



Donner Summit Historical Society

November, 2010 issue #27

Newsletter

Don't Believe Everything You See

The graphic here is a lesson in don't believe what you see and in particular, just because it's old doesn't make it true. In this case this is a glass slide, its dimensions about three inches by three inches. They were used like 35mm slides were used, for presenting pictures or other graphics to groups of people. The slide is in Norm Saylor's collection and was recently acquired because it looked so interesting.

The slide shows the route of the Lincoln Highway, which as any regular reader of this newsletter knows, ran over Donner Summit, hence the connection of the slide to the Historical Society. Then later in this newsletter you'll see more about the Lincoln Highway on Donner Summit. As you can see the slide shows the route going over Tioga Pass which is where it definitely does not go.

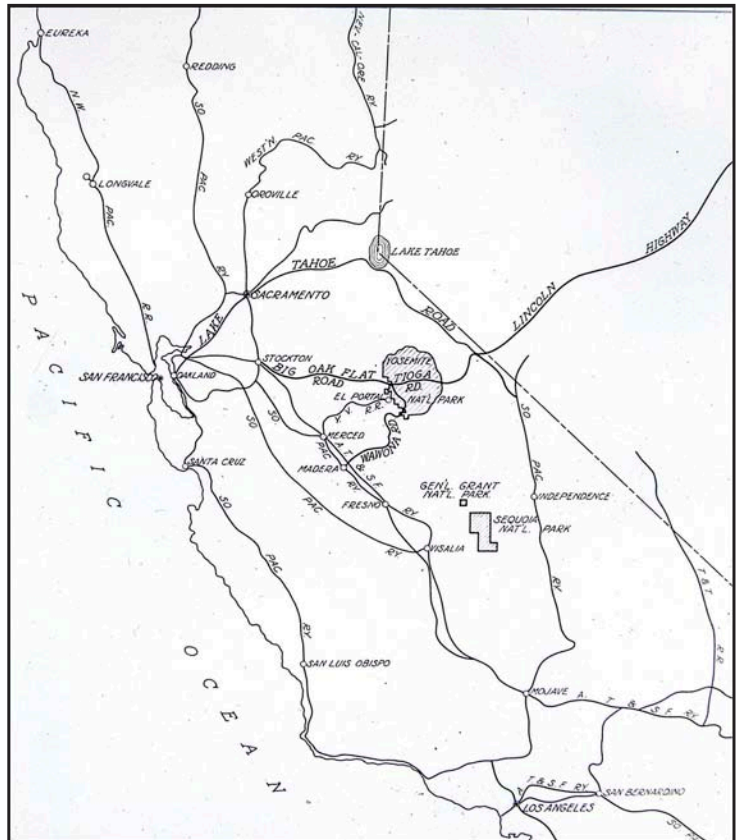
So what's the story behind the slide? There are no markings or dates on the slide. We know it must date to not much before 1913 which is when the Lincoln Highway route was laid out nationally.

The picture of the slide sat in my computer waiting for an opening in a newsletter when it occurred to me, why not contact the Lincoln Highway Association's California chapter? They might be interested and they might even know.

Bob Dieterich, the president of the Lincoln Highway Association responded,

"This graphic is interesting... however, I have a couple of thoughts.

First, there was talk at one time of a feeder route that would go from the Lincoln Highway to Yosemite, much like the Yellowstone Trail. Such a route is described in the 1924 (Fifth Edition) of "A Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway." This was not a description of an official [Lincoln Highway] route, but rather as an



interesting side trip. The discussion appears on page 508 and a map is shown on page 116. The discussion describes a way to drive to the valley from Stockton and return to Stockton. The map clearly shows the Tioga Pass road, but this is a general park map with no mention of the Lincoln Highway.

“Secondly, a lot of towns claimed to be on the Lincoln but were not. This was a ploy to lure tourists into their towns and spend money there or convince the powers that be that the Lincoln SHOULD go there.”

That got me to take out my handy copy of the 1924 Lincoln Highway to see just what was up. The official Lincoln Highway route had two routes over the Sierra, one over Donner Summit and the other over Echo Summit and South Lake Tahoe. There is however, a separate chart on page 486 sending people to Yosemite, over the Sierra and down to Stockton. It’s listed as an “Optional Route.”

The route across the country was pretty strenuous in 1924 and there is advice, “followed by many” to ship your car back and make the return journey by train. A one way trip by automobile was apparently enough.

In 1924 the guidebook says of Donner Summit, “Pop 50... Southern Pacific Railroad, 1 general business place, express company, telegraph. Good camping and fishing. Unsurpassed scenery.” Eventually lots of people would use the road over the Summit as cars became more reliable. Gas stations, lodges, hotels, and stores would spring up all along the road over the Summit. The scenery would still be unsurpassed however.

Of Donner Lake the book says, “Summer resort, ...Railroad station is Truckee; stage to camp. European and American plan. Auto camping. Housekeeping tents. Telephone, garage.”

Not wanting to leave any stones unturned, I turned to the 1915 guide to the Lincoln Highway. It says of Donner, “Pop. 50... Two hotels, accommodations for 90. Summit House, \$2.00 Amer.; Soda Springs Hotel, \$2.00 Amer. Gas, 30cents; Oil, \$1.00. Route marked through village and county. Extensive road improvement planned for 1915. Good detour road without mileage increase over L.H. One R.R., 1 general business place, 1 Exp. Co., telegraph. Donner Party monument on north shore of Donner Lake.” The only mention of Yosemite is in the accompanying ad.

In 1924 although “An uplifting of the spirit is sure to follow this contact [cross country travel on the Lincoln Highway] with Nature in her majesty” and travel between San Francisco and Omaha was a “delightful outing,” travel was still hard. Advice was given not to drive until a day or two after rains cease to allow the road to dry out. The Guide said it would take 20 to 30 days to travel the country averaging 18 miles an hour. So you can imagine what the roads were like.

Further advice was don’t wait until your “gasoline is almost gone.... Don’t allow your canteen to be other than full...Don’t forget colored goggles [dark glasses]....Don’t ford water without first wading through it...Don’t drink alkali water.... Don’t wear new shoes

| To and Through YOSEMITE PARK | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|
| 291 | *Carson City, Nevada | 00 |
| 274 | Minden, Nevada | 17 |
| 243 | Coleville, Calif. | 48 |
| 207 | Bridgeport, Calif. | 84 |
| 181 | Mono Lake, Calif. | 110 |
| 162 | Tioga Summit | 129 |
| | (elevation 9941 ft.) | |
| 112 | Carl Inn, Calif. | 179 |
| 86 | Groveland, Calif. | 205 |
| 38 | Oakdale, Calif. | 325 |
| 00 | *Stockton, Calif. | 291 |
| *On the Lincoln Highway | | |
| See Page 78 | | |

**“See California”
IN AUTOMOBILE**

Automobile tours from San Francisco to the Yosemite Valley and to Los Angeles by the coast route, visiting the Old California Missions. Parties at frequent intervals. Special parties any time, any route.

Large, roomy STUDEBAKER SIXES specially equipped

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(See also page 37)

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View of Donner Lake from the Lincoln Highway on Donner Summit. The highway route is to the right of the pole in center.

Lincoln Highway at Donner Summit II

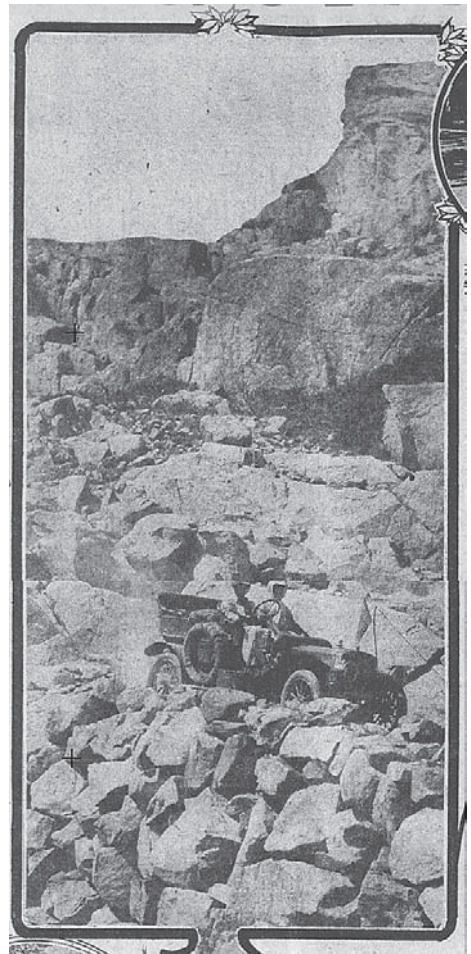
Last month we covered a stretch of the Lincoln Highway at Big Bend that you can walk. It's across the street from the ranger station, behind the garage and east. Previously we covered the Lincoln Highway along the Yuba River. Across the street from the ranger station, go south on the dirt road. You will pass old stone cabins and be on the Lincoln Highway along the river. It's a nice walk. This month it occurred to our staff that there are other stretches of Lincoln Highway on Donner Summit.

One of course is along Lake Van Norden. You can drive or bike that and end up at Sugar Bowl.

The second stretch starts right at the summit at the PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) trailhead. It starts inauspiciously but go through the single track trail and you'll end up on the old Lincoln Highway which you can follow down across the railroad bed (no tracks), go through the 1913 underpass, past signs painted on rocks advertising Truckee to motorists, and you will see some great scenery as you can see in pictures here.

The Truckee Chamber of Commerce hosted a number of history hikes the weekend of October 9-10. Participants could sign up for hikes to Roller Pass, the snowsheds, "High Sierra Lakes," Coldstream Pass, Mt. Judah Loop/Roller Pass, and the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road. The hikes were followed by lunch at the Sugar Bowl Judah Lodge, a talk by Margie Powell of the DSHS, and a talk by Mark Twain (MacAvoy Lane).

The Dutch Flat hike was the hike with the most history since it covered the most topics: the wagon road, the



Traveling what will be the Lincoln Highway on Donner Summit in 1909. [San Francisco Call](#)

transcontinental railroad, the Lincoln Highway, and the Stephens Party (first wagon train with wagons over the Sierra - 1844). So I took that one.

It was an interesting hike as the group walked along the original Lincoln Highway route. The Stephens Party was the first wagon train to take wagons across the Sierra. They crossed in 1844 and ended up in California with two more people than they started with. Elizabeth Yuba Murphy was born at Big Bend and the first white baby born in California. Moses Schallenburger was a 17 year old member of the party who spent most the winter alone at Donner Lake. Not only did hikers learn the story but saw where the party hit the granite wall and thought they could go no further. When hope seemed lost, they discovered a cleft in the rocks through which the oxen could go one at a time. Then the wagons were hoisted up the 12 foot face. We saw where the Lincoln Highway was rerouted from the Dutch Flat road because the new route's exposure left it free of snow. There was lots more.

If you have time, I recommend the Truckee Chamber of Commerce's Donner Party Hike weekend. Next year will be their 19th annual hike.

In this portion of the newsletter are pictures of the walk downhill from the PCT trailhead on the old Lincoln Highway.

Pictures of the Lincoln Highway route from Donner Summit east.

Top page 3: panorama Donner Lake, snowcapped peaks, and Lincoln Highway in the right foreground.

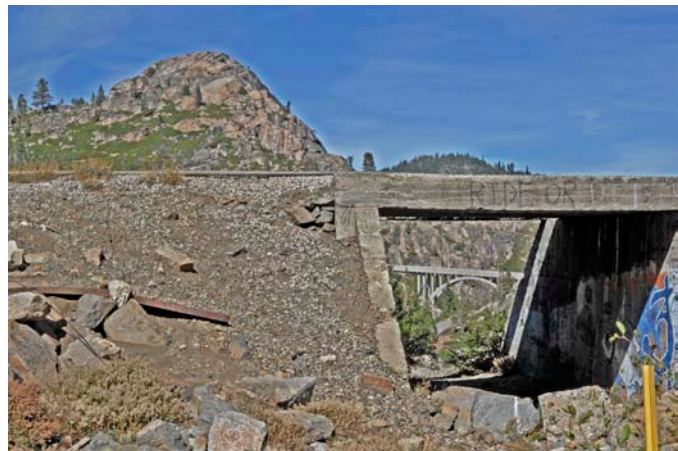
This page top: an uninspiring start to the Lincoln Highway route today at the PCT trailhead.

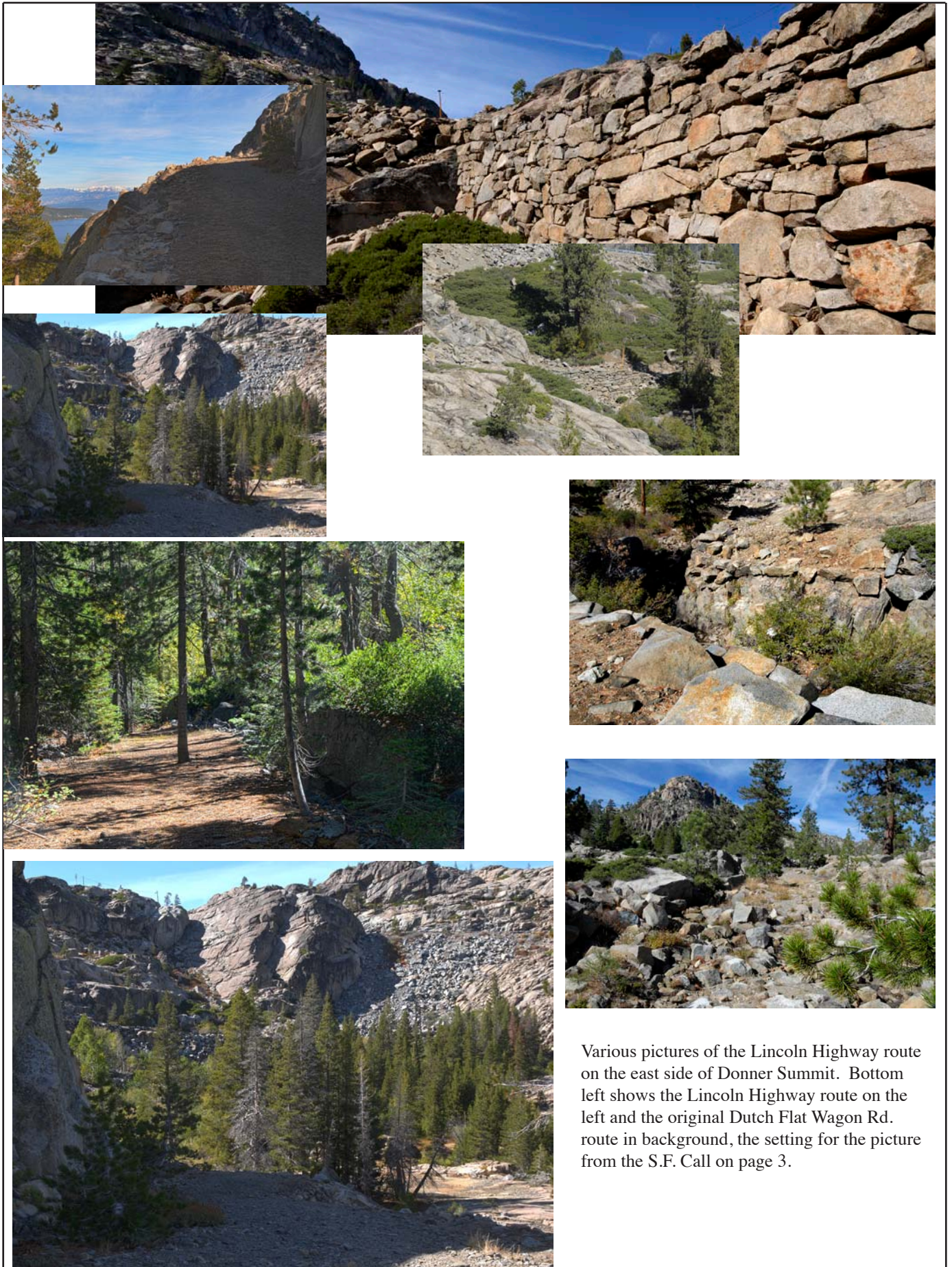
Second from top: break through the brush and the route is easy to follow.

Third from top: 1913 underpass, maybe the first to be built under a railroad in the U.S. Mt. Stewart in the background and Rainbow Bridge (1926) through the underpass.

Bottom: Lincoln Highway route below Donner Peak.

Top next page: rock wall fill to support the Lincoln Highway. Picture below it shows the wall from a distance.





Various pictures of the Lincoln Highway route on the east side of Donner Summit. Bottom left shows the Lincoln Highway route on the left and the original Dutch Flat Wagon Rd. route in background, the setting for the picture from the S.F. Call on page 3.



More of the Lincoln Highway route. Top: going across the center of the picture. Right, the road below Donner Peak.

In many places along the Lincoln Highway businesses tried to lure customers. There are a number of rocks with paint still in evidence. Below, Donner Lake and two signs advertising the Tamrak Lodge at Donner Lake.



Margie Powell of the DSHS entertaining the Chamber of Commerce hikers at Judah Lodge at Sugar Bowl.



Catfish & Donner Summit

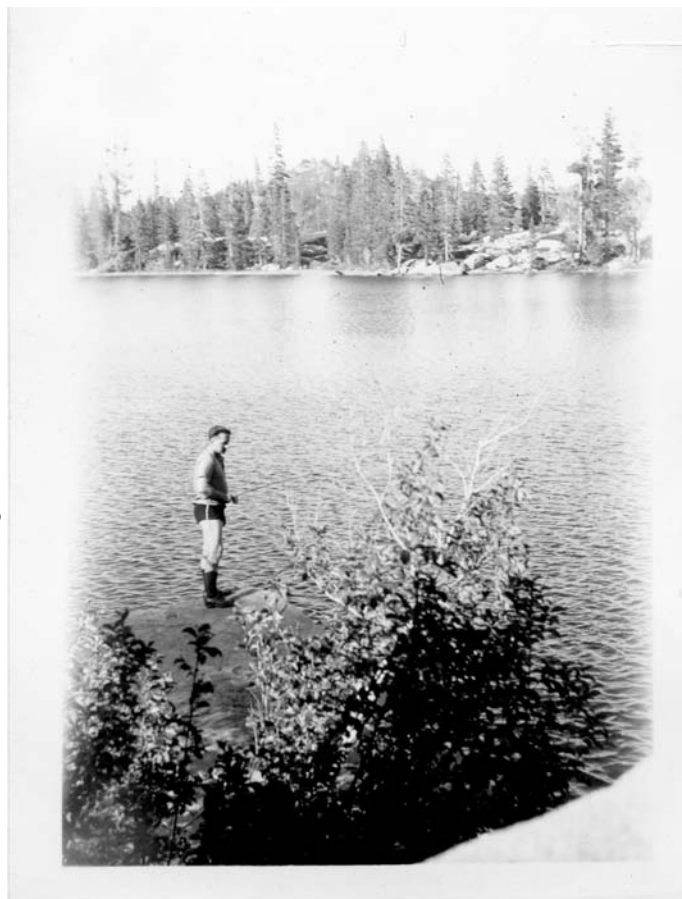
The Catfish Pond

2010 was the year for re-discovery for me at Donner Pass. Top of the list was Lake Flora, today much as I remembered it from my youth in the 1940's and early 50's. Still there, the big flat rock, site of fishing and swimming of those days long gone. The water level is much lower today and the alder much bigger. A grey heron sure looked out of place, but there he was fishing. Catfish inhabit Lake Flora now, but back then we only caught trout. As Norm Saylor and I went through Lena and Herb's photos, one came to hand of Herb fishing from that same flat rock at Flora, sometime in the late 1930's!

The next exploration was to locate the Catfish Pond, also of long past memory. In the 1940's Lena and Herbert Frederick of the Norden Store and Post Office were caretakers of the Hutchinson lodge. Jimmy Hutchinson and his brother and other members of the Sierra Ski Club [not Sierra Club which owns it now] built it, just to the East and north of the store [just above the DSHS 20 Mile Museum Hutchinson Lodge sign]. My dog Pepper and I went exploring, with previously obtained permission. We would find the old catfish pond. Well above the lodge I located a bit of the old lodge access road and followed it. It wasn't far when I noted a clearing in the trees and a hint of water. I had to skirt around to the south because of the dense tree and willow growth, but there it was, just as I recalled, only a few minutes' walk from the Store, and less from the lodge. Near the east side a well groomed trail goes by, with a post numbered "25". Peter Lemkuhl, manager of the Clair Tappaan Lodge, said the post references the pond and then asked, how did the pond come to be? It was a small seasonal creek that was dammed as a water source for the Hutchinson Lodge.

In the 1930's and 40's, that pond was actively used by Sierra Ski Club members, with a little square dock at one end, from which they enjoyed their private "pool" and sunbathed. I Wonder if the dock isn't still somewhere. And across the pond was an open bank, and from there we fished with worms Lena carefully tended for sale at the store. With those big, active worms threaded on hooks a good mess of catfish were easy to pull out.

Fishing was good until '47 or 48, when the winter killed off everything – frogs and catfish. A good friend of the Frederick's, Kurt Holzhauser (known



in Bay area for his artistic murals and flower paintings) and I went to Lake Van Norden to catch some young catfish. Parents of young catfish stay with their offspring protecting them from predators until they can fend for themselves. In this case, they obviously thought two humans with nets qualified as predators, and we had to be downright cagey to catch the little ones. We got 'em, tadpoles too. And in the following years we could again fish the pond. Back then there was not only the Hutchinson lodge, but a number of platforms for wall tents, scattered in the trees above the lodge. On one occasion Marjorie Hutchinson (Jimmy's daughter), invited me in. Golly, that was the fanciest "camping" tent I had ever seen, with a lot more amenities than my folks ever thought to put in our old Army tent!

So, to the DSHS history guru, Norm, it is clearly not Lytton Lake, and to me, it will always be the Catfish Pond. I think now we know why it doesn't show on the old topo map of Herb's, the one glued to the fabric, dating back to late 1800's, very early 1900's. The pond wasn't created until the lodge was built. If you look carefully at the photo of Lena and Herbert skating on that pond (February, 2010 Issue of the DSHS Newsletter), behind them you can see the snow that was cleared, and a railing. Could that be the platform, perhaps removed for winter???

Milli Martin

Donner Summit History Detectives

The Catfish Episode

Milli's article about the catfish pond of her youth is interesting and it brings to mind other catfish stories. There is a rumor of the historical nature, that Chinese workers on the transcontinental railroad stocked ponds along the route with catfish to supplement the diets provided by the railroad. It sounds like a good idea, if you like catfish. What could be nicer in a time when there were no supermarkets to have a source of fresh seafood (or pond food in this case)?

The story sounds a bit unbelievable though. After all Donner Summit is 7000 feet in elevation. We get over thirty feet of snowfall a year and it gets cold. The ice in some lakes on the summit gets to be between four and five feet thick. That will freeze solid smaller ponds and one would think it would make catfish survival problematical.

Still, there may be some truth to the stories. Mark McLaughlin, the "Storm King" and historical author says in a web article, "Chinese Catfish Pond: Donner Pass" that he thinks the stories are true. First there are catfish in ponds all along the railroad route. Norm Saylor, of the Donner Summit Historical Society, says the catfish get larger with the decrease in elevation, which makes sense. There are no indigenous catfish in the Sierra which means the catfish had to come from somewhere. McLaughlin says the CPRR supplied the Chinese with fresh seafood and so maybe the cooks stocked nearby ponds. The Chinese worked on Tunnel 6 for two years. If the catfish story is true, then since the Chinese were in the neighborhood for a long time, shouldn't there be a pond or two resident catfish? Mark went out looking and found a nice pond stocked with



The catfish pond south of Lake Angela today. Top next page, some of the many catfish coming for snacks.

catfish just south of Lake Angela which is a reservoir on the Summit. The catfish in this Summit pond are only five to six inches long. Life must be hard in that pond.

I took a trip to the Summit to find the pond which was easily done. Indeed there are catfish there as you can see in the picture here from September, 2010.

Are the non-indigenous catfish descendants of Chinese planted fish? We can't say, because like most day-to-day activities, they were not recorded. We do know though that fish stocking was done at the time in California. B.B. Redding, a railroad land agent among other things knew a lot of about fish culture from his time back east. He was on the Summit. His brother Fitz William Redding was the first settler at the Summit's Serene Lakes (AKA Ice Lakes) and we know he is the first person to have stocked those lakes with trout, probably from the American River, which brother B.B. had visited and fished, and which was only a few miles away. If Fitz William could stock fish and they survived, couldn't the Chinese have done so as well?



Take a walk up to the catfish pond. Bring a little bread as an offering and you'll soon have lots of catfish coming to visit.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Ski at</p> | <p>Double Chair Lift J-Bar Lift - Free Parking Slopes Packed Daily by Sno-Cat Run the "Flying 40" Eat at the "Snowflake"</p> |
| <p>SODA SPRINGS</p> | |
| <p>CERTIFIED SKI SCHOOL WHERE THE INSTRUCTORS ARE SKI INSTRUCTORS</p> | <p>SKI THE RELAXED WAY</p>  <p>WITH BUEK THE</p> <p>DIRECTOR CO-DIRECTOR CARL BUEK GRATS POWERS</p> |
| <p>BUEK SKI SHOP Soda Springs - Calif.</p> | |

1953 ad from The Skier magazine. The Buek ski shop.

DONNER SUMMIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Membership 2010

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

_____ New Membership

_____ Renewing Membership

_____ Individual Membership - \$30

_____ Family Membership - \$50

_____ Patron - \$500

_____ Benefactor - \$1000

_____ Business - \$250

_____ Business Sponsor - \$1000

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(Please mail this card with your check payable to DSHS to Donner Summit Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, Norden, CA 95724)

_____ Friend Membership - \$100

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Zuendt, Bill & Diane

1930's Donner Summit Topo



The Topo

The map on page 11 is a map of the Donner Summit and environs. There is no date on it which makes dating hard. But there are clues.

First, the map came from Milli Martin, who traveled all the way from her home in Homer, Alaska to join the DSHS at the Second Annual Pioneer Awards. She arrived with lots of Donner Summit artifacts: pictures, maps, newspaper articles, and other ephemera (that word has just been sitting in my vocabulary waiting to be used). One of the ephemeron (that's really a word) was a map used by Milli's uncle and aunt, Herb and Lena Frederick. They use to run the Norden Store and Milli wrote about them in our February and October, 2010 newsletters.

The Fredericks were avid outdoors people enjoying the Summit in all seasons. As one travels the mountains one should take a map and compass. Today a GPS has maps in it. Before GPS we took topographic maps. Herb and Lena's map is an old topo modified for regular use. Someone trimmed the original map of its irrelevant parts and then cut it into rectangles. Each rectangle was glued to a piece of cloth separated from its neighbors by an eighth of an inch or so. That way the map could be folded to fit easily in a pocket and could be folded and refolded over and over. Indeed it has been folded and refolded, most recently as we explored it. Look at the map and see the cloth between map rectangles. You can buy plastic coated topos today, but this cloth one seems to do the trick for less money

Now to the dating. Look at the map and note that there is no freeway. It must be before 1960. That's no big deal; we have lots of those maps. Next, look near Soda Springs. There is no Van Norden. There is no dam. There's no lake there now either but there was from the early 1900's until the 1970's. The map shows "Summit Valley." Palisade Lake does not have a name which may not be a big deal. Serene Lakes, just outside of Soda Springs, is named Sereno Lakes. That's a name that appears on 19th century maps. Sereno Lakes is also shown to be three lakes not the two that are there today. A dam was built in the 1940's and Lake Sybil was no more. The road to the Cedars also goes across the lakes not around them as it does now. Donner Lake has no buildings except for "Lake House" at the eastern end. Soda Springs is called "Soda Springs Station" stemming from the days when the train stopped there and people would hop onto the stage to head for the real "Soda Springs" which you can also see. Notice that there are few buildings on the map.

20 Mile Museum - Our Experiment Needs Improvement

The note about our 20 Mile Museum last month drew three responses so we thought we'd try again.

We've received a lot of good comments about our 20 Mile Museum and our Highway 40 brochures (taking Old 40 from Rocklin to Truckee). Those are just two of our initiatives.

You can see the 20 Mile signs on our web page if you have not had time to see each one personally: <http://www.donnertsummithistoricalociety.org/pages/20milmuseum.html>. It's particularly nice to see families stopping by the roadside to read and enjoy the signs.

We hope you are as happy as we are with the project.

We were experimenting. We'd never done something like that before. As the summer progressed we saw that despite the recommended UV shields, the ink in many of the signs just did not stand up to our Sierra sun.

Doing some further research we were connected to a company that can print signs with ten year guarantees using a better twelve ink process. Their signs are used in many National and state parks as well as in other outdoor locations. Their sample is absolutely vivid and the ten year guarantee is very attractive.

We will be reprinting our first year's crop of signs. Most will be reprinted this winter and others next summer because they are still functional.

Reprinting the signs on one piece plastic, enabling us to dispense with the UV covering and the attendant condensation will cost us \$192.00 each. So we are looking for a little help to pay for the replacement signs.

If you'd like to help, you can send a check to our PO box 1 Norden CA 95724. Please note on your check that you are directing this to our 20 Mile signs.

Thanks for the help.