

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

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

August, 2023 issue #180



Capt. Kidd on Donner Summit

We couldn't resist the clever title even though [Heirloom](#) readers don't need exciting "come ons" to encourage them to read the [Heirloom](#).

It's interesting to consider the origins of place names and Donner Summit has lots. The origins of most are easy. There are the names related to geographical features: the Palisades at Sugar Bowl, Deer Lake, Cascade Lakes, and Castle Pk. There are those named for people: Mt. Judah, Mt. Disney, Mt. Lincoln, Mt. Stewart, Lake Angela, and Mt. Stephens. There are those related to function: Signal Hill and Signal Pk. Then there are the ones with names we don't know the origins of: Lakes Serena Sybil and Dulzura (the Serene Lakes) that some long ago real estate entrepreneur said were named by Mark Twain. There's also Lake Flora which became Crater Lake with Lake Flora now being near Lake Azalea and Lake Angela. In this list we can't forget Tinker Knob. (*see page 3 for list name origins)

We should parenthetically mention Devil's Pk. (right) We can suppose it's named after some famous entity and perhaps got its name by being a huge black basalt monolith. The exact origins of the name are lost to history but even the very earliest pioneer referred to it as Devil's Pk.

That's not a complete list of geographical place names on Donner Summit but it gives you the idea and you can go hunting among past [Heirloom](#) editions to see the stories attached to each. Maybe one day we should do a compilation.

The list above still leaves out some named features such as Pahatsi and Kidd Lake. Pahatsi is probably a Native American name bestowed by the Boy Scouts who resided in summers at Camp Pahatsi out near Kidd Lake.

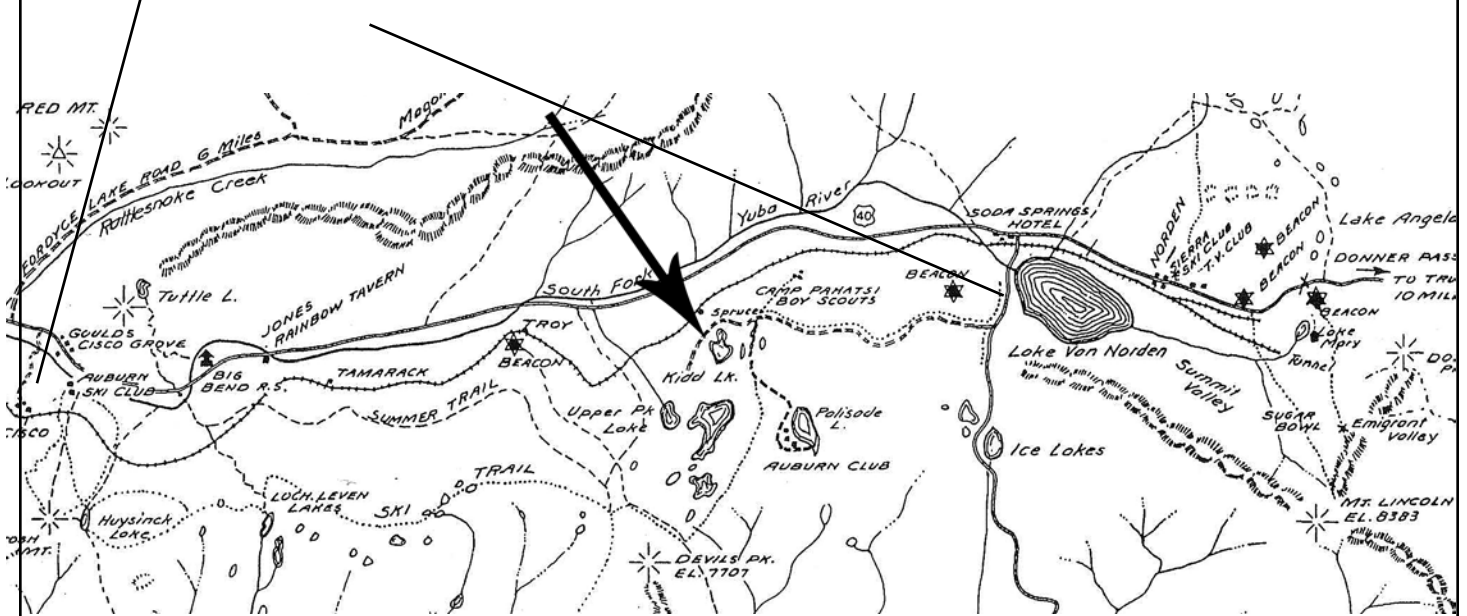


Kidd Lake's origins has been bothering the DSHS research team for years. You can see a map of the location on the next page.

As an aside a 1908 map shows a bunch of Kidd Lakes not where Kidd Lake is today. We can suppose that the naming of the lakes in the area was in flux in the early 20th Century. Some maps of the time just show the lake unlabeled. Sometime, though, in the early Twentieth Century, Kidd Lake acquired its name and although the people of the time presumably knew the namesake, the people of our time are curious and given that there are lots of interesting characters in California history, it's just possible that whoever Kidd was, that person was interesting. Indeed, he was – that's called foreshadowing in the literary business or the anticipatory set in the education business. It means something good is coming.

Story Locations in this Issue

Cisco Grove pg 9 Soda Springs Ski Area pg 8



1936 Forest Service recreation map of Donner Summit. Cisco Grove is on the very left and Donner Pass on the right. The tip of the arrow is Kidd Lake.

The stars represent beacons for the transcontinental airway. So here the reader gets a nice bonus beyond just the location of Kidd Lake.

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. 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.

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*historical society humor

Find us on 

Capt. Kidd

Kidd turns out to be Captain Kidd, no relation to any other famous Captain Kidds you might remember from history or your study of pirates. To get enough about our Capt. Kidd and ferret out his story required a lot of historical source scouring, the list of which is further on. (See page 6)

First a little necessary background.

The former Lake Van Norden was and Cascade Lakes and Kidd Lake still are, reservoirs belonging to PGE. In the 19th Century they belonged to the South Yuba Canal Co. which owned a number of reservoirs and canals throughout our part of the Sierra and the foothills leading up to the summit in the Yuba River drainage. The reservoirs provided water to the canals to operate hydraulic mining equipment. In 1886, just as the collection of canals and reservoirs was complete, the State outlawed hydraulic mining. This was bad news for the So. Yuba Canal Co. but luckily for them people were beginning to plant orchards in the Central Valley and irrigate crops, providing a “ray of hope [for] the now despairing company.” According to a 1903 issue of the [Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas](#). Cities were also beginning to grow and needed water too which the canal company happily provided. Then electricity arrived and the canal company became a supplier of electricity as well as water. The South Yuba Canal Co. became the Central California Electric Co. and that eventually became P. G. & E. As water was used

and lower reservoirs were emptied, water was let out of the upper reservoirs. Then each winter the system was refilled and ready for the following spring. So Cascade Lakes, Kidd Lake, and Van Norden water went down the Yuba River and was collected at Lake Spaulding and power was generated at Drum Forebay.



George Washington Kidd

Captain George Washington Kidd was one of the stockholders and general superintendent of the So. Yuba Canal Co. He must have been amazing, given his resume and weighing only 135 lbs. and standing just 5' 6". He was born in Kentucky in 1821 and died in California in 1879. Kidd had been born to a poor family that had migrated from Virginia to Tennessee on foot with all their possessions tied up in a handkerchief. Kidd led a childhood of “unremitting severe toil” and had only six months of schooling. He ran away from home at age 18 (or 13 depending on the source) and got a job as a cabin boy on a steamboat. He then worked his way up to captain. 1847 found Kidd in Mexico with thirty thousand dollars he'd made from trading. That would be over a million dollars today. He had dealt in lumber, cattle and hogs so far.

By 1849 he was married and on his way to California “through Indians, cholera, scurvy, mountain fever, dysentery, desert, death and exhaustion” “to the promised land of gold.” Like the railroad's Big 4 he didn't

go into the mining of metal, he went into the mining of miners: freighting, trading, mining, making clapboards, hotel keeping, quicksilver, reclaiming tule land, banking, and building the Meadow Lake Dam. In the fall of 1854 the So. Yuba Canal was formed and he was a “leading spirit.” By 1858 he had an income of \$50,000 per year, equivalent in purchasing power to about \$1,700,012.20 today.

So there's your typical 13 year old runs away from home and finds success story.

Some geographical names on Donner Summit from page 1 and their origins

Palisades at Sugar Bowl: the terrain between Mt. Disney and Mt. Lincoln

Deer Lake: former Girl Scout camp out near Kidd Lake

Cascade Lakes: there's a cascade where they drain to the Yuba River

Mt. Judah: Theodore Judah, chief engineer of the transcontinental RR

Mt. Disney: early investor in Sugar Bowl

Mt. Lincoln: duh

Mt. Stewart: famous author about the Donner Party and Donner Summit

Lake Angela: Angela Starr King

Mt. Stephens: leader of the first wagon train to California with wagons

Signal Hill: Donner Ski Ranch

Signal Pk.: Red Mountain

Serene or Ice Lakes: Mark Twain did not name them.

Lake Flora: probably named after Edward Muybridge's wife

Tinker Knob: named for an apparently famous proboscis belonging to Joseph Tinker

Capt. Kidd and the Steamboats

Having accumulated a lot of money and success in his various businesses Kidd turned to a past love. He decided to go into the steamboat business which must have been an interesting business as companies competed for passengers. In 1860 he started construction on a steamboat named Nevada for Nevada City. "She proved the swiftest steamer on the Sacramento River." That began a rivalry between Captain Kidd and the California Steam Navigation Company, a rivalry that was of "mortal bitterness." One of the California Steam Navigation Company's steamboats forced the Nevada onto a mud bank as part of their competition. So you can see how the game was played.

Naturally the steamboat companies competed on price sometimes reducing fares to almost zero. Then there were the races. Steamboats on the Sacramento, as well as the Mississippi, raced each other. The winner could claim to be the fastest which would attract customers wanting to get to their destinations quickly and be on the winning boat. The races also provided entertainment for the public both in the racing and in the stories afterwards. There were problems though. "Races were frequent, and perilous to human life from the terrible pressure of steam."

The Nevada sank in 1863 after a race with a Steam Navigation Co. steamship and Kidd began a new boat in 1863 which he named the Washoe and which he outfitted with extra large boilers. Large boilers allowed for more steam which allowed for more speed. The Washoe made its maiden voyage and started its regular schedule with Capt. Kidd at the helm in May, 1864. It left its place on the San Francisco wharf for Sacramento every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 4PM. The Washoe had continuing problems with leaky boilers which was not advantageous for racing.

Kidd almost lost the Washoe when it collided with another steamer, the Yosemite (which belonged to Kidd's rival the Steam Navigation Co.), just two months after the maiden voyage. A man was killed. The Washoe was saved though, but this showed how the steamship business on the Sacramento River was really cut-throat. The Yosemite's captain and its pilot were arrested and indicted by the grand jury for assault to commit murder using the Yosemite as a weapon.

Kidd was threatening the near monopoly of the steamboat business of the California Steam Navigation and Improvement Co. and they didn't like that.

In a commentary about the collision, the California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences, in its July 15, 1864 edition, noted that "the event was one likely to occur at some time from the very (unpleasant) nature of the relation held by these lines of steamers."

I would rather be "captain of a steamboat than President of the United States."
George Washington Kidd

Later that summer of 1864, on September 5, While the Washoe was traveling about 35 miles below Sacramento, many of its 175 passengers were killed and about half of the survivors were severely injured as a result of a boiler explosion,.

The explosion story in the Sacramento Daily Union (September 7, 1864) was headlined "STEAMBOAT CATASTROPHE!" Imagine the scene on the decks of the Antelope steamship which picked up survivors and the dead,

THE NEW STEAMER WASHOE.
CAPTAIN G. W. KIDD,
WILL LEAVE
SACRAMENTO for SAN FRANCISCO every TUESDAY
THURSDAY and SATURDAY, at 2 o'clock P. M.
Fare:
CABIN.....\$1 | DECK.....50 CENTS
For Freight or Passage, apply on board. jyl

Daily Alta California July 19, 1864

"The scene on board was such as has rarely been witnessed on the Pacific coast. The floor of the cabin and a portion of the deck were covered with the dead and wounded. The mattresses and bedding of the boat had been brought into requisition, and some forty sufferers were stretched out some of them enduring great agony and others too badly injured to be conscious of their condition."

A thousand people gathered at the dock in Sacramento hoping friends and relatives survived. All of the city's doctors

were pressed into service.

Steamboat racing may have been popular in the abstract but this was a catastrophe. Western Express, a history newsletter, printed a letter dated September 19, 1864 in its April, 1966 issue. The writer referred to Captain Kidd as “of the steamer Washoi [sic] notoriety.”

"The Steamer WASHOE, Capt . G . W . Kidd, left San Francisco on the afternoon of September 5th 1864 with over 150 passengers bound for Sacramento and under suspicion of racing an opposition Steamer the YOSEMITE. That night about 10:00 it blew up near Vista, with a loss of 16 dead and over 50 with burns and injuries." [Western Express, April,1966]

Kidd maintained that he'd not been racing his chief rival, the Chrisopolis, which at the the time of the explosion was some

miles ahead. The Washoe boilers were certified to operate at 133 and later 140 lbs. of steam pressure but the chief engineer said they could beat the chief rival Chysopolis if it had 188 or 200 lbs pressure. At 9:30 PM on September 5, 1864 the boilers exploded. History doesn't tell us the reading on the pressure gauge.


After the catastrophe the public began to pressure for an end to dangerous steamboat tactics. The Washoe was raised, sold, and refitted as a ferry. Capt Kidd went back to Nevada City and the South Yuba Canal Co., among other things. The Steam Navigation Co. had its monopoly but faced other problems. Hydraulic mining sent mud down the rivers filling in their channels making it harder and harder for steamboats. The coming of the railroads was another nail in the coffins of the steamboats on the Sacramento River.

So there we have the story of George Washington Kidd.

River & Harbor Steamers

OPPOSITION

The new, swift and elegant light draught Steamer



WASHOE.

G. W. KIDD,.....Captain.

Will leave Pacific street Wharf for Sacramento

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays,

AT FOUR O'CLOCK P. M.

For freight or passage apply on board. my10-tf

OAKLAND FERRY.

Daily Alta California May 11, 1864

TERRIBLE STEAMBOAT EXPLOSION ON THE SACRAMENTO!

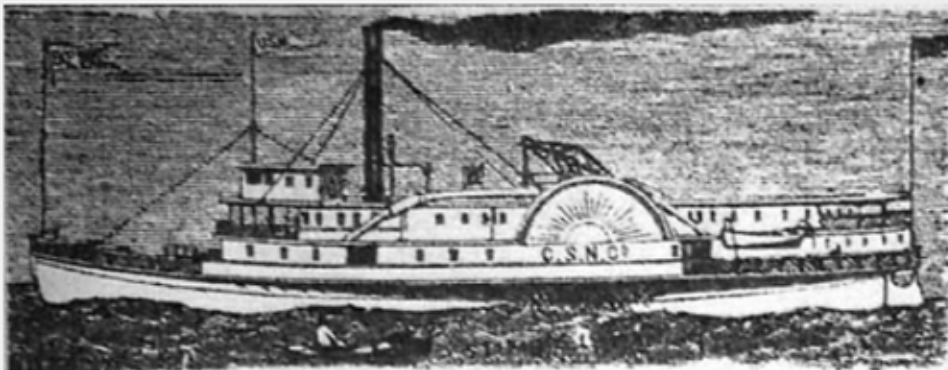
**Destruction of the Steamer Washoe—
Over Fifty Killed and Seventy-Five Injured!**

Statement of the Clerk of the Washoe.

FIRST DISPATCH.

SACRAMENTO, September 6.—The steamer Washoe, bound up the river, exploded below the old slough last enemy. A large number of passengers were killed and scalded. The Antelope took up sixty wounded and a number of the survivors. A steamer is about leaving Sacramento to go to the wreck. A large number of women were on board—nearly all of whom were killed or injured.

Stockton Independent
September 7, 1864



The steamer Antelope came to the rescue of survivors of the steamer Washoe tragedy on Sept. 5, 1864. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Public Library, Sacramento Room

The Antelope arrived at the wreck of the Washoe a few hours after the explosion. The Antelope belonged to Kidd's rivals.

Captain Kidd's Obituary

Captain Kidd as one of that band of sturdy pioneers who pushed their way to this coast in 1849 against cholera, famine and hostile savages, as one who has stood, bravely up before repeated misfortunes, fighting on to the very hour of his death with uncompromising faith in honest toil and unflagging energy, this short notice may be thought to come far short of a just tribute to his memory. ...[people] will recall the event of the busy life which has come to a close, and the many sterling qualities and rare endowments that marked him as a man of no mean capacity. The story of his life will prove an interesting chapter in the history of the Pioneers of California, where we hope some time to see it recorded. He leaves a wife without children, and is reported to have been possessed of a large property at the time of his death.

San Jose Herald (and other newspapers) April 23, 1879

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Valley Community Newspapers May 23, 2013

STEAMBOAT OPPOSITION.-The Bee, of Tuesday, says :

The Washoe and the Chrisopolis both started from San Francisco for this city yesterday afternoon. The fare of the former was fixed at three dollars and two dollars, but the latter commenced cutting down and the Washoe followed suit until the fare was reduced to four bits and two bits. Each boat employed three runners, and the pulling and hauling for passengers was very great. It is suggested that if the same takes place here this afternoon, some arrangement be made between the two boats whereby the arms and bodies of passengers pulled apart in Sacramento may meet and rejoin company at the Bay.

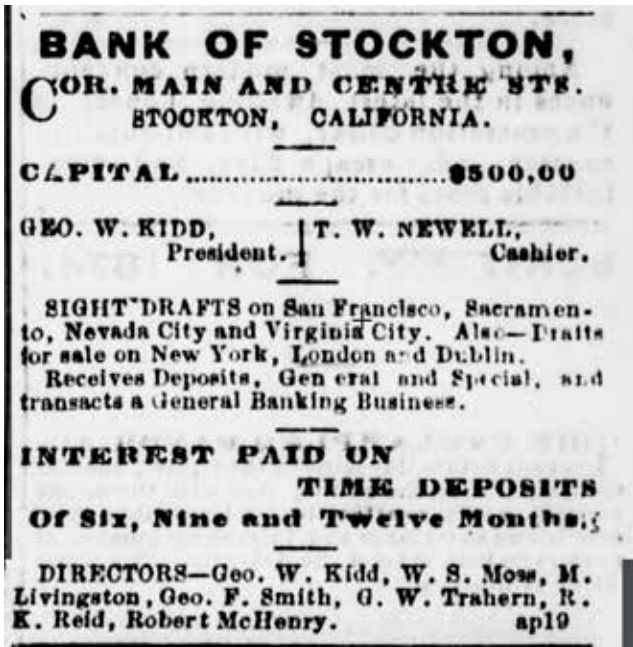
Marysville Daily Appeal May 13, 1864

Geographical Name Changes on Donner Summit

Current Name Other Names in the Past

Donner Peak	Crested Peak	
Stephens Peak	Grant's Peak	
Mount Lincoln	American Pk.	Turret Mtn. Mt. Crocker
Stewart Peak	Mount Ida	
Mount Judah	Emigrant Mountain	
Mount Disney	Hemlock	Red Top
Castle Peak	Mount Stanford	Fremont Peak
Donner Ski Ranch	Mount King	Signal Hill
Tinker Knob	Berkeley Peak	
Palisade Rocks	Paradise Rocks	
Donner Pass	Fremont's Pass	

List compiled by Art Clark



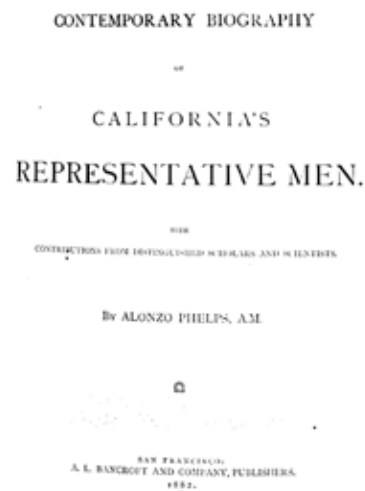
An example of Mr. Kidd's many interests. Here he is the president of the Bank of Stockton.

Mrs. Kidd

From Contemporary Biography California's Representative Men 1882

“It is not only relevant, but it is necessary, in tracing with propriety the lives of the pioneers, to note the influence of their wives in directing their fortunes; for, in many instances, it is too much to say that their wives were as conspicuous as heroines as they were as heroes.

“For thirty-four years, Mrs. Kidd shared with her husband, fully, all the anxieties and hardships incident to the vicissitudes of a pioneer life, not only without a murmur, but lent support, on the most trying occasions, with wise advice and undaunted spirit. In the early days of Nevada City, Mrs. Kidd, though a delicate woman, in forwarding the fortunes of her husband cooked for from thirty to forty men; and, besides, did the washing and table service. The eloquence and grandeur of the pioneer history of California can never find adequate expression, without a just recognition of the fortitude, the patience, the sense, the self-sacrifice, the courage, ambition, and refinement of the noble wives and women from whom the men received their inspiration, and, without fainting, hopeful, cheerful, and serene, toiled on to the goal of triumph.”



From the DSHS Archives



Beacon Hill Ski School 1962 - Beacon Hill is the name of what is today Soda Springs Ski Area

Beacon Hill got its name from the airway beacon that used to be at its summit.



This billboard was part of the 1950's campaign to make Highway 40 four lanes. That did not happen until the mid-1960's. This comes from a publication, "Blockade," about the winter of 1952-53 and the highway blockade

From the DSHS Archives



Cisco Grove 1946

Cisco Grove 1952

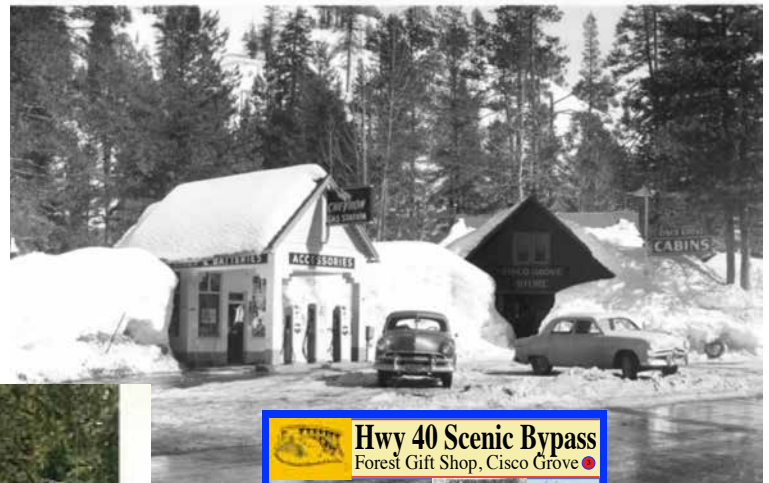


Cisco Grove was a thriving little community on Highway 40 serving tourists and other travelers.

The coming of the freeway brought an end to that as people started taking Interstate 80. People were in too much of a rush to stop for the tourist knickknacks and refreshments. Automobiles were too reliable to need to stop for service.

Today the commercial buildings are all gone leaving only a few vacation homes along the river and the stone buildings below which were the Forest Gift Shop for tourists. Between the buildings is one of the DSHS 20 Mile Museum signs (below right) keeping Cisco Grove alive.

The Gould Family, which owned the area contributed most of it to Placer County. That is Gould Park.



Hwy 40 Scenic Bypass
Forest Gift Shop, Cisco Grove

History
The history of the Forest Gift Shop is a story of a small business that has survived for over 60 years. It is a story of a place that has become a landmark in the community. The shop was founded in 1952 by the Gould family, who had been in the area for many years. The shop was a success from the beginning, and it has continued to grow and thrive. Today, it is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike. The shop offers a wide variety of gifts, including clothing, home decor, and outdoor gear. It is a place where you can find something for everyone. The shop is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Gould family. It is a place that has become a part of the community. It is a place that has survived through the years. It is a place that is worth visiting. The shop is a great place to spend some time. It is a place that is worth the drive. It is a place that is worth the wait. The shop is a place that is worth the effort. It is a place that is worth the time. It is a place that is worth the money. The shop is a place that is worth everything. It is a place that is worth it all. The shop is a place that is worth it all.

A Good Story
The story of the Forest Gift Shop is a story of a small business that has survived for over 60 years. It is a story of a place that has become a landmark in the community. The shop was founded in 1952 by the Gould family, who had been in the area for many years. The shop was a success from the beginning, and it has continued to grow and thrive. Today, it is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike. The shop offers a wide variety of gifts, including clothing, home decor, and outdoor gear. It is a place where you can find something for everyone. The shop is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Gould family. It is a place that has become a part of the community. It is a place that has survived through the years. It is a place that is worth visiting. The shop is a great place to spend some time. It is a place that is worth the drive. It is a place that is worth the wait. The shop is a place that is worth the effort. It is a place that is worth the time. It is a place that is worth the money. The shop is a place that is worth everything. It is a place that is worth it all. The shop is a place that is worth it all.

Things to do right here
The things to do right here are to visit the Forest Gift Shop. It is a place that is worth the drive. It is a place that is worth the wait. The shop is a place that is worth the effort. It is a place that is worth the time. It is a place that is worth the money. The shop is a place that is worth everything. It is a place that is worth it all. The shop is a place that is worth it all.

Book Review

The Lincoln Highway the Story of a Crusade that Made Transportation History

The Lincoln Highway Association 1935

249 pages

"By any standards, it was a remarkable accomplishment."

Pg 126

Living in an age of hermetically sealed automobiles and wide interstate freeways it's hard to consider what it was like before we got here. Then as we walk around Donner Summit, perhaps holding a copy of the DSHS's "Lincoln Highway" brochure, we can see the route of the first transcontinental highway and a number of pristine sections. We take it for granted that people came along, wanted better travel routes, and the Lincoln Highway was born. We shouldn't take the idea for granted, nor the old highway.

The Lincoln Highway the Story of a Crusade that Made Transportation History was published in 1935, only two decades after the road was established. It was written and published by the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA). Because it was done by the LHA it's a self-congratulatory volume highlighting the spirit, energy, work ethic, etc. of the principal characters. "Here, in one sentence, is the secret of the marvelous results attained by the Lincoln Highway, the thing that kept men working day and night, year after year, to make it a success. Each man had his work to do and the man higher up not only let him do it but expected him to do it."

Here are some other examples, "ALL [capitalized in the original text] Lincoln Highway men were public-spirited. The local consul in the smallest community on the route and the president of the organization alike were enthusiastic, able to visualize what real highways could be and willing to labor endlessly and unselfishly to create them."

"Having material of such temper [the people involved] available, it is not surprising that President Joy and Secretary Pardington fashioned from it one of the most effective organizations ever created. In this organization local rights were protected"

Then because everyone had to be recognized, the appendix has lists of names and throughout the book there are pictures of many of the principles.

That's not to say that the congratulatory remarks are bad, it's just that there are a lot of them and they don't add to the story. There is also a lot of information in the book.

Carl Fisher invented carbide lamps for automobiles. He also invented the Indianapolis speedway which was a "proving ground or makers of motor cars..." So he was associated with automobiles for a long time. His biggest idea was the Lincoln Highway, "A road across the United States; Let's build it before we're too old to enjoy it." In 1912, when Mr. Fisher presented his idea, there were almost no roads in the country, "as roads are known today [1935]" Only 28 of 48 states spent anything on roads. Road signs were a rarity.

The impetus for the idea of the national highway came from an incident where Fisher and two friends drove out from Indianapolis. As it got dark it started to rain hard and the car had no top so the group headed back. Coming to a three-way intersection they

The LINCOLN HIGHWAY

THE STORY OF A CRUSADE
THAT MADE
TRANSPORTATION HISTORY



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
NEW YORK 1935

Screenshot



had no idea which way to go. They could see no city lights to guide them and “It was black as the inside of your pocket.” Using their headlights Fisher climbed a pole where he’d seen a sign which couldn’t be read from the ground. At the top he pulled out his matches so he could light the sign, “Chew Battle-Ax Plug.” Something had to be done about roads.

It was also a time when roads were a local thing rather than built with Federal or even state government money. Hence, Carl Fisher began a national movement to build a transcontinental highway, made of concrete, bypassing the various governments.

Fisher first turned to the automobile industry because without roads there would be no market for their cars. Then he turned to the concrete industry because it would have a big interest in the endeavor. Fisher aimed for completion of his national road by 1915 so that 25,000 people could drive to the 1915 World Exposition in San Francisco. Knowing that individual people might want to participate in the building of the transcontinental highway, memberships were offered.

Initially the project was paid for with individual subscriptions/memberships and subscriptions from businesses and industry. The auto and cement industries for example promised .5% of gross business for three years.

The book goes on to talk about the inner workings of the planning group, discussions about various aspects of the project, raising money, initial and continuing publicity, details of the 1919 army convoy (initiated and done with the assistance of the LHA), races or record setting automobile trips across

the continent, fights over the route, a recalcitrant state, etc.

During the discussion of the route the conclusion was that the best route had been chosen. That leads us to Donner Summit. The Lincoln Highway Association chose to follow the Pony Express route because it worked and was the “acme of highway construction, the route of the Overland Stages.” That took the route over Echo Summit to Placerville and then Sacramento and beyond. They also chose the Donner Summit route but there is no discussion about why two routes, the only place in the entire transcontinental route where there was an alternative, were chosen and why they focused on the Pony Express route instead of the railroad’s route in their initial publicity. We should note too that for the stage company that was a competitor to the Overland Stage, the “acme of routes,” was over Donner Summit. (See our August, ’19 [Heirloom](#) to see that the Truckee route was superior; but of course all [Heirloom](#) readers already know that so this note is kind of irrelevant).

Here’s how travel was before the Lincoln Highway:
 Henry B. Joy, President of the Packard Motor Car Company, took many of these test trips himself, often through some terrible conditions. Once, plodding through a test trip, he asked the Packard distributor in Omaha for directions to the road west.
 “There isn’t any,” was the answer.
 “Then how do I go?” asked Mr. Joy.
 “Follow me and I’ll show you.”
 They drove westward until they came to a wire fence. “Just take down the fence and drive on and when you come to the next fence, take that down and go on again.”
 “A little farther,” said Mr. Joy, “and there were no fences, no fields, nothing but two ruts across the prairie.” But some distance farther there were plenty of ruts, deep, grass-grown ones, marked by rotted bits of broken wagons, rusted tires and occasional relics of a grimmer sort, mementoes of the thousands who had struggled westward on the Overland Route in 1849 and ’50, breaking trail for the railroad, pioneering the highway of today.

It’s interesting to note that common knowledge says that the Lincoln Highway was born in 1913 using existing roadways. According to the LHA, the authors of this book, 1913 really was just the start of public fundraising and that’s when the membership drive started – after the route had been laid out. \$5 Memberships were sold primarily by motor car dealers and good roads enthusiasts and supplemented with direct mail. There were also donations of ad space in various magazines and journals. A solicitation to “3,000 millionaires [met] with but negligible results” though.

It was a huge endeavor made harder by selfish interests competing to be on the route; a continued lack of money; the need to conduct a continual public relations campaign; competition for public attention with WWI, the Panama Canal (just finished in 1912), and even the exposition in San Francisco in 1915. Clearly the Lincoln Highway was not something to take for granted.

In California there were fights over whether the road should go to Los Angeles instead of San Francisco and whether Beckworth Pass or near Yosemite would be better than what was decided as the route to cross the Sierra – the Placerville and Auburn routes.

Sometimes the detail is as tedious as it was self-congratulatory. There are lots of lists of articles about the highway in so many places by so many people. Then, in the discussion about “seedling miles” there are lists describing the miles across the country. The authors could just have said there were lots of articles about the highway and “seedling miles” were a great idea that helped the effort. The reader doesn’t need to know about each one.

Within a few years money began to flow from the Federal Government, standards were published, and “traffic was increasing by leaps and bounds...” The principles do need to be recognized; the first transcontinental highway was a boon to the nation.



THE “IDEAL SECTION.” SITE BEFORE IMPROVEMENT



A COMPLETED PORTION OF THE “IDEAL SECTION”

Ideal sections of road were good publicity.



Figure 19. Fallon Sink between Frenchman and Fallon, no date.¹⁴³

Here an auto is crossing the desert. The narrow tires sink into the sand and so the autoists have brought along planks. One set of planks was laid down and the auto maneuvered onto them. The next set was placed in front of the car and the car was driven into them. The now uncovered planks in back were moved to the front and so progress was made one plank length at a time.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Lander, Lyon, Washoe, White Pine Counties
County and State
The Lincoln Highway in Nevada
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 10



Figure 2. Image illustrating poor condition of many early-twentieth-century roads.¹²

This picture comes from the application to given landmark status to the Lincoln Highway.

In 1908 60-90 days to travel the continent

One idea to further the Lincoln Highway was a cross-country tour in 1913. The press coverage would be golden publicity for the Lincoln Highway and show the need which would develop public support..

Instructions for each participating automobile included a list of what to take.

Mr. Edenburn knew by experience what was likely to be needed and as the tour was going through' some places where few, if any, automobiles had ever gone before, he saw that all necessities were taken along. Here is his list which shows the condition of roads prior to the Lincoln Highway:

One pick or one mattock

One pair of tackle blocks

600 feet of ¾ inch rope

One barn lantern, hung on the rear tire carrier, to be lighted if the car's regular lights failed, so the following driver could see it and keep in line.

One steel stake 3 feet long, 1½ inches wide at top, tapered to point, for use as anchor to pull car out of sand or mud.

12 mudhooks

1 full set of chains

1 sledge

Chocolate bars

canned beans,

canned goods, stowed under rear seat

West of Salt Lake City each car also carried:

4 African water bags, kept filled at all times

1 4x6 foot tent, envelope type, made especially for the tour. This tent was intended to be tied to the top and the wheels of the car. It could be raised from inside and provided with ground cloth and mosquito-bar ventilating windows.

Practically every car in the group used every item at some stage of the journey.

The tour also picked up in Salt Lake two 750 lb. packages – canvas 7.5' wide and 100 yards long. "The idea was, said he, that if we ran into sand we could unroll one of these strips, drive onto it, then unroll the other ahead and drive onto that, then roll up the first one, carry it ahead and repeat the process until the sand had been passed."

Besides better roads the Lincoln Highway brought tourists.

That stream was a river of gold to the country through which it passes -- tourist gold--for the hotelkeeper, the garage operator, the sellers of gasoline and oil and food. Cities and towns contended for this wealth, seeking by all fair and some unfair means to divert the whole stream, or at least a larger portion of it, into that channel where it would profit them most.

Just for fun

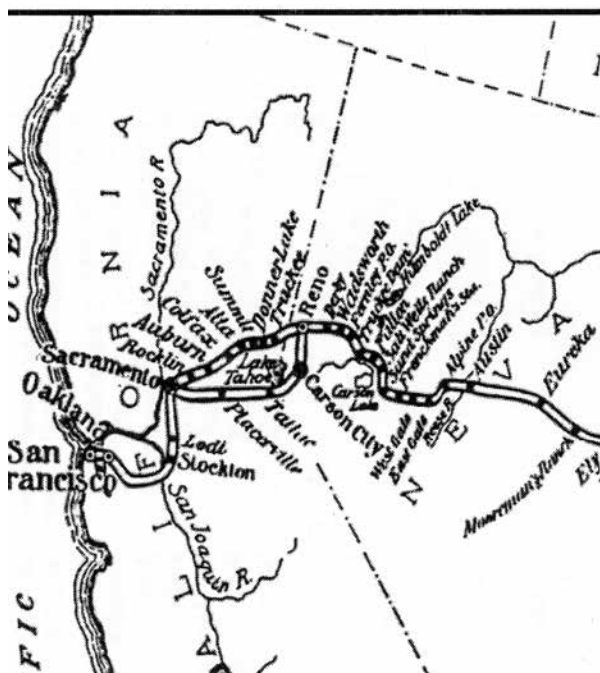
This month we reviewed [The Lincoln Highway](#), written in 1935. While reading the book we came across a reference to the "Lincoln Highway Route Road Conditions and Directions," a small booklet put out in 1913 to help transcontinental drivers. In just thirty pages it provided some directions for driving across the country. That sounded like something interesting. What was the first guidebook like?

So we turned to the Lincoln Highway Association's Trading Post, www.lhtp.com, which is a source for lots of things having to do with the Lincoln Highway. A few days later the reprint of the 1913 booklet arrived and we dove in.

Here's a map showing the only place in the country where the Lincoln Highway had an alternative route.

Then we have an excerpt from the main part of the booklet, "The Route". There are not many details but presumably what's there got people across the country. Following the route there is an example of the "detailed road directions, covering some of the more difficult sections of the western route." In that second section we can get an idea of what early autoists crossing the country faced and the need for the Lincoln Highway and its signage as Mr. Fisher noted in the impetus for the idea of the Lincoln Highway outside Indianapolis in the accompanying book review in this [Heirloom](#) edition.

We should note here that this first guide in 1913 was only the beginning. In the December, '08 [Heirloom](#) we had some extracts from the 1924 [Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway](#) Fifth Edition which has some good advice and ads for things you might need if you are considering a trip across the country. You might also like, "Hints to Transcontinental Tourists Traveling on the Lincoln Highway" in the 10/18 [Heirloom](#) FM Trego, chief engineer Lincoln Highway Association 1914 10 pages



Mileage	Description
3133.5	TRUCKEE, CAL. After leaving here we soon enter the mountains and are lost in the great fine fir forest for about 75 miles. A fine road has been built through the Sierr Nevada Mountains, 5,820 feet. Scenery among lofty granite cliffs is grand.
3138.6	DONNER LAKE. Here is where a large party of emigrants were lost through starvation in 1847, and a large monument is being erected to commemorate the event. Sierr Nevada (snowy range).
3143.3	SUMMIT, 7,020 feet. Some winters the snow bears the telegraph poles.
3175.8	ALTA,
3196.6	COLFAX, 2,420 feet.
3208.8	AUBURN, 1,360 feet. We are now down in the valley and orchards and vineyards are numerous.
3223.0	ROCKLAND,
3252.6	SACRAMENTO, elevation 30 feet. This is the capital of California and lies on the bank of the Sacramento River. We now turn down the Sacramento Valley to—
3288.1	LODI and
3305.0	STOCKTON, 25 feet elevation. From here we turn westward again and finally reach—
3382.6	OAKLAND, where we ferry across the bay to
3388.0	SAN FRANCISCO.

The route description for Truckee to San Francisco.

- 9.4 Point of rocks on right.
- 9.6 Deserted ranch; straight ahead.
- 10.4 Left fork at sign. "Austin 70 miles—Roberts Creek 19 miles."
- 11.5 Now on hill side.
- 11.7 Right fork; road from right comes in immediately.
- 12.9 Right fork and make half circle around large corral, passing ranch house.
- 13.1 Ranch house on left.
- 14.4 Right fork.
- 15.8 Right fork.
- 16.5 Cedar hill on left.
- 18.1 Sign board. Straight ahead swinging right across creek. (No bridge.)
- 18.6 Mud flats.
- 20.6 Dry wash.
- 21.5 Now going west.
- 24.1 Bear right on new road around mud flats.
- 24.9 Now on main road again.
- 25.8 Left fork at sign-board.
- 30.0 Cedar hill on left.
- 32.1 Cedar grove.
- 34.3 Ford small creek; good water; probably dry in summer.
- 34.4 Old cabin ruin on left.
- 37.0 Right fork straight across valley toward high mountain.
- 38.1 Sign-board, take right fork.
- 38.6 Ford small creek; probably dry in summer.
- 40.8 Extreme caution for flooded road; go round to left and fill each ditch with brush before crossing; use chains.
- 42.8 Short steep climb.
- 48.0 Caution for steep descent.
- 51.4 Caution for steep ascent and descent.
- 53.5 Road in from right at sign-post.
- 54.0 Left fork.
- 54.4 Bad rocky descent.
- 55.8 Crossroads; straight ahead.
- 57.2 Right fork.
- 59.7 Swing right on sharp descent passing sign-post with road in from left.
- 59.9 Caution for high centers (rocks).
- 60.0 Road in from left at sign-post.
- 60.3 Under telegraph lines.

Example of driving instructions given for the "most difficult sections." This is for the section "Eureka, Nev., to Austin, Nev. 69.5 miles."

1903 Packard Transcontinental Trip



Arriving in New York

When the automobile was in its infancy, car companies would go to great extremes to prove their worth. While most people were making their way west by horse and buggy, the young Packard Motor Car company decided to go east, from San Francisco to New York, in one of their fancy new automobiles. Packard investor, Henry Joy, dreamed up the journey, believing it would prove that American-made cars, specifically Packards, could “negotiate the all but impassible mountain and desert roads and trails of the Far West.”

Selected for the journey was a 1902 Packard Model F. It would be driven by Packard plant foreman and test driver Tom Fetch, who would be accompanied by The Automobile magazine editor Marius Krarup. Fetch made some modifications to the car to prepare it for a rough journey across roadless terrain and hazardous trails. This included stripping it of fenders, outfitting it with additional gas tanks and installing a low gear that would help it crawl up mountains. The car alone weighed in at 2,200 pounds, but once packed with supplies that included a pick, shovel, chains and canvas used to cross deep ruts and soft sand, it tipped the scales at 3,000 pounds.



Tom Fetch in the mud splattered Packard

The pair left San Francisco on June 20, 1903. The route selected for them by Packard Sidney Waldon had them follow the Southern Pacific railroad lines. Due to this, Fetch decided to name the car Old Pacific. The treacherous mountain terrain proved incredibly difficult to navigate. It took Fetch and Krarup until July 20 to reach Denver. The first third of the journey, as harsh as it was, provided for much fanfare and press. One article in Horseless Age read, “The Packard Motor car Company reports that E. T. Fetch and M. C. Krarup, who have undertaken to run a Packard automobile from San Francisco to New York City, have reached Wadsworth, Nev. in their progress eastward. This is the first time that an automobile has succeeded in crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains.”

Without cared for roads and hardly a map to follow, the pair faced many challenges, both mechanical and not. They had little opportunity to bathe, operated in extreme temperatures and at high altitudes and food was sparse. From time to time they even found themselves building their own roads to get up mountains and across rivers. Upon reaching Colorado Springs, Krarup wrote, “Nevada is awful, but Utah is the worst I ever saw. We carry a pick and shovel along, and we found it necessary in more than one instance to use them when we had to build roads ourselves, cutting along the sides of hills.”

Getting from Denver to Illinois was similarly difficult, but once down from the mountains the plains proved to be suitable for making good time. East of Chicago there were more roads available to use, which helped the Packard conquer the second two thirds of America in the same amount of time as the first. It seemed the great American road trip would succeed after all. When the Packard rolled into Tarrytown, New York, some 200 other automobile owners and fans met them. The crowd was intent on escorting Fetch and Krarup to the finish line in New York City, about 30 miles away. The journey came to an end on this day in 1903 when the Packard and the parade of autos entered NYC, marking the second time an automobile had made the transcontinental trip. At the end of the 63 day pleasure cruise, Fetch addressed the crowd, exclaiming, “Thank God, it’s over.”

This day in automotive history
https://automotivehistory.org/1903-packard-road-trip/?fbclid=IwAR34MIIdP3jF5SrJ8ofOh4Ys0GdzJqwHA6UqqtpRuwgPzSsjplTkKjYE9H_8

Tom Fetch with Old Pacific

Fetch's automobile
1902 Packard Model F Runabout
12HP engine
34x4 tires inflated to 80 lbs
Top speed: 20 MPH
Three speed gear
Price started at \$25,000 equivalent to
about \$70,000 today



Just a Little More Fun

In reading The Lincoln Highway the Story, we came across Bobby Hammond who was given as one of the examples of transcontinental racers on the Lincoln Highway. Besides setting records their travels across the country raised awareness of the highway and so were good publicity for fund raising. Mr. Hammond set one of the transcontinental records taking only six days to go from SF to NY in 1916. We had Mr. Hammond in the 12/15 Heirloom.

In the Automobile Magazine dated May 25, 1916 there is an article about a record transcontinental automobile trip set by Robert Hammond. He bested the old record of 7 days, 11 hours, 52 minutes by going 3485 miles in 6 days, 10 hours, 59 minutes. The old record had been set, ironically, on the day that Hammond left San Francisco. He averaged 22.5 mph on the Lincoln Highway and drove from "Frisco" to Ogden in 36 hours. So we can't expect he'd have any good descriptions of 1916 Donner Summit.

The important part for this article is

"At the start Hammond ran into a deep coat of snow on the roads over the Sierras [sic], but overcame this obstacle by following a train through a snowshed for about 40 miles. Owing to this maneuver, he was able to make his long turn to Ogden in 36 hours." We cannot imagine that Mr. Hammond was the first to do this death-defying trick. First, though, a few details of Mr. Hammond's trip are fun to list. He hit a "thank you ma'am" (depression dug across a road to drain water – like a water bar today on a hiking trail) at 45 mph which threw his passenger out of the car and 25 feet away. The passenger had to be replaced. He had 70 punctures in his tires, used a gallon of oil each 150 miles, and he got 10-13 mpg of gas.

Then as loyal readers will remember we followed up in the June, '17 Heirloom because our research into Donner Summit history is never done.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported "Robert Hammond and his 'ghost car,' in which he claims he hurtled through the climate from San Francisco to New York in eight days, evidently have set New York city by the ears.

"Hammond, according to advices received last night from New York, told the Gothamites that he left the hotel St. Francis [San Francisco] at 12:01 o'clock on the morning of May 17; that an American Automobile Association official checked him out; that a crow saw him off that he sailed through the Sierra snowsheds of the Southern Pacific Company in an hour and a half, emerging just before he reached Truckee, 'Arizona.'"

"Aside from the fact that the Truckee and the snowsheds are in California, several hundred miles from Arizona, and a few other mis-statements, Hammond's story is correct. He has at least arrived in New York.

Regarding Bobby Hammond's transcontinental transit in 1916 from San Francisco to New York in an Empire roadster in 6d 10h 59m, the Lincoln Highway Association boasted:

"It's a real road which will permit a traveler to average 21 miles an hour each hour of the 24, day and night, day in and day out, for practically a week running."

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Making History Colorful



Today, due to advances in computer graphics technology, there may be a solution to the color limitations of our historical black & white images. Computers are remarkably adept at manipulating photographic images. Algorithms developed for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning have been adapted to image technology to give almost magical results such as the colorization of black & white images. Algorithms are “trained” by looking at millions of color and black & white versions of photos to “learn” how to add back colors to a black & white image. The algorithms learn how to find a sky and make it blue, find a face and make it flesh colored, find a tree and make the leaves green. They develop highly sophisticated models that can do amazing transformations. Amazingly this technology is now available on desktop computers.

George Lamson



April 22, 1926 Scout Car - Auburn Chamber of Commerce --- to Salt Lake City, Nice ads on the automobile. The picture comes from the Placer County archives. This was the first auto over the summit in 1926. There's a little more in the September, '22 Heirloom but we could never find the details of the full story. Now that we have the colorized version we thought to run the Studebaker crossing the summit again - in color.

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



This plaque sits at the Donner Summit Hub right next to the short trail to the central shaft of Tunnel 6.

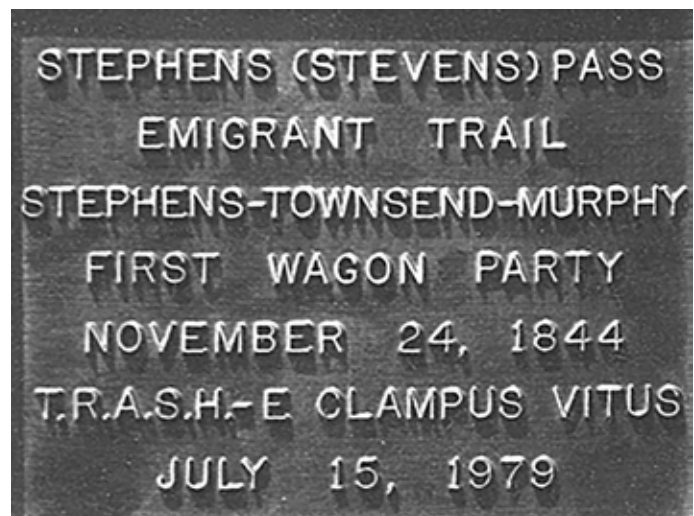
There are quite a few plaques on Donner Summit. Go out exploring and see what you can find.

GREAT SUMMIT TUNNEL OF THE SIERRA NEVADA

Beneath this plaque the first transcontinental rails road traversed the mighty Sierra Nevada range. The 1659 foot long summit tunnel took over 15 months of Chinese muscle and sweat to build. the Chinese painstakingly hand drilled, then blasted the granite rock with black powder and newly in-vented nitroglycerine. a vertical shaft took 35 days to complete and allowed tunnel construction to proceed from the center as well as from the portals. the most difficult obstacle facing the portals central pacific railroad was overcome when the tunnel was completed in august 1867 the first passenger train passed through the tunnel on June 18, 1868. The last train went through in 1993.

Dedicated august 7, 1999 chief Truckee chapter no. 3691 E Clampus Vitus

Plaque for the Stephens Murphy Townsend wagon train close to the top of the trail down Summit Canyon.



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.

Membership

I/we would like to join the Donner Summit Historical Society and share in the Summit's rich history

- new membership
- Renewing membership
- Individual Membership \$40
- Family Membership \$60
- Friend \$100
- Sponsor \$250
- Patron \$500
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