

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

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

August 2025 issue #204



Skiing To Be Restricted In Highway 40 Area As Defense Precaution

Sierra Sun January 1, 1942

Heidi Sproat of the Truckee Donner Historical Society was perusing old issues of the local Truckee newspaper, the Sierra Sun and came across some items related to Donner Summit. Being helpful, she passed them on. Most of the items she found came from the "Summit Scene" column by Fran Couillard who wrote her column in the mid to late 1940's. The time period included WWII. As we found columns we got an insight into life on Donner Summit and that progressed into an article - this article.

In the following we pull out some items of the time and print some interesting parts of columns. To that collection we add some ads that also give us some slices of what life was like during the war years.

With the coming of WWII life changed on the Summit with rationing, calls to conserve, new speed limits, and soldiers stationed to protect the transcontinental railroad from sabotage. In other ways things remained the same in the small close community. Lots of car crashes were reported on Old 40 but there were crashes before and after WWII on Old 40 so that's not of Heirloom interest. There are mentions of drunk drivers (the fine was \$100). Speeding was a thing too. The speed limit on highways had been set at 35 mph on October 1, 1942. By the following month 5,509 people had been stopped for speeding. To try and counter the problem not only were people arrested and fined for speeding, but they could and did have their names published. Speeders' names could also be turned in to their local rationing boards and could be denied recapped tires or the loss of their rationing books. Earlier in 1943 (March) rationing boards had the power to scale down the gasoline allowances for speeders.

Again we say...

**PLEASE
DON'T TRAVEL**

unless absolutely necessary



Use the money to

BUY WAR BONDS

Winning the war is the most important job confronting us today—far more important than taking a weekend or vacation trip.

Transportation is vital to this victory toward which we are now advancing. Because buses are already crowded with military traffic, war workers and others whose business is important to the nation's welfare, there is little room for vacation or pleasure travelers.

That's why we say "Please don't travel unless you absolutely have to." Refrain from unnecessary travel now and buy War Bonds with the money you would spend for your trip. It's the patriotic thing to do.

*Go to your local bank today
BUY WAR BONDS*

PACIFIC GREYHOUND LINES

SERVE AMERICA NOW ... SO YOU CAN SEE AMERICA LATER

Sierra Sun 4/29/43 Leave room on the buses for military personnel. Spend your money on war bonds rather than travel.

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DONNER SUMMIT



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Finding Your Way Through Donner Summit History

We've done hundreds of 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 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.

Find us on the the DSHS YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJenAxPCb47Y14agmVGI-zA>

Find us on Facebook where we place a new historical picture daily.
<http://bit.ly/418lhxN>

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Find us on 

 YouTube

Our first entry about WWII comes not from the "Summit Scene" column about Donner Summit but the "Sun Beams" column about Truckee. The war, for America, was less than a year old. On September 9, 1942 the Sierra Sun noted that the speed limit on highways had been cut to 35 miles an hour and the author of the "Sun Beams" column wondered at the unpatriotic drivers who exceeded the limit. The author said that the country may or may not have been short of rubber but we should be smart enough not to burn up our rubber on the highways. He or she exhorted readers to cooperate. The author also exhorted people to vote and help with the appeal for more scrap. People probably had scrap sitting around that they didn't need, "why not take just a little time out right now, get it together..." We thought that column was a good way to introduce what was in the Sierra Sun during WWII.

On January 1, 1942, not even a month after Pearl Harbor, the Sierra Sun reported that skiing had been restricted in the Highway 40 area (which for our out of area readers is Donner Summit). As defense precaution to prevent sabotage against the transcontinental railroad "all railroad rights of way" had been closed to skiers. Skiers were warned not to come within 200 yards of the tracks "at any section except those designated for crossings." Emigrant Gap, which has tracks running right through it as well as a train station, was to remain open as usual. For the Auburn Ski Club, in those days still down at Cisco Grove, tracks could not be approached at all and skiers were not allowed to ski over the tunnels there which was their main ski hill. At Rainbow Tavern skiing was as usual (the track being way up the hill). From Soda Springs to the Summit Lookout station (presumably the weather station) the area between the highway and the snowsheds could not be used (that was a popular ski run from Donner Summit down to Donner Lake where people could get a car ride back up). Skiers could access the Soda Springs ski area using a fifty-yard passage across the tracks. That same passage was the access to Sugar Bowl with tractor pulled sleighs running on regular schedules to the Bowl. The Norden Ski Hut, across the tracks from Norden and which had a train station, restaurant, and ski rentals in the snowshed, could not be accessed at all.

The article also said that "shelter facilities with rest rooms and other conveniences" had been installed at Soda Springs (which makes those people in those days more enlightened than people in these days where there is a dearth of bathrooms and "conveniences" all over the summit. Please excuse the editorial comment.)

Those using the Norden Ski Lodge (the Norden store in those days), Vanderfords (which was right across from what would become Donner Ski Ranch, and private clubs could "de-train and entrain at Soda Springs" and presumably be picked up by automobiles for the short trip to their destinations.

The trail from the highway maintenance station at the top of the pass on Old 40 was closed. That was a Sierra Crest Trail for cross-country skiers.

To prevent interference with cross-country travel on Highway 40 no congestion on the road would be permitted at all. A twenty foot strip down the highway "must be kept open."

The proudest title in the Army

IT CONSISTS of two simple words.
Yet every soldier who's worth his salt covets it.
This title is simply:
"Good Soldier."
It isn't just happenstance that so many women in the WAC have earned this title—the proudest in the Army.
For wherever Wacs are working, both here and overseas, there you find a job well done. And done with a spirit so gallant and fine that high Army officers everywhere say of the WAC...
"They're soldiers. Good soldiers!"

Good soldiers... the WAC
WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

► FOR FULL INFORMATION about the Women's Army Corps, go to your nearest U.S. Army Recruiting Station. Or mail the coupon below.

U. S. ARMY RECRUITING STATION
222 Federal Building,
Sacramento, California.
Please send me, without any obligation on my part, the new illustrated booklet about the Wacs...telling about the jobs they do, how they live, their training, pay, officer selections, etc.

NAME _____ (in)
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ PHONE _____

Please answer "yes" or "no" to each of the following questions:
Are you between 20 and 50?
Have you any children under 14?
Have you had at least 2 years of high school?

Checking pilots to and from war zones

Sierra Sun 7/27/44 Join the Women's Army Corps

The military was serious about a lot of Donner Summit being closed for the duration of the war. The May 21, 1942 "Sun Beams" column reported "Wyoming Tourists Discover Army Means Business After Close Call." Three Wyoming residents sped past the sentry at the Donner Summit Bridge (an important link for the transcontinental highway). The sentry had ordered the car to halt and then followed up the order

with "twenty shots from a 'tommy' gun but the car did not stop. A deputy sheriff followed the car to Reno where he stopped it. The driver had taken some pictures of the bridge, "now prohibited under army order." Sentries had attempted to confiscate the film. The driver said he'd thought the sentries (later in the article the number had increased from one to two) were trying to hitch a ride so he did not stop. The flying bullets excited the driver so he kept on.

immediately. The article went on to explain the need. The government provided soldiers with clothes but not necessarily for soldiers stationed in places like Iceland. Commanding officers had requested already 15,000 articles of clothing. All women "who can assist in knitting are asked to" help out. The article ended with an exhortation, FOR VICTORY BUY A BOND.

The July 2, 1942 "Summit Scene" column focused on the war effort. The Meadow Lake* rationing board noted that anyone caught speeding could be refused tires and tubes. That had taken effect the previous day. Speeders were also to be considered guilty of reckless driving. The board could demand affidavits from people asserting they had not driven faster than forty miles an hour "except in emergencies." We can note here that the September 9, 1943 newspaper reported on the stork chasing a car on Donner Summit. The couple in the car beat the stork to the hospital in Reno after exceeding the speed limit. All affidavits could be investigated and liars liable to \$10,000 fines and ten years in jail. The purpose of the new regulations was to save rubber and reduce the number of accidents.

On January 7, 1943 Otto Frederick who ran the Norden Store and was the Norden post master was drafted and mail stopped coming to Norden, instead stopping at the Soda Springs post office. (We should note, for readers who are non-residents, that today the Norden post office, 95724, is just down the short hallway in the Soda Springs post office, 95728). Otto's wife, Lena, Otto's wife, kept the store running during the war.

With the soldiers guarding the transcontinental highway and the transcontinental railroad the army took over the Soda Springs Hotel. All civilians had been removed. The military had been staying at Vanderford's (3/11/43). No reason was given for the change. In addition, Elmo Moriano, who owned the Beacon Hill Lodge was drafted and he leased the lodge to a fellow from Kingvale, a few miles down the highway.

There were also a couple of articles detailing the removal of slot machines and limiting alcohol for enlisted men. Apparently officers could be trusted not to over-indulge.

April 29, 1943 Because rationing was in effect people were not allowed to use gas rations to drive to their summer homes. According to the article this was mostly because of the rubber shortage. Somewhat confusingly people with "A"

*Meadow Lake is an old ghost town that saw its heyday in 1867 when there was a small gold rush (see our July-October 2014 [Heirlooms](#)). It was also the name of the township that included Truckee and Donner Summit in Nevada County.



DONNER THEATER

Two Shows Nightly: 7:15 and 9 p.m. Phone 99
SELECTED SHORT SUBJECTS ON EACH BILL

Saturday, May 29
THE COCK-EYED SAILORS
Tommy Trinder Michael Wilding Claude Hulbert

Sunday, May 30
REAP THE WILD WIND
Ray Millard Paulette Goddard

Wednesday, June 2
AIR FORCE
John Garfield Gig Young

To all drivers whose tires
NEED RECAPPING
NO RATIONING CERTIFICATE REQUIRED



Expert workmanship means extra miles

If your tires are smooth, see us about recapping today. Our workmen are all skilled. And our recapping equipment is of the latest type. That's why you can be sure of thousands of extra tire miles when we do your recapping. Come in today.

DONNER GARAGE
Charles Brunk, Owner Phone 217
OFFICIAL O. P. A. TIRE INSPECTOR

Sierra Sun 5/27/43 Note the movies playing in downtown Truckee. In the old days tires could be recapped - adding tread to the tire.

The author concluded, "Drivers should be warned to heed orders from sentries in this district as less experienced men may have caused a tragedy." We've not run into any other stories like this during the war.

The end of the article exhorted readers to "BUY A BOND" which was a common exhortation in other articles as well.

Just a month later the Sierra Sun ran an article, "KNITTERS NEEDED BY RED CROSS IN TRUCKEE AT ONCE." The local Red Cross chair person had just received fifty pounds of yarn which needed to be knitted into sweaters for the soldiers

ration books could use those for vacation travel and those with "B" and "C" books could use their ration books to travel vacation homes to and from work.

With the draft pulling many men from important work there were calls for volunteers to pick up the duties of railroad workers. "Come on your days off and any days they have off" said the Sun on 4/22/43. The article said that "Quite a number of highway and other workers have volunteered and are working and as most of them are experienced workers, have the swing and rhythm of using pick and shovel, tamping bar and spike hammer, it is just another day's work for them." Three school teachers were working twenty hours a week as volunteers. See the sidebar on page 9 for one volunteer's experience to encourage others.

In May (20) 1943 Fran Couillard asked readers to "Write a line today" illustrated with the following.

"The essence of what we're fighting for struck a local postmaster like a blow in the solar plexus when a debonair young private thrust his smiling, expectant face in the grill of the office cage and asked for mail.

"There isn't any for you today," said the local P. M.

The private shoved his cap back on his head and scratched his hair line thoughtfully. His smile changed to thoughtful perplexity. "I wonder if everything is o. k. at home," he said.

NOT: "Gee, I wish they'd write."

NOR: 'Guess they've forgotten me."

NOR: "It's been three weeks since I've had a letter."

..JUST: "I wonder if everything is o. k. at home."

"It isn't quite fair to add that worry, too, is it folks? After all the boys are in uniform to see that 'Everything is O. K. at home.'

"SO-Write a line today. If you haven't anyone to write to adopt someone. There are plenty who don't receive a letter. Let one of them know that 'Everything is o. k. at home!'"

On May 13, 1943 Company C took over the Soda Springs Hotel from a previous company. Fran had heard that there was some musical talent in the company, "hope we 'natives' have a chance to hear the boys perform before long." Music, singing, and dancing in the evening, to which soldiers were invited, was apparently a common thing.

On June 10, 1943 we get a window on socializing and entertaining the troops guarding the summit.

Beacon Hill Lodge entertained "The Summit Scene" and company C at Soda Springs Saturday night, Mrs. C. A. Gates chaperoned a group of girls from Truckee who came up on the mountain to help entertain the boys. Another group of girls

SOMETIMES - ON SOME CALLS - THE LONG DISTANCE OPERATOR WILL SAY —



"Please limit your call to 5 minutes. Others are waiting"

MANY Long Distance calls go through about as fast as ever.

But sometimes there's an extra-heavy rush on certain circuits—especially in war-busy places.

Whenever that happens, the operator will ask you to limit your Long Distance calls to 5 minutes.

The idea is to give everybody a fair share of the wires. That gets to be more and more important every day.

THE PACIFIC TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
Commercial Row * Telephone Truckee 50

Sierra Sun 5/27/43 Share the long distance phone wires.

came from Blue Canyon to join in the fun. And a very fine time was had by all the participants."

One unidentified would be thief didn't consider the presence of police and army guards as a deterrent to his thievery on Donner Summit. He broke down the rear door of the Beacon Hill Lodge (next to the Soda Springs Hotel until it burned in the 1970's). "Amid the whistle of bullets" he escaped to the "brush of an adjoining hillside." "None of the shots, it is believed, took effect." (8/5/43)

In July (7-15-43) the story was about the wives of soldiers on duty at Donner Summit.

"Many pretty young wives of the soldiers were seen in and around Soda Springs last weekend for a group of the new boys were sent to Soda Springs

and their wives, unable to find housing facilities in the district will have to confine themselves to weekend visits with their soldier husbands."

Camp Pahatsi (7-29-43) was in full swing despite their groceries being stolen. Camp Pahatsi was a Boy Scout camp on Donner Summit.

On August 26, 1943 frost was in the air. People had left the summit. "Winter issues of mail order catalogs are in with orders for warm clothing up." "The natives are getting [sic] to 'hole in'. Wood salesmen are taking orders. Shutters are being closed" as summer homes are being closed for winter.

The September 16, 1943 the newspaper listed people who bought war bonds. That would encourage others to buy. Hunting is a bigger deal so men providing for their families in the old fashioned way getting deer is a necessity instead of a

sport this year. Hannes Schroll, Sugar Bowl founder, just got married. Parenthetically the money had wanted to invest in Sugar Bowl was taken by the Austrian government after the anchluss with Germany (where Germany took over Austria).

In October (10-7-43) the Summit was entertaining the troops and the Mountain Red Cross was making things for the troops

In November (11/4/43) Boy Scouts were cutting Christmas trees on the summit, there was a Halloween party at Donner Summit Lodge, Company C had left and was replaced by Company A. Soda Springs had been taken over by the army and so places to stay for winter skiers were limited.

In December of 1943 the Sierra Sun reported that 1944 was going to be a critical year. There were shortages of gasoline, tires, and manpower. People were exhorted to conserve automobiles through a three point program: reducing speed, dispensing with needless driving, and keeping cars in "best mechanical condition."

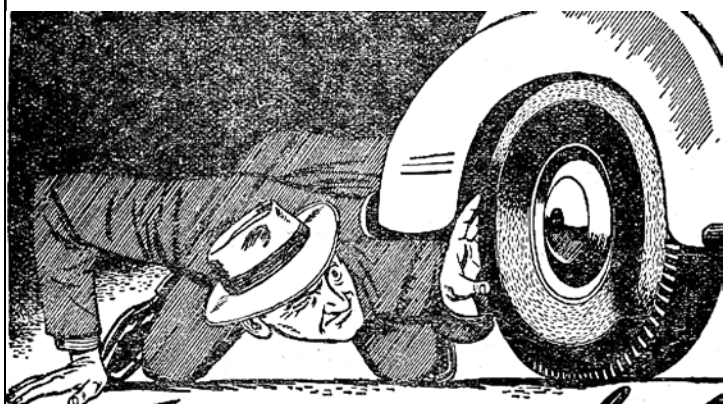
By 1944 the war in Europe had been over since May 8 and the war in Japan would be over the next year. People were thinking about fun again as the Sierra Sun noted December 14, 1944: By Sierra Sue..

"get your head in the clouds! my friends, but keep your feet on the ground! This can be done at no better place than in the cold, clear air of the high Sierra-up 7,000 feet. Relax those frayed nerves that jump at the drop of a neighbor's shoe at night. It's off to Soda Springs and you'll find just the right amount of relaxation-both indoor and outdoors depending, of course, on what kind of a skier you are, Scissor Bill or Snow Bunny or Cannonen.

"A bus will deposit you at the doorsteps of any of the ski lodges on the mountain, or a train, if you prefer will drop you at the summit where a short hike will bring you to any of the resorts. It's really worth doing without your car in the city if it means you can use it on weekend trips to the mountains. Once you've been skiing you'll realize there is no thrill in any sport that can compare with the thrill of a downhill run on skis [sic]."

After the war life returned to normal. The February 27, 1946 "Summit Scene" wrote about problems we still have.

"The Donner Trail Association meeting which was scheduled several weeks ago hasn't materialized as yet. We realize that everyone is terribly "swamped" at the present time but, on the other hand, if the meeting isn't called by the 'Powers that Was' while the thing is still hot, enthusiasm will dwindle and we'll be right back where we started. As it is people whom we have hitherto known by name only are writing and contacting us to find out when



Tires wearing thin?

BANK BY MAIL with Bank of America

Tires are no problem when you Bank by Mail with Bank of America!

Banking by Mail is a convenient and economical service of this bank that will save you time and trouble.

It is easy to Bank by Mail. That is one important reason why thousands of Californians say—"I bank by mail with Bank of America."

This service covers not only savings and checking accounts but also other facilities. Write, telephone or call at any branch for your free deposit tags, envelopes and other Banking by Mail material.

Bank of America
NATIONAL TRUST AND SAVINGS ASSOCIATION

Member Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation • Member Federal Reserve System

Sierra Sun 5/27/43 Save rubber for the war effort by banking by mail instead of driving your car

arid where the meeting promised us will be held. With parking problems, water problems and civic improvements badly needed in this area of Highway 10. [sic] with public rest rooms and first aid station and other conveniences - well organization must simply be accomplished and soon. Our last. editorial on this subject was reprinted by many newspapers so we try our hand again and together with those who are interested (and there are many) we'll keep pounding and hammering away until said meeting takes place."

There was no notice of a meeting being held.

"Then, last week ['Summit Scene' 1/16/47] I wrote about dogs and now I find several fond canine parents are crying because their Fido didn't get his name in print. So we add, with a shameful look, Red Rudolf (George's four footed friend). Now this Red needs a special column by himself anyway. He is an Irish terrier, still in the clumsy stage. He

War-time Wives appreciate...

the beer with the high I.Q.
(It Quenches!)

ACME BEER
ACME BREWERIES, San Francisco

COCA-COLA BOTTLING COMPANY OF TRUCKEE

Sierra Sun 7/15/43

And back to work... refreshed

DRINK Coca-Cola 5¢
TRADE-MARK

**Coca-Cola Bottling Co.
Of Truckee, Calif.**
Truckee, Calif. Telephone 74-W

Sierra Sun 7/1/43

has a very Irish face, in fact we think George should give him a clay pipe. Well, Rudy took Red to the Sugar Bowl for a bit of skiing. Think I'm kidding? Red takes one look at the rope tow, takes a nip on to it with his teeth and rides to the top. Can you tie that one? I beg of George to take Red to the Sugar Bowl again and take along an excess camera man so that we can enter Red as the first tow riding canine in some national magazine."

There's also no record of an "excess camera man" memorializing Red.

FAIR WARNING

...before you board
the Train!



Train travel is different in wartime. Nowadays S. P. trains are generally crowded, often late, and some cars aren't bright and shiny like they used to be. You may have to wait quite a while to get into the dining car on some trains.

The reason is—our war job!

Equipment, including dining cars, must be diverted constantly for military use. Troop trains and war freights often move over our lines on emergency schedules to which regular service must be adapted. The need for cars is so pressing that it is often impossible to take them out of service for renovation and overhaul.

We are short of cars, locomotives, manpower—but we're putting first things first and *pushing the war trains through*. After the war is won, S. P. hopes to make up to you for today's uncomfortable train travel. Meantime we suggest you follow this...

Wartime Traveler's Guide

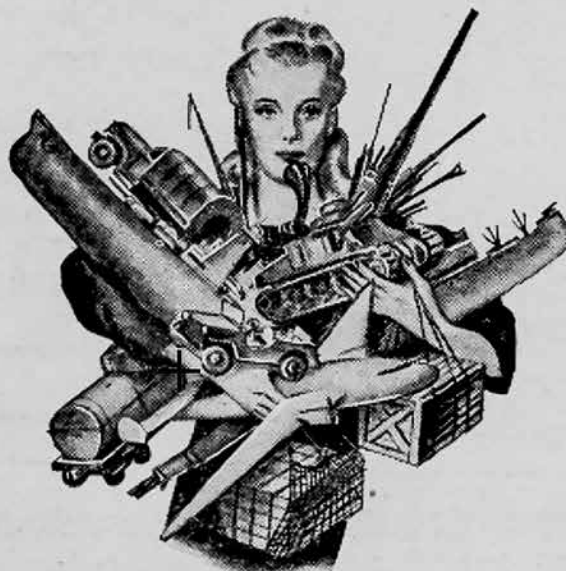
1. Unless your train trip is really *essential* please don't make it.
2. If you must travel, do so on Tuesdays or Wednesdays or Thursdays. Avoid week-ends—that's when our trains are most crowded.
3. Cancel space reservations promptly if your plans change. Train space is too precious nowadays to go unused.
4. Travel light—take with you on the train only baggage you'll need on the train. Check other baggage at least a day in advance.
5. Help stretch available train accommodations by buying just the space you really need—no more, no less. Share your bedroom, compartment or drawing room with a friend.
6. Eat before you board the train if possible. For many trains it may be well to bring your lunch or buy a box lunch (for lunch or any meal).
7. If you eat in the dining car, please remember other folks are waiting. No need to bolt your meal—but please don't linger over it.

S·P

The friendly Southern Pacific

Sierra Sun 5/27/43

☆ For Victory ☆



A warplane manufacturer estimates that it takes about 12,000 telephone calls to make a big bomber. A shipbuilder figures about 63,000 telephone calls for the construction of a 10,000-ton cargo ship.

War is indeed on the telephone wires, and the Long Distance operators have their hands full. More lines cannot be added, for that would take materials needed by the bombers and ships and tanks and guns.

There is an important way whereby everyone can help to make the present long distance lines serve our Country's war effort to the utmost. That is, by making, to war-active centers, only calls that are *essential*.

For your co-operation, many thanks.

For Victory—Buy United States War Bonds

THE PACIFIC TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
Commercial Row * Telephone Truckee 50

Sierra Sun 5/20/43 Buy War Bonds

FOR VICTORY :: BUY BONDS

KNITTERS NEEDED BY RED CROSS IN TRUCKEE AT ONCE

Fifty pounds of yarn were received this morning by Mrs. G. J. E. Keetch, chairman of production for the local Red Cross. This yarn is to be knitted into sweaters for the soldiers and the finished garments are needed as soon as they can be finished. While the average soldier and sailor is adequately clothed by the government, there are exceptions. Our boys in Iceland are such an exception and can make good use of additional clothing. When a commanding officer desires such additional clothing and as sweaters he applies ; to the Red Cross which arranges for the garments to be knitted.

At present such requests by commanding officers total over 15,000 knitted articles. All women who can assist in knitting are asked to get in touch with Mrs. Keetch.

-FOR VICTORY :: BUY A BOND_

In the Army —

Quentin Queen, for the past three years employed on Donner Summit at Norden Store and Ski Lodge, is now with the Army at Camp Grant, Illinois, according to word from there.

In Army

Ned Morehouse, who five years ago was employed at the Sierra Sun, is now a first lieutenant and an official photographer for the U. S. Army.

Sierra Sun 2/12/42 Soliciting volunteers to knit clothing for the military. Note the notices for Quentin Queen and Ned Morehouse who had joined the military not even two months after Pearl Harbor

JUST ARRIVED
SHIPMENT OF
S I L E X
2 Cup Coffee-Maker
SPECIAL
\$1.49
SENSATIONAL COFFEE MAKER

For the Boys In Service
MILITARY SHOE SHINE KIT
\$1.00

Loynd's Truckee Drug
Sierra Tavern Building Telephone 139

Sierra Sun 5/13/43

Personalizing helping the war effort to encourage others to join.

Mr. Nelson has been off the' farm for a good many years and is out of practice with the section tools but he still has the farmer idea of an eight hour day (eight hours before dinner and eight hours after) and when the foreman says "Six p.m. Time to quit," his aching bones and tired muscles give a sigh of relief but he sees the sun is still up and looks at the unfinished track work and thinks of the days when he could work from sun to sun and finish up -a good day's work by lantern light.

Sierra Sun 4/23/43

Donner Summit Ads

DONNER SUMMIT LODGE

AT SODA SPRINGS

PRESENTS

Smorgasbord \$1.50

On Saturdays and Holidays from 6 to 9 PM

Delicious, delectable food offered for the first time in this area in true SMORGASBORD style

Due to its unprecedented popularity, we suggest that you make reservations for your family

SMORGASBORD for clubs, organizations and lodges made by special arrangement

TELEPHONE SODA SPRINGS 2301

Sierra Sun 6/19/47

Dancing Every Night

Refreshments

The Ski-Hi

THE HOUSE OF VANDERFORD

Atop Donner Summit on Highway 40

Elevation 7,135 Feet

Soda Springs P.O.

Gene & Lois Woods

Ernie & Margot Nordstrom

For An Ideal Vacation

COME TO THE SIERRA

The Best Spot in the Sierra



— FEATURING ITALIAN DINNERS —

Cocktails — Refreshments — Rooms
COMPLETE HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS

- Beacon Hill Lodge -

ELMO MORIANO, Mgr.

SODA SPRINGS

Sierra Sun 12/20/47

FIRE WOOD
CONTRACT FELLING & CUTTING

Mother Lode Wood Co.

SODA SPRINGS, CALIF.

TRUCK & TRACTOR FOR HIRE
BY DAY OR CONTRACT

P. O. Box
Telephone 1

Jack Buchanan
Paul Norboe

Sierra Sun 1/9/47



Christmas Greetings

THE nearness of Yuletide is unmistakable. Whether snow festoons the fir trees or whether earth still awaits its mantle of white, woods and fields, city and town breathe Christmas and its spirit of kindness.

We sincerely hope that the Christmas season of 1944 will be richer for you, fuller, and more satisfying than for many a year, and thank you for twelve months of very pleasant relations.

DONNER SUMMIT LODGE
Art and Fran Couillard

Sierra Sun 12/21/44

It's Convenient Going by Greyhound



28 Departures daily from
TRUCKEE

Sierra Sun 2/27/47 This ad shows the popularity of bus riding.

SPEED UP! SAVE UP!



Bank of America

NATIONAL TRUST AND SAVINGS ASSOCIATION
MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

Sierra Sun 6/25/42



Meeting Wartime Needs

with

**BUS
SERVICE**



Helping You

Get Where You Must Go

To provide service for essential military and civilian travel is our first responsibility. Burlington Trailways is readjusting its service to meet these requirements.

When it is absolutely necessary to travel, bus service offers a means of doing so with economy of money and a saving of vital materials.

Ask Agent for Travel Details

Trailways Bus Depot

Hazel Lewis, Agent

J. L. Lewis' Store

Telephone 24-J

**ROUTE OF THE AIR-CONDITIONED
DIESEL
LINERS**

Double Duty on America's Highways to Victory!



HOW GREYHOUND SERVES THE WAR EFFORT:

- ★ CARRIES WAR WORKERS TO JOBS
- ★ TAKES SELECTEES TO CAMP
- ★ HELPS BUSINESS TO FUNCTION
- ★ SPEEDS MILITARY MOVEMENTS
- ★ SAVES FUEL, RUBBER, METAL
- ★ MAKES FURLOUGHS EASY TO TAKE

DEPOT: J. L. LEWIS' STORE

PHONE: Truckee 24-J



GREYHOUND

Sierra Sun 3/26/42 Greyhound helping the war effort.

Sierra Sun 3/26/42 Taking the bus saves "vital materials" for the war effort.

Bus Travel from Donner Summit

On February 13, 1947 the war had been over for two years and life was coming back to normal. Fran Couillard decided to head for Sacramento instead of “battling around” the summit looking for news about which to write. Automobiles were not as ubiquitous in those days and like most people, Fran took the bus. What was bus riding like in those days?

Her bus was loaded with “ski kids” heading home and Fran said it was a “great experience.” The kids were noisier, tired, and hungrier than you’d never seen the like of. She was pressed in between nap [sic] sacks, ski poles, ski boots, coke bottles, cookies and stuff. The main topic of conversation was hunger which is natural following a day of hard skiing. They shared one T-bone steak, Coca Cola, cookies, crackers, a can of tomato soup, and bubble gum. At Baxter, on old highway 40, the kids collected the myriad of Coke bottles and spent 15 minutes turning them all in for the deposits which were spent on two hamburgers shared among them.

Mechanical troubles ensued and “the rumbling of the bus’ insides competed with the rumbling of the stomach of the kids.” At Auburn everything was switched to a better bus which had no luggage compartment. Everything was “dumped unceremoniously” in the new bus that was more like a streetcar. Onto the mess fell all the kids in “such ungraceful positions as only tired kids can assume.” Heads lolled on sleeping bags and banged against windows. Unbooted feet “hoisted toward the ceiling.

In Sacramento Fran disembarked noting that the “whole kit and kaboodle were peacefully sleeping and showed no signs of ever relieving the kinks in their respective necks.”



Over the Hills... and off to war

John left today for training camp. Last month Sam had a furlough—now he's in the Southwest Pacific. Mary, the girl who lives next door to Sam, works in a bomber plant across the county. Our old friend Pete handles T. N. T. at the new munitions depot. And so it goes—neighbors, city folks, suburbanites, farmers—all need essential bus transportation to take them over the hills and off to war.

As war demands increase, there are less and less empty bus seats. Burlington Trailways is carrying twice as many passengers as a year ago—nearly four times as many as two years ago.

That is why we say, give these soldiers, sailors and war workers a chance. If you must travel, consult our agent for the best time and way to go.

BONDS TO BEAT 'EM

BUS DEPOT

Hazel Lewis, Agent
J. L. Lewis' Store
Telephone 21-J



ROUTE OF THE
AIR-CONDITIONED

DIESEL LINERS

Sierra Sun 9/2/43 Leave room on the bus for soldiers and sailors.

Book Review

Our Native Land Glances at American Scenery and Places 1882

By 1882 people were beginning to pay more attention to American scenery. Prior to that "intelligent Europeans" had been reluctant to think there was much civilization in the New World. They sneered at Americans who were "rude and crass..." The Civil War brought with it a "new and more serious attitude." People started visiting, crowding "every nook and corner of our country with keen and competent observers..." People saw with "amazement and pleasure" "the wonder scattered profusely by the hand of Nature, and the no lesser marvels brought by the energy of man." Here we included some of that wonder from Donner Summit in 1882.

"It is the purpose of the present volume to bring together intelligent and animated descriptions of the more picturesque and sublime phases of scenery in our great country, interspersed with episodes of travel and adventure, and glances at some of the great industries.

The book moves across the country on the train with lots of illustrations and evocative prose which gives the reader a feeling for the America of 1882.

The writers took a stage ride to Lake Tahoe. "After the stage has been toiling up-hill for two or three hours over a dusty road partly strung across a precipice," Tahoe is described, "Beautifully clear as the water actually is in the shallows — the boats floating upon it seeming to be suspended in the air as we look down upon them from the landings," but Tahoe is out of our purview.

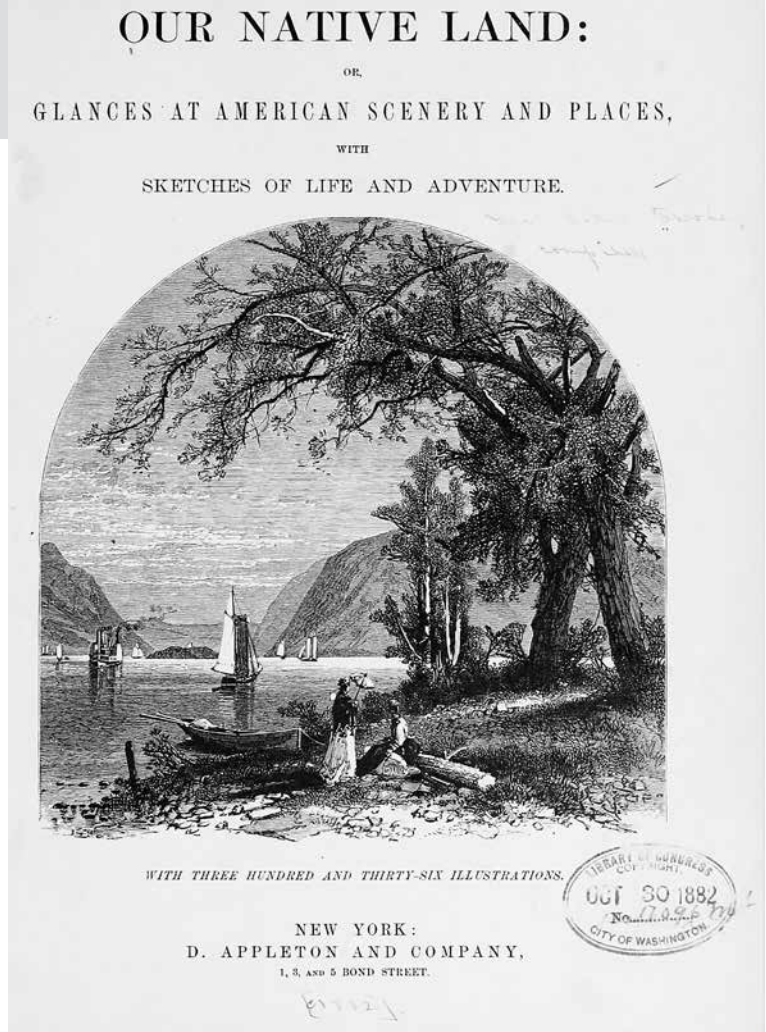
The writers leave the train for a trip to Donner Lake, "a crystal sheet of water lying in the lap of the hills," This brings up the Donner Party tragedy which is related mostly correctly.

Sportsmen and lovers of Nature will love Donner Summit. "There are the many lakes There can be no more perfect scenery than that of the western slope of the Sierras."

You can see how the prose could make Americans want to go off and explore their land,

" The railway winds along the edges of great precipices, and at sunrise the shadows are still lying deep in the cañons below. The snow-covered peaks above catch the first rays of the sun, and glow with wonderful color. Light wreaths of mist rise up to the end of the zone of pines, and then drift away into the air and are lost. The aspect of the mountains is of the wildest and most intense kind, for by the word intense something seems to be expressed of the positive force there is in it, that differs utterly from the effect of such a scene as lies passive for the imagination. This is grand ; it is magnetic ; there is no escaping the wonder-working influence of the great grouping of mountains and ravines, of dense forests and ragged pinnacles of rock."

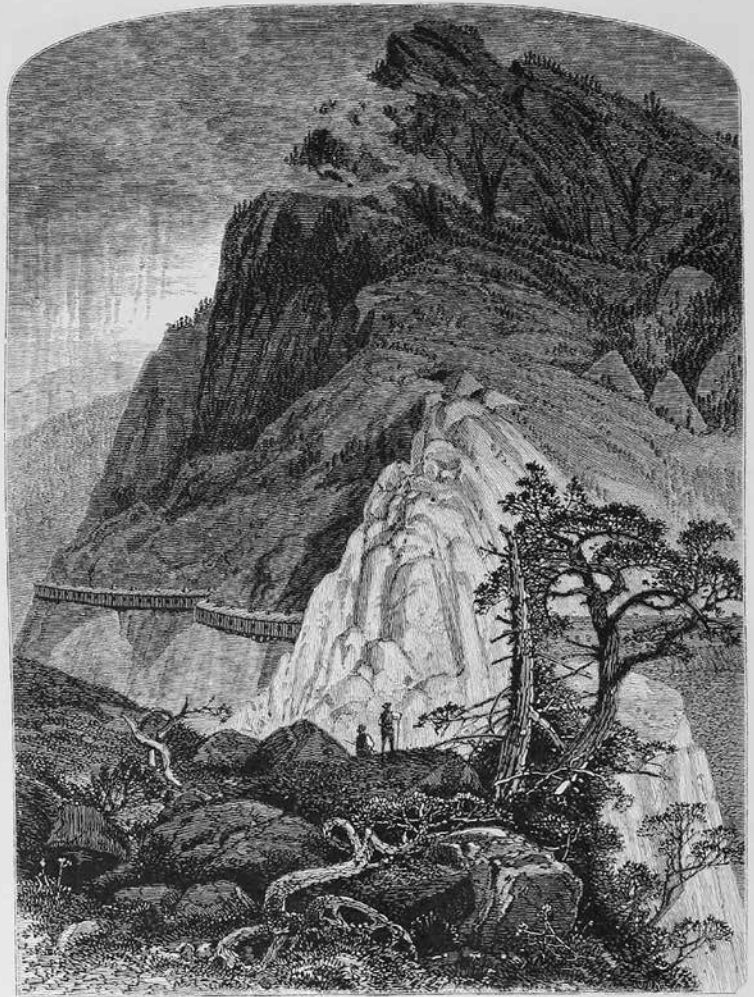
This also shows the writers' good taste.



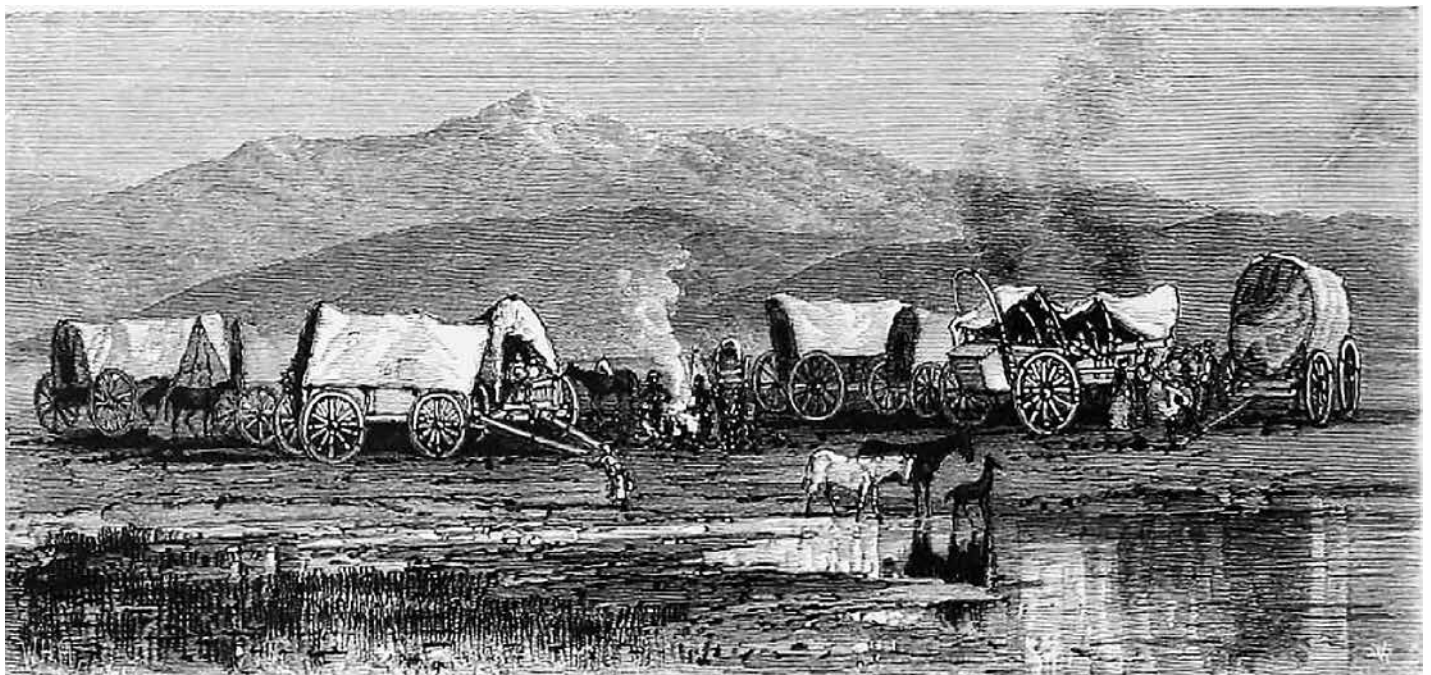
"A moonlight night, however, with wild witchery, lends the greatest magic to the scene, surpassing the sun glare of daylight and the stronger colors of evening. To stand on any commanding point of the mountains when the moon is at the full, and the sky is clear, reveals a charm in the nature of the lofty rocks at variance with their aspect at any other hour."

"Two hundred and forty-four miles from San Francisco we reach the station of Summit, at the great height of seven thousand and seventeen feet above the sea, and thence the descent is made into the Sacramento Valley. The down grade is now one hundred and sixteen feet to the mile, and the train in many places, as it wheels around sharp curves, pitches and plunges wildly, alarming the more timid souls, who every moment expect to be dashed over a precipice. But the road is splendidly constructed, the engineer watchful and experienced, and the cars are solidly built, so there is but little danger in this headlong ride down the Sierra-sides, though it almost seems like challenging Fate."

"There are charming spots within a short distance of the road, among which are Kidd's Lakes, which pour into the south branch of the Yuba River, and gorge of that river whose striking bluffs are called the New Hampshire rocks. Should we be beguiled into visiting all the picturesque spots lying within easy distance of the road on the western slope of the



Donner Peak.

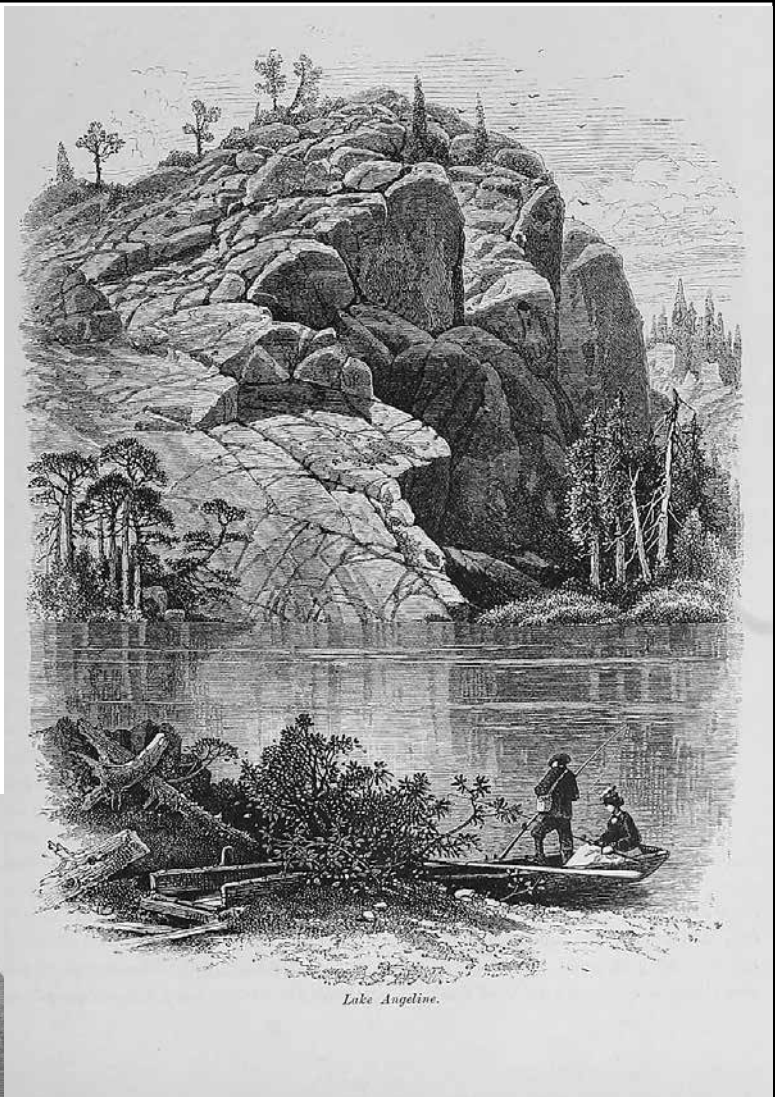


Emigrants' Camp, Laramie Plains.

Sierras, our journey to San Francisco, though apparently drawing to an end, would be prolonged for weeks."

"The old emigrant-road, which occasionally edges on the railway, is not wholly deserted yet. The capacious wagons, with their arched roofs of white canvas, loaded ten feet high with furniture and stores, are now and then seen toiling along at a pitifully slow rate, a small herd of cattle following, and the youngsters of the family running a long way ahead, and skirmishing among the bordering woods for squirrels, or anything else to shoot at."

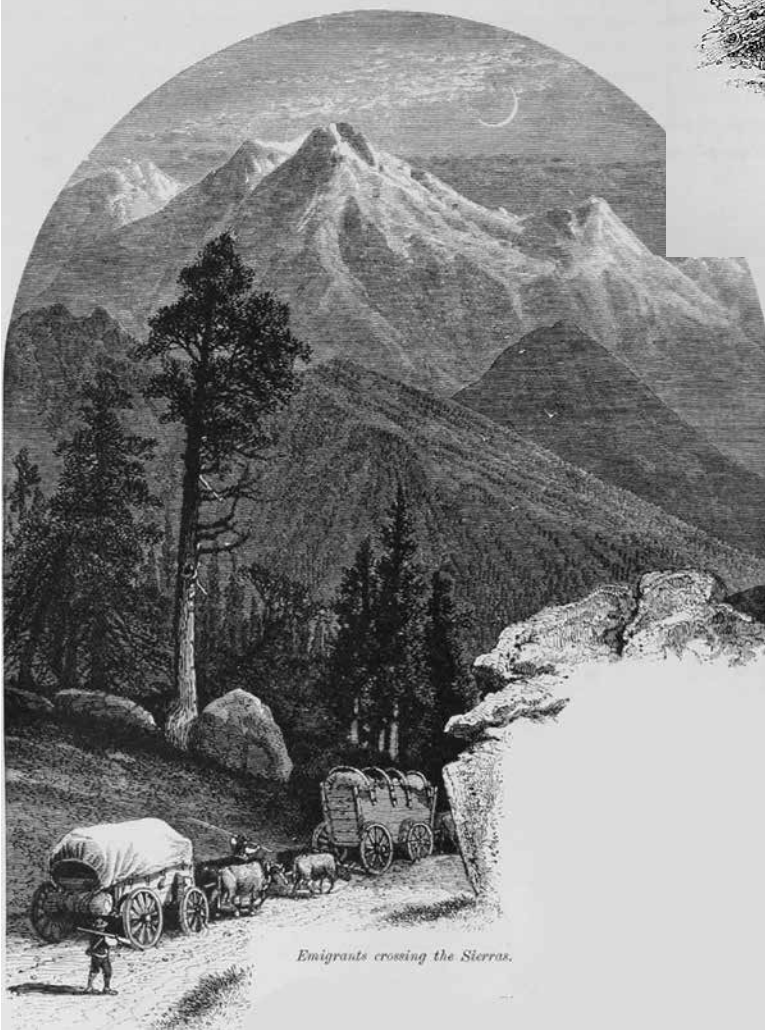
"In spring, when the farmers and stock-raisers of the Sacramento Valley are taking their herds into the more luxuriant mountain-pastures, and at the beginning of winter, when they are retreating before the early snows into a safer region, the road is lively with traffic, but not with such traffic as was known between the years 1850 and 1860. At frequent intervals the old taverns are found, their ample apartments vacant, the windows and doors out, and the bar rooms



Lake Angeline.

12

OUR NATIVE LAND.

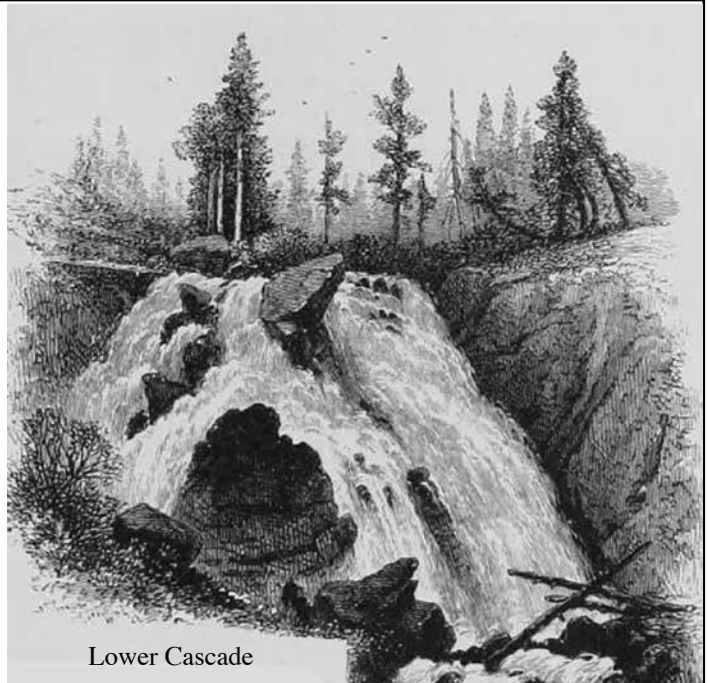


Emigrants crossing the Sierras.

only remaining. This is an example of the survival of the fittest for the lonely red-shirted dispenser of bad whisky, though he has the house to himself still finds custom for the fiery stuff which fills his decanter."

"At various points along this portion of the road are saw-mills and shipping points for lumber. One of these is Blue Canon, through which runs a wild, brawling torrent called Cedar Creek, a place of bold and striking beauty. The traveler, looking in any direction, has a splendid view before him of great hills, heavily timbered with pine, and broken into sharp peaks, upon which the snow remains all the year round. How thick the pines are, and how they streak the steep embankments upon which they have planted themselves like battalions of infantry ! What an air of deep gloom and mystery they have ! Upon some an emerald - green moss has grown in rings and irregular patches — a moss having the appearance of an ostrich-feather, which makes a striking contrast to the dark green of the prickly foliage, and the dull red of the bark. In the distance the pines are blue, and at night they are intensely black."

"As the train continues westward we leave Donner Summit and environs and head to San Francisco, said by the inhabitants to comprise a larger proportion of wealth, beauty, and intellect, than the same area in any other city. San Francisco is undoubtedly very charming. Its people are lavish in their hospitality and in all their expenditures ; the hotels are palaces ; the places of amusement are numerous and liberally conducted."



Lower Cascade



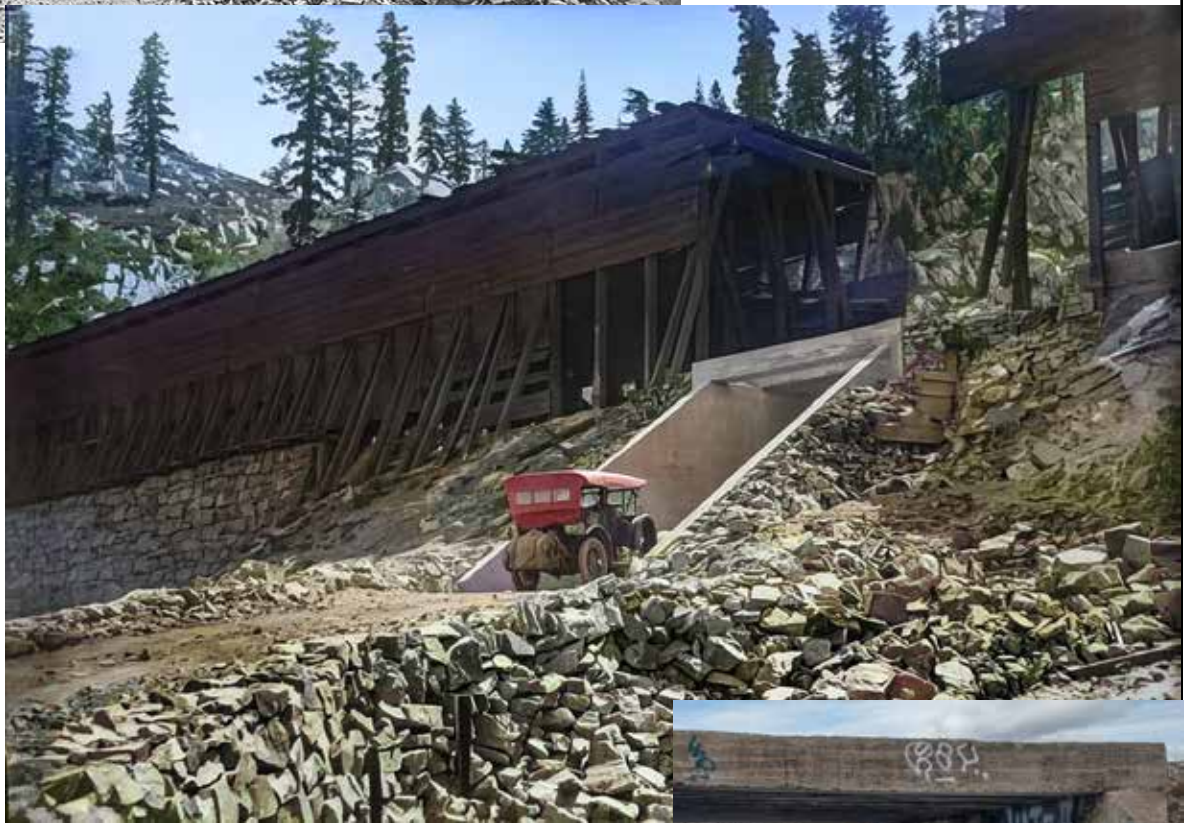
Summits of the Sierras.

Making History Colorful



Here is the underpass on the Lincoln Highway, opened in 1914 to save driving across the tracks and through the snowshed. It continued in use until 1926 when the Donner Summit Bridge was completed. Today the underpass is a repository for graffiti.

Note the wooden snowsheds. Eventually they will be replaced with concrete structures and/or removal with the advent of better snow clearing machinery.



Right: underpass today from the other side with bridge in the background.



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

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



As you are perambulating in the forest on Donner Summit keep an eye out for old markers. Here are some Emigrant Trail markers just down the east side of Coldstream Pass. The picture to the right and bottom left are by George Lamson. The fellow at bottom right is Art Clark.

There are many kinds of Emigrant Trail markers along the Emigrant routes. For more pictures look at our picture index on our website.



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
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- ☐ Family Membership \$60
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- ☐ Benefactor \$1000

The Donner Summit Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit

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50 interpretive signs along Old 40

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DONNER PARTY HIKE

October 4 & 5, 2025



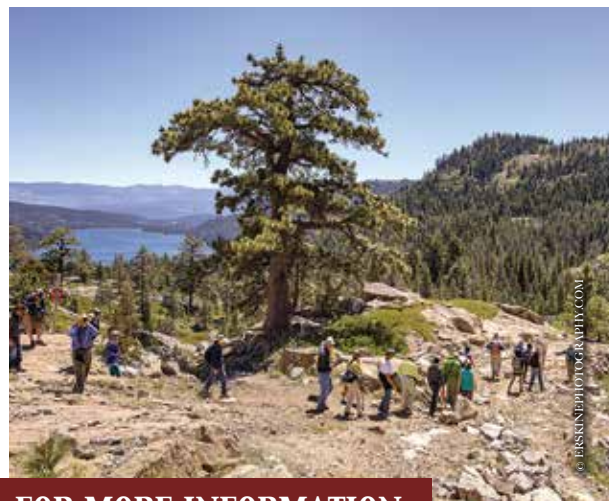
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*Learn secrets
of the Sierra
as you hike with
local historians.*

Saturday:
Scenery
Illustrated history hikes
Lunch at Sugar Bowl
Donner Party chautauqua
Reprise of Stephens Party
Sunday (optional extension)
The Donner party

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

info@donnerpartyhike.com
donnerpartyhike.com



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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**Register
early to save**

Explore Donner Summit with local historians on illustrated* interpretive walks and hikes. You'll discover why Donner Summit is the most historically significant square mile in California.

SATURDAY HIKES- Choose from one of eight hikes ranging from 3.5 to 6 miles with varying degrees of difficulty. Explore the trails, see petroglyphs and the China Wall. Stroll through meadows or discover hidden Sierra lakes. Price includes guided hike, hamburger lunch, afternoon chautauqua about the Donner Party, and presentation of 1844 Stephens Party's 2025 reprise.

Saturday Hike: \$65 per hiker (\$75 after September 19)

SUNDAY WALKING TOUR—Learn about the grueling mishaps of the Donner Party and the archaeological finds that remain. Then, it's on to Donner Memorial State Park to view the Murphy Cabin Site and Pioneer Monument. Price: \$20 additional (\$85 total - \$105 after September 19).

REGISTER TO SECURE YOUR SPOT IN TIME - Tour size is limited.
donnerpartyhike.com

*We bring along lots of old photographs



PRODUCED BY DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY a 501c3
www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Donner Party Hike After Lunch Speakers

As part of the Donner Party Hike 2025 we are presenting an afternoon presentation with Tim Twietmeyer and Bob Crowlev. Tim and Bob are two of the extreme athletes who reprised the Donner Party Forlorn Hope, the Donner Party rescue expeditions, the Goshute Brothers' trek, Snowshoe Thompson's route over the Sierra. At our 2025 event Bob and Tim are two of the five who will have just done a reprise of the horseback expedition which was an offshoot of the Stephens, Murphy, Townsend Party of 1844.

The Stephens Party was the first to come with wagons to California. Most of their group went over Donner Pass but six, including two women, split off from the main group at Truckee's Lake. They headed south to today's Lake Tahoe and then over the Sierra Crest to California. They were hoping to get to Sutter's Fort for help. Snow had been falling and winter was almost upon them.

Bob and Tim will tell the story of the 1844 Stephens Party and the 2025 expedition to celebrate the six. It is a story of heroism.

To discover more about Bob and Tim's adventures you can go to historyexp.org.



Bob Crowlev



Tim Twietmeyer



History Expeditions.org is more than just a team of adventurers; they are historical sleuths, piecing together forgotten narratives. Their expeditions are testaments to the power of human spirit, both in the past, with figures like Thompson, and in the present, with the team's dedication to unearthing these stories. By exploring the tales and trails of the American West, they remind us that history isn't just about grand events, it's about the remarkable individuals who shaped our past.

On the previous page is information about the 2025 Donner Party Hike event. On this page the after lunch entertainment.

Donner Party Hike After Hike Presentation **Chautauqua***

James Reed & His Remarkable Daughters

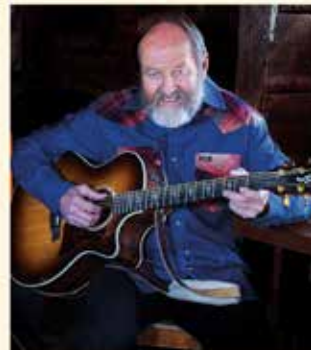
Alice & Rick's Musical Chautauquas

Last year's Chautauqua was wonderful. We expect no less from this year's Donner Party story, James Reed & His Remarkable Daughters.

James Reed took his family west on the California Trail in 1846 partly to escape a cascade of failing businesses in Springfield, Illinois. Trouble followed him as bad decision-making continued. Yet now after time, the courage and love of his daughters, Virginia and Patty, for their father, won the day.

This Chautauqua will be accompanied by original music about the Donner Party from Alice Osborn and Rick Mitchell.

Rick Mitchell



*A chautauqua is a traveling show that flourished in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It provided popular education with entertainment in the form of lectures, concerts, and plays and was modeled after Chautauqua Institution of western New York.



**Cali Booth
as Patty Reed**



Alice Osborn



**Cori Mitchell
as Virginia Reed**



**Jeremy Lin
as James Reed**

Museum of Truckee History



2025 History Talks

Free to attend, donations appreciated

Truckee's Logging Railroads and Lumber Towns

April 8th at 6 p.m.

By Dan Cobb & Judy DePuy

Truckee's Chinese Railroad Story

May 13th at 6 p.m.

By Jerry Blackwill

Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party

June 10th at 6 p.m.

By Ron Grove

National Recognition Comes to Donner Summit

July 8th 6 p.m.

By Dave DePuy

Every Picture Tells a Story ~ TDHS Image Collection

August 19th at 6 p.m.

By Heidi Sproat

Talks held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the
Truckee Tahoe Airport, 10356 Truckee Airport Road

Info@MuseumOfTruckeeHistory.org

GPZ 2025-03-24