

The Donner Summit

Heirloom

History and stories of the Donner Summit Historical Society

June, 2018 issue #118



Pioneer Monument at 100

We're pretty parochial at the Donner Summit Historical Society's Heirloom offices. We focus on Donner Summit history, of which there is a lot and so no need to go elsewhere for good stories. Coming up this month, though, on June 9 (see the ad later in this issue), is the one hundredth anniversary of the Pioneer Monument at the Donner State Park. At first look, that has nothing to do with us since it's down at Donner Lake, miles away, and a thousand feet lower in elevation. Since we're addressing the subject here in the Heirloom, though, you can guess that there is a connection to Donner Summit.

The Pioneer Monument celebrates the achievement of thousands of emigrants who came over Donner Summit on their way to new opportunities and new lives in California. They'd just endured almost unimaginable hardships crossing the deserts of Utah and Nevada and must have been so glad when they reached the Truckee Meadows (today's Reno) where there was water, grass, and rest.

And then they approached the Sierra.

To Edwin Bryant in 1846 the Sierra was a "formidable and apparently impassable barrier..." David Hudson (1845) said, "When we reached Sierra Nevada mountains they looked terrible." William Tustin (1846) said that when they saw the Sierra "every heart was filled with terror at the awful site [sic]." Wm. Todd (1845) said the Sierra were "Tribulations in the extreme." We've carefully acquired a long list of emigrant quotes so we could continue, but you have the idea.

For the first couple of years emigrants had to take their wagons apart to get them up the rocks of Donner Pass. Then Roller Pass was discovered and although the wagons could be kept together, up to a dozen oxen had to be linked to pull individual wagons up the terribly steep pass with men pushing and guiding each wheel. For some that was done in snow and bitter cold. For all, food and energy were running out, they were physically exhausted and emotionally drained. Crossing Donner Summit and the Sierra was heroic. You can imagine the emigrants' feelings as they reached the top and California was before them, thinking it was all downhill from there. John Steel (1845) said, "Having reached the height



Dedication of the monument June 6, 1918
Governor Emmet Boyle (Nevada) Patty Reed Lewis
Eliza P. Donner Houghton, Frances Donner Wilder,
and Governor Wm. Stephens (California)

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DONNER SUMMIT



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I believe our statue will stimulate and create strong human impulses, that it will arouse determination to meet life squarely, face on and honestly.”

Dr. Chester Warren Chapman, 1918

of the last mountain range, so we could look forward from its summit to the land of our dreams, toil and hope, we gave three long and loud cheers.” Wm. Todd (1845) agreed, “You never saw a set of fellows more happy than when we reached the summit.”

Donner Summit has a connection to the emigrants and so, to the Pioneer Monument at Donner Lake celebrating emigrant heroism. That rationale lets us include this story of the Pioneer Monument.

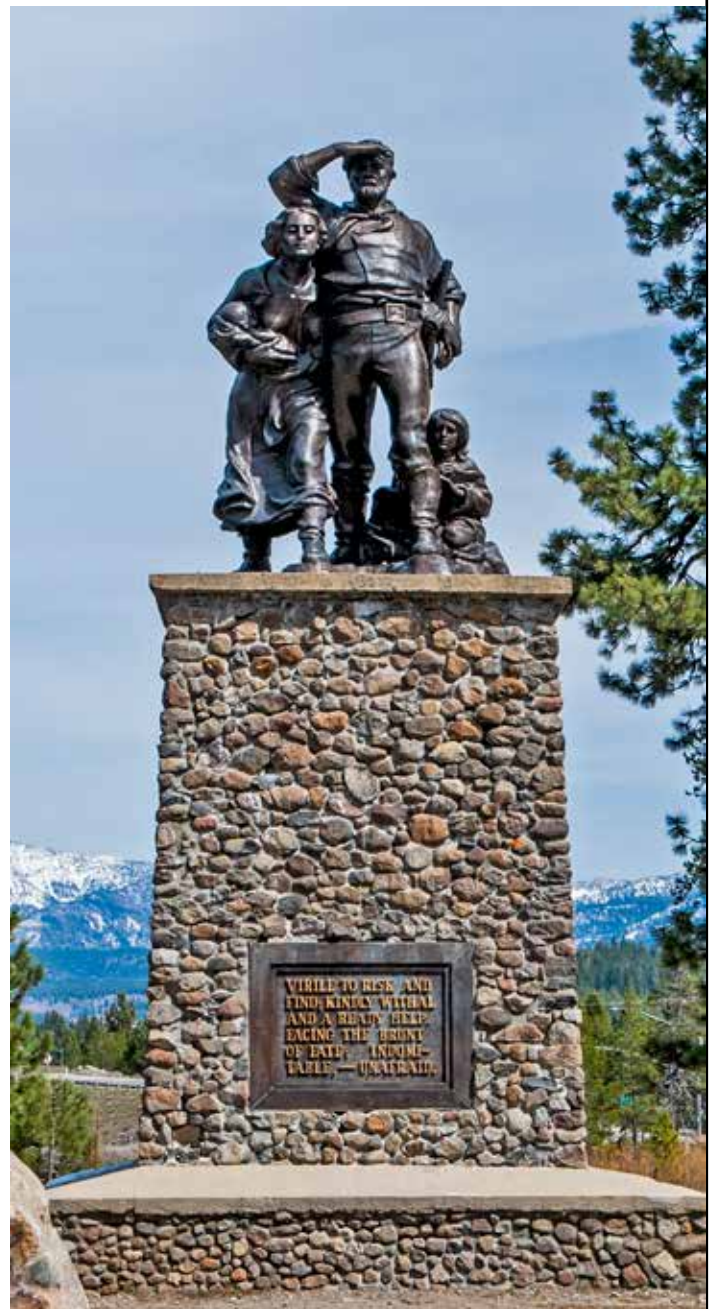
There is a second part in getting “permission” to cover the Pioneer Monument’s centennial in the [Heirloom](#). The area in our “historical purview” is called Donner Summit. The “Donner” comes from the “unsuccess” of the Donner Party. The Donners have been remembered and all the others who crossed successfully have been left out of the naming, including the first ones to cross, the Stephens Party (1844). The Donners were not at Donner Lake. The actual Donners were at Alder Creek, some miles away. The name “Donner Summit” is a connection and even though most of the Donner story took place at Donner Lake, there was a lot of “action” on Donner Summit. The rescuers crossed Donner Summit heading for Donner Lake. The rescuees came over Donner Summit on their way to California. Two of the most evocative episodes of the story, Starved Camp and the Forlorn Hope, also took place on Donner Summit. The first idea for the Pioneer Monument came from C. F. McGlashan who wrote the History of the Donner Party (see the April, ’15 [Heirloom](#) for a review). He wanted the monument built in the Donner Party’s memory. That’s a second connection of Donner Summit to the monument. The Pioneer Monument has a place in the [Heirloom](#).

Parenthetically the DSHS has been invited to participate in the festivities on June 9 so we’ll have a table there along with exhibits. That would be a third connection. Stop by.

Part I The Monument

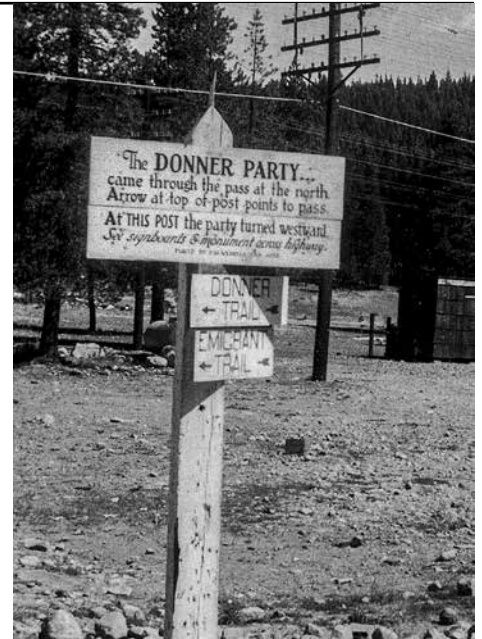
Charles McGlashan wrote one of the first books about the Donner Party after having interviewed many of the members. Their story needed to be memorialized by more than just a cross or sign. He wanted to commemorate the people’s suffering, determination, and heroism at Donner Lake. By himself it was difficult although he did accept the donation of an acre of land for a monument to the Donner Party from a local butcher. When the Native Sons of the Golden West joined the effort a committee was formed in 1898 and Dr. Warren Chapman of Nevada City became chair in 1901. Discussion continued for some years about

the design and construction with many comments focusing on how to do the project cheaply. Other comments focused on whether the monument should be in San Francisco instead of Donner Lake and whether it should be to the Donners or Pioneers in general. One controversy was over just what the theme should be. Should the statue depict privation, anxiety, despair and resignation of death or should it reflect “Courage, determination, fortitude, and endurance”, an “I can and I will” spirit. Chapman’s view would eventually win out: “steadfast





Donner Cross circa 1915 (postcard)



"The Donner Party
Came through the pass at the north.
Arrow at top of post points to pass.
At this post the party turned westward.
See signboards & monument across
highway."

(who paid for it and the date are unreadable.)



"Donner Cross
A bronze table 195 feet south of
this cross marks the location of
the Graves cabin, members of the
Donner Party. Many of them perished
in an attempt to cross the mts. winter
of 1846 & 7."

"Erected by the Truckee Chamber of
Commerce 1927"

Other Donner Party Monuments

and resolute to triumph." The 1906 earthquake put off the project for awhile though, while people concentrated on rebuilding the city.

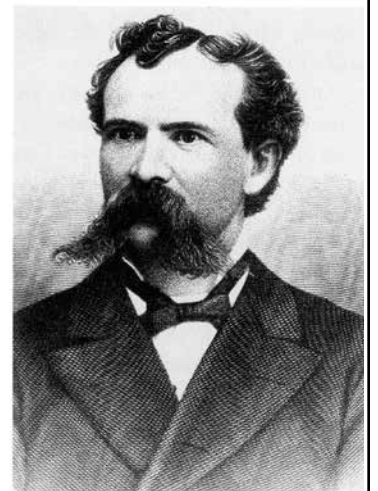
In 1909 it was decided that the base of a monument to the Pioneers should be 22 ½ feet high, the height of the snow when the Donners were encamped at Donner Lake. On May 11, 1910 a ceremony was held to break ground and dedicate the 600 lb. cornerstone on the site of the Breen cabin. Parenthetically that cabin had also been where Moses Schallenberger wintered at Donner Lake in 1844. The foundation was 21 x 20 x 6 feet. The project stopped at that point waiting for money. In 1913 John McQuarrie was chosen as sculptor for the statue to sit on the base. Sculpting and casting took years. The pedestal was finished in 1917 and the dedication was held in 1918 after the 18 ton statue was assembled on the base.

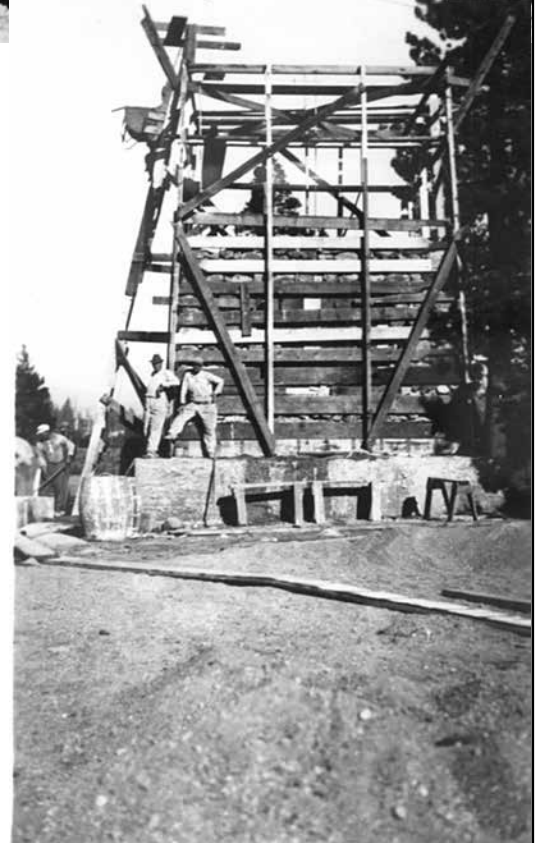
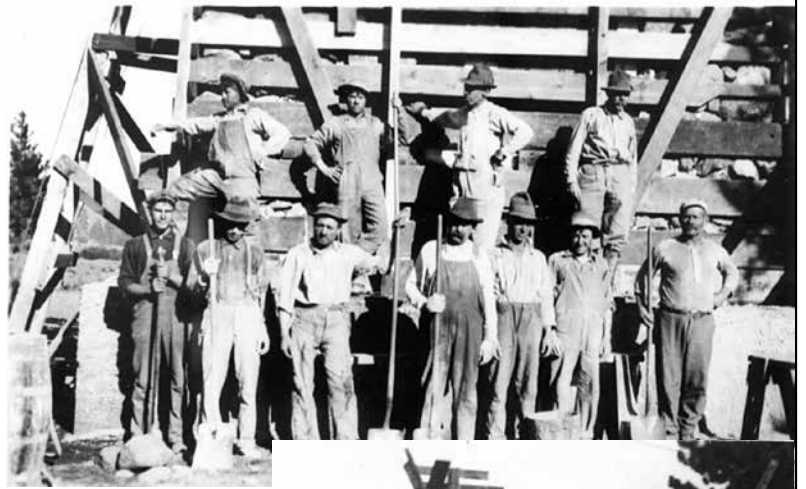
The entire structure cost \$35,000 (about \$743,822 today). Money came from various sources: the State of California,

Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, proceeds from a reprinting of McGlashan's book, sales of splinters from a log of the Murphy cabin (5,000 vials containing splinters were sold), the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, and donations from the public.

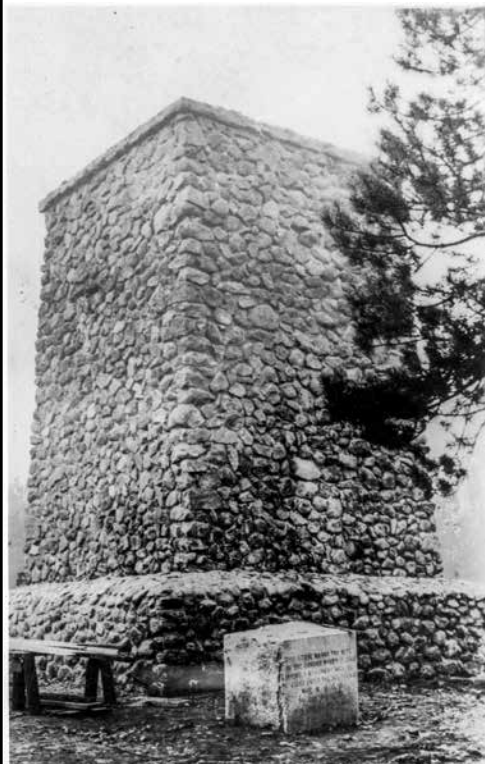
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C. F. McGlashan from The Origin of the Statue, by Doris Foley, 1982 Nevada Co. Historical Society

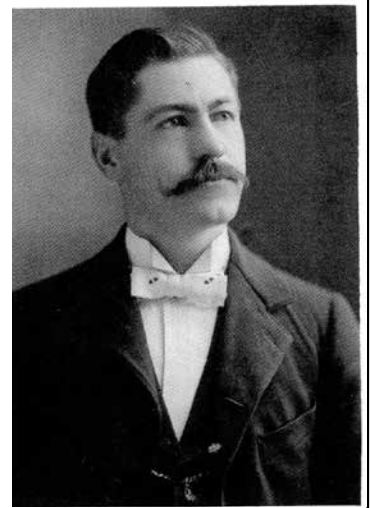




Donner Monument under construction

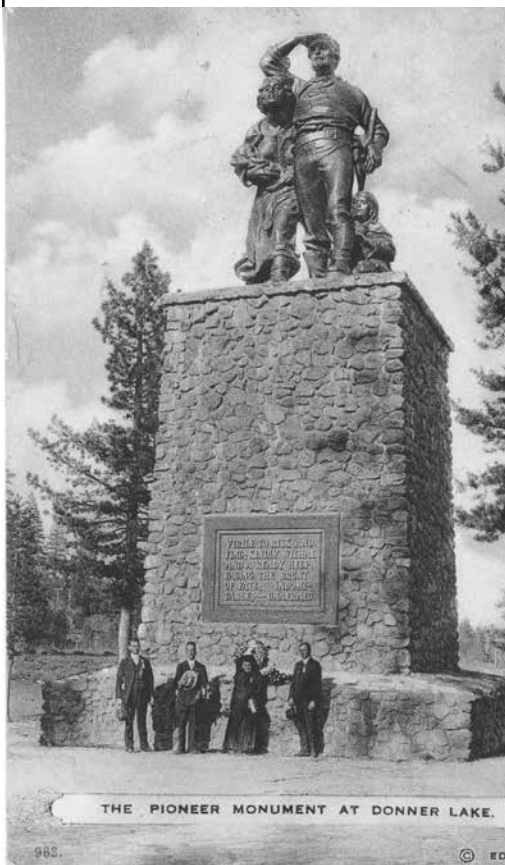


Dr. Warren Chapman from
The Origin of the Statue by
Doris Foley, 1982 Nevada
Co. Historical Society





Base Dedication June 10, 1910 eight years before monument was completed. Ladies on the platform: Frances Donner Wilder, Virginia Reed Murphy, and Patty Reed Lewis



Left postcard of the monument dedication ceremony, June, 1918.

Right, close up.

Below, the wording on the back of the postcard. Do descendants still live in Felton?



Mrs. T. N. Toft Felton, Cal. Santa Cruz Co. July, 1923

"My Dear Sister
Hello we are having one grand trip and seeing so much country Everything is Beautiful here.
Love to you all,

From Ruth & Chas." [sic]



T.C. Wohlbruck's canteen and service station at the Donner Park.

Part II – The Park

McGlashan dedicated a later edition of his book to Harriet Simpson Wohlbruck, “Founder of Pioneer Donner Park.” She was the wife of T.C. Wohlbruck.

T.C. Wohlbruck was born in New Jersey in 1879. In 1912 he came west to Reno for a divorce and remarried. He made his living doing school photographs. To do that he had to do a lot of traveling and that got him thinking about auto travel, which was not so reliable in the old days. Remember when cars carried water bags on the front bumpers to fill leaky radiators? Wohlbruck saw the need to service auto travelers and automobiles and so he opened three “Canteen Service Stations” to provide “unique service for tourists’ comfort – resorts, refreshment and souvenir stations.” The first two were at Emigrant Gap and Echo Summit. The third was at the Pioneer Park at Donner Lake where the Pioneer Monument had been erected.

By 1919 people were stealing rocks from the statue’s base so T.C. Wohlbruck leased eight acres from the Native Sons on which he built one of his canteen service stations to serve automobile travelers and also lend a presence to prevent



further damage to the monument. Wohlbruck’s idea also saved the area because his lease of eight acres averted the Donner Lake Development Co. which wanted to develop the east end of the lake.

Wohlbruck's contract stated that he could sell light lunch, have a tea room, soda fountain, souvenir stand and living accommodations for an attendant. He could provide afternoon tea, sodas, ice cream, fruits, candies, cigars and tobacco, photographs, curios, and souvenirs. The souvenirs included 5,000 vials of wood splinters from the Murphy cabin (Donner Party) for \$1 each. He paid \$1 rent to the Donner Monument Committee to lease the one acre his canteen and service station sat on and he had a 25 year lease. That acre later

expanded to eight acres. The Native Sons of the Golden West got the proceeds from the Murphy Cabin souvenirs less 25%.

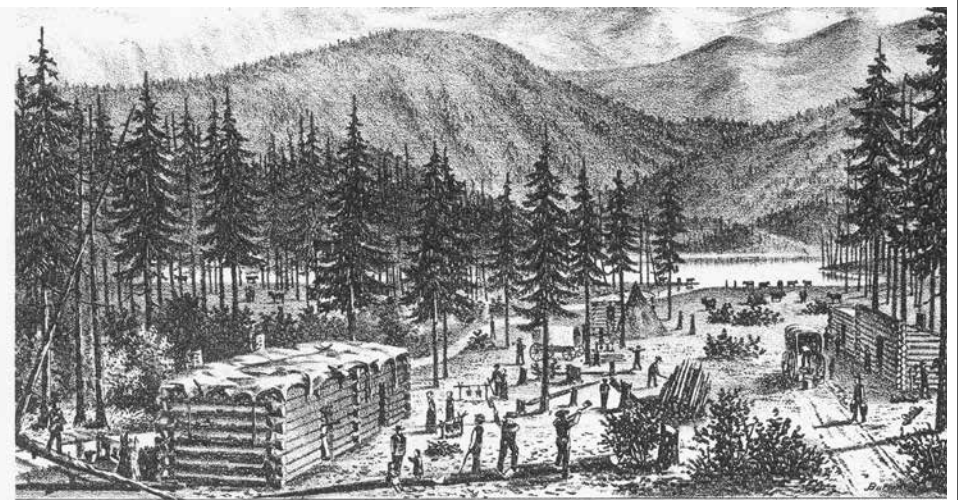
This venture at the monument, called Pioneer Donner Park or Pioneer Lodge, led to Wohlbruck's contribution to modern life. He was one of the first to develop the gas station convenience store with his three "canteen service stations." Wohlbruck also developed a campground at Donner Lake.

1920 saw 3500 visitors in his guest register. Wohlbruck also wanted to build cabins but apparently Donner Lake Camp (at the west end of the lake) did not want the competition and prevailed on the Native Sons of the Golden West not to allow the cabins.

TC hosted at the lodge in summers answering questions and selling books and souvenirs. He also displayed artifacts.

To prevent competition with his gas station T.C encouraged Chapman and the Native Sons to buy land from Pacific Fruit Express that was adjacent to the monument. In 1922 the Native Sons got 18.54 acres surrounding the monument for \$50 but title was not conveyed for some years.

The State Park came along to Donner Lake in 1928 and with it came the end of T.C. Wohlbruck's service station empire. More acres were added to the park and T.C.'s concession was canceled by state in mid 1930's. The canteen and service station was converted to park headquarters.



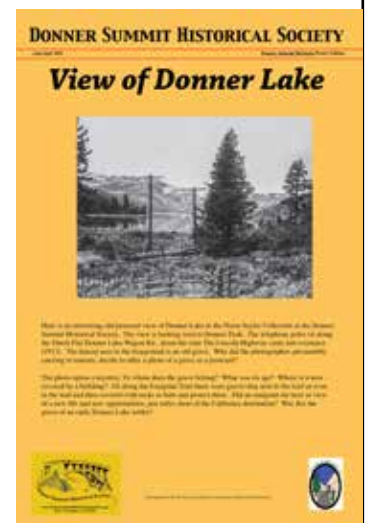
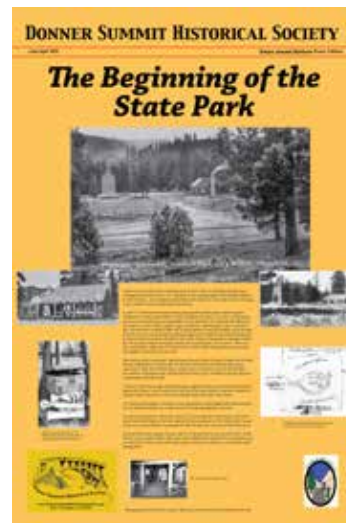
CAMP AT DONNER LAKE,
Nov. 1846.

The theme of the monument Chapman's Desire in a letter to the first sculptor:

The statue should show "a type of men who possessed courage, determination and endurance to suffer physical and mental strain, remaining steadfast and resolute to triumph over difficulties under which others succumb. I would want the figure that surmounts this pedestal to show by attitude and mien that he had experienced terrors and strain. I would want the eager, searching gaze to show a realization that the goal was near, and I would like the face to show the light of the conqueror's soul that never fails except through death, no thought of which could be gleaned from the steadfast gaze toward the promised goals. I would not have those who leave its present exclaim that it was beautiful. I would have them square their shoulders and say, "I CAN AND I WILL!"

New Exhibits

The DSHS will be at the centennial celebration of the Pioneer Monument on June 9 at the State Park. We thought we'd produce some exhibits to go with the event. Here they are in miniature but you can see larger ones on our "Exhibits" page: <http://www.donnertsummithistoricalociety.org/pages/exhibits.html>



Cadaver Dogs Find Donner Party Remains on Donner Summit



Introduction

At the end of April there was a presentation at the Donner State Park Visitors' Center about using dogs to find Donner Party campsites at Alder Creek, the State Park, and on Donner Summit, "Canine Search for the Donner Family Winter Camp at Alder Creek."

It is fascinating to contemplate that dogs' olfactory senses are so good that they can find human cadavers. This is well proven by police who use dogs to find bodies. It is even more amazing that, according to the presenter, John Grebenkemper, dogs can be trained to find human remains that are much older than currently or recently disposed of corpses. That is called, "Historic human remains detection" (HHRD). According to Dr. Grebenkemper dogs can find human burial sites that are up to 9,000 years old – even after the bones have decomposed. He says that organic fluids from bodies seep into the soil and can be detected. Even more amazing Dr. Grebenkemper says that organic fluids left by human remains are different from organic fluids left by animal remains. Hence, dogs can be trained to detect where human bodies have been or are. In the case of Dr. Grebenkemper's dog, Kayle (a border collie above, and pronounced "Kaylee"), she was trained starting at just a few weeks old through the Institute for Canine Forensics in the Bay Area.

Dr. Grebenkemper and Kayle have been searching out buried human remains. Most recently they were tapped by National Geographic to help in the search for Amelia Earhart. The results of that search will be made public at some point in the future.

The presentation at the end of April was a report on Kayle and Dr. Grebenkemper's visits to Alder Creek, the campsite of the actual Donner Families. Their search proved that there were two Donner encampments at Alder Creeks as well as an encampment for the teamsters. Kayle had "hit" on dozens of spots where there had been human remains with concentrations at three spots, indicating the camps. Dr. Grebenkemper is not an archeologist and so there was not archeological work done to validate the "hits." In 2004 there had been archeological work finding a hearth and animal bones near one of the Grebenkemper-Kayle sites.

To find where to start searching for historic or pre-historic human remains Dr. Grebenkemper uses available documentation. In the case of the Donners there are diary entries, letters, and visits done by members of the party years later. In this case those sources pointed to locations near a now-gone Alder Creek. Then he used historic pictures of old stumps cut high off the ground. Since the snow was deep people foraging for firewood would have cut trees at snow level. Those cuts would have left stumps many feet high in summer. There are a number of old photographs showing stumps along with identifying landmarks in the background to accurately place the stumps which are now gone. One, parenthetically, is in the State Park's old museum building.

Once Grebenkemper had tentatively identified general areas for campsites through the documentation and matching the photographic backgrounds of the stumps, it was Kayle's turn. She "hit" again and again in those areas showing that human remains had been or are still there having been scattered by animals. Those sites are several hundred yards away from the accepted locations other researchers have found, including C. F. McGlashan and Peter Weddell (who were the first to pinpoint sites).

Grebenkemper also took Kayle to the State Park and the Pioneer Monument (100th anniversary celebration this year on June 9 at the State Park). There has been some controversy about exactly where the Murphy Cabin was. Was its location under the current monument as some believe or a distance away? Kayle "hit" all around the monument indicating human remains had been or are there.

That's Alder Creek and the Murphy Cabin site but since this is the Heirloom it should not really concern us; it's out of our purview. It does set up the part of the story for the location of Starved Camp on Donner Summit.

The Donner Summit Tie-in

The Donner Party arrived at Donner Lake on October 31, 1846. They were too late to cross the pass so they set up winter camps at Donner Lake and Alder Creek. There were a number of escape attempts and then on December 15 the party called the Forlorn Hope left Donner Lake to cross the pass. 31 days later seven of the original 15 members made it to the Central Valley of California. That set off a number of rescue attempts to save the survivors on the other side of the Sierra.

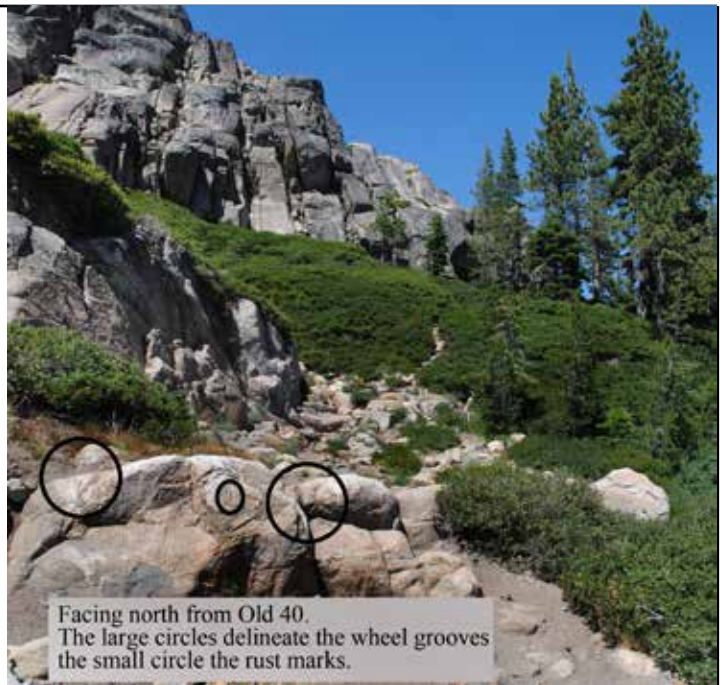
The Heirloom ran a multi-part story about the Donner Party and Donner Summit from December, '16 to March, '18 (check our website for the PDF's). Below is the chronology in the January, '17 Heirloom.

February 18, 1847 The First Relief arrives in Summit Valley. Snow was 30' deep.
February 22, 1847 30 people make it to the top of the Pass.
February 26, 1847 more die on Donner Summit.
February 27, 1847 The 2nd Relief meets the 1st relief somewhere on Donner Summit.
March 3, 1847 The 2nd Relief gets to Donner Summit from Donner Lake – Starved Camp.
March 5, 1847 2nd Relief is camped in Summit Valley. A storm rages.
March 6, 1847 Isaac Donner dies at Starved Camp.
March 8, 1847 James Reed takes those who will go away from Starved Camp.
March 9, 1847 More die at Starved Camp.
March 13, 1847 The 3rd Relief arrives at Starved Camp. 11 people are lying at the bottom of the deep pit.

For more background you should also read “Heroism and Pathos” on Donner Summit in the May, '14 Heirloom.

The location of Starved Camp, somewhere on Donner Summit, has never been ascertained and it is that site that Dr. Grebenkemper and Kayle set out to discover.

In keeping with his rules, Grebenkemper first looked at the documentation available. “The location of the 1846 wagon route was key to the dogs locating human remains scent.” (Grebenkemper email to the [Heirloom](#) March 15, 2018.) Determining the route of the wagons, Grebenkemper relied on Trails West which has a different view of where the Emigrant Trail went than do other trails experts. The generally accepted and marked route is up Donner Pass on the south side where the railroad goes. Trails West believes the Emigrant Trail went up on the north side and turned uphill just past the Donner Summit Bridge. There they have found rust marks and grooves worn into the granite that they say could only have been made by wagons. They've also found various spots where rocks and logs have been piled up to assist wagons. You can read a full discussion and see pictures of



their evidence in the October, '11 Heirloom. Grebenkemper believes the route is basically that but diverges and goes up hill before the emigrants would have reached the location of today's bridge.

Grebenkemper then uses the diaries of the First and Second Relief Parties to bolster the idea that the Emigrant Trail went up the north side of Donner Pass and past Lake Angela where the Trails West marker (T40) is. That would mean that Starved Camp was on the north side of the pass.

From the First Relief Diary

“[February] 18th Travelled 8 miles and camped on head of Juba on the Pass we suppose the snow to be 30 foot deep-“

From the Diary of the Second Relief – James Reed

[March 4] “I moved camp and after a great fatiguing day arrived at the prairie now Starved Camp at the head of Juba it was made by the other Compy. who had passed in but a few days previous. here the men began to fail being for several days on half allowance, or 1 1/2 pints of gruel or sizing per day. the Sky look like snow and everything indicates a storm

Trails West marker
T40 photo by George
Lamson





778. Stumps of Trees Cut by the Donner Party
In Summit Valley, Placer County.

god for bid wood being got for the night & Bows for the beds of all, and night closing fast, the clouds still thicking terror terror to many, my hartte dare not communicate my mind to any, death to all if provisions do not Come, in a day or two and a storm should fall on us. Very cold, a great lamentation about the cold.” [sic]

Putting all that together, Grebenkemper says in conclusion, “The location is in a grove of trees 150 meters west of Trails West marker T-40. This is south of the eastern edge of the Lake Angela dam. The location agrees with the description in the First and Second Relief Diaries.” (ibid).

People will argue about the route of the wagons and emigrants. The Donner Pass route was used only in 1844, 1845, and part of 1846. Roller Pass had been discovered in 1846 and then later that year Coldstream Pass was discovered. Coldstream became the main route and Donner Pass was abandoned because on Donner Pass wagons had to be disassembled. For Roller and Coldstream, wagons could remain intact and multiple yoke of oxen used to pull the wagons (i.e. more oxen pulling each wagon one at a time).

For both of those diary entries the main point seems to be “head of Juba”. Given that the snow was at least very deep it would have been hard for travelers to note the “head of Juba.” It must also be said that the headwaters of the Yuba are on the west side of Roller Pass and come right out of the mountainside as well as the creek that emptied Lake Angela in those days. So using “head of Juba” as proof is problematical. Trails West also quotes emigrants such as Wm. Todd’s below, saying they went by a lake at the top of the pass.

Wm. Todd, 1845: “On the top of the mountain we found

a beautiful lake, but quite small, and a few miles farther we came to a fine prairie, about three miles long by three fourths of a mile broad, full of springs and excellent water, and at the lower end a find branch, which forms the head of Juba river, and the way we danced “Juba”...

That lake must have been Angela says Trails West forgetting about Lake Mary which is also at the top as one would come up the south side of the pass. It’s smaller today than Angela and was lots smaller in the old days before the dam. One must say, though, that in those days Lake Mary was two lakes and not one. The other was named Lake John.

The documentation that Grebenkemper relied upon is not clear. Grebenkemper also says that using stumps is good evidence and he used stumps at Alder Creek to locate the camps. There were stumps on Donner Summit as well from the Donner Party as you can see here from the Houseworth #778 (also Hart and Watkins #133) picture depicting those stumps IN Summit Valley, according to the caption. That would point to the south side of Donner Pass route and if that’s true then Dr. Grebenkemper should have taken Kayle to the forests surrounding Summit Valley for a sniff.

No one has any idea where those stumps and Starved Camp were though because the stumps have disappeared and the diaries are not specific. The writers were more focused on rescue and dealing with snow (“falling in to their middles” according to Reed) than in giving the future clues. Here maybe the [Heirloom](#) historical staff can weigh in.

In the May and September, ’15 [Heirlooms](#) we reported on an “intriguing” trip which came from the 1915 book [Lake of the Sky](#) by Wharton James. He said,

“An unusual trip that can be taken from Tahoe Tavern is down to the foot of Donner Lake and then, turning to the left, follow the old emigrant and stage-road [into Coldstream Canyon]. It has not been used for fifty years, but it is full of interest. There are many objects that remain to tell of its fascinating history. Over it came many who afterwards became pioneers in hewing out this new land from the raw material of which lasting commonwealths are made. Turning south to Cold Stream, it passes by Summit Valley on to Starved Camp. The stumps of the trees cut down by the unfortunate pioneers are still standing.

“It was always a difficult road to negotiate... But those heroes of 1848-49 made it, triumphing over every barrier and winning for themselves what Joaquin Miller so poetically has accorded them, where he declares that ‘the snow-clad Sierras are their everlasting monuments.’

“This road is now, in places, almost obliterated. One section for three miles is grown up. Trees and chaparral cover it and hide it from the face of any but the most studiously

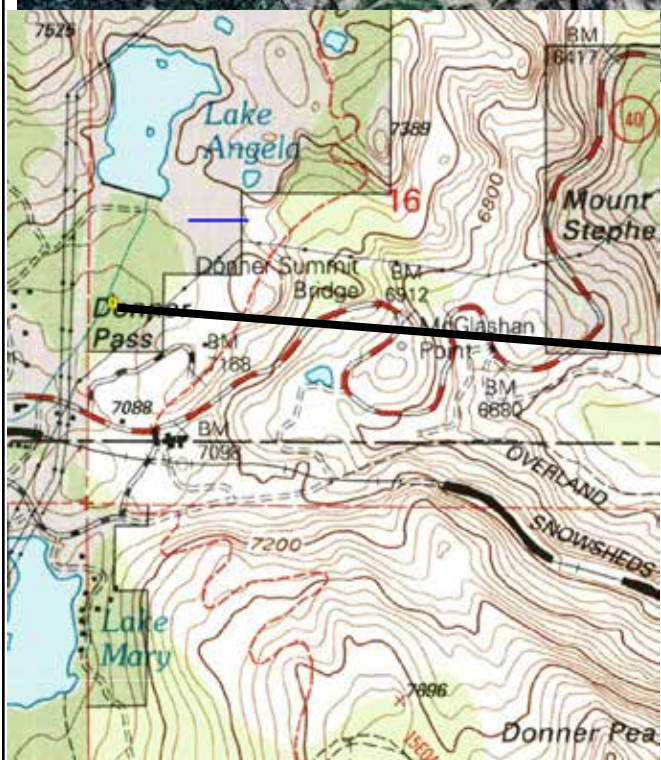
observant. When the road that takes to the north of Donner Lake was built in 1861- and goes directly and on an easier grade by Emigrant Gap to Dutch Flat, this road by Cold Stream was totally abandoned. For years the county road officials have ignored its existence, and now it is as if it never had been, save for its memories and the fragments of wagons, broken and abandoned in the fierce conflict with stern Nature, and suggesting the heart-break and struggle the effort to reach California caused in those early days.”

Here we have stumps, stumps that Alfred A. Hart first photographed IN Summit Valley in 1868 (then his photos were used by Watkins and Houseworth). Those stumps were apparently still there in 1915 for Mr. James to find and then describe in his book (page 109 by the way).

I would love to see Dr. Grebenkemper bring Kayle for a visit to Summit Valley’s outskirts and investigate that route of the emigrants. What might Kayle turn up? That said, just because a dog discovers the scent of human remains does not mean the dog has found the relevant human remains. Even if we were to discover evidence of remains in Summit Valley on one purported piece of the Emigrant Trail does not mean that the remains are of people who were in Starved Camp.



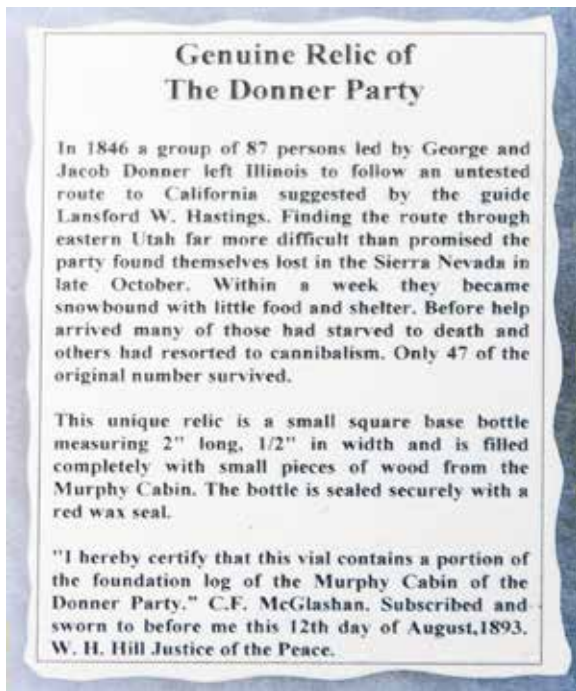
Starved Camp location according to John Grebenkemper and Kayle



Left: topo map labeled by Art Clark for the approximate location of the purported Starved Camp. Lake Angela is in the upper left and Lake Mary in the lower left. Old Highway 40, Donner Pass Rd. goes right between.

From the DSHS Archives

This also comes from the Norm Saylor Collection. Here is one of the souvenir splinters from the Murphy cabin at Donner Lake. Splinters were sold to raise money for the Pioneer Monument. Eventually 5,000 were sold.



Book Review

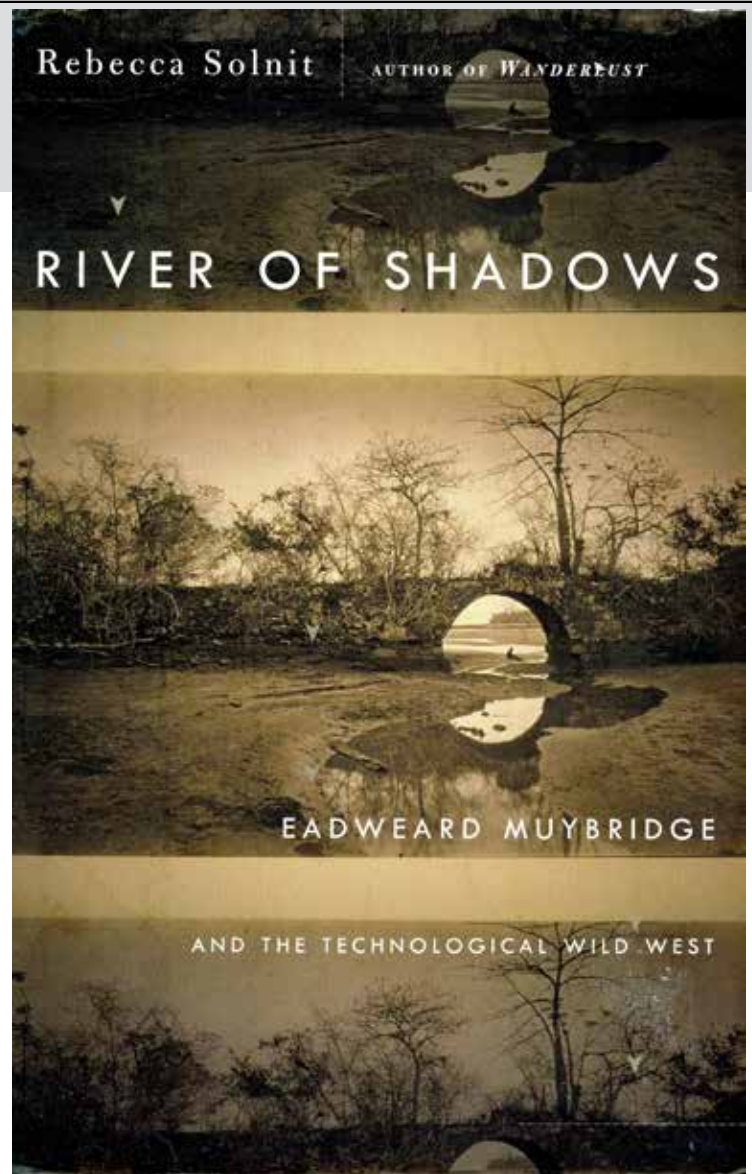
River of Shadows (Rebecca Solnit - 2003, 300 pages), although it does not mention Eadweard Muybridge on Donner Summit (see the March, '18 Heirloom), it is a really good non-fiction read and since Muybridge was on Donner Summit (see the photograph at the end of the article) we can talk about the book. You also might want to look at the March, '18 Heirloom for The Inventor and the Tycoon which is also about Mr. Muybridge.

River of Shadows is a scholarly work first setting Muybridge into his time, the Industrial Revolution with the changes and speed that time entailed. Most simply the world went from walking and horse or barge speed to hurtling along at railroad speed of 20-30 miles per hour. What an amazing change that must have been. Suddenly everything was closer both to visit and from which to get products. In a larger sense a long list of inventions that included photography, the telegraph and the telephone annihilated time and space. Muybridge fit into that – Rebecca Solnit, the author, says he “grasped time itself, made it stand still, and then made it run again, over and over.” Muybridge’s photography documented slices of time that could be seen over and over. Then his motion studies showed movement, some of which had been invisible, and precursors of motion pictures could be run again and again.

This book is about Muybridge; it’s about his pioneering photography in both landscape and motion, but along with that it’s also about America in the second half of the 19th Century. Describing Muybridge and the new age Solnit describes “a pivot from the old world to new...” The sped up Industrial Age was a doorway to today where people watch videos and surf the internet. Muybridge helped set the foundation for that change.

In writing about Muybridge in the 19th Century we get perspective for what California was like. Of course there is the biography: his start in England, stint of a bookseller and business man, the stage accident that changed his personality, his return to San Francisco, marriage, murder, pioneering landscape photography, and his work capturing time and motion. It’s what goes with that that sets this book apart.

Solnit’s description of the vibrance of San Francisco and California is a perfect example of how much broader and more interesting her biography of Muybridge is. In San Francisco there were animal species found nowhere else and the city “eliminated one of those butterfly species in the nineteenth century... It developed its own rare specimens: eccentrics, visionaries, and radicals... It had a coastline of inlets and coves, including the great natural cove around which a downtown quickly sprang up. There were so many ships’ masts in the harbor that observers compared it to a forest. The ships the gold seekers came in were left to rot... though some were dragged ashore to use as storerooms. There was a land rush... people took to buying... underwater real estate... Montgomery Street was where Muybridge sold books and his galleries sold his photographs... [it ended up several blocks inland after shoreline filling] There were shacks and tent cities... [the city burned a number of times and] volunteer fire departments became important social and political clubs that strove to outdo each other with equipment and uniforms and sometimes fought each other over who would put out a fire while the blaze raged. There were literary magazines and myriad newspapers... San Francisco gloried in its urbanity, in banquets and music, business deals and political organizations. As someone was listening to opera or buying art books someone in the gold country was being shot with



an obsidian arrowhead or hanged with a dirty rope.”

Solnit fits Muybridge into the California scene. He changed his name a number of times during his lifetime and reinvented himself a number of times. The changes of name and occupation fit a perspective of California. It was a land of new opportunities and lives. Name changes and new or exaggerated histories of previous lives went along with the new land. Solnit mentions the popular tune of the time, “What Was Your Name in the States?” More perspective on the new society is offered by including literature: Mark Twain and Bret Harte and their stories of the west. San Francisco was “well populated with liars, delusionaries, confidence men, men disguised as women, and women disguised... as men.” That extended to the whole west and other famous personalities who tried on various roles are brought in: Wild Bill Hickok, Davy Crocket, Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill, etc. “The West was... an arena for their self-invention, and truth was whatever the winner said it was.” “The men and women of the West scraped the glass of their own lives whenever they wanted to make a new image there, and San Francisco was a hothouse made out of these lives, incubation fantasies, erasures, and new beginnings.” Muybridge fit right in.

The Transcontinental Railroad was, as the San Francisco Bulletin put it, “a triumph bloodless, deathless, but no less glorious to the Nation and the State: a victory over space, the elements, and the stupendous mountain barriers separating San Francisco from the world.” Pg 58

Solnit also focuses, of course, on Muybridge photography and her description of one view in Yosemite is a good example of her analysis of his various works, “His stereophotograph looking straight down into the crevice [at Yosemite] that bisects the picture is nothing like a conventional landscape composition. The image conveys a sense of vertigo and of almost anatomical form. With boulders wedged deep within it, this is a sensual cleft and a dangerous one.” Then there is an explanation of how different his photographs were from the work of other photographers at the time.

Other photographers and artists captured Nature as “unfallen Eden” or as “Adam standing on the brink of our undiscovered continent” without man yet. Muybridge took the opposite approach in his photographs, for example he photographed the Native Americans and the damages from man’s presence. Muybridge wasn’t after purity; he was after reality and included “footpaths, picket fences, idling figures...” Some pictures “rage with a chaos of downed trees, gnarled trunks, shattered debris, and sharp rocks, the last perhaps shaken loose by the earthquake... Such debris fills the foreground of many of the pictures. It looks like the wreckage from events of tremendous violence, and though the images are as dramatic as the work of his peers, they bear no traces of their beneficent deity.”

In placing Muybridge into perspective, as part of his time, lots of subjects are covered: buffalo, the transcontinental railroad, the history of motion in photography, the Chinese, the railroad strike, the Big Four and the railroad in the state, Native Americans, the Modoc War, the women’s movement, John Muir, Albert Bierstadt, Clarence King (Government survey of 1874), Carleton Watkins (photographer), spiritualism, etc.

A good portion of the book is devoted, at different times, to what made Muybridge famous for capturing motion, which is probably what people who have heard of him remember. “In 1872 the whole world seemed to be in motion...”. With the railroad, for example, people went faster than nature. With the telegraph they could communicate faster. With photography they could see faster and see what was hidden. Leland Stanford contacted Muybridge (there was apparently no bet despite that apparent myth) to photograph his horses in motion. By the following year experiments had shown that horses do lift all four feet off the ground as they gallop. There followed more experiments, inventions, and thousands of photographs to capture motion and capture what is hidden by the speed of motion, such as the spokes of a spinning wheel.

At the end Muybridge was surpassed by technological change and was living in England again. He died one day out in his garden digging a pond in the shape of the Great Lakes. Muybridge was a pathfinder but to be a pathfinder you have to be a little bit different. Putting the Great Lakes in your back yard is a bit different as was his whole life.

Note:

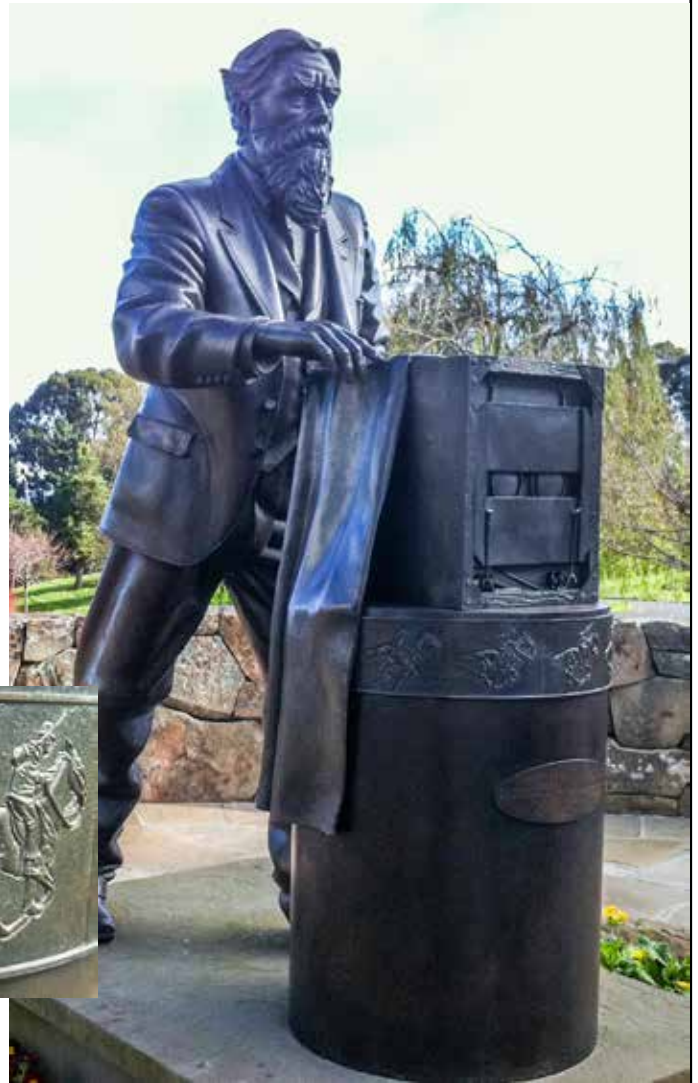
You have noticed our monthly book reviews. You might want to do some reading of your own.

Stop in at the DSHS. Norm Sayler has a large collection of books for perusing, buying, or checking out.

You might even want to do a review for us.

Visit Mr. Muybridge Today

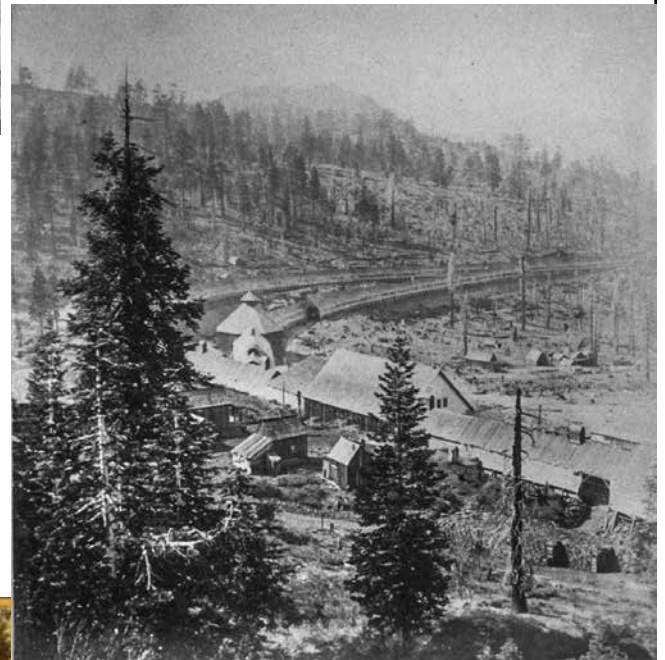
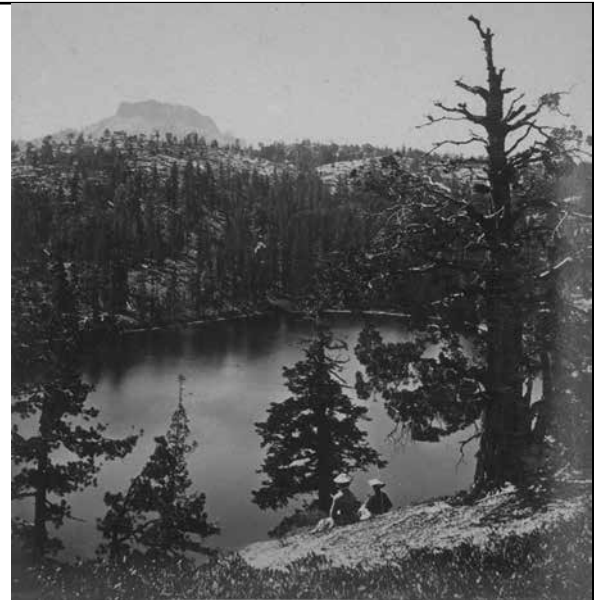
Eadweard Muybridge, the subject of [River of Shadows](#) on the previous pages, was a famous guy and even more famous for those interested in the history of motion pictures. Right is a statue of him near the Disney Museum in the Presidio in San Francisco with the description below and below that some frames for which he is most famous, proving the bet Leland Stanford had about running horses.



Summer Adventure

And then for a little fun this summer: Eadweard Muybridge was exploring what is now Boreal Ridge and took pictures of what he called Lake Flora (today it's Crater Lake) and Rhinoceros Rock (left). It's directly west of Crater Lake, downhill a couple of hundred yards. If you have trouble finding it, take along our "Historic Hikes of Donner Summit" brochure which has the GPS coordinates and a map. It's a fun hike and the satisfaction of finding the rhinoceros is you'll be able to describe that for yourself.





Photos by Eadward Muybridge clockwise from top: "Interior of Snowsheds, Western Summit of the Sierra Nevada;" "The Devil's Peak, from Palisade Lake, Western Summit of the Sierra Nevada;" "Snowsheds at Cisco from the East;" "Mount Crocker [today's Mt. Disney] Looking South from Lake Flora [today's Crater Lake] (crater of an extinct volcano)", on Mount Volcano [Boreal Ridge], Summit Valley



Margie Powell Hike, 2018 August 11&12



Margie Powell was the inspiration for the Donner Summit Historical Society. She was also the energy behind the founding. In her memory we've held annual Margie Powell hikes in August. Our hikes have gone down Summit Canyon, up to Roller Pass, around Van Norden, and around Serene Lakes. We've covered the Lincoln Highway, the Emigrant Trail, Native Americans and what they've left behind, the 1914 underpass, Tunnel 6, snowsheds, Van Norden Dam, Soda Springs (the original and Soda Springs Station), ice harvesting

On this, our seventh year, we're going to tour mostly on the north side of Old Highway 40, Donner Pass Rd. Of course the walk will be illustrated with dozens of historic photographs and lots of stories.

This year will be very ambitious for the number of stories to tell. We'll be starting at the Donner Ski Ranch parking lot and talking about Tunnel 6, the Summit Hotel and the railroad facilities right there. Then we'll cross Donner Pass Rd. and talk about Sierra Junipers, the transcontinental air route (and the remains of the weather station buildings where there is a GREAT view - see above), the Catfish Pond or Maiden's Retreat, the idea that the north side of Old 40 was the Emigrant Trail (see photograph below of Trails West marker there) and possible proof, the recent report of cadaver dogs and Donner Party, down and around to Old 40, Donner Pass Rd. and across to the petroglyphs, China Wall, up the old Lincoln Highway to the PCT trailhead, and back to the start.

Do not consider going on this hike unless you are nimble because there are parts where we'll have to scramble over some rocks since there is no trail.

The dates: August 11,12 9:30 AM each day. Meet at the Donner Ski Ranch parking lot.

Bring:

comfortable shoes - no flip flops
water
sunscreen
insect repellent
camera
hat

Lunch

Both photos by
George Lamson



Donner Party Hike, 2018

The Donner Party Hike will be held this year on September 15 & 16. You get to choose among seven different hikes on Saturday, each led by a leader armed with historical photographs and history knowledge. There will be music during lunch at the Judah Lodge at Sugar Bowl followed by an afternoon presentation on the Lincoln Highway by Jim Bonar. The hike menu will include a new hike.

In the evening at the State Park Heidi Sproat and Barbara Czerwinski of the Truckee Donner Historical Society will speak on C.F. McGlashan and the coming of winter sports to Truckee.

On Sunday there will be a walk around Donner Party sites at the State Park and Alder Creek OR a bus tour of Donner Summit.

For details see donnerpartyhike.com

A promotional graphic for the Donner Party Hike. The background is a photograph of a rocky trail winding through a forest of tall pine trees under a clear blue sky. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible. Overlaid on the image is a circular logo featuring a hiker in a red shirt and blue pants with a backpack, walking on a trail. To the right of the logo, the text "DONNER PARTY HIKE" is written in large, white, serif capital letters. Below this, "September 15 & 16, 2018" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there is a white, jagged-edged shape resembling a snowflake or a starburst. Inside this shape, the text "Learn secrets of the Sierra as you hike with local historians." is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a dark red rectangular box containing the text "FOR MORE INFORMATION:" in white, sans-serif font, followed by "info@donnerpartyhike.com" and "donnerpartyhike.com" in a larger, white, sans-serif font.

150 Years Ago

“Last evening we received a dispatch from Coburn’s stating that the last connecting rails between California and Nevada, on the Central Pacific Railroad, had been laid. Tomorrow the cars will be run direct from Reno to Sacramento.”

June 18, 1868 the Daily Tresspass of Virginia City

Odds & Ends on Donner Summit



Cisco Grove.

There used to be Upper Cisco which was the railroad town. With the completion of the tunnels over the Sierra, end of track moved east and Upper Cisco died.

Lower Cisco was on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd. which also lost business after the transcontinental railroad was finished. The town was resurrected with the coming of the transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway. By the time Highway 40 was installed Cisco Grove was a vibrant little town on the highway catering to tourists. There were a gas station, lodge, cabins, general store, ski lodge, etc. When Highway 40 was replaced by I-80 Cisco Grove was again bypassed. Eventually the buildings were torn down to save on property taxes. Today you can visit Cisco Grove on the south side of I-80 and visit the 20 Mile Museum sign for the stone buildings, visit the Gould Park on the Yuba River (donated to the County by the Gould's who used to own Cisco Grove and who had the buildings torn down. In the fall the Aspen colors are wonderful. There are also a lot of building remains including the fireplace above.

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](#).

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

Pioneer Monument's 100th Birthday Celebration

Time: 11:00am

Come celebrate the Pioneer Monument's 100th birthday!



Erected to honor the immigrants who passed through Truckee en-route to new opportunities in the West, the Pioneer Monument has stood majestically at Donner Memorial State Park for 99 years. At its dedication on June 6, 1918, thousands of people and three Donner Party survivors gathered to honor the past. June 9, 2018 is the re-dedication, centennial celebration, and restoration kickoff of this iconic statue.

Ceremonies begin at 11 am, followed by family activities, living history, live music and more. Want to make it a whole day of fun in the park? Join the Sierra State Parks Foundation for their annual Fundraising Gala to raise funds for the construction of an education pavilion and restoration of the iconic landmark. For more information see <https://sierrastateparks.org/annual-events/>

Pioneer Monument's 100th birthday Flyer

Donner Memorial SP

EVENT DATES

Saturday, June 9, 2018

New Book about Donner Summit History

Stories of crossing Donner Summit - people in the old days were lots tougher than we are today. Stories, pictures, quotes, and the human spirit

222 pages ©2018

Purchase a Copy:

www.donnersummithistoricalsociety/pages/store.org

Regular Mail:

DSHS P.O. 1 Norden Ca 95724

In person:

- Soda Springs Gen. Store
- Donner Summit

Historical Society

\$25 includes S/H and sales tax.

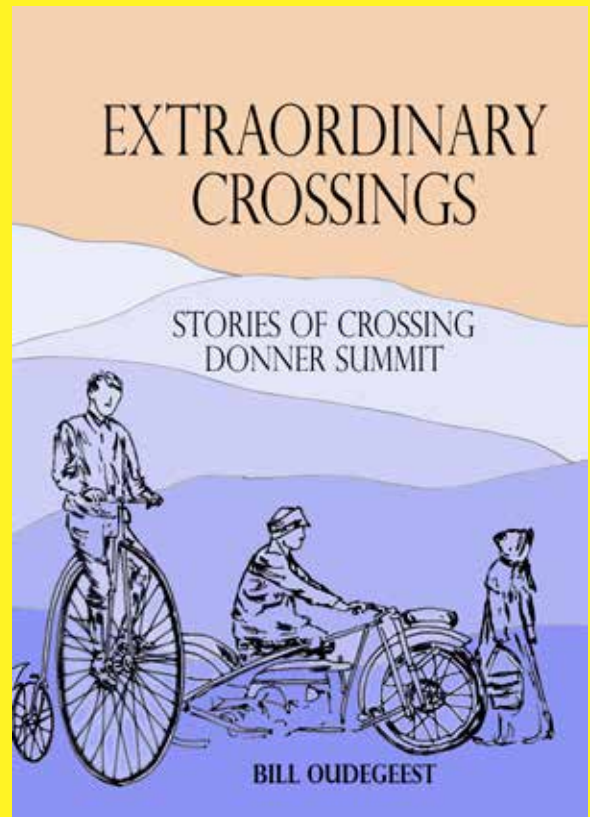


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From the Introduction

The Sierra is a great barrier and there are only a few passes through the great barrier to connect California with the rest of the country. One of those passes is Donner Pass, the area colloquially known as Donner Summit. Through that pass have funneled many stories – stories of heroism, adventure, excitement, pathos, courage, and tenacity. Those stories encompass the very best of the human spirit.

Couple that with Donner Summit being the most historically significant square mile in California and maybe the entire Western United States, and that most of the stories have almost been forgotten, their resurrections ought to be really interesting. They are.



Donner Summit Historical Society



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info@donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

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June 1, 2018

Annual Fund Raising Drive.

The DSHS is 10 years old this year. Without your support we could not have done all that we've done. Our success at telling the story of "The Most Historically Significant Square Mile" in California is due to your support.

Ten years ago we opened the museum at the blinking light in "downtown" Soda Springs. It is the repository of Norm Saylor's incomparable photographic collection and historical artifacts.

Ten years ago the first issue of the Heirloom "hit the stands" followed by 119 more issues each filled with Donner Summit history.

Ten years ago we started the 20 Mile Museum which now consists of 47 interpretive signs from Auburn to Truckee. At this writing four more are in production.

Ten years ago we started making brochures about Donner Summit history and now we have sixteen in permanent use.

Ten years ago we started making exhibits. One shows continually on a television in the DSHS and dozens more make public appearances and are on our website.

Ten years ago we started building our website – full of Donner Summit history – which now has grown to almost 400 pages.

Those are the big things over ten years but there have been lots of small things: hikes led, investigations done, new historical research, letters answered, etc.

There are more stories to tell, more Heirloom issues to write, more web pages to produce, more and brochures to print. In short there's more history. We need your further support to pay the only things we spend money on: rent for the museum, printing, insurance, and some sign manufacture.

Please help by using the attached membership form or go to our website's "membership" page and use PayPal or your credit card.

In other news the Margie Powell Hikes will be on August 11 & 12. We'll be hiking the north side of Old Highway 40. Details are on our website and in the Heirloom. The Placer County Heritage Trail Museum Tour will not be just on one weekend again this year. It will be all summer long with the 23 different museums having different open dates. Details are on our website. Our date is July 28.

We've taken over the Donner Party Hike event this year and the dates are September 15 & 16 (see donnerpartyhike.com or the "News and Events" page on our website).

Thank you for your help,

Norm Saylor
President

Donner Summit Historical Society
www.donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

| | |
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