

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

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

February, 2023 issue #174



The Missing Axe - Pt II

In last month's exciting issue we took the route of the Forlorn Hope to a site that may have been the Camp of Death for the members of that group heading for California and help. The geography matched 19th Century reporting. It made good logical sense. Four cadaver dogs alerted on the same multiple spots indicating that there had been human remains at one time. Those remains do not necessarily need to have been Forlorn Hope remains though. It would be great to do an archeological dig on the site, maybe discover some human bones or teeth, and do some DNA analysis. There most likely can't have been other forensic evidence though, given the time that has passed, the harshness of the area and animals. Any remains of the people who died at the Camp of Death would have been scattered far and wide. The Forlorn Hope also didn't have much in the way of artifacts that they might have lost there either. They had little with them to lose.

Our 2020 Forlorn Hope guys, the extreme athletes who did the reprise of the Forlorn Hope trek in December, 2020, are a curious bunch and can't leave things alone. What if they could go back to the purported Camp of Death site and find something definitive? Body parts like bones and teeth are long gone, scattered by animals and destroyed or washed down the canyon. What evidence could there be? The story of the Camp of Death, told by Wm. Eddy's missing journal and contemporaneous interviews mentions the axe head that flew off its haft, the loss of which made wood gathering more difficult. Could the axe head be found? It would be like finding a needle in a haystack that covered many acres but suppose they could find it? Wouldn't it at least be worth a look?

The idea burned in our explorers' heads and by mid-June 2021 the snow had melted. Bob, Tim, and their Forlorn Hope 2021 photographer, Keith Sutter, headed back to the



Story Locations in this Issue

Camp of Death Central Sierra Snowlab pg 9

DONNER SUMMIT



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 

see the story that starts on page 1

Camp of Death site loaded with borrowed and rented metal detectors and pin pointers (very small metal detectors to do fine detecting after the larger metal detectors find something). They'd also interested an archeologist, who gave the odds of finding the Camp of Death a five percent chance. He'd done some research on the area and discovered there'd been a lot of subsequent human activity including a narrow gauge logging railroad. Indeed, just walking around one finds all kinds of metal remains which you can see a sample of here, right. He also didn't believe in cadaver dogs alerting as any kind of evidence.

Bob, Tim, and Keith had a plan of attack. They set up a grid over the area where Kale (John Grebenkemper's cadaver dog - see last month's [Heirloom](#)) had made her alerts. Then they began sweeping their metal detectors close to the ground, under the manzanita, and in and around the fallen trees. Turn back to last month's [Heirloom](#) to see pictures of the terrain. There were many hits: metal cable, horseshoes, railroad spikes, a shovel without its handle, etc. The detectors were working but it was tedious because nothing found was an axe head.

Bob was on one uphill side of the seasonal creek. Tim and Keith were in the stream bed about ten yards apart. Keith's metal detector beeped. It was a horseshoe. Those of course bode good luck.

Not long after, Tim's detector made another noise. More garbage no doubt. He bent over and probed the object under the dirt. It was substantial. Even not so careful readers know what's coming. Of course Tim uncovered the object and picked it up for examination. Of course it was an axe head (left in its original position - see pages 2, 4, and 5). Tim and Keith shouted over to Bob about having found something.

"What?" Bob called back.

"It's an axe head," replied Tim.

Bob is a serious guy, "Very funny. Does it have Franklin's name on it too?" It didn't have Franklin's name on it, but it was an axe head. It had required less than an hour of searching. That's really good luck.

As it happens Tim and Bob's new archeologist friend happens to be an axe expert. He pronounced the axe as a "home axe," not a factory manufactured ax as one could have expected to find the in area. He also pronounced it of the right vintage – mid-19th Century.

Our guys are responsible amateur archeologists. They put the axe head back in place and marked the site. The next step was a permit from the U S Forest Service to do a dig in the area. Suppose they come up with teeth from DNA can be extracted?



As we come to the end of the story the question is, could the axe head found in June, '21 be the axe head lost by the Forlorn Hope in December, '1846? Could it have been lying there undisturbed all this time? If it is the axe head then can this be the Camp of Death, the location of which heretofore has been unknown?

Without further evidence there is no way to corroborate the location and the diaries and interviews have been exhausted. Our explorers have exhausted the common sense of where the original Forlorn Hope, starving, exhausted, and hobbling on rag wrapped frost bitten feet would have gone. We can't prove this site is the site of the Forlorn Hope; we can't prove it's not.

In any case the axe head has a story to tell and this is the best one. If only it could talk. Next steps are for the Forest Service to turn the axe head over to researchers who will analyze the shape and style and try to pull off some organic materials for carbon dating.

You might also want to look up the Discovery Channel's television show, "Expedition Unknown." On August 24, 2022 they broadcast a show about the Camp of Death and the axe. The episode is titled, "On the Trail of the Donner Party (season 10 episode 15)

Stay tuned.

pictures here and next page by Bob Crowley

The axe head found at the purported Camp of Death site, right. Below, Bob Crowley, left, and Tim Twietmeyer, right with the axe head.



About the found axe head:

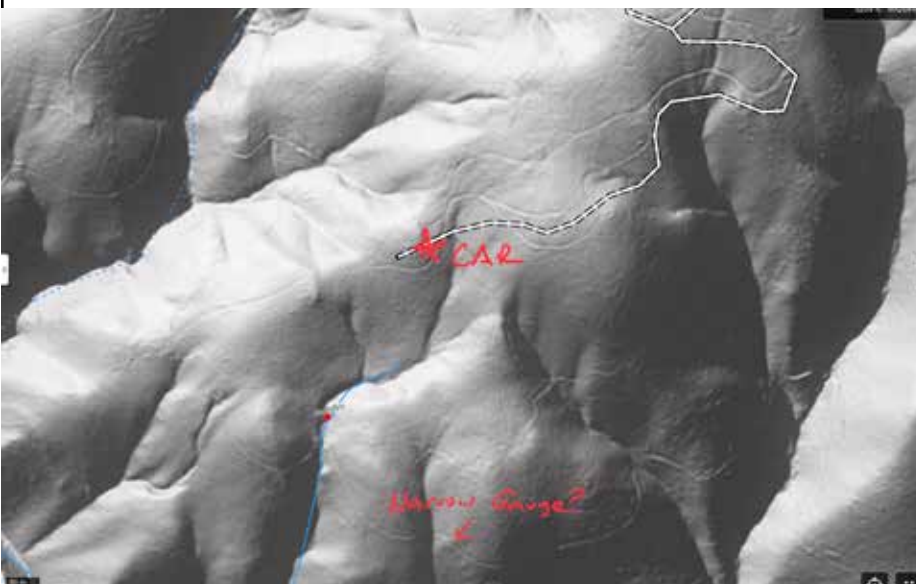
The axe found at the purported Camp of Death site appears to be a mid-1800 personal axe which may have been forged in the eastern US (this is yet to be determined before proper testing). These types of axes would have been hand forged and unlike more commercially-forged axes where the steel head would have had a hole into which the tapered wooden handle would be hammered into place, this axe would have had a narrow tongue which would have been attached to the right of the photo (see photo right) along that edge, and then bent with a hammer around the axe handle to get the handle to stay in place. In this axe, that tongue has been broken.

In the Forlorn Hope story, one of the members was gathering wood using the axe during the torrid snowstorm when the axe head flew off and was buried in the snow, never to be found. It's possible the axe head broke off – the tongue fracturing and the axe head separated from the wooden handle by the force of a swing.



Bob Crowley

Above: That is the part of the axe head where the wood handle would have been attached. Note the concave shape (where the dowel wood handle head would have been positioned).



Left is a model of the topography around the Camp of Death site

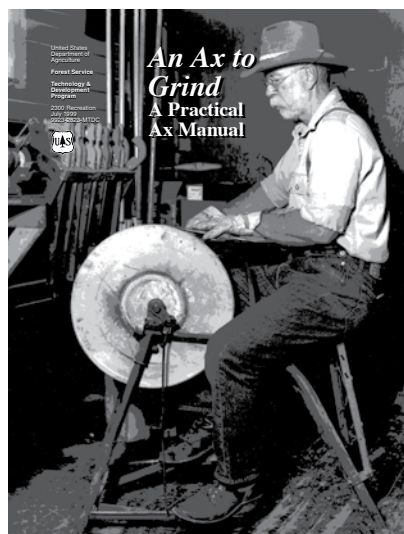
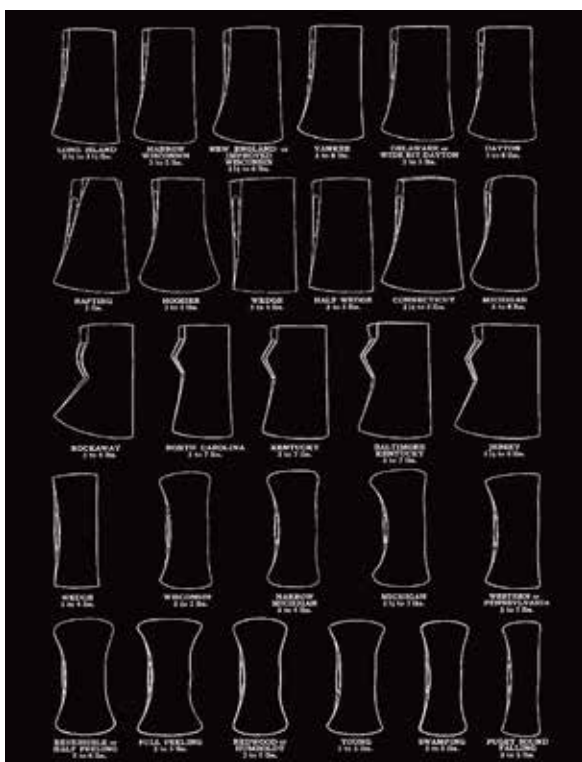
Alcalde Sinclair, who interviewed the Forlorn Hope after their arrival in California, captured some of the pathos,

“How heart-rending must have been their situation at this time, as they gazed upon each other, shivering and shrinking from the pitiless storm ! Oh ! how they must have thought of those happy, happy homes which but a few short months before they had left with buoyant hopes and fond anticipations ! Where, oh where were the green and lowery plains which they had heard of, dreamt, and anticipated beholding, in the month of January, in California ? Alas ! many of that little party were destined never to behold them. Already was death in the midst of them.” [sic]

Next Steps for the axe head,

At this writing, in August, 2022, the axe head is with the U.S. Forest Service. In the not too distant future it will be turned over to an archeologist for analysis and testing. That will include testing organic materials on the axe head for age using Carbon 14 dating. There will also be a careful analysis of shape to help with dating and the kind of axe head the Forlorn Hope might have carried.

If you want to look into axe heads, their origin, uses, kinds, etc. look on line for the USDA publication "An Ax to Grind a Practical Manual," below right. You discover all kinds of esoterica related to axe heads like the different shapes in different parts of the country. See below.



NOTE: Readers may also want to get more deeply into this story by finding the "Discovery Channel's" program, "Expedition Unknown". Their August 24 episode was about the Camp of Death and the axe head discovery.

One more picture of the ax - see page 8

Bob Crowley's analysis of setting out to find the site of the Camp of Death

Specifically for finding the Camp of Death:

1. We referenced several noted authors and their coverage of supposed location of COD including Stewart, Kaufman, Thornton, Johnson, Rarick, etc. You can find a full bibliography here: <https://www.forlornhope.org/research-resources/> .
2. There were conflicts regarding the location as well as the route the Forlorn Hope took from Carpenter Flats to the North Fork of the American River. Again, we logged and compared and contrasted the different theses in a spreadsheet which we converted into a timeline. Then Tim and I headed to the field for extensive “seeing is believing” and applying logic to discovery. We added our findings to the timeline to create a comprehensive “book” and “field” day-by-day log of suppositions and rationale. Full day by day reconstruction of facts, weather, distance, accounts, conflicts, field notes, etc. in a single detailed timeline here: <https://www.forlornhope.org/day-by-day-timeline/>
3. For the Camp of Death we knew the Forlorn Hope had followed the contour of the land at Carpenter Flat which slopes gently towards to East South East following the East Fork of the North Fork of the North Fork of the American River (NFAR). Emigrant Gap was obscured by a small ridge. That plus not knowing exactly what to look for, losing their guide (Stanton), no compass, no map, 3 days starved, Indians confused, despondent, conflicts and amidst a blizzard so no dead reckoning - they would have taken the path of least resistance...the easier down slope. That's what we found in the field. That's what the best book accountings suggested. That's what we investigated ourselves in the field as well as trying the other possible routes to verify logical alternative or eliminate the thesis based upon common sense. We narrowed the possible route to two most likely: 1. Thru Burnett Canyon or 2. Following the North fork of the North Fork of the American River (NFNFAR). We eventually eliminated the latter because the going is extreme, making it impossible to traverse due to rugged, steep and dangerously narrow cliffs on both sides of the NFNFAR. And there would have been no place for 14 people to camp. And no match to the “ridge on opposite side”, “climbing steep ridge to top”, “view of the valley”, “sliding down steep slope to river on snowshoes” (all clues from the literature).
4. This leads the Forlorn Hope to Onion Valley where we believed they camped. Or closer to the ridge near Tunnel (where we camped). Whether they climbed nearby Scott Hill or not is debatable but Tim and I did the climb and it was strenuous and upon the summit no way could they have “looked back for Stanton” as there was no visibility towards Six Mile Valley or beyond. We concluded it was highly unlikely anyone from the Forlorn Hope climbed Scott Hill, especially given their physical, mental and emotional condition, starvation, storm and it's pretty obvious if you look at the Hill, there would be no “view back to Six Mile Valley.” So no one would throw in a steep, strenuous climb just at this point. Thus we greatly discounted that thesis. In the end it didn't matter and confirmed we were on the right direction for their path to NFAR.
5. George Stewart provides the most vivid description as to the terrain and what they saw in Ordeal By Hunger. He was the only author of those we referenced who had actually set foot on any of the terrain back in the 1930's. The rest relied upon stories, maps and GPS. So Stewart gained credibility with us. We trust field survey above all other sources. The terrain has not changed from 175 years ago. It doesn't lie. And one can imagine the thick blanket of snow and possible thicker forest. If major features are missing (i.e. ridges, hills, streams, mountains, views, etc.) then it would be hard to justify the correctness of the supposed route.
6. Stewart (who used Eddy's journal, interviews with Eddy, Foster, Mary Graves by Thornton and Sinclair soon after the Forlorn Hope journey, Reed diary, accounts from Edwin Bryant as primary sources...as did we) described the Forlorn Hope camping on an area that protected them from the wind from the storm. That would have been on the east slope of the west ridge of Burnett Canyon as the wind was coming from the west.
7. The area those chose had to accommodate 14 people, there are few spots that have that feature and are fairly flat (Tim and I went all over Burnett Canyon searching for possible sites).
8. There would have had to have been lumber nearby for making a fire and refueling (they were there six days).
9. We know there was water (stream) beneath the fire as eventually it melted thru the snow and fell into a stream, extinguishing it for some time. There are only two streams in Burnett Canyon: the one we suppose the Camp of Death is upon and the one we crossed at the bottom of the canyon. The stream at the bottom has no area big enough or flat enough to accommodate 14 people.

And it would have been too far based upon multiple accounts of miles traveled from Carpenter Flat to the Camp of Death.

10. There is a description of seeing the “ridge across the canyon” from the Camp of Death. This lines up with the view of Sawtooth Ridge from our supposed Camp of Death.

And of course there is the description of “the view of the valley, so green” as they rounded the corner of said ridge - the spot Tim and I identified as the only place where there is a clear view of the Sacramento Valley from the ridge, through a clearing. This reinforced both the route they took to reach their first crossing of the NFAR but also where they came from to catch this view: “Ascending the steep ridge before them...walking along the ridge...view of valley through opening in trees...down a steep slope, sliding on snowshoes upon the snow to reach the river’s edge...”. The previous description fits where they came from on the northwest ridge of Burnett Canyon (our Camp of Death location).

From the DSHS Archives

Heidi Sproat of the Truckee Donner Historical Society has been paging through Truckee Republican newspapers and sharing what she's found about Donner Summit with us. Here is one example, a column called "Summit Scene" by Fran Couillard who wrote a social column for the newspapers for a few years in the 1940's. Heidi has titled this column “What real women did in 1946 who were not glamour girls.” It gives a bit of insight into the summit just after the war, August, 15, 1946.

SUMMIT SCENE

by FRANCES COUILLARD

We have an intrepid lot of women on this Mountain. Looking at the well dressed, manicured, shiny haired gals at a cocktail party in the evening one would gather that they slumber all day, just awakening time to shower and put on the glamour for said wing-ding. But we know for a fact that Madelyn Jones Walton painted the outside of her house, trim and all; that she herself wove the materials for a couple of upholstered chairs in her room: that she drives an ex-army truck for her husband, Bud when the need arises and withal keeps herself fully groomed.

Eleanor Johansen is Kem-Toning [apparently, according to GOOGLE, a method of painting] her home and she also emerges from her bespattered working clothes to dance a rhumba with her husband at the hot spot of Woods and Nordstrom on the peek [sic?] of the mountain not looking the worse for wear.

Lola and Kirby Schull of Kiski Lodge are building a new kitchen and dining room in their mountain retreat. Knowing Lola we would say that she is in there pitching-for Lola,

in the spring of the year plants a garden on the back end of their property which takes a mountain goat to navigate, and comes forth with beautiful produce-even giving some to the neighbors when the crop gets too bountiful. Besides this, Lola somehow or other maintains a cow and chickens--even thru the rigors of the winter and mothers two boys who are definitely in the health bracket. When Kirby was in the service, Lola ran Kiski Lodge single handed, cooking for it least 40, waited on them and kept them comfortable. Kiski Lodge became the rendezvous for groups of Waves, Spars, Wacs and service men. We can remember, when the food shortage was acute and Lola had many guests to feed, that she jumped into her truck, trucked to Reno in a snow storm to see what she could buy to maintain her lodge. We think Lola deserves the best there is and know that she will get it if hard work is recompensed

We have a lady up here who has a weekend cabin that is she lives in Roseville and spends as much time here as possible. Her name is Mrs. Robb Allen (Ruby) of the Allen's Drug Store. Not too long ago Ruby went thru a very trying and tragic ordeal, losing her son in an airplane accident. Know what Ruby is doing now? She is managing Camp Pahatsi for the Girl Scouts. There are over a hundred guests there right now and the small, lively ones require much care and supervision. Ruby is in there pitching-and we of this Mountain salute her.

Goldie Rowton of Ice Lakes is another. She does the cooking not only for her family but for guests, Rumor hath it that the food is delicious. We have been to Ice Lakes quite often and never have we seen Goldie relax. We know that it takes much hard work in these lodges to keep everything running ship



From the DSHS Archives

shape and in these days of help scarcity and incompetence the only thing to do is do it yourself. We were at Ice Lakes for a picnic last Sunday-and it is truly a beautiful spot. The youngsters that were with us went boating and the large raft serenely in the middle of the beautiful lake is a lure to good swimmers.

We talked to Muriel Jones one day about getting lamb killed and dressed for a barbeque. Said Muriel nonchalantly "I can dress a lamb." We have seen Muriel about the Soda Springs Hotel wearing overalls and pushing a wheelbarrow. The flowers around the hotel were planted by her and yet in the evening Muriel in her well tailored riding togs is never too tired to be a good hostess and have parties. We celebrated two of these last week. One for Bill and Rita Vail -first anniversary. Rita, well known here, used to be employed at the Soda Springs Hotel in the capacity of bookkeeper, hostess and what have you. She married, Bill went east, and when Bill, who was a navy flyer, was discharged they hied themselves back to the mountains they love. There is a new Vail too. Patrick.

Helen McCarty, FL Stocktonite who owns a cabin up here, is not much inclined to the social side of living - and we presume it is because she has a lathe, a jigsaw, and other pieces of equipment in her attic out of which she fashions her own furniture. In her spare time last year she assisted her husband, Ray, in building a stone wall around their properties.

We have, Jeanne Reynal up here internationally known for her modern mosaics. Jeanne has a studio with a kiln to complete her beautiful works.

There is Marie Strickland. She and Bill, her husband, recently took over the McClellan Field Ski Lodge. Marie unfortunately, broke her leg last winter and has had a pretty hard time of it. She dropped in to have coffee with us the other morning. She hopped out of a jeep, fitted her crutches under her arm and came up the stairs. She was driving the jeep herself - broken leg and all. She entertains extensively practically every weekend and is well known for her hostessing ability - a broken leg is no handicap.

We know Maria Schuster up here, too. Maria was a refugee from Germany during the first part of the war. She had skied all over Europe and when the first shock of her experiences left her she came to the high Sierra to recuperate. Now Maria is a resident - having purchase the Ben and Verna Smith cabin. Maria has completely refurbished her cabin. She tells us laughingly that the red leather divan she has in her "parlor" and the two matching chairs, were purchase in Carmel for \$10 and that the red leather upholstery was accomplished by herself. Another day we found Maria linseeding the outside of her cabin. She is not tiling her bathroom!

We have what is know in the district as the "Mountain disease". It is recognized by a complete lethargy that paralyzes the working faculties. We have seen an umber succumb to this dread malady - but taking it all in all, we think the workers are in the majority.

See you next week.

One more pictures of the Camp of Death Ax now residing at the USFS in Foresthill. Picture by Taylor Cole.



Snow Storms 1890

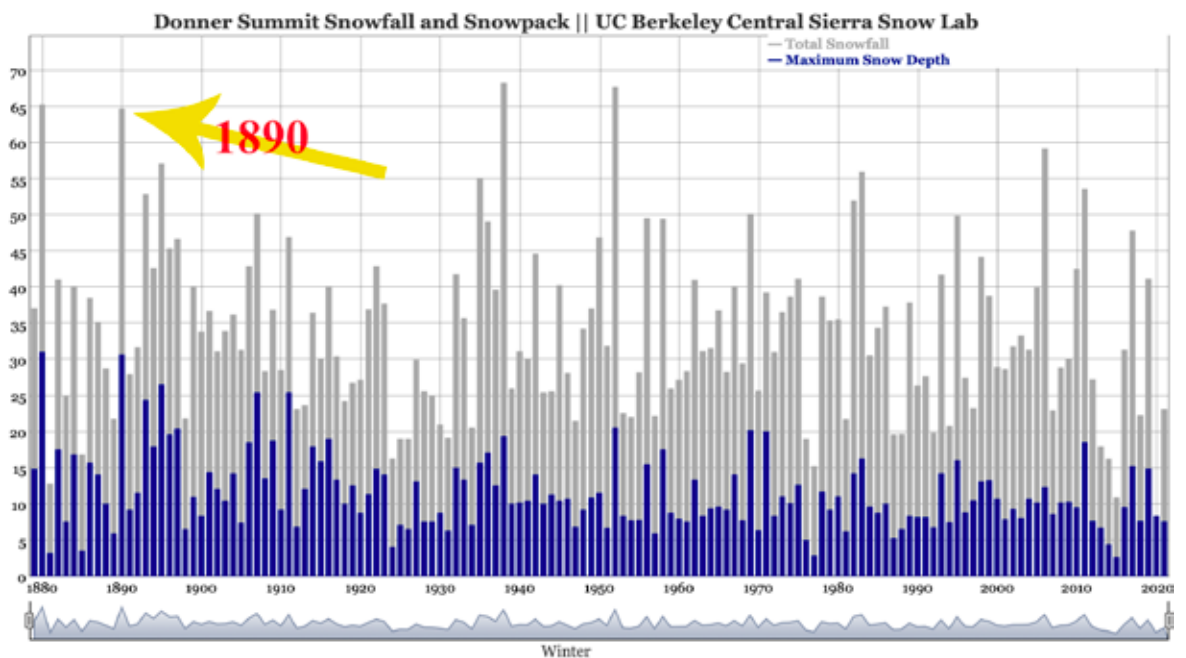
First we need a little introduction. The lead article in our August, '22 [Heirloom](#) was “Around the World and Over Donner Summit.” Curiosity led us to more which you’ll find starting on page 13 in this edition, book reviews on three books about Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland. Those books sent us into old newspapers where we serendipitously came across a reference to the Nellie Bly Escort Corps. The Corps was sent out by Bly’s [New York World](#) to bring her across the continent and back home at the conclusion of her seventy-two day trip around the world. Both Nellie and the Corps, from different directions, were stopped from crossing the Sierra. There was a huge set of storms that blocked the railroad for a couple of weeks. Looking for the Escort Corp. brought us to the snow storms of 1890. Hence, the snow storms of 1890 in this issue of the [Heirloom](#).

In the story of Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland there is a very tenuous connection to Donner Summit. Elizabeth did go over Donner Summit but it was at night and so we didn’t get treated to any of her beautiful descriptions (See the review that follows). Nellie couldn’t go over Donner Summit because there was a snow blockade. That doesn’t sound like much until one reads more of the sources. The [New York World](#) had sent an “escort corps” to accompany Nellie across the continent. Unfortunately Nellie Bly chose one of the two highest snowfall years on record to do her circumnavigation of the world (see

the graph below from the Central Sierra Snow Lab on Donner Summit). Her Escort Corps was trapped in the mountains by the snow. The heavy snowfall closed the transcontinental railroad route for weeks and was reported upon by newspapers all across the country. The details are many but they are not necessarily all accurate. Some just reprint what others had first published. Others were flat wrong like one that said Nellie was crossing the Sierra, relying on what had been planned rather than what actually was. So much for the veracity of primary sources. Historians need to verify, not just trust primary sources, but that’s a digression. Let’s just say that the [Heirloom](#) doesn’t just trust; it verifies. Our readers’ trust is important. Back to our story. The many details from those newspapers describe what Sierra storms can be like and make a good story that draws the Bly-Bisland context to Donner Summit.

Talking about the snow, [The World](#) headlined their January 20, 1890 report with “NELLIE BLY WILL SEE MORE SNOW THAN SHE EVER SAW BEFORE.” That, apparently, was before [The World](#) knew about their corps being stranded and Nellie taking the southern route. The article went on to say that “the Drifts have become so solidly packed and the fall of snow has been so unprecedentedly heavy, that it may be a week before the [rail] road is clear.... There has not been a storm in the last dozen years that has

Snow fall on Donner Summit. Note the depth of the snow when Nellie Bly's Escort Corps came west to meet her and accompany her across the continent.



NOTE: Limited data exists for the 2019-2020 winter (Water Year 2020). SNOTEL data has been used for maximum snowpack depth and no data exists on total snowfall. We are working to rectify this data shortage as soon as possible.

so completely defied the efforts of the powerful rotary snow-plows as this one.” That sounds like a good story but the article doesn’t tell more. We had to go looking.

A huge storm had come in just as the Nellie Bly Escort Corps was approaching the Sierra. Newspapers trumpeted “IT BREAKS THE RECORD” (Sacramento Daily Union January 24, 1890) “The great snow blockade on the Sierra Nevada continues” (Napa Register January 24, 1890), SNOW BLOCKADE (San Luis Tribune January 24, 1890), and “The snow is packing up in the mountains and has reached the greatest depth ever known (Daily Alta California January 23, 1890). The transcontinental line was blocked for thirty-five miles for weeks trapping the Nellie Bly Escort Corps along with hundreds of passengers, the U.S. Mail, and train loads of freight. At the summit the snow was twenty-four feet deep and at lower elevations it was at least eight feet deep for miles (Sacramento Daily Union (January 24, 1890). The snow amounts varied in reports depending on the newspaper and the exact locations described. The snow was so deep in spots that the rotary plows [note that spelling varied in different articles sometimes "plow" and sometimes "plough"] could not send the snow over the embankments on either side of the tracks. More snow fell down the mountainside and covered one plough which was being pushed by four engines (San Jose Mercury News January 24, 1890). Another plough was derailed and a whole freight train was covered by snow near Cisco. All passenger trains were halted and so at Colfax, “passengers were killing time as best they could, and making a heavy draft on the substantial and liquid refreshments of the town.” In Truckee the passengers, “for the want of better amusement, gave a literary performance. They have given up all hopes of ever leaving town.” (San Jose Mercury News January 24, 1890)

The Coronado Mercury reported that the Corps (February 1, 1890) was ignominiously stuck in Sierra snow but the Sacramento Daily Union reported (January 21, 1890) that the Nellie Bly Escort Corps was snowshoeing from Emigrant Gap to Colfax. Other newspapers reported that it was only one member of the Escort Corps, or three or four. They, or he’d, left Emigrant Gap guided by a local miner and gotten to Blue Canyon two hours later. It’s only a mile or so, so we can imagine the conditions. There the snow was twenty feet deep

IN DARKNESS AND HUNGER

The Nellie Bly Escort Corps Snow-Bound In the Sierras – Food scarce and Several Sick

Pittsburgh Post Gazette January 20, 1890

and covered the houses. They expected to arrive in Alta, further down the hill, at 2 AM where they hoped to catch a train going west. The Corps was able to get a special train when they got below the snow blockade and caught up with Nellie in Lathrop, just south of Stockton. Nellie had taken the Southern Pacific line through the Central Valley and then the southern transcontinental route. The World had reserved a special train costing them one dollar a mile to Chicago.

Before leaving Emigrant Gap the Corps telegraphed their predicament which shows what Donner Summit winter storms can be like (St. Louis Dispatch January 19, 1890). The telegram said they’d made no progress at all for two days and could not get word out because of downed tele-

PACIFIC COAST The Disastrous Blockage of Trains A Woman Becomes Insane Big Efforts Being Made to Clear The Track

San Jose Mercury News January 24, 1890

graph lines. The snow was coming down in flakes the size of a “soda cracker.” The wind was causing drifts of snow ten feet deep on the tracks. Eventually a rotary plough pushed by “two twelve wheel 96,000 pound engines and one ten-wheeler [arrived to clear the track]. The [plough’s] fan was eight feet in diameter.” The Corps was told it could go six miles an hour through eight feet of snow. The plough started to “bravely” clear the track and the start “was a magnificent one. There was 1500 horse-power behind the plough. Snow flew in circling, sparkling spray for fifty feet in all directions. The engine quivered at every bolt and a path eight feet wide was visible in the wake of the engines.” After only fifty yards the plow ran into a snowbank. A “shiver went through twelve wheels. She fairly lifted from the rails, fell back, then made a lunge forward” and was stuck fast. Snow shovelers were put to work to clear the track. Two engines from a mail train were attached to the plough and its engines to pull it free. Then another attack was made at the snowbank. The plough and its engines were stuck again. By then the steam engines were out of water so the shovelers were sent to get snow to fill the boilers. Then it was dinner time and the train was left stuck in the snowbank.

It had taken all day to go two hundred yards. Meanwhile other trains were stuck everywhere. Then there was a labor problem. The snow shovelers had been told to sleep in the snowsheds. In retaliation they refused to work the next day.

The report continued, saying they didn't know when things would finally open and there were twelve to twenty feet of snow on the tracks.

Meanwhile a 28-year-old telegraph operator was "imprisoned" at Cascade (Donner Summit) dying of pneumonia. Because the tracks were blocked no one could get to him. Normally snowsheds would have enabled help to come but there was a two-mile break in the sheds, apparently filled with snow. Snow around Cascade was eighteen to twenty feet deep. The Escort Corps from The World tried to convince the railroad crews to take a doctor they had with them in a rotary and go back to Cascade but the railroad men would do nothing without orders. At that point The New York World sent a telegram to the Division Superintendent saying it would pay the expenses of sending their doctor to Cascade. Although The St. Louis Dispatch didn't mention what happened to the man, another newspaper reported that he died.

There are lots of details that are missed when writing only about Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland. One detail is the succession of storms. For example, the St. Louis Dispatch (January 19, 1890) said that the train with the Nellie Bly Escort Corps was stuck in a snowshed. There was little food because there were so many snow shovelers who took all the food at the nearest hotel. People were suffering for the want of food. Dominican sisters, who had been traveling on the train, began attending to the sick. The newspaper said there was a lot of sympathy for the sick telegrapher at Cascade.

Delving in to the newspapers, there are lots of little facts beyond Nellie and Elizabeth's travels. During the blockade newspapers variously reported on the number of snow shovelers the railroad had sent to work. The L.A. Herald (January 24, 1890) said there were 1200 men at work between Alta and Summit. The Marysville Daily Appeal (January 24, 1890) said there were six hundred between Towle and Shady Run. Snow shovelers were being paid \$2 to \$3.50 a day with board. The snow shovelers had a union, The Brotherhood of Snow Shovelers, which proposed a strike, but the leader was discharged "and work was resumed" (Grass Valley Morning Union January 22, 1890). The Appeal also said, that windows in the houses along the track were removed because in the past the power of the rotary's thrown snow "smashed in pieces" every front window. Another interesting detail came from the L.A. Herald (January 28, 1890) as well as other newspapers saying, "the most

FETTERS OF ICE The Railroad Situation Any- Thing but Hopeful A NEW OBSTACLE ARISES Miles of Frozen Slush to Be Removed With Pick and Shovel – Snow- Plows Helpless

LA Herald 1/28/90

troublesome difficulty" after the tracks had been mostly cleared, was that from Verdi to Tunnel 13, just a bit east of Donner Pass, the snow had melted to slush and then refrozen covering twenty-five miles of track miles with ice that could only be removed by pick and shovel. Frozen "boulders" of ice had to be chipped and levered off the tracks. Carpenters were sent to enlarge parts of the snowsheds so a large plough could get through. Trenches eight to twelve feet deep had to be dug along the railroad line to free the telegraph lines.

The Daily Alta California (January 18, 1890) reported snow depths. "Some idea of the enormous work it is to clear the track may be gained from the fact that on the sheds between Summit and tunnel the snow is from 50 to 200 feet deep, and in a few instances it is estimated that the banked-up snow is fully 500 feet deep, incredible as it may appear. Wherever the sheds show signs of weakness, men are at work shoveling off the snow. West of Summit the sheds are covered from eighteen to twenty-five feet deep." It should be noted that other newspapers also reported high snow depth figures varying with locations being reported upon. The Daily Alta was the only one to note "500 feet deep."

TOO MUCH BEAUTIFUL. GREAT BLOCKADE IN THE CEN TRAL PACIFIC RAILWAY. Snow Fifteen Feet Deep on the Level and Fifty Feet Deep in Drifts-Some Strange Incidents of the Blockade.

Manitoba Weekly 1/30/90

Finally, on January 31 the San Jose Mercury-News reported that “the blockade [was] raised. The cheering news flashed over the nation last night that the great snow blockade in the Sierra Nevadas was raised at last and that the track was clear from San Francisco to Ogden. The dispatch will be hailed with joy not only by the people of California, but by the residents of every State in the Union as well.”

A TRIP ON SNOWSHOES.

"I was determined to reach Alta, if possible, and procured a pair of snowshoes [what we could call skis today] on which to travel. Everybody advised me to remain, as I knew nothing of the country and had never before seen a pair of snowshoes, and of course had no idea how to navigate them. It was like learning to skate - one runner would dart off in a southerly direction while the other would probably head for the north or west. I slid and stumbled and fell, but after a time I could travel very smoothly and thank God for it. I have seen snow and blizzards in New York, but the people back there don't know what snow is."

John J. Jennings New York World
Member of the Nellie Bly Escort Corps who snowshoed off Donner Summit and down to Alta to get a special train.

“The snowshoes used were, the ordinary white ash shoe, turned up at the front end and grooved on the bottom, about four inches wide and ten feet long. The World man was unaccustomed to white ash shoe leather, and though his spirit was willing his flesh was weak, and he had to be assisted over the hard places that so frequently punctuated the hard night's march. The three whose flesh and will went neck and neck, and held out, took turns in leading the way, the hardest place in the expedition, for the leader had to keep the course, as well as break the track. He was steersman and captain at the same time.

“They reached Alta at 4 o'clock yesterday morning.”

Sacramento Bee 1/21/90

The article continued, “The importance of California to the rest of the nation has been proven and emphasized by its long isolation. All over the country were merchants anxiously awaiting their consignments of California goods and their remittances of Pacific Coast money...”

"The Escort Corps man headed south “with his legs aching, but his mind stored with experience which is worth specie in the columns of his paper.”

It should be noted that breaking track in new snow as the Escort Corps man was doing is exhausting work as one pushes through the snow sinking with each stride. Ten foot long skis weigh quite a bit too, making the effort harder. See the sidebar to the left.

Daily Alta California January 22, 1890

FETTERS OF ICE The Railroad Situation Any- Thing but Hopeful A NEW OBSTACLE ARISES Miles of Frozen Slush to Be Removed With Pick and Shovel – Snow- Plows Helpless

LA Herald 1/28/90

The snowfall is unprecedented in the memory of white men in these mountains:

New York Evening World January 20, 1890

Book Review

Around the World in 72 Days The Race Between Pulitzer's Nellie Bly and Cosmopolitan's Elizabeth Bisland

Jason Marks 1993 260 pages

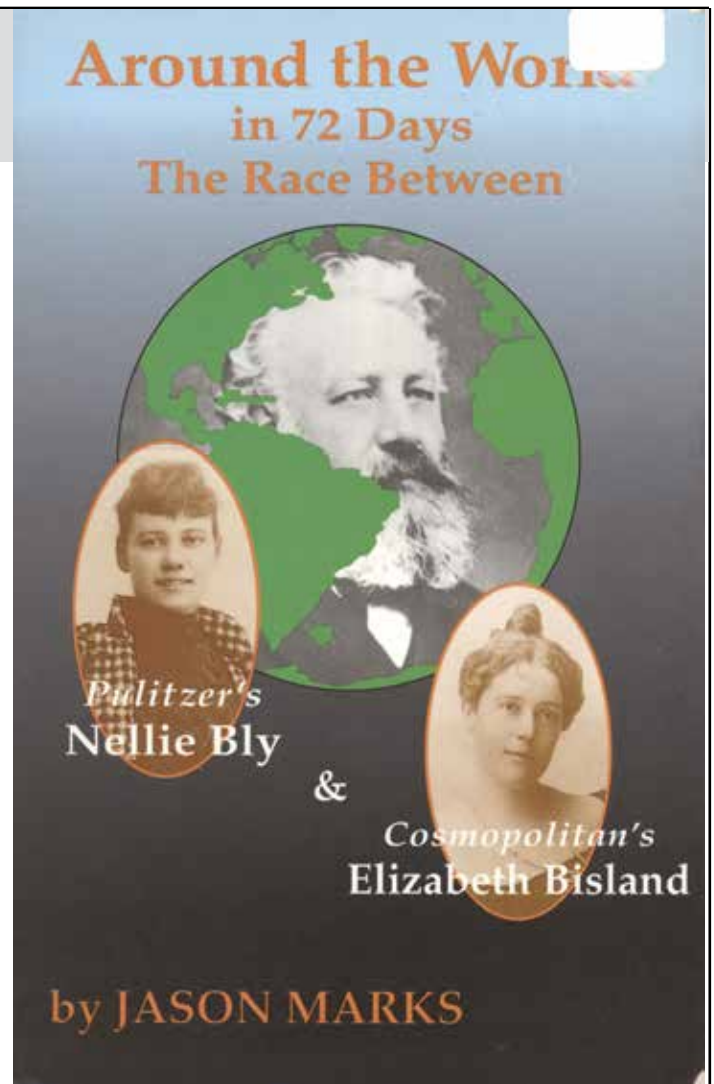
In Seven Stages: A flying Trip Around the World 1891 100 pages Elizabeth Bisland

Around the World in Seventy-Two Days and Other Writings Nellie Bly 140 pages 1890

In August of '22 the Heirloom's lead article was "Around the World and Over Donner Summit" which followed the 2022 PBS broadcast of a remake of "Around the World in Eighty Days." In the original 1872 story by Jules Verne, Phileas Fogg went over Donner Summit during his fictional trip around the world. Verne, though, neglected to set any of Fogg's adventures there, as did PBS, which had a mostly different set of adventures for their Mr. Fogg. That led the Heirloom editorial staff to see who might really have gone over Donner Summit on the way around the world. We did come up with some but it seems that the globe's 19th Century circumnavigators did not have the exquisite taste that others have had and so, go over Donner Summit. That's all part of the August, '22 Heirloom. It should be said here too, that most of the time the transcontinental railroad heading west crossed Donner Summit at night. That, of course, shows bad planning on the part of railroad personnel.

The investigation for non-fiction world circumnavigators did find Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland (both in the August, '22 Heirloom). We thought their race was an interesting story and it turns out that there is actually a book about both adventuresses, Around the World in 72 Days The Race Between Pulitzer's Nellie Bly and Cosmopolitan's Elizabeth Bisland. The sources for that book were books by Elizabeth Bisland, A flying Trip Around the World, and Nellie Bly, Around the World in Seventy-Two Days and Other Writings. Both of the latter two were written right after their authors' adventures.

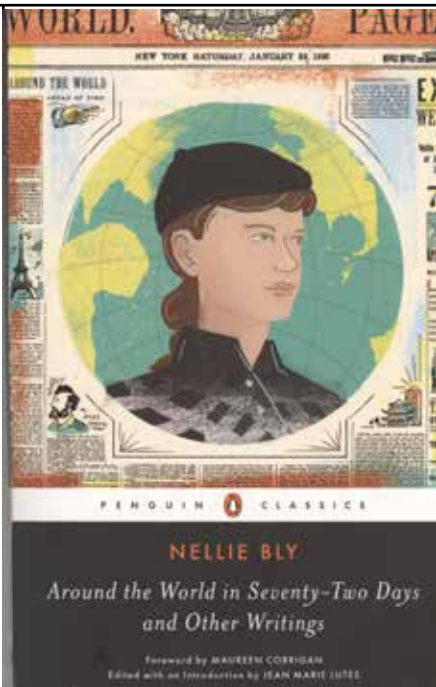
It might seem to the casual reader that none of this has anything to do with Donner Summit and that the Heirloom editorial staff is getting pretty far afield. Here we are at issue #174 and we've covered the 173 previous issues' subjects exclusively about or on Donner Summit. So we have to go



a bit afield. There is the connection though. Elizabeth did go over Donner Summit and Nellie wanted to go over Donner Summit. If that's not enough of a connection, we also came up with the article on page 9 which makes a better connection to Donner Summit.

First a little background. Nellie Bly was a pioneering investigative female reporter for the Joseph Pulitzer's New York World. In 1888, at the age of twenty-one, she presented her editor with the idea of taking a trip around the world and beating the record set by Jules Verne's fictional Phileas Fogg. Her editor didn't like the idea because a woman alone would need a protector, a woman would carry too much baggage and so lose time, and Bly only spoke English. Nellie won the argument a year later partly because of her previous reporting and the idea fit with Pulitzer's desire to tell stories rather than straight news, and so build circulation.

John Walker was the publisher of Cosmopolitan Magazine and he was also looking to increase circulation. So he thought to capitalize on Nellie Bly's adventure by send-



ing his own reporter, twenty-eight year-old Elizabeth Bisland, on her own trip to beat Nellie.

No expense would be spared by either periodical. Both women started on the same day with Bly going east and Bisland going west. Both were aiming to beat Fogg's "record" eighty day journey.

Around the World in 72 Days could have been a fun book comparing the Bly and Bisland's real trips

and Verne's fictional trip around the world, providing historical and social context, and dropping other bits of information. Marks does do that in Around the World in 72 Days the Race... to some extent, particularly at the beginning, exploring Bisland's fan mail, what the newspapers printed, quotes from opposition newspapers, a letter that went around the world, and an admirer of Ms Bisland's.

The author had other plans though. He divided up both trips like a deck of cards and then shuffled the cards of both trips together so that each subsequent chapter went from Elizabeth to Nellie and back. Then he added commentary some of which is ridiculous, irrelevant, and even nasty.

For example,

"Miss Bisland would doubtless have been deeply offended to be informed of her sensuality, which breathes through every line of that passage. It would not have been proper for her as a model Southern gentlewoman to admit to her healthy sexual urges. But she had them, and they made her seem to smolder with passion..."

This was commentary about Elizabeth's description of the Singapore dock workers. In another example about Elizabeth's apparently deep thoughts on having seen a good-looking Sikh policeman, "In Elizabeth Bisland's rich and vivid fancy, if she was going to conduct a clandestine tryst it would be with a potentate, not with a policeman." Then there is Elizabeth seeing a Scottish soldier in a kilt, "Elizabeth Bisland's Scottish blood tingled at the sight of those six inches of rosy male thigh peeping above the Scottish knee." Finally there is more of Elizabeth's deep thinking on seeing the beggars at Port Said, "the beggars were using her the way

they used all the tourists who passed through Port Said. She saw through their peculiar form of blackmail, which was if she would give them money they would go away." Is there anyone who would not have understood what the beggars were after? Is that really deep thinking?

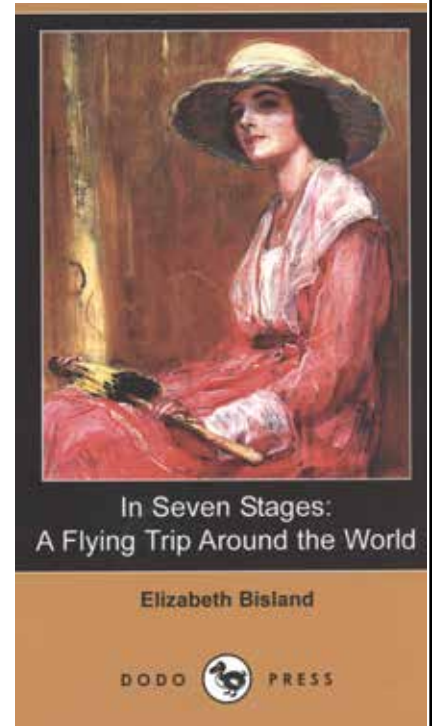
There is the possibility that someone could have had prurient thoughts about the dock workers, the Scottish soldier, and the Sikh policeman, but if one takes the totality of what Elizabeth wrote, one sees someone with a genius for description about what was around her and not just the males.

Another issue is that Marks completely misreads sometimes. Elizabeth was caught by surprise by her assignment. At the beginning of Bisland's trip Marks says many times how angry Elizabeth was,

"it all happened so fast... the heated argument, the pressure of getting ready... the coffin like smell of the sleeping car. For her this was no adventure; this was a chore, and one that she accepted with extreme reluctance. She felt lonely, confused, depleted by the day's events. As the train pulled out with her on it, Elizabeth Bisland thought, What am I doing on this ridiculous wild goose chase?"

I went back to look at Elizabeth's book. There was "argument" with her editor in terms of trying to convince the editor that she should not go and he convincing to go. Elizabeth does not mention a heated argument. She talks about being "practically stupefied with astonishment" about the speed of things but she doesn't talk about a "wild goose chase."

From reading her many descriptions we get an opposite impression. In Council Bluffs she had slept away her "stupefaction of amazement," and awoke at daybreak, something she seldom did. She found the sun almost ready to rise. She had never "permitted a vulgar familiarity to dull [her] keen delight in the ever-varying pageant of the breaking of day; so that, consequently, on the rare oc-





Elizabeth Bisland, the statuesque beauty who prized her dignity as a Southern gentlewoman, regarded the trip as a "ridiculous wild-goose chase." (Lafcadio Hearn Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA)

casions when I assist at this function, my pleasure has all the enthusiasm of novelty.

Now the lifted curtain showed me a New Jerusalem.... At the moment when God gave his great daily fiat of 'Let there be light'..."

Although the book is mostly the quotes of both around the world racers, that is sometimes a strength which belies Elizabeth's purported reluctance. Here are some descriptions by Elizabeth Bisland,

In describing an ocean storm,
 "I lay and listened to the loud combat of the thundering squadrons outside, whose white plumes flashed into sight again with the first gray gleam of days the battle still raging. Every plank in the ship creaked and groaned and shrieked without once pausing to take a breath, and I regarded with contemptuous indifference the frantic tobogganing of all my most treasured possessions all over the stateroom. What were the fleeting things of this world to one whose unexampled suffering, death must soon put a period?"

In another passage Bisland describes the morning light, "As the light grew, nacreous tints of milky blue and rose flushed the argenteous pallor of the land, and when the yellow disk rolled up over the horizon's edge, I traveled for some brief space in a world of intolerable splendor, where innumerable billions of frost crystals flashed back to the sun..."

That's wonderfully descriptive and evocative and if we put her descriptions of the dock workers and others in that context we have beautiful descriptions not examples of the "healthy sexual urges" of a "Southern gentlewoman."

The descriptions and quotes both by Bisland and Bly are interesting in themselves and tell us something of the ladies' personalities. Therein is also a problem. Most of Marks' book is predominantly the women's words. The stories could have been so much richer with more elaboration and relevant commentary.

Here is the first recommendation to read the Bisland and Bly books and forget Mr. Marks'.

One interesting part of *Around the World in 72 Days...* by Marks... is the end where Marks describes Bly's and Bisland's lives after their race.



Nellie Bly with checked camel's-hair coat, visored cap, and single handbag, traveled light. (The Bettman Archive)

In Seven Stages: A flying Trip Around the World 1891 100 pages Elizabeth Bisland

We should never let it be said, and regular readers must agree, that the Heirloom doesn't stop at the basics. After reading Around the World in 72 Days by Marks with some disappointment, we pulled Elizabeth Bisland's book, In Seven Stages: A flying Trip Around the World out for comparison (the Heirloom book shelves are full of good things). What did Elizabeth really say about her trip without the commentary of Mr. Marks?

It's really quite enjoyable, especially if you like vocabulary of which Elizabeth had a good handle. Elizabeth's book is only one hundred pages long and is available as a reprint on the internet for a few dollars. Here we get some sense of Elizabeth's personality and details of her story.

In describing Hong Kong Elizabeth says,

"Yea, verily, life is good in this magnificent equatorial world! Again I am a great sponge, absorbing beauty and delight with every pore. Every day brings new marvels and new joys. I go to bed exhaustedly happy and wake up expectantly smiling. Everything pleases, everything amuses me;..."

The joy is palpable and her personality shines.

Just before that she described Japan for pages, "I am fain to declare that I forgive fate in advance for any future trick, because of this one day of unmarred delight."

Before all that is the story of her assignment to go around the world. She woke up on a November morning in 1889 at 8 AM as usual. Her maid brought in her breakfast tray along with the morning papers and "a neat pile of notes and letters." The letters were mostly acceptances of invitations to tea the next day and "the usual communication from one's friends on casual subjects" like invitations to dinner. There was as yet no email or messaging I guess. One note from her tailor asked her to come by for a gown fitting. By 10:30 AM she'd finished the newspapers and was rising. She made "a calm and uneventful toilet" (as getting ready was called in those days). Then came a "thunderbolt out of the serene sky of my existence" asking her to come to her publisher's office. Elizabeth got there by 11AM. You can see she had a tough life. It's also a fun window into the life of a 19th Century gentlewoman as Elizabeth called herself.

"To wake up in the morning to one's usual daily duties and find one's self at night voyaging round the world is an experience calculated to surprise even a mind as composed as that of Pet Marjorie's historically placid fowl;" [here we have a literary allusion that goes right past the twenty-first Century reader]. Elizabeth received her assignment to race Nellie Bly around the world in seventy-two days. "I was practically stupefied with astonishment for at least two days."

Elizabeth apparently canceled her next day's tea party, packed, and headed for her ship.

The following pages track Elizabeth around the world. We read her thoughts, for example musing about why the British Empire was so powerful, "What is the secret?... Is it more beef and mutton perhaps – or more of submission to orders and power of self-discipline?"

We read her marvelous descriptions of Japan, Ceylon, Hong Kong, Aden, Port Said, Greece, and Europe.

In describing Ceylon she said,

"The soil is red – bright red - the color of ground cinnabar. Not "liver-colored," as the earth seemed to the ancient Northmen, but deep-tinted as if soaked with dragon's blood, of which antiquity believed cinnabar to be made. A broad street, fringed with grass and tulip—trees, goes inland, and on either side are massive white buildings with arched and pillared arcades... The vividness of color here is astounding – brilliant, intense, like the colors of precious stones. We doubt the evidence of our senses – doubt the earth can be so red, the sea and sky so blue... it is a miracle wrought by the ineffable luminosity of the Eastern day! One's very flesh tingles with an ecstasy of pleasure in this giant effulgence of color..."

We learn about more ordinary things too: 19th Century ship travel for first class passengers, 19th Century tourism, and then train travel. Each description as vivid as the last.

Elizabeth ran into some troubles, storm at sea, a late train, and miscommunication. She made it around the world in seventy-five days.

So, read Elizabeth's book instead of Mr. Marks'.

Naturally we couldn't leave the story at that. We also pulled Nellie Bly's book off the shelf. It's titled, Around the World in Seventy-Two Day and Other Writings. She did make the around the world trip in seventy-two days and so won the race. Her book is only about one hundred forty pages and is also available on the web for a few dollars in used condition.

Nellie was only twenty-two but already had years of reportage "under her belt" before coming up with the idea to go around the world and beat Phileas Fogg's "record." She does not have the vocabulary or eye of Elizabeth Bisland, but she has a good story.

Nellie wrote about her trip in four installments in New York's World newspaper. Like Elizabeth she reports on all kinds of things giving us a nice view of 19th Century tourism, ship and train travel, and cultures in lots of detail. Like

Elizabeth she was fascinated by Japan. Unlike Elizabeth, Nellie's reporting is about her itinerary and is prosaic. In talking about her small traveling bag she says that in hers,

"I was able to pack two traveling caps, three veils, a pair of slippers, a complete outfit of toilet articles, ink-stand, pens, pencils, and copy-paper, pins, needles, and thread, a dressing gown, a tennis blazer, a small flask and a drinking cup, several complete changes of underwear, a liberal supply of handkerchiefs..."

Elizabeth left out details like that, focusing instead, on what was around her. Here's Nellie again,

"The fourth day out was Sunday. The afternoon was spent on deck looking at the most beautiful green island which we slowly passed. Sometimes we would lazily conjecture as to whether they were inhabited or not."

Imagine what Elizabeth would have done with that after reading her quote in the sidebar in the right column here.

Nellie provides interesting commentary such as about American vs. English trains, the English trains dividing people up into compartments, "But talk about privacy! If it is privacy the English desire so much, they should adopt our American trains, for there is no privacy like that to be found in a large car filled with strangers. Everybody has, and keeps his own place. There is no sitting for hours, as is often the case in English trains, face to face and knees to knees with a stranger, offensive or otherwise, as he may chance to be." This made her understand why English girls needed chaperones. "American women would shudder to think of sending their daughters alone on a trip locked in a compartment with a stranger."

Another interesting aside was about America's place in the world in the late 19th Century. Bly took along American money but most of her money was English. She wanted to see if people would take American money. They wouldn't except for one

port of call where the use of American money was exclusively in jewelry rather than as a medium of exchange.

Nellie had some flights of fancy. She was watching the boys diving for money in Aden. They made purses "out of their cheeks," with as much ease as a cow. She envied the cow the splendid gift of storing grass in its cheeks "to chew at her leisure." "One wastes so much time eating, especially when traveling, and I could not help picturing the comfort it would be sometimes to dispose of our food wholesale and consume it at our leisure afterwards. I am certain there would be fewer dyspeptics then."

There were sharks in the water at Aden but they did not bother the divers who claimed sharks didn't attack black men. Then Nellie caught a whiff of the grease "with which these men anoint their bodies. I did not blame the sharks."

This book's version of Nellie Bly's trip around the world includes some other of her exploits in World War I and her reporting on conditions in an asylum. It also includes many headlines and articles from the New York World about her journey which add to the telling. (See the next page.)

Nellie had an advantage working for the World. Although she couldn't send regular accounts of her travels, The World played up every part of her trip supposing where she might be. They did this so much so that when Nellie arrived back in America there were crowds all along her transcontinental route welcoming her back. There was almost no one awaiting Elizabeth who worked for a magazine that only published monthly.

Compare the descriptions of storms by Nellie and Elizabeth

Nellie Bly:

"One night during the monsoon the sea washed over the ship in a frightful manner. I found my cabin filled with water, which, however, did not touch my berth. Escape to the lower deck was impossible, as I could not tell the deck from the angry, pitching sea. As I crawled back into my bunk a feeling of awe crept over me and with a conscious feeling of satisfaction. I thought it very possible that I had spoken my last word to any mortal, that the ship would double sink, and with it all I thought, if the ship did go down, no one would be able to tell whether I could have gone around the world in seventy-five days or not."

Elizabeth Bisland

"I lay and listened to the loud combat of the thundering squadrons outside, whose white plumes flashed into sight again with the first gray gleam of days the battle still raging. Every plank in the ship creaked and groaned and shrieked without once pausing to take a breath., and I regarded with contemptuous indifference the frantic tobogganing of all my most treasured possessions all over the stateroom. What were the fleeting things of this world to one whose unexampled suffering, death must soon put a period?"

SHE'S BROKEN EVERY RECORD!



A Little Pardonable Consternation Among the Globe-Circlers at the Remarkable Achievement of "The World's" Traveller.

copy. I like Americans so much that I don't know them anything." He said that both he and Mme. Carpot had taken a great interest in the exploit of pleasure-travel with the help of the distinguished French author, who had set the example of what we mean when we say "ALL EUROPE ENTHUSIASTIC."

FATHER TIME OUTDOOR

Even Imagination's Record Pales Before the Performance of "The World's" Globe-Circler.

HER TIME: 72 DAYS, 6 HRS., 11 MIN.

Thousands Cheer Themselves Happy at Nellie Bly's Arrival.

WELCOME SALUTES IN NEW YORK AND BRITAIN.

The Whole Country Aglow with Intense Enthusiasm.

NELLIE BLY TELLS HER STORY.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN SEVENTY-TWO DAYS 275

FLYING HOME

"The World's" Earth-Circler Is Nearly Half Way Across the Continent

SHE ACTS AS AN ENGINEER

A Wild Ride in the Cab of the Big Locomotive

A TERRIBLE DEATH ESCAPED

FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN SEVENTY-TWO DAYS 153

NELLIE BLY IS OFF

She Takes the World in Her Great Race Against Time Around the Globe

WILL SHE BEAT THE RECORD?

The Plucky Newspaper Globe-Trotter Sailed at 9.40 A. M. Yesterday

SHE CARRIES BUT ONE GOWN

FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN SEVENTY-TWO DAYS 157

SHE WILL HAVE TO HUSTLE

Can Old Sol Make 75 Laps Around the Earth to Nellie Bly's One?

A CALIFORNIAN FIGURES THAT THE TRIP CAN BE MADE IN 72 DAYS

But the Figuring Is Done on Paper and Doesn't Count for Much in a Race Against Time—"The World's" Latest Has Set Globe-Trotters to Thinking—Many Wagers Being Made on the Result.

[SPECIAL TO THE WORLD.]

FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN SEVENTY-TWO DAYS 173

NELLIE BLY'S TRIP

How She Skimmed Like a Swallow Through England, France, and Italy to Brindisi

A WILD RACE AGAINST TIME!

Had to Overtake a Fast Steamer a Week Ahead of Her

JULES VERNE'S FRIENDLY INTEREST

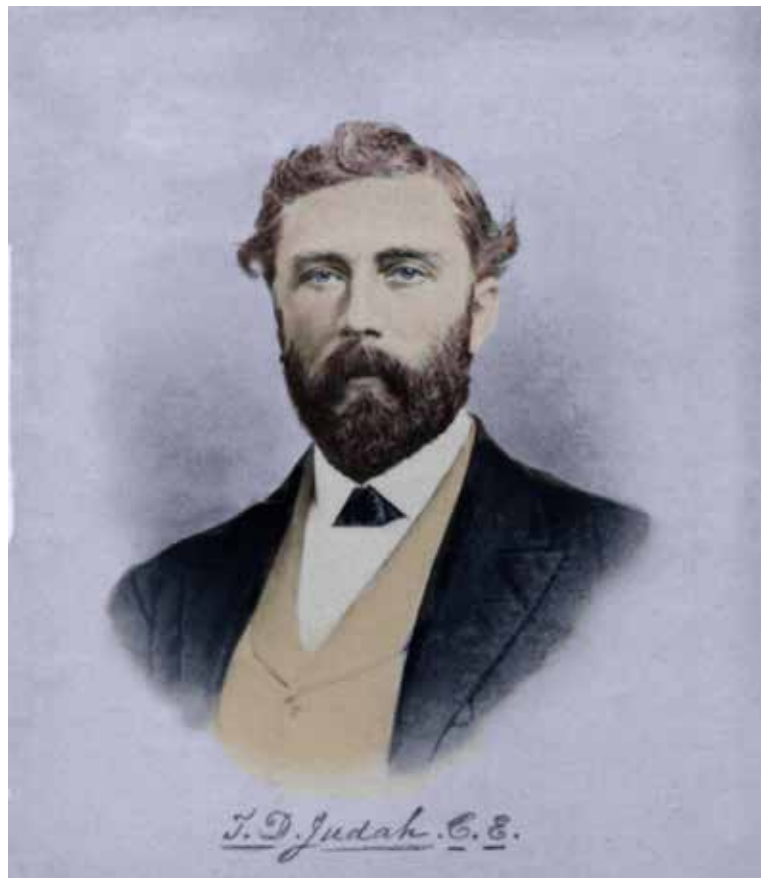
Making History Colorful



Theodore Judah was the impetus behind the first transcontinental railroad. He took the idea to Congress and President Lincoln. He found investors. He made the plans. Maybe most importantly he found and laid out the route of the railroad over Donner Summit.

He fell out with the Big 4, the main investors and while headed back East to entice new investors he fell sick and died.

His route opened California to the world and the world to California. Above is the standard photograph of Mr. Judah, found in many sources. Right is the colorized version only available on the DSHS website and this fine periodical.



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

Donner Summit Historical Society

www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

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