

# The Donner Summit

# Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society and the most historically significant square mile in California.

August, 2022 issue #168



## Around the World and Over Donner Summit

PBS broadcast an update of Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days early in 2022. Verne, of course, was enamored by the technological wonders of his imagination and of the 19th Century. The actual technological wonder of the time was the transcontinental railroad and so naturally Verne had to fit it into the story. Indeed, the fictional Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's book, took the train across the continent and that of course meant crossing Donner Summit.

Since the Heirloom deals in Donner Summit history it was only natural for the editorial staff's curiosity to have been piqued by the PBS series which brought up the original book. What did the original story say about Donner Summit? Staff memories had lapsed over the decades so getting a copy was the next step. There followed disappointment both for the possibilities neglected and in Verne's story telling. Mr. Verne inadvertently left out any adventures on Donner Summit while making up all kinds of adventures everywhere else. There are lots of other adventures while crossing the continent but nothing on Donner Summit. Mr. Verne's popularity might be misplaced. Likewise, PBS' 2022 version, which played loosely with the original's plot lines, also left out Donner Summit.

Excerpt from Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days

### Chapter XXVI IN WHICH PHILEAS FOGG AND PARTY TRAVEL BY THE PACIFIC RAILROAD

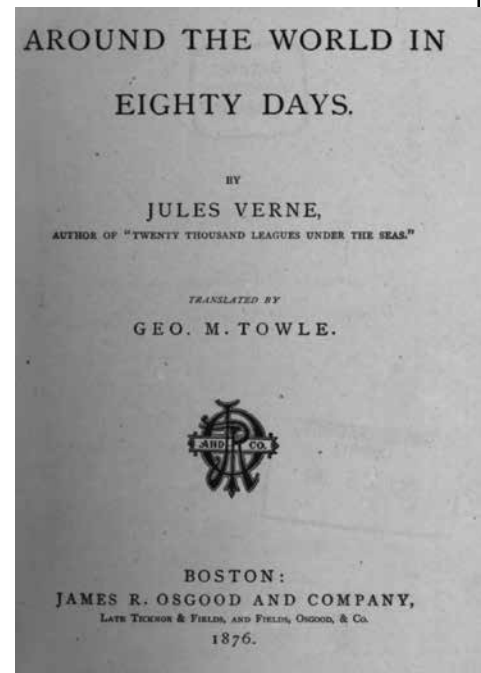
"New York and San Francisco are thus united by an uninterrupted metal ribbon, which measures no less than three thousand seven hundred and eighty-six miles. Between Omaha and the Pacific the railway crosses a territory which is still infested by Indians and wild beasts, and a large tract which the Mormons, after they were driven from Illinois in 1845, began to colonize." Amazingly, Verne said, whereas the transcontinental trip had

taken six months, it now took only seven days by railroad.

Verne has it start snowing an hour out of Oakland. Since the train was going only twenty miles a hour that would leave the train just outside the Bay Area. The snow doesn't get in the way of the plot though. Except for the snow error, Verne had clearly read about transcontinental train travel,

"The car which he occupied was a sort of long omnibus on eight wheels, and with no compartments in the interior. It was supplied with two rows of seats, perpendicular to the direction of the train on either side of an aisle which conducted to the front and rear platforms. These platforms were found throughout the train, and the passengers were able to pass from one end of the train to the other. It was supplied with saloon cars, balcony cars, restaurants, and smoking cars; theatre cars alone were wanting, and they will have these some day.

"Book and news dealers, sellers of edibles, drinkables, and



# Story Locations in this Issue

Crampton's pg 9   Beacon Hill Lodge pg 10   Norden School pg 9   Vanderford's pgs 9/10   Donner Summit Brige pg 11



## Finding Your Way Through Donner Summit History

We've now passed 150 issues of the Heirloom: thousands of pages, thousands of pictures, and hundreds of subjects. You've probably begun to realize that you cannot keep all the history in your head. Even if you remember it all, retrieval is difficult.

Fortunately John Albert Index invented the index\* and one of the choices we made back at the birth of the DSHS was to index all our Heirloom articles and pictures. We've diligently kept up the indices so that they are many pages long, full of alphabetized titles and subjects. Go to our website and to any of the Heirloom pages (one for each year) and you'll find links to the Heirloom indices.

One of the strengths of the DSHS is the incomparable historical photograph collection of Norm Sayler, our president. The collection is thousands of pictures and again the sheer number makes finding anything in particular, difficult. Avoid the long URL by going to our website and clicking on the "photographs" link and then to the "historic photo collection link." A third link, to the Flickr URL will take you to those thousands of searchable historical photographs of Donner Summit. Have fun.

\*historical society humor

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cigars, who seemed to have plenty of customers, were continually circulating in the aisles.”

“At eight o'clock a steward entered the car and announced that the time for going to bed had arrived; and in a few minutes the car was transformed into a dormitory. The backs of the seats were thrown back, bedsteads carefully packed were rolled out by an ingenious system, berths were suddenly improvised, and each traveler had soon at his disposition a comfortable bed, protected from curious eyes by thick curtains. The sheets were clean and the pillows soft. It only remained to go to bed and sleep which everybody did—while the train sped on across the State of California.”

San Francisco to Sacramento took six hours over a “not very hilly” route. While the passengers slept the train went through Sacramento and into the Sierra,

“The train, on leaving Sacramento, and passing the junction, Roclin [sic], Auburn, and Colfax, entered the range of the Sierra Nevada. Cisco was reached at seven in the morning; and an hour later the dormitory was transformed into an ordinary car, and the travellers [sic] could observe the picturesque beauties of the mountain region through which they were steaming. The railway track wound in and out among the passes, now approaching the mountain sides, now suspended over precipices, avoiding abrupt angles by bold curves, plunging into narrow defiles, which seemed to have no outlet. The locomotive, its great funnel emitting a weird light, with its sharp bell, and its cow-catcher extended like a spur, mingled its shrieks and bellows with the noise of torrents and cascades, and twined its smoke among the branches of the gigantic pines.

“There were few or no bridges or tunnels on the route. The railway turned around the sides of the mountains, and did not attempt to violate nature by taking the shortest cut from one point to another. [Here we must assume that Verne's source for transcontinental travel didn't mention the fifteen tunnels and the many miles of snowsheds.]

“The train entered Nevada where passengers had twenty minutes for breakfast.”

Given all the adventures Phileas Fogg and his companions

had in their travels around the world, couldn't he have dedicated a few to Donner Pass? Couldn't he have at least mentioned it? Certainly Verne's imagination was up to it. Elsewhere in the book there was a kidnapping, a rescue from a funeral pyre, an Indian ambush, mistaken identity, storms, mutiny, etc.

That disappointment occasioned some further research into actual as opposed to fictional world travelers who might have mentioned Donner Summit. We've covered Thomas Stevens' 1884 trip around the world, the first by bicycle. He went across the Sierra on high wheeler bicycle (March, '15 [Heirloom](#)).

## Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland

Nellie Bly was an ace investigative reporter for the [New York World](#) and was inspired by Phileas Fogg. Her publisher was Joseph Pulitzer who was focused on building circulation with

interesting stories, a new kind of journalism. Sending Nellie off was a wonderful idea and Nellie was determined to actually make the trip rather than just fictionally do it as Fogg had. She set off in 1889. Here we thought was a possibility. An ace reporter would follow truth and truth was that the transcontinental railroad went over Donner Summit. An ace reporter could scarcely ignore such a significant piece of geography. Unfortunately, Nellie was stopped by Sierra snow and took another route across the country going through the southwest.

Nellie Bly had competition, though. John Walker was the publisher of [Cosmopolitan](#)

[Magazine](#) and he too was interested in building circulation. So when he heard about Nellie Bly's coming trip he pulled one of his reporters, Elizabeth Bisland, into his office and gave her marching orders. Her assignment was to go around the world in the opposite direction of Nellie Bly. Parenthetically, Walker tried to bet the World's Joseph Pulitzer \$1,000 that Bisland would beat Bly.

Bly went east on her trip and Bisland went west. She described her trip in [In Seven Stages: A flying Trip Around the World](#) which was a compendium of articles that appeared first in the [Cosmopolitan](#). Elizabeth took the train across the country too and did go over Donner Summit. The nearest there is of any mention of Donner Summit is, “All through this country the air had a delicious dry perfume, like the smell of parching vegetation, that was stimulating and wholesome

# WHICH WILL WIN?

## Miss Bisland or Nellie Bly in the Race Around the World

### THE LONGEST RACE ON RECORD

Brooklyn, NY [Standard Union](#)  
November 20, 1889

# CIRCLING THE GLOBE

## Miss Bisland Reaches San Francisco on Her Race Against Time. TO SAIL FOR YOKOHAMA TO-MORROW.

How She Came to Start on Her Extraordinary Journey - Leaving New York at a Few Hours' Notice - Nellie Bly – Well Started in the Opposite Direction-Both Expect to Beat Jules Verne's Imaginary Record of Eighty Days-They Hope to Circumnavigate the Globe in Less Than Seventy-Five Days-One of the Most Singular Races Ever Undertaken

San Francisco Examiner  
November 20, 1889

as the resinous incense of pines.” We have to guess at the location since the quote appeared after Indians in Nevada and before Sacramento. We might excuse Bisland’s not noticing Donner Summit since she was only 22 when she was tapped to race Nellie Bly. Then too, further research showed that at least sometimes the one transcontinental train per day crossed Donner Summit at night which shows a great lack of planning by the Central Pacific.

Bly beat Bisland by four days but that’s not what’s important here. We want to know about Donner Summit as part of global circumnavigation. So the search went on in the editorial offices of the Donner Summit Heirloom.

The continued search brings up the letter here from an 1872 book titled, Letters from Japan, China, India, and Egypt by Wm. Perry Fogg. He also traveled the world. The resulting letters were published in a book as a souvenir for his friends. He said in his preface, “My motive was not merely the pursuit of pleasure, but the desire to gratify a long-cherished passion to see once in my lifetime the strange and curious nations of the Orient, books of travel among whom have always had for me a strange fascination.”

There are lots of links to various versions if you go searching the internet. Mr. Perry Fogg also crossed Donner Summit on the transcontinental railroad and did not neglect to note that. Go to the next page.

page 21...

## PHINEAS FOGG'S RIVALS.

### Miss Bisland Off for Japan—Nellie Bly Passes the Scillys.

#### BOUND TO BEAT JULES VERNE'S HERO.

Now They will race Against Time and Fiction-Scene at the China Steamer When Miss Bisland Took Her Departure - What the Steamship Companies Promised to Do.

**Dramatis personae:** Elizabeth Bisland, black-eyed and comely young lady of enormous aspirations in the globe-trotting line. Bound round the world in seventy five days. Determined to outdo Phineas Fogg, the hero of Around the World in Eighty days

Miss Jan Elizabeth Pink Cochran (Alias "Nellie Bly"): Another black-eyed young and comely maiden of extreme peripatetic ambition. Also bound to beat the mythical Fogg and make the circuit of the globe in Seventy-five days.

#### **Scene This planet.**

The action in this sensational drama is divided. One of the principals is heard of by telegraph as follows:  
"NELLIE BLY" ON TIME.

San Francisco Examiner  
November 22, 1889

**Letter NUMBER III.**

**From Ogden Over the Central Pacific Alkali  
and Sage Brush-The Sierra Nevadas-Rounding  
Cape Horn Glimpse at the Golden State-San  
Francisco Approached at Night Aladdin'  
Lamp-Hotels, Stores and Public Buildings  
Churches and Schools-Starr King-The Cliff  
House  
and the Lions-Lone Mountain Cemetery--Mis-  
sion Dolores-The Chinese-Adieu.**

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 1, 1870.

“The Central Pacific from Ogden to California is by no means a duplicate of the Union Pacific from Omaha to Ogden. The sleeping cars and eating stations are inferior; gold and silver take the place of scrip [i.e. gold and silver coins were in use vs. paper money], and "good square meal" cannot always be had. Chinese laborers and track repairers replace the Irish. California fruits, especially pears and grapes, grow cheaper at every station, and we begin to realize that we are on the Western Slope of the Continent. But one train a day each way is run between Omaha and San Francisco, which leaves Ogden at 6 P M. We wake the next morning in the valley of the Humboldt, and the day before us is perhaps the dreariest and most uncomfortable on the whole route. Vast Alkali plains surround us, where sage brush alone grows, and not a drop of water can be had which man or beast can swallow. The ground is white with alkali as if covered with snow, the fine dust penetrates even through double windows and makes our hands and faces feel sticky and uncomfortable. Our eyes are slightly inflamed and reading becomes difficult. Water affords but a temporary relief, and a 'dry wash' with a soft towel is much better. Such are a few of the annoyances of the railway traveler, while dashing over this worse than Sahara desert, twenty-five miles an hour in a first class car. Imagine what were the sufferings of the early emigrants, hundreds of whom perished miserably on the way, overtaken by storms of alkali sand, and the bones of thousands oxen and horses bleach on these barren plains.

“After three hundred miles of sage brush and alkali, we commence to climb the Sierra Nevadas, and for the next ten hours see results of engineering skill that seem almost mar-

velous. Constantly ascending, we wind around the mountains on narrow shelves of rock, bridge chasms at dizzy heights on trestle work, and where no other course is practicable; boldly plunge through the hills, and emerge from dark tunnels to dash onward through the gloom of miles of snow-sheds, by which alone this route is kept open in winter, and the road protected from the avalanches which sweep down the mountain sides. There are over fifty miles of these snow sheds, built of heavy timbers, and covered, roof and sides, with four-inch planks. They are somewhat aggravating to the traveler, as they cut off all view of the scenery, and leave him in gloomy twilight which is neither night nor day.

“On we glide past the summit, and the second morning after leaving Ogden commence the descent of the Western slope. We round 'Cape Horn,' bold promontory, which juts out and overhangs a valley 2,000 feet below, and half way up the face of the mountain on a narrow shelf of rock the trains

wind round like some huge monster, where but a few years ago there was not even a foot trail - a place well calculated to unsettle the nerves of timid ladies. We pass it in safety, and turning to the left cross the valley on the big trestle-work bridge, and we feel inclined to hold our breath until the train reaches the solid embankment on the opposite side of the chasm.

“Lower and lower We go, leaving the Alpine scenery behind us, and now, as if by magic, there opens before us the beautiful valley of the Sacramento. It is our first glimpse of the 'Golden State,' and the picture is one long to be remembered. Pleasant farm

houses, orchards loaded with fruit, smiling fields and fertile meadows, as far as the eye can reach, are in striking contrast with the desolate scenes of the past thirty six hours. A short delay at Sacramento, the second city and Capital of California, and we continue on to Stockton, near which gold was first discovered in 1848.

“Thence through several western looking towns, over the coast range os mountains, the high volcanic peak of Mount Diabolo [sic], looming up 8,800 feet on our right-a land mark far out in the Pacific--and just at dusk we reached Oakland, the terminus of the railroad, and the Brooklyn of San Francisco. Here we are transferred to a steam ferry boat, and crossing over the broad bay we watch with no little interest

LETTERS

FROM

JAPAN, CHINA,

INDIA, AND EGYPT.

By WM. PERRY FOGG.

CLEVELAND, OHIO,  
1872.

the myriad lights from the great city before us which reflected and doubled in number on the smooth water, stretch from the wharves high up to the summit of the hill upon which the city is built. Arriving at the pier the rush of passengers, shouting of hackmen and omnibus drivers, and the general confusion are worthy of New York City. The streets through which we are driven to the 'Grand Hotel' are most brilliantly lighted. We pass block after block of splendid stores where the plate glass and rich display of wares remind us of Broadway. On the street corners the large, white California grapes are being sold, 'eight pounds for a quarter.' The pears, which we have frequently seen East, but rarely felt rich enough to buy, are here offered 'three for a dime.' No indication this of the high prices we had on the Pacific coast.

"I have heard it predicted that in a few years this trip across the Continent will become as stale a subject for description as that over the Alleghenies from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia, and such was my own impression before passing over it. And now, perhaps, I owe your readers an apology for occupying so much space in trying, though very imperfectly, to sketch the salient points of the route. The novelty, beauty, and grandeur of the scenery can hardly be exaggerated. One should return by the same route, at least as far as Cheyenne, to properly appreciate it, and then he will agree with me that no word painting can do it justice.

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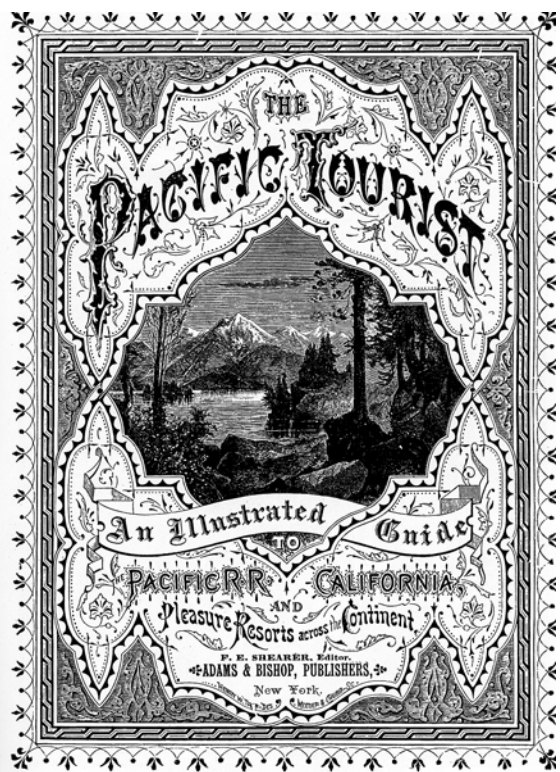
Wm. Perry Fogg, 1870

## Traveling By Rail in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

What was it like traveling across the continent on the transcontinental railroad just a few years after its completion? *The Pacific Tourist*, the "handsomest Guide Book in the world The Most Beautiful Book of Western Scenery Ever Issued..." can give us an idea just in case you have a hankering for a train journey. In this article we'll just report on details about taking the train. We already reviewed the book in our November, '18 [Heirloom](#) and the book was an introductory article in our January, '22 [Heirloom](#). We'll slip in some details from other sources as well.

From the Preface

The opening of the Pacific Railroad has given people access to "many new and remarkable Places of Wonderful Scenery and Pleasure Travel. The Attractions of the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra have become world famous, and Regions unknown five or ten years ago have been discovered which far transcend the liveliest imagination in their scenic beauty, and glorious enjoyment. Those who have ever crossed the Continent once in enjoyment of the Scenery of the Far West or in search of Health, can now return to the same line of travel, and spend their entire time in visiting Resorts, Mountains, Lakes, Springs,



Cañons, which were unknown before, but now are so easily accessible that an entire Summer can be spent in new and delightful fields of travel.

Hop on the transcontinental railroad and you will be traveling more easily and comfortably than in anywhere in the world. It is "a constant delight,... With absolutely no fatigue or discomfort." The Palace Car is as enjoyable as your "drawing room" at home, "the little section and berth allotted to you, so neat and clean, so nicely furnished, and kept, becomes your home. Here you sit and read, play your games, indulge in social conversation and glee... the overland tour become an intense delight."

You embark in the east on the Pullman cars traveling forty or more miles per hour. The first thousand miles to Chicago is a bit tedious and wearisome but don't judge the whole trip by that. In Omaha you change trains to the Pacific Railroad and there it is waiting, all six hundred feet of it. It will seem the "handsomest work of science ever made for the comfort of earth's people." Its slow rate of speed, "sixteen to twenty

miles per hour, day and night, produces a peculiarly smooth, gentle and easy motion, most soothing and agreeable." The track is straight for hundreds of miles and so the swinging motions of other trains is avoided, "bumps are unknown" and there is not the "discomfort of jerks and jolts."

Approaching the Rocky Mountains, "Without scarcely asking the cause the tourist is full of glow and enthusiasm. He is alive with enjoyment, and yet can scarcely tell why. There is the constant change of scenery."

"Ah! It is this keen, beautiful, refreshing, oxygenated, invigorating, toning, beautiful, enlivening mountain air which is giving him the glow of nature, and quickening him into greater appreciation of this grand impressive country."

When night time comes and your berth is made up you "snugly cover yourself up, under double blankets..." Perhaps you will witness vivid flashes of lightning or prairie fires or other of "nature's greatest scenes" before you fall to sleep.

It will take five days from Omaha to the wharf in San Francisco... but enough of the eloquent descriptions of the wonders of the country. What about the details of the trip?

Bring along a companion so that you can avoid the possibility of the disagreeable "campagnon du voyage" that can happen with the indescribable mixture of races in the same car." In the Pullmans you cannot get one section to yourself; it must be shared.

Give your porter a dollar "if he is attentive and obliging." It is well worth the money to assure that he will watch your baggage and other things "against loafers."

The trains stop at excellent stations for meals so you don't need to bring along food to eat on the cars. Meals at all dining-halls are excellent, and food of great Variety is nicely served; buffalo meat, antelope steak, tongue of all kinds, and always the best of beefsteak.

If you want to economize or cannot eat



three railroad meals a day, bring along a basket easily filled at stopping places. Your porter will "get you up a nice little table ... and spread on a neat white tablecloth."

Eat regular meals and you will pass the journey with the most comfort and best health. Those who were irregular, skipping here and there a meal, always suffered inconvenience.

The cost of meals is standardized on the Pacific Railroad: \$1 in greenbacks or .75 in silver

For clothing you will need light spring suits, winter suits, and "at the summit of the Sierra, all your under-clothing" because the temperature will vary so much with altitude.

Baggage can be checked. If you have more than 100 lbs. the extra fee will

be .15 per pound.

Once you get to San Francisco hotels are \$3 per day in gold. An extra charge of a dollar or dollar fifty will secure the traveler a "good nice room." Be sure to telegraph ahead and mention you have ladies to assure the better rooms. If you want to rent a horse on your arrival "look out with sharp eyes for the tricks of the trade." Set an agreed upon price per hour and number of hours.



Without much exception, all railroad officers, railroad conductors, Pullman car conductors are gentlemen in manners, courteous and civil. No passenger ever gains a point by loud orders or strong and forcible demands. You are treated respectfully by all, and the same is expected in return. The days of boisterous times, rough railroad men, and bullies in the Far West are gone, and there is as much civility there, often more, than you will find near home.

In an article titled, "Across the Continent," a New York Times correspondent identified only as W.S. wrote about the George Pullman expedition across the continent in 1869. W.S. offered some observations.

Above: scenes on the Pacific Railway Below: The dining car, Both from The Pacific Tourist

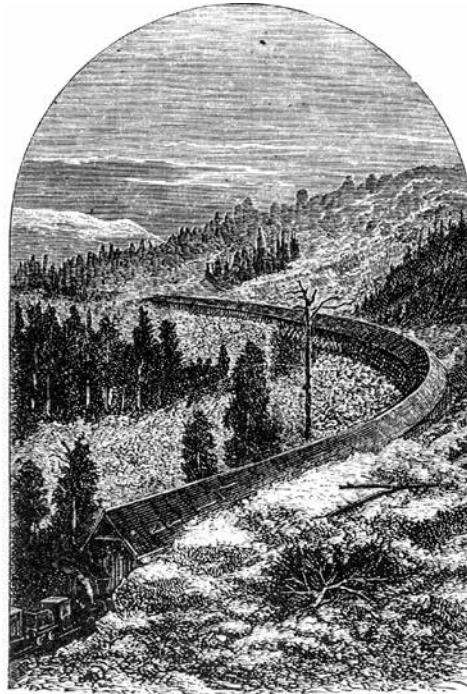
While scenery on the trip is mostly grand, there is also the Great American Desert — a vast barren basin, utterly destitute of life, devoid of living streams, a Sahara without a single relieving oasis, truly the Valley of the Shadow of Death! I had been anxious to see sage brush, of which I had read so much; well, here it was in hideous profusion, a sort of devil's herbage whereof no living creature may eat... From Promontory westward there is a long stretch of several hundred miles which is one dreary monotone of sage-brush and desolation."

While the scenery may not be of interest there are curiosities such as the Chinese encampments, "For a while the encampments of the Chinese hands on the Central Pacific attract by their novelty, and it may amuse you, while the train stops a few minutes, to chat with the grinning, good natured Celestials."

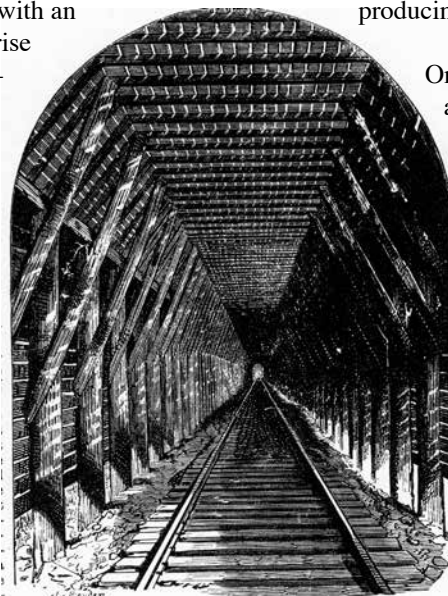
Another couple of days of tedium give way to the Sierra. "Here they are! This is mountain scenery! We got to Truckee at noon on Thursday. This is the centre of a very extensive lumber trade, and must grow to be a place of some importance... Truckee was almost entirely destroyed by fire last August, but is now rebuilt in clean, fresh pine. It boasts a newspaper and a theatre, and claims 2,000 inhabitants."

From Truckee to the summit is 14 miles with an increase in elevation of 1176 feet, "You rise up and up, over Alp on Alp, till the external snows stretch all around you; then through another tunnel, emerging from which you find yourself on the Summit, with Donner Lake — said to be the loftiest sheet of water in the world — reposing in wondrous beauty beneath your feet. Here, and for several hours through the Sierra Nevada, there is a royal feast of fat things for the imagination. It would be impossible to conceive of mountain scenery of more varied sublimity than meets the vision during this ride; where majestic, frowning peaks overhang you and bottomless abysses lie below, and where the splendor of snow and the music of sighing pines invite to 'Summer high in bliss among the hills of God!' We passed through all ... while the whole vast landscape was bathed in glory of sunshine. It richly repaid us for many an hour of dreary desert travel..."

The first passenger train on the line took 102 hours to travel from Omaha, Nebraska to San Francisco, and a first-class



SNOW SHEDS ACROSS THE SIERRAS.



INTERIOR OF SNOW SHEDS, U. P. R. R.

ticket cost \$134.50—the equivalent of about \$2,700 today (History Channel "What Was It Like [sic] to Ride The Transcontinental Railroad?")

" Wm. Smith wrote about his trip in 1875. He was amazed to have traveled almost 2,000 miles in five days. The train traveled night and day stopping only a couple of times per day for meals, "and then for a few minutes only." One gets used to the motion of the cars he said and he traveled with a "jolly lot of [three or four hundred] passengers" in eight passenger cars." Mr. Smith said he'd read about the deserts but reading doesn't come close to developing an understanding of the immensity and "utter desolation." "For hundreds of miles there is neither tree or shrub except sage bush and geese wood from about six inches to a couple of feet high and then only in spots." Save a few hovels there are no people.

This description gives one pause to consider what it must really have been like for the emigrants in their wagons and what an improvement the railroad was as it hurtled across the desert at twenty-two or so miles per hour. The sight of the desert was not all, "with no vegetation whatever and many of the rivers are so impregnated with alkali of some kind that neither man nor beast can drink the water without injury and after producing death. "

On reaching the Sierra at night Smith put on an overcoat and sat out on the platform. The stars were bright and appeared "to be twice as large as I ever saw them before, owing to the clear and rarified atmosphere so high up in the mountains." Then it was into the snowsheds and their "Egyptian darkness." A few miles later the train stopped for a few minutes at the "summit of the Sierra Nevada" and the Summit Hotel.

Most of the reporters and correspondents appeared to have been well enough off or with large enough expense accounts to take passage in the first class cars and their luxury. There were other travelers too though. "Second-class passengers had upholstered seats; third-class, or "emigrant" passengers, paid half of what the first-class passengers did but had to sit on benches instead of seats and bring their own food." "The overland journey is no fairy tale... wrote a journalist in 1878, noting crowded conditions and discomfort in the ordinary passenger cars." (History Channel again)



# From the DSHS Archives

We don't know why anymore, but our DSHS research department borrowed the bound editions of the Sierra Sun. Other things got in the way and the collection languished until the TRDHS wanted their bound editions back. We went into overdrive and harvested this collection of ads and things from 1946.

Dancing Every Night Refreshments

## The Ski-Hi

**"THE HOUSE OF VANDEFORD"**  
**Atop Donner Summit on Highway 40**  
**Elevation 7,135 Feet** **Soda Springs P.O.**  
 Gene & Lois Woods Ernie & Margot Nordstrom

### CRAMPTON'S Food Market

### CRAMPTON'S Food Market

#### STOCK UP FOR WINTER

10 Cans Campbell's Chicken Soup .....	\$1.80
10 Cans Habitant Pea Soup .....	\$1.60
10 Cans Libby's Sauerkraut .....	\$1.90
10 Cans Mission Sugar Peas .....	\$1.50
10 Cans Pictsweet Golden Corn .....	\$1.90
10 Cans Del Monte Golden Corn .....	\$1.80
10 Cans Libby's Sweet Garden Peas .....	\$1.90
10 Cans Dinette Salad Vegetables .....	\$1.60
10 Cans Apricots in Heavy Syrup .....	\$3.40
10 Cans Peach Halves, Light Syrup .....	\$2.70
10 Cans Kingan's Corned Beef Hash .....	\$2.40
10 Cans Treesweet Grapefruit Juice .....	\$1.50
10 Cans Hunt's Tomato Juice .....	\$1.10
10 Cans Clam Chowder .....	\$2.70
10 Cans Pismo Minced Clams .....	\$3.40
10 Bottles Heinz Tomato Catsup .....	\$2.30
10 Cans Grated Tuna .....	\$3.10
10 Jars Best Foods Mustard-Horadish .....	90c
10 Cans Planters Cocktail Peanuts .....	\$2.70
10 Cans V-8 Vegetable Cocktail Juices .....	\$1.60
10 Jars Kraft Cheese Spread .....	\$2.40
10 Pounds of Wild Flower Honey .....	\$4.00
10 Pounds Farmer Bros. Coffee .....	\$4.90
10 Cans Sweet Potatoes .....	\$3.00
No. 10 Can of Pumpkin .....	45c
No. 10 Can of Sliced Beets .....	50c
No. 10 Can of Dewkist Prune Plums .....	75c
No. 10 Can of Solid Pack Tomatoes .....	85c
No. 10 Can of Sliced Peaches in heavy syrup .....	\$1.00
No. 10 Can of Mission Cut Green Beans .....	75c
No. 10 Can of Solid Pack Pie Apricots .....	\$1.20
No. 10 Can of Sweet Blossom Peas .....	75c

These Prices ONLY While Present Stocks Last

### CRAMPTON'S FOOD MARKET

19 Miles West of Truckee on Highway 40 and Opposite Hampshire Rocks  
Public Camp — Look for Neon Sign

Sierra Sun April 18, 1946 The House of Vanderford was a ski lodge that sat across Old Highway 40 from Donner Ski Ranch just a bit west of Sugar Bowl Rd.

In 1946 locals were working to move the Donner Summit school from its location in Norden to its current location in Kingvale. This was an interesting snippet in the "Summit Scene" column in the Sierra Sun. Fran Couliard wrote the column for some years passing on local news and gossip.

We hear that the movement to move the location of the Norden School--which was underway before the war is again rumbling say a few mothers to whom I have talked, "The kids get SO darned dirty in the smoke and grime of the snow shed that we are at the washtub continually.

"Summit Scene" Sierra Sun  
8/12/46

Sierra Sun October 31, 1946 Crampton's sat at what is now the Rainbow exit from I-80 west bound. You can find lots of pictures in our Heirloom indices on our website.

# From the DSHS Archives

ay, September 19, 1946 1846 — DONNER

## House Of Vanderford



On the Old Emigrant Trail . . . Atop Donner Summit

Gene and Lois Woods

Ernie and Margot Nordstrom

### SKI-HI

LIVELY MUSIC

REAL WESTERN HOSPITALITY

### Summit Sport Shop

WINTER SPORTS EQUIPMENT SALES, REPAIRS, RENTALS

### Summit Garage

SERVICE, PARTS, REPAIR

TOWING SERVICE

### Summit Photo Shop

PHOTOGRAPHIC SUPPLIES

### Home of San Francisco's VIKING SKI CLUB

#### Sierra Sun

9/9/1946 There were lots more businesses in Soda Springs in the old days.

For the Best In Recreation

# Come to the High Sierra

and for the Best on the Sierra Come To

## Beacon Hill Lodge

Elmo Moriano, Manager SODA SPRINGS, Calif.

Sierra Sun April 18, 1946 Beacon Hill Lodge sat on the empty property immediately west of the Nancy O art gallery in "downtown" Soda Springs. Our [Heirloom](#) indices identify lots of pictures.

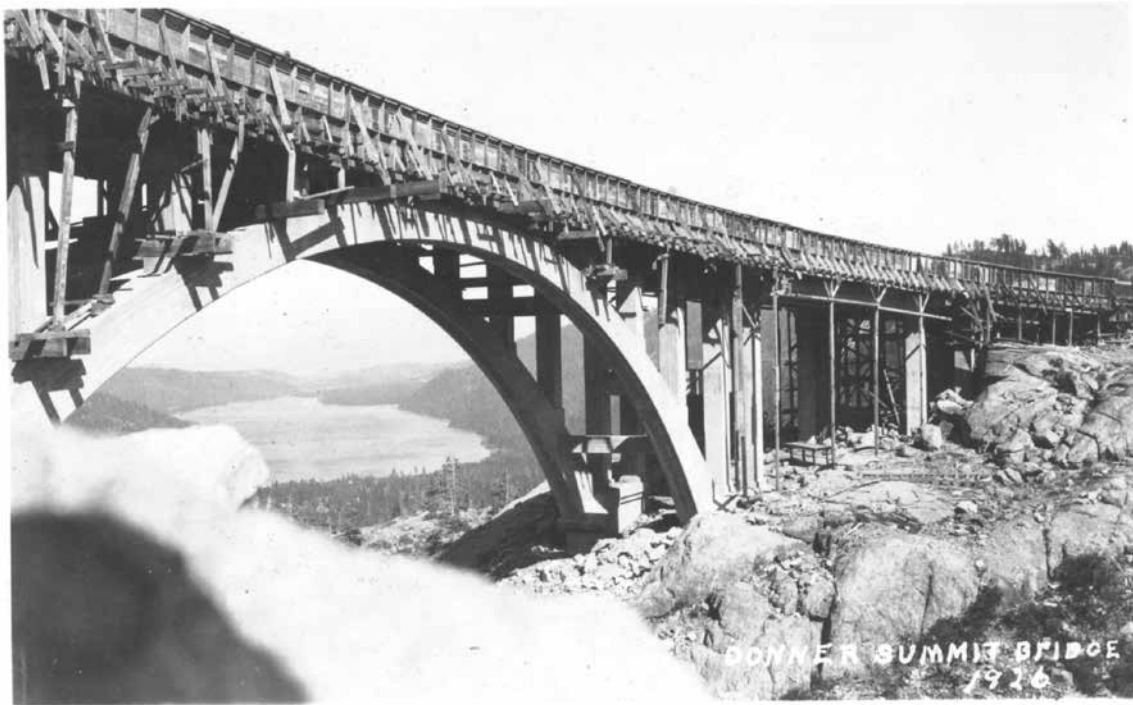
This comes under the heading of what fun they had in the old days; we couldn't resist its inclusion even though it is about Truckee.

## "COWBOY" IS FINED FOR RIDING HORSE INTO COFFEE SHOP

The pioneer custom for horsemen to ride their mounts into saloons as depicted in western movies has long since been outmoded and no longer meets the approval of cafe keepers nor the police. This was brought to the attention of W. A. Myers, local truck driver, when he took a horse into Tony's Club and Coffee Shop last Friday night after he had displayed his horsemanship by riding the animal up and down the busy street and sidewalk for some time. He was arrested by Night Patrolman John Collier and charged with disturbing the peace. Appearing before Justice of the Peace R. N. Little, Myers paid a \$50 fine.

Sierra Sun August 1, 1946

# What's in Your Closet?



From time to time people send us pictures of Donner Summit history. In this case Gary Smith of Anacortes, WA, sent the unique picture above in March of 2022. It was part of a postcard collection that belonged to his wife's family and which had been passed down, generation to generation, since the early 1900's. As they were cleaning out his mother-in-law's belongings they decided to disseminate pieces and the DSHS was the recipient of this unusual photograph. It is, of course, the Donner Summit or Rainbow Bridge under construction just prior to its completion in 1926.

We immediately sent it off to George Lamson for inclusion in our data base.

The reverse of the postcard is addressed to "Ruth and Casey Jones, Mr. Smith's in-law grandparents. It says, "Here is another splendid view added to our wealth of scenery. And my best wishes go out to you at this Christmas tide. J. R. Mathews." J.R. is a mystery.

If you come across Donner Summit photographs, stories, memorabilia, etc. please consider sending it to a good home and perhaps a page in the [Heirloom](#).

# Book Review

## Overland in 1846 Volume 2

### Diaries and Letters of the California Oregon Trail

Edited by Dale Morgan, 1963 367 pages

Volume 2 of Overland in 1846 follows Volume 1, the review of which was in the March, '22 Heirloom. Volume 1 was mostly a collection of diaries. Volume 2 is a collection of letters from emigrants to the folks back home or to newspapers.

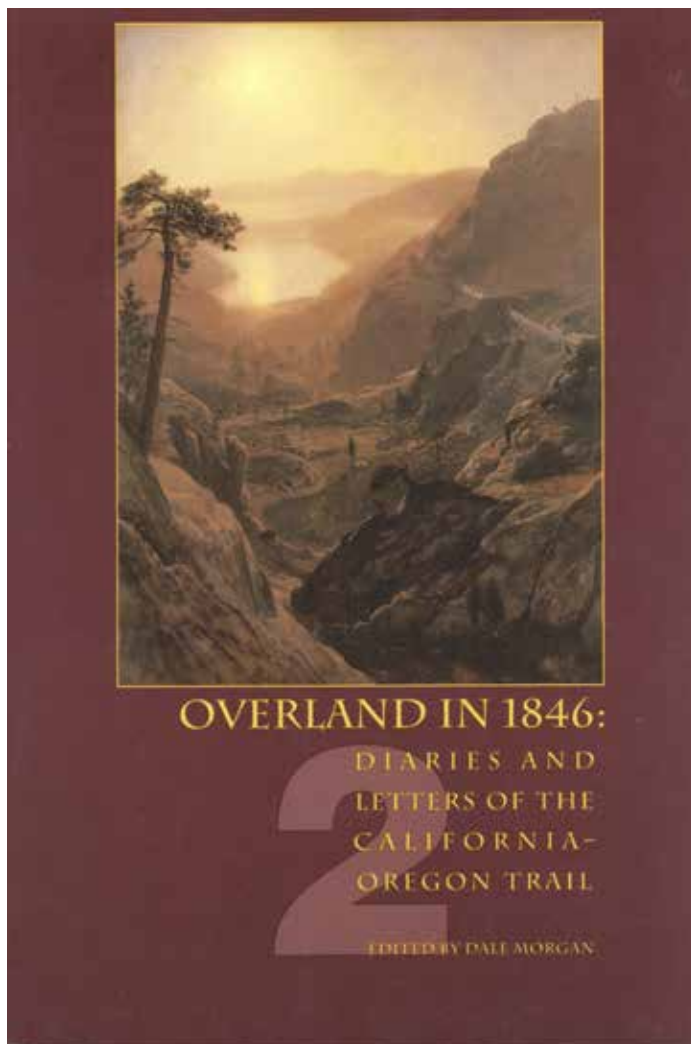
The first observations from reading is that there is a lot more detail in these letters and newspaper articles than in the diaries. The letters talk about hard ground, food, Indians, clothing, people met on the way, amounts of supplies to carry, various hints, hunting, etc. The diary entries generally don't get into that detail. That's probably because the letters to the newspapers back home are giving advice to prospective emigrants and reporting to families about life on the trail. The diaries were mostly aimed at the writer with scarcely a thought to readers beyond that. The second observation is the amazing amount of mail that was coming from the emigrants to the folks back home. That means the emigrants met a lot of people going in the other direction willing to carry letters. Third, even though this was a few years before the Gold Rush there were still lots of emigrants in 1846. Wm. Russell who initially captained the larger wagon train that included the Donners, said that although it was impossible to be absolutely accurate, he thought the number of emigrants was large, "far more than I had dared to hope," with over one hundred wagons and 500 people in his immediate area, and the total to "not fall short of 1,000" wagons.

There are all kinds of interesting things to learn in this collection. Letters are about rules of the road, the organization of the wagon trains, and Indians. The letters to the editors have advice. For example you might have to trade a good deal with the Indians. In that case "take Blue Calico and Beeds [sic] in little narrow Red Blue & Green Ribbons." Wagons should be able to carry 2,000 to 2,500 lbs. There follows advice for wagon construction and supplies.

The letters back home sometimes include advice because other family members or friends were going to come along in following years. Others just bring news to families and reassure them that everything is fine, "don't give yourself any uneasiness about us, we are provided with every thing that heart could wish for..." Another writer offered advice, "It is better not to be burdened with any heavy and unnecessary articles of house furniture" and then went on to list what should be taken: farming instruments, seeds, tools, etc.

Most of the letters and articles are fairly prosaic, giving advice and mundane details like numbers of wagons, with none of the enthusiasm the adventure might expect. The Arkansas Gazette (October 27, 1845) was an exception as it exhorted its readers saying energetic men willing and anxious to carve new homes out of the wilderness should not be put off by details. The emigration is just what their fathers had done coming to Arkansas. Why should the current generation "falter" [sic]. Distance is just speculation. Danger is "pure fancy, arising from a diseased and morbid temperament. Were men to be deterred from great actions through the fond anxieties of others, or the possible fear of failure, then would the world remain stationary 'aye, would retrograde.'" Tell that to the Donners.

Sometimes there are bits of politics in the letters. There is no power "that can cope with the spring emigration... Texas is



ours - is it impossible that California can? The very echo of the 'can?' is most decisive. There shall be another star added to our constellation.... 'it's jest as sure as shootin.'"

The letters also provide insights into the emigrants' state of mind. An apparently common joke among emigrants' reasons to go west was a about a fellow who died in California. Upon arriving at Heaven Gabriel came out and asked him where he was from. On learning the man was from California Gabriel told the man to go back because it was "a heap better country than this." Most people thought it was a jest, reported the letter writer, but it gives insight into the mind of the emigrants.

This is reminiscent of a joke that Edwin Bryant, who wrote What I Saw in California (1846) repeated and who has some letters in Overland in 1846. A man had lived in California for 250 years. He became tired of life and traveled, soon becoming sick and dying. His will said he should be returned to California. On being brought back to California soil and interred, the "health breathing California zephyrs" returned him to life "with all the vigor and beauty of early manhood."

One letter described male/female relations. A wagon train had broken up with most of the girls going to Oregon and most of the boys going to California. After the separation, with the trains still not too far apart, the boys would pretend to go out hunting "but instead of pursuing the bounding deer or fleet antelope, they are generally found among the fair Oregon girls! Thus they go, every day, making love by the road side, in the midst of the wildest and most beautiful scenery..." A Missouri newspaper described the girls, "There are numerous young girls, just blooming into womanhood, and many of them beautiful, neatly dressed, and bound for Oregon and California. Young men going to those distant countries need have no fear of not being able to get a wife." That notion ranks with the story about the emigrant meeting Gabriel.

Another writer provided some insight to his feelings, "Life on the plains far surpasses my expectation ; there is a freedom and a nobleness about it that tend to bring forth the full manhood..." Charles Stanton, member of the Donner Party who died on Donner Summit, said in one of a number of letters to his brother, "I have seen the Rocky mountains [sic] - have crossed the Rubicon, and am now on the waters that flow to the Pacific! It seems as if I had left the old world behind, and that a new one is dawning upon me... In every step thus far there has been something new, something to attract... I shall be abundantly repaid for the toils and hardship of this arduous trip."

The Gazette in St. Joseph Missouri described emigrants' state of mind, the emigrants "have been pouring in upon us by quantities... We look out upon them, and are astonished to see such careless ease and joyousness manifested in the countenances of almost all - the old, the young, the strong and feeble - the sprightly boy and the romping girl, all plod along, as if the jaunt was only for a few miles instead of a thousand - as if a week's troubles were to terminate their vexations and annoyances forever. What an idea it gives us, and what an insight into human nature - HOPE, the bright, beaming star, high ascendant... alluring them on to peace and enjoyment... Anticipating an interminable season of pleasure and delight, they go forward with easy tread, willing to brave all danger and run every risk, if they may be attain that a favored spot...[their destination]"

The Missouri Republican said, "What most surprised us was the satisfaction and confidence expressed by the women. They appeared to be not only indifferent to the hardships and dangers of the way, but to be gratified and pleased with their prospect."

Not all the writers reflect on the wonders of the scenery or the females. One writer said, "I am tired of the snail-like travel of the wagons, and the dissension and disunion which exists throughout the entire emigration..." Another writer reported on the state of things in California, "numbers of emigrants have arrived there who would be glad to get back to the

States if they could..."

There are interesting little nuggets of information. For example the Donner Party placed an ad for help to accompany them,

Westward, Ho!  
For Oregon and California!

Who wants to go to California without costing them any thing? As many as eight young men, of good character, who can drive a team, will be accommodated by gentlemen who will leave this vicinity about the First of April. Come, boys! You can have as much land as you want without costing you any thing. The government of California gives large tracts of land to persons who have to move there. The first suitable persons who apply, will be engaged.

Another interesting tidbit mentioned people in Oregon sending representatives back along the trail to meet the emigrants and counter the lies that Lansford Hastings was telling.

"It is remarkable how anxious the people are to hear from the Pacific country ; and strange that so many of all kinds and classes of people should sell out comfortable home, .... Pack and start across such an immense barren waste, to settle in some new place of which they have at most no certain information."

Missouri Republican July 30, 1846

Oregon people also passed on negatives about California in order to lure more emigrants their way. For example, in the Central Valley of California it was said the “whole country [was] burnt up by the sun, and no food for either man or beast.” There was drought and no vegetables. Food was expensive. There was no timber. Swamps were full of water. There was no rain. There was no good society. Title to land was poor. Clothing was impossible to get. The principal article of food was jerked beef. Iron was scarce. Horses and cows were expensive.

There were wonders in Oregon. “I think no place where a living is to be made out of the earth can be preferable to Oregon for that purpose – and let people say what they may – all agree that it is healthy. It is certainly the healthiest country in the world, disease is scarcely known here, except among the late emigrants ninety-nine out of a hundred of them get well the first season. Just replacing the “Oregon” with California, there were writers saying the same about California.

The second to last section of the book are newspaper articles about Oregon and California including almost forty pages

about the problems of the Donner Party and the rescue parties. Many of the articles include misinformation or gossip. An example ([California Star](#) April 10, 1847) of that reports the rescue parties arriving at Donner Lake with food but could not entice the members of the Donner Party to partake. They preferred “the putrid human flesh” and the day the rescuers arrived one of the emigrants “took a child of about four years of age in bed with him and devoured the whole before morning; and the next day ate another about the same age before noon.” One thinks that today there are some story tellers with equivalent skills.

The last section is for those who like to re-enact history with a reprint of the [Shively Guide](#) for emigrants traveling across the continent. There’s a lot of good advice: go well armed, take no tents, don’t delay to kill game, keep watch every night, wear wide brimmed hats, oxen should be three to five years old, bring lots of horseshoes, if your animal gives out, leave it “your time is of more value than all your horses.” It lists things to take and how much, amounts of foodstuff, how to construct wagons (unseasoned wood will cause wagons to fall apart).

# Making History Colorful

Last month George Lamson introduced the idea of coloring pictures in the Donner Summit Historical Society’s collection – not to replace the historical photographs but to give another perspective using modern technology. Does replacing color change the photo? Here we have Charlie Chaplin on Donner Summit directing his hit movie, “The Gold Rush.” (See the August, ’11 [Heirloom](#) for the story).



# Odds & Ends on Donner Summit

Donner Summit history goes back not just years, decades, or centuries, but millenia. In many places on the summit Native Americans, who visited in summers from both sides of the Sierra, left mortars. Soft foods were ground on the granite boulders. Eventually, over millenia, the soft foods wore depressions inches deep in the granite. In some places the mortars sit by themselves. In others they are part of "gossip rock" collections. Here food was prepared by the Native Americans but maybe just as importantly the culture was passed on from generation to generation.



The mortars are generally not found where the petroglyphs are; they are found where the Native Americans did their summer camping. There are many sites in Summit Valley.

The center picture, right, is a variation. The depressions are cupules that may have had magic or religious meaning. They are only an inch and a half in diameter whereas the mortars in the other pictures are a couple of inches across.



The bottom picture in this column includes basalt flakes, the detritus from making projectile points.

For more, read the book review on our website, [Martis Indians: Ancient Tribe of the Sierra Nevada](#)



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

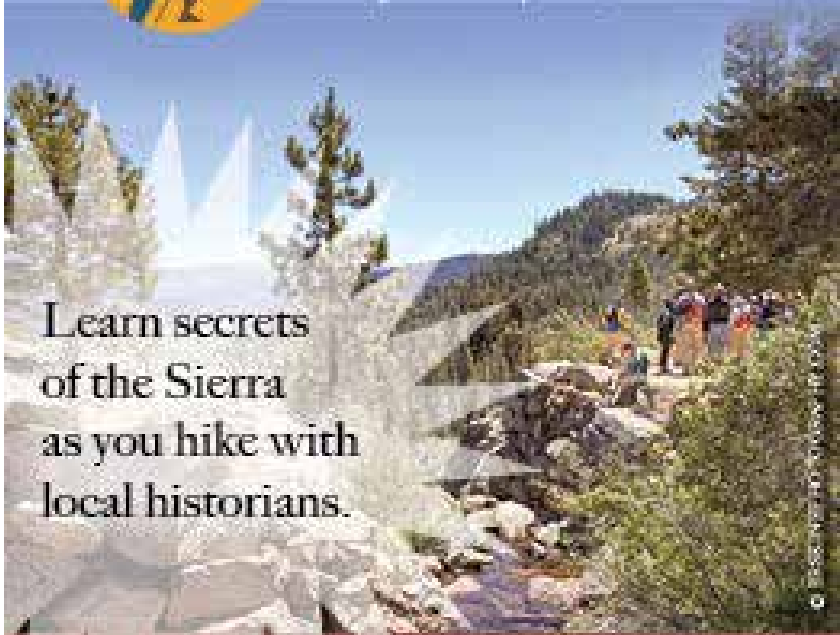
\*Native Americans; first wagon trains to California; the first transcontinental railroad, highway, air route, and telephone line, etc.



# DONNER PARTY HIKE

September 17 & 18, 2022

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



© 2022 Donner Party Hike

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[info@donnerpartyhike.com](mailto:info@donnerpartyhike.com)  
[donnerpartyhike.com](http://donnerpartyhike.com)

## Old Time Sunday Drive

**Next Time  
Take Scenic  
Old Hwy 40  
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 (let 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)

