factory in Newton, Massachusetts. Curt Brohard and his brother Allan used a metal detector and tried to locate additional parts of the car. Both axles were found, the cracked burner plate, the foot pedals, with part of the floor-boards, one wheel hub, all four leaf springs and one steam gauge. Most of the wood had rotted away. There was a steering column, but it was not original equipment and was probably changed when Edward modernized the body of the car and installed lower seats.



Remaining parts of the 1906 Stanley Steamer recovered by Dr. Brohard in 1996.

Dr. Brohard tried to complete the restoration of the car in time to “steam” it up to Watawangawa in 2011 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of building the cabin. However, there were many delays in replicating parts and the car was only partially restored for the centennial celebration.



June 2011 – The wooden body parts and chassis were completed for the Watawangawa centennial celebration.

The 1906 Stanley Steamer was fully restored and operational in 2016 after 20 years of restoration work by Curt and Allan Brohard. The car was invited to the Concours d’Elegance at Pebble Beach in August 2017 and then displayed at the Blackhawk Auto Museum for six months. The completely restored car was sold to Dr. Gerald Entine in May 2018 and is now on display in the Stanley Brothers factory building in Newton, Massachusetts, where it was originally built. The factory was converted to an office building and the car can be seen in the lobby during regular office hours. Some pictures of the restored 1906 Stanley Steamer are included below.



Above left: Richard Chamberlain with the restored 1906 Stanley Steamer at the Concours d’Elegance at Pebble Beach in August 2017. Above right: the 1906 Stanley on display at the Blackhawk Auto Museum in Danville, California





Above: 1906 Stanley Steamer on the honeymoon.

Below: Stanley Steamer near Donner Summit, 1914.



# Book Review

## Across the Continent by the Lincoln Highway

Effie Gladding 202 pages 1915

One of the big firsts for Donner Summit is the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway.\* We've been reviewing books with some focus on Donner Summit in the [Heirloom](#) for some years (there are 92 posted book reviews and a number of video reviews as of this writing on our website.) We've known that there is not an unlimited number of books even tangentially related to Donner Summit and we are now coming to the end. So imagine our excitement when Effie Gladding's 1915 book, [Across the Continent by the Lincoln Highway](#), appeared during a search. According to the Lincoln Highway Association, Gladding's book (available in reprint editions on the internet or in various ebook editions for free) "was the first full-size hardback to discuss transcontinental travel, as well as the first to mention the Lincoln Highway." The book also has a picture right on the cover of an automobile on the Lincoln Highway between Big Bend and Cisco (right). We thought we'd not run out of Donner Summit related books yet.

Now for the bad news. There is only one spot in the whole transcontinental route where the Lincoln Highway broke into two routes. Donner Summit is one of the routes and then there is the Carson City to Placerville/Sacramento variation. The latter is clearly inferior but it's also the route Effie took. Why there is a picture of Donner Summit on the cover (and another on page 92 of the highway up Donner Pass - see the next page), who knows. Even though Effie did not go over Donner Summit, she did travel the Lincoln Highway and if you're interested in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century automobile travel, keep reading.

We don't know much about Effie but she must have been adventurous, willing to try new things, and forward thinking. She also must not have had very good taste given that she avoided the clearly superior Donner Summit route.

Effie had already toured Europe for a year, followed by six months in Australia and New Zealand, and three months in Hawaii before arriving through the Golden Gate. There she and her husband started an exploration of six hundred miles of the El Camino Real and California before heading across the Sierra and across the country. In some ways the book is an exploration for us of traveling life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Effie, for example, was quite taken by California cafeterias, "well equipped and perfectly ordered restaurants." They saw Palo Alto and Stanford University; U.C. Berkeley; the Santa Clara Valley, "...amid its orchards are tasteful houses and bungalows..."; Santa Cruz; Monterey and the 17 Mile Drive (75¢); Carmel; Salinas; and then further down the coast staying in little inns.

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\*the others being the first transcontinental railroad, the first transcontinental telephone line, the first transcontinental air route, and the first wagon trains to California with wagons.

DUNDA BOOKS  
CLASSIC



ACROSS THE CONTINENT  
BY THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

EFFIE  
GLADDING



At Los Olivos “We pass dozens of wagons and buggies, the people all in holiday attire, coming into town for the May-Day celebrations. Los Olivos was once an olive growing valley, but grain growing has been found more profitable.”

“It would be hard to exaggerate the charm and beauty of the Ojai Valley for those who like its type of scenery. A magnificent wall of stone mountain, whose colors run into greys, pinks, lavenders, and yellows, forms the eastern boundary of the valley. On its level floor are luxuriant orchards. Here in warm protection grow the fig, the olive, the orange, and the lemon. The beautiful Matilija poppies grow in great luxuriance here, their tall grey-green stalks and white crape petals with golden hearts being very effective.”

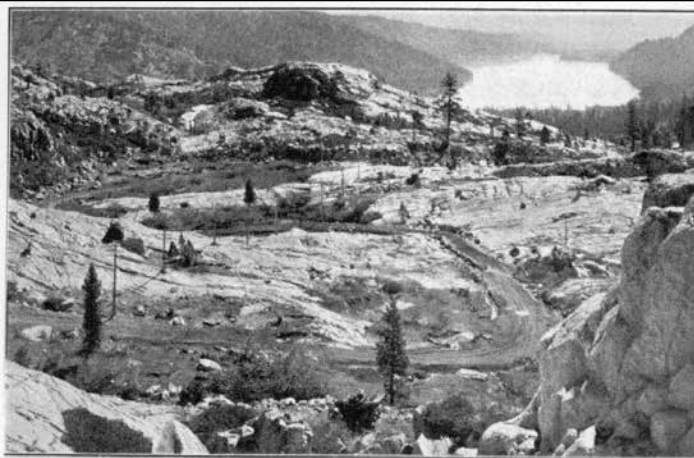
There was joy in the trip, “...the woman waves to me with a big loaf of bread in one hand and her bread knife in the other. I wave with equal heartiness to her. This is part of the charm of the open road, these salutations and this jolly passing exchange of sympathy, not between two ships that pass in the night, but between two parties who enjoy the air and the open, and who are one in gypsy spirit. It all belongs in the happy day.”

Not everything was great though. “Before we reached Saugus we had to ford the Santa Clara River, the bridge being down. We stuck in the soft sand in mid-river and T. [presumably her husband] was obliged to wade through the shallow water to the shore behind us, which happened to be nearest, to go in search of a countryman and horses. In the meantime I took off my boots and stockings and waded across to the far side of the stream... Soon T. appeared with a countryman driving two stout horses. They quickly pulled the car across and their master received a dollar for his services.”

“The Lincoln Highway is already what it is intended to be, a golden road of pleasure and usefulness, fitly dedicated, and destined to inspire a great patriotism and to honour a great patriot.”

exterior. One said solemnly of the sun when we expressed a wish that it would appear, "Yes, the sun is our father, and our step-father." Then he added, "I'd worship the sun if I were a heathen. I kinder do, now." He went on irrelevantly, "I do think Roosevelt's one of the best men we've got. I do think so. I do so." We were close to a deserted logging camp, which looked doubly melancholy in the falling rain. There was the deserted runway, there were the empty cottages, with broken windows and doors swinging open. Back of the cottages were piles of tin cans. One cottage still bore its old name, 'Idle Burg.' All about were blooming columbines and the odorous balsam.”

Once they finished with California and got on the Lincoln Highway Effie felt their great adventure had really begun. “We were driving down an unfrequented hill road, in an attempt to cut across to the main road, marked by white bands on the telephone poles. We suddenly found ourselves hanging high and dry above the ruts of the road. The rain had worn them so deep and the middle of the road had remained so hard and dry, that on the hillside we were literally astride the ridge in the middle of the road. This meant a long journey on foot to a farmhouse to borrow a spade and a pick. It also meant much hacking and digging away at the hard earth under the body of the machine to release the axles and drop the wheels to the road. Finally it was accomplished. We picked up the farmer's children who had come out to see the rescue and drove down the long hill to the farmhouse.”



Lincoln Highway near Donner Lake. Donner Lake in distance.

Another time the rain came in torrents near Mariposa and they got stuck, “We found that with no chains and with the machine slipping and sliding on the steep clay road, progress would be impossible. I tried to help the matter by putting freshly cut branches of odorous balsam fir under the wheels to help them grip. I walked behind the machine with a log, throwing it under the wheels as they advanced foot by foot, T. fighting at the steering wheel like the pilot of a drifting ship. But it was impossible to make headway. We met some teamsters who had evidently been taking something hot to counteract the discomfort of their wet

What a tour it has been!

Effie Gladding

Another time they couldn't do the extricating themselves and an industrious local helped them for \$2.00. There was no AAA.

Reading Effie's book you do get a sense of California in 1915 "Los Angeles is unique. Where will you find another city like it, so open, so bright, with such handsome apartment houses, designed for light housekeeping, such multitudes of cafeterias? Where will you find such a green square of civic center with people sitting quietly about, enjoying the sunshine, the splashing of the fountain, the tameness of the starlings? These are the happy, not the unhappy, unemployed. They have come from far and near to live simply in light housekeeping apartments, to bask in the sunshine, many of them to enjoy a sunny old age on a modest but comfortable income. The last census, they tell us, shows that 80 per cent of the Los Angeles people are from the State of Iowa. But from all the Middle West they have fled from the cold winters to the warmth of this big city which really seems to be not a city at all, but an immense collection of open parks, bright houses, and handsome streets. Thousands of people are pouring into Los Angeles every year. Great fields around the city have been included within the city limits, fine streets with ornate lamps and copings have been cut through them, handsome stucco and shingle villas have been erected. These are homes of well-to-do people who mean to spend at least part of each year, if not the rest of their lives, in Los Angeles."

Effie dispenses little bits of advice, "We had taken luncheon at Acton, a sordid little place with an extremely unattractive wooden hotel, poor and bare. The luncheon, cooked and served by a hard working landlady, had been better than appearances promised. We had hot beefsteak, a good boiled potato, some crisp lettuce, and fair tea. Western people are addicted to green tea, a great affliction to one accustomed to black tea. Western hotel keepers would do well to use black tea for their tourists, as the use of green tea is, so far as I know, almost unknown in the East."

She also talks about how travel was done sometimes, "We found Mr. and Mrs. Dudley of the ranch hospitable and willing to give us bed and board. It is very pleasant for those who are willing to forego luxuries to stop at farm houses and ranch houses, to take the fare and sleep upon the beds given them, and to enjoy the talk of the people and the contact with real ranch life."

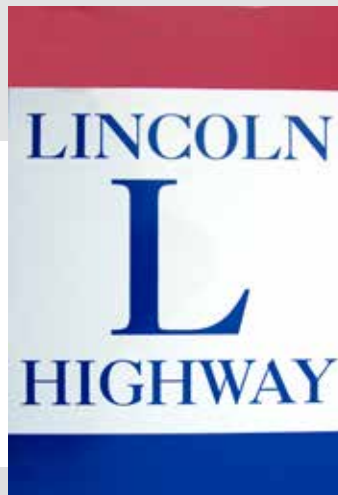
About Nevada she says, "I must own to having an impression that the trail across Nevada could be marked by whiskey bottles if by no other signs. All along our road across the great State we saw the bottles where they had been thrown in the sand and dust by passers-by."

The quotes above and the sidebars here give you the impression that Effie's telling is more interesting than it is. Basically the book is a list of places. We don't know what induced Effie and her husband to undertake the cross country journey. We don't even know Effie's husband's name. We don't even know she was traveling with her husband (that came from the Lincoln Highway Association's website). In her introduction Effie says, "What a tour it has been!" There is not much in the book to justify the sentence or the exclamation mark.

Outside Reno, the joy of travel on the Lincoln Highway

"I believe that's N's car!" said T. As we came up to it we saw that the two left wheels were hopelessly down in a deep rut. Mr. N. had stuck his card in the windshield of the car, and had written on it, "Gone for some boards; wait until I come back." Soon we saw him coming across the desert with some loose boards in his arms. We found that the poor fellow had been there from ten o'clock the night before until ten o'clock in the morning, the hour of our passing. He had been bowling along comfortably and somewhat sleepily the previous night, when suddenly his car bumped into a muddy rut from which he found it impossible to extricate the machine. He told us that he had worked frantically and futilely until about midnight. Then he put out his lights, wrapped himself up as best he could, and slept until seven. He said that utter stillness and darkness were about him. "Not even a jack rabbit passed." At seven he again began to struggle with his car. He had the sure hope that we would come along sooner or later. He had calculated that we would arrive about eleven. When we found him he had just gone to a deserted, falling ranch house to find a few boards to be used as levers. He and T., taking our machine, now drove to the ranch house and brought back a goodly supply of boards and some heavier pieces of timber which they had torn from the dropping fences. The boards they put in the rut in front of the wheels in order that they might get a grip when once they started. The heavier timbers they used as levers. And so by dint of hard work and by the help of two young men who passed in their motor half an hour after our arrival, the front wheel was pried out of the sticky mud, and the car was once more gotten on firm ground. It was past one o'clock when we climbed up the bare road to the high town of Austin and went to the International Hotel for our luncheon. What with lack of sleep and his long fast Mr. N. was quite worn out. A good luncheon prepared by a Japanese cook and served by a natty and very debonair Japanese waiter put us all in better trim.

When we left Stockton we felt that the great adventure had really begun. We were now to traverse the Lincoln Highway and were to be guided by the red, white, and blue marks; sometimes painted on telephone poles, sometimes put up by way of advertisement over garage doors or swinging on hotel signboards; sometimes painted on little stakes, like croquet goals, scattered along over the great spaces of the desert. We learned to love the red, white, and blue, and the familiar big L which told us that we were on the right road. Had we taken the Lincoln Highway literally from ocean to ocean, we should have driven direct from San Francisco to Stockton. As it was we saw California first, and came in at Stockton.



### **Finally there's advice.**

First: We did not wear our good clothes. The long, dusty journeys are very hard upon clothing, and for a lady a comfortable light weight tweed suit with plenty of washable blouses with rolling collars, covered by an ample motor coat, gives the greatest comfort and satisfaction. The dust of the plains is ground into one's clothing and one should be ready for this. The requirements of the hotels along the road are very simple, and a fresh blouse will usually be all that is needed. We took care to use only such dust robes to cover our luggage as could not be injured by the wear and tear of the journey. We did not take with us our best rugs and robes.

Second: We did not travel by night. We found it very delightful to travel in the late afternoon, when the lights were particularly fine, but we avoided as much as possible traveling late into the evening. In this way one does not miss the scenery of the country, and one is not over fatigued. We found that when we were obliged to arrive late at our inn, it was wiser to eat supper at the proper supper hour wherever that might find us.

Third: We did not as a rule travel on Sunday. Partly because we wished to attend church in whatever town we might be, partly because we found ourselves fresher for enjoyment and sight-seeing after the rest and quiet of a day.

Fourth: We resolved at the outset to take the days and the roads as they came; not looking for luxury and well satisfied with simplicity. It is surprising how one is fortified for the vicissitudes of the road by such a deliberate attitude of mind. The Lincoln Highway is not as yet a road for those motorists who wish only luxurious hotels, frequent stops, and all the cushioned comfort of the much-traveled main roads of the favorite tourist parts of Europe. It is, however, perfectly practicable in its entire length of 3200 miles, and rich in interest and charm for those who care for what it has to give.

### **Note:**

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.



# Then & Now

Occasionally we sojourn from Donner Summit to the big city which is what we did in early October. Because my wife is an artist we have to make the requisite appearances at the altars of art, in this case the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco. There was a special show, "In Pursuit of Venus," but that's not the point of this.

After viewing the special show we went into the regular collection where they substitute art from time to time. There, in the second room, was an Albert Bierstadt painting (right) unlabeled but clearly Donner Summit.

On our return to Donner Summit I had to get the view now, almost 150 years after Bierstadt had been on the summit. I took a number of shots, the closest being the one below. I am nowhere near that expert that Art Clark is, who has done more than a hundred Then/Now's which you can see in previous [Heirlooms](#) or on our website. The reason my scene does not match Mr. Bierstadt's is not because of the changes over time: Old 40 (the road at the center) and Highway 80 (Back left). See the next page.



## Bierstadt and Donner Summit.

Don't get your hopes up. This article is only about the pictures on the previous page. One day we'll do an article or articles about artists visiting Donner Summit. We've already covered the photographers, we're just waiting for the inspiration and "hook." So, keep up your subscription.

The photograph on the previous page does not match the Bierstadt painting, "View of Donner Lake" (1872) and that's not due to incompetence on the photographer's (mine) part nor because times have changed the geography. Photographers mostly end up with actual scenes but painters can take liberties with reality and Bierstadt took great liberties, romanticizing his subjects. He exaggerated and augmented his scenes. You can walk back and forth at the top of Donner Pass and not get the view that Bierstadt painted. You've got Donner Lake in the distance and the snowsheds of the Transcontinental Railroad on the right side. It's a wonderful painting but it's not reality, although it is history. Bierstadt was focused on nature and technology with nature taking the dominant roll but showing what the coming of technology was going to conquer. Just 25 years before, the Donner Party had been conquered by nature at the lake in the distance. The painting shows the change. In 1872 people could travel in comfort where people had died of starvation just a few years before. You can see the Dutch Flat Rd., barely, in the center. These exaggerated views of nature earned him criticism but his large paintings also attracted crowds who paid admission to see the wonders of the west. Eventually his exaggerations fell out of favor.

The Daily Alta California said on January 12, 1872 about "Donner Lake from the Summit"

Bierstadt's latest work, "Donner Lake from the Summit," will be on exhibition during the coming week at the rooms of the Art Associates. The effect represented is early morning, and the serial effect and wonderful distance are worthy of Turner himself. The foreground of rock, pines and moss have been carefully studied, and the whole composition is that of a master. In comparing Bierstadt to Turner, we do so with this difference: While the great English artist sought out always the higher forms of nature and endeavored to represent them, he was not unfrequently [sic] eccentric, and the results of his work were often not up to the standard of his aspirations. Mr. Bierstadt has much of the same talent and as much or more of the same Industry and never "runs wild." This work is evenly painted, has all the attributes of a great work, and would be noticeable in any gallery in the world. It has been painted for C. P. Huntington, Esq., and will be forwarded to him in New York, immediately after it leaves the rooms of the Art Association, where it will remain for one week only.

One day we'll do more about Donner Summit art - stay tuned.



**Old Time Sunday Drive**

**Next Time  
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instead of I-80**

Historic Towns  
Interesting Scenery  
Fascinating History  
Picnic Spots  
A Slower Pace

Take a look at our guide to Old Highway 40: turn by turn instructions from Rocklin to Truckee, broken into four legs and including pictures and history. Available on line on the brochure page of [donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://donnersummithistoricalsociety.org), at the DSHS (at the blinking light in "downtown" Soda Springs), or the visitors' centers in Truckee and Auburn.

And while you are at it, check out the 20 Mile Museum - interpretive signs from Nyack to below Donner Summit on Old 40. Information at [www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)





# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



George Lamson took this photograph of the Charles Stanton memorial at Cascade Lakes. Forget that emigrant trail experts think that Stanton died somewhere further down around what is now Kingsvale.

Charles Stanton was a hero as a member of the Donner Party. When the party was low on food somewhere in Nevada Stanton and another fellow left for Sutter's Fort. The other fellow became sick but Stanton, even though he was a single traveler with the Donner Party, having no family in the group, returned from California with two Indians, food and mules.

On December 15, 1846 he led the Forlorn Hope (15 members of the Donner Party) away from Donner Lake hoping to get to California and get help (see "Heroism on Donner Summit" in the May, '14 [Heirloom](#)). Stanton grew more and more tired and somewhere near today's Kingvale he was too tired to go on. He sat back against a tree with his pipe telling another member he'd be along shortly. His body was found by rescuers in the spring.

On that morning of their fifth day out, poor Stanton sat late by the camp-fire. The party had set off, all but Miss G., and as she turned to follow her father and sister, she asked him if he would soon come. He replied that he should, and she left him smoking. He never left the desolate fireside. His remains were found there by the next party who passed."

Eliza Farnham,  
[California Indoors and Out](#) quoted in [The Donner Party Chronicles](#) pg 235

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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](#).

If you find any "Odds & Ends" you'd like to share pass them on to the editor - see page 2

\*Native Americans; first wagon trains to California; the first transcontinental railroad, highway, air route, and telephone line, etc.



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