



Founded July 24, 1968 and
designated a 501(c)(3) in July 1971

Truckee Donner Historical Society
P.O. Box 893
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ECHOES FROM THE PAST

JUNE 2014 ISSUE 2

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Membership:

Wow, our second newsletter! We are blessed to have Heidi Sproat as a volunteer - so wonderful to be able to be in touch again with all of you.

Here are some statistics I hope you will find to be of interest. We currently have approximately \$19,000 in our operation cost funds (Budget monies plus contingency fund) and another \$9,000 put away in a money market for special projects. We could not be this solvent without your support. I cannot thank you enough for being our members and for the extra donations throughout the year. Our ultimate goal is to get enough monies set aside and start an endowment fund for the Society and also the Old Jail Museum.

On any given Thursday we enjoy at the minimum of 10 to our most of 23 people stopping by the Joseph Research Library to partake in their personal research activities or to just visit.

We are now open on Sundays from Noon to 4 p.m. and although it is not as busy as a Thursday it is still an enjoyable time.

By the time you read this we will have had a couple Truckee Old Jail Museum Clean Up Days to prepare for the upcoming 2014 summer season opening. We are setting our docent scheduling calendar now for the season, so as a reminder to anyone that may be able to fill in some hours; we will be open Thursday Evenings, during Truckee Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday and Sundays 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Thursday shifts include two people inside and one outside to be a bike valet for Truckee Thursdays. Saturday and Sunday are minimum of two volunteers. Please [contact us](#) if you have some time available.

The Town of Truckee will be starting the Brickelton Streetscape and Sidewalk project after July 4th but we will still be open at the Old Jail Museum during construction. For Streetscape details, please visit <http://bit.ly/1qG3R53>. The Society has also applied for redevelopment funds to work on the driveway area next to the Old Jail Museum. If the funds are approved, then that work will be done concurrently. We are looking into whether or not the town has a parking program that we would pay for so that the docents can park without paying during their volunteer time.

All in all we are very busy and we hope we are improving in a way that the membership can be proud of.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 24 - Shaffer Cemetery Cleanup

May 26* - Annual Memorial Day Ceremony
Sierra Mountain Cemetery, 10 a.m.
(Rain or Shine)

May 26* - after the Memorial Day Ceremony,
Special Old Jail Museum Opening

May 27 - Veterans Hall Fundraiser, 6 - 10 p.m.

June 12 - Old Jail Museum
Official Opening Day for Summer 2014 5 p.m.
(for the first 2014 Truckee Thursday)

June 27*, Sept. 18*
Truckee History Alive! Series
7 p.m., Vet's Hall

July 12 - Truckee Air Fair, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

July 19 - Old Timers' Picnic and
Truckee History Day at the
Truckee River Regional Park, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

August 7 - Truckee Thursday
Volunteer Booth Night

September 30 - Membership Dinner at The
Lodge Restaurant & Pub in Tahoe Donner 6 p.m.

* Please Note: The dates were incorrect in the last issue of
Echoes From The Past. Our apologies.
(More event info on page 7)

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Photo courtesy of Library of Congress,
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/highsm.23384>

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA MURAL LISTED IN LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

For any visitor who enters historic downtown Truckee, California, it would be hard to miss the giant mural on the side of the building with the skier.

Local artist Rob McCarthy, of McCarthy Sign Co., painted the mural in 1993. Photographer Carol M. Highsmith donated her collection of photographs to the Library of Congress ("LOC") and this photo is now included in that LOC collection, accessed in 2012, as well as nineteen other images available at this link , <http://1.usa.gov/1m2wvYM> . The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Gift; The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation in memory of Jon B. Lovelace; 2012; (DLC/PP-2012:063).

If you missed the Inaugural *Truckee History Alive!* series which commenced on March 27, 2014 with Captain John Sutter appearing, take note of the second one in the series, **June 27 with Cathryn Fairlee as Virginia Reed Murphy at Veterans Hall, at 7 p.m.** Full Details will be emailed to those on our TDHS eNews mailing list. If you would like to subscribe to our TDHS eNews, please visit our website at www.truckeehistory.org and sign up. Photos from Captain Sutter's March visit will also be included in that email.

An article appeared in the Sierra Sun on Thursday, February 1, 2001 entitled "The stones that tell of Truckee's history" by then TDHS President Guy Coates. It is reprinted here with permission from the author. The article appeared on page 3B, but it does not appear to be available online.

THE STONES THAT TELL OF TRUCKEE'S HISTORY

During the last three Ice Ages, glaciers covered the Truckee River basin and surrounding mountains, carving out Donner Lake and many other lakes.

Much evidence of this glacial action can still be seen by examining the smooth and striated rock along old Highway 40 along Donner Pass. To the east, today's Nevada desert was covered by a huge inland sea.

The earliest known inhabitants to occupy the Truckee area were prehistoric nomadic tribes who spent their winters in the Nevada desert and California valleys. During the summers these ancient hunters climbed both sides of the Sierra into the high country.

These inhabitants, believed to be ancestors of the Washoe, Maidu and Paiute Indian tribes, traveled through the pristine mountain meadows and forests collecting edible and medicinal roots, seeds, and marsh plants. In the higher elevations they manufactured stone tools and hunted local game and fished in the many lakes and streams while living in temporary brush shelters.

Archaeological evidence of these ancient people who returned year after year during the Middle Archaic Period can be found in petroglyphs carved into solid granite near the

crest of Donner Summit as well as in the abundance of flaked stone artifacts, broken tools and dart points which have been discovered throughout the Truckee basin.

When Stampede Dam was completed in 1969, an ancient Indian ceremonial circle of stones in Stampede Valley dating back 15,000 years was carefully removed to an area adjacent to Truckee River Regional Park and placed exactly in their original position by volunteers and members of the Truckee-Donner Historical Society under the direction of Carroll Maynard, Roy Baker and Dorothy Fordham.

In 1983 an archaeological excavation at the location of today's McDonald's restaurant revealed that the site was associated with a large prehistorical Indian camp dating back 3,500 years. The findings included layer after layer of stone artifacts indicating that the site was once a major tool manufacturing area.

Resident archaeological Susan Lindstrom has found evidence of a Washoe village at the mouth of Donner Creek and other sites all along Interstate 80. Donner Lake park and throughout the Truckee River basin Today's "bug station" sits atop a large site dating back 8,000 years.

In one study Lindstrom noted that downtown Truckee rests on top of a former Washoe Indian village named "K'ubuna detde'yi," and below Truckee, at Trout Creek, was another village site named "Pele ma'lam detde'yi." The Washoe name for the Truckee River was "a'wakhu wa't'a."

Perhaps the most tangible reminder of Truckee's Native American roots sits to the hillside above the Town of Truckee. **Rocking Stone Tower** is believed to be one of 25 such stones known in the world.

Continued on page 6

**ARCHITECT OF THE TRUCKEE
MEMORIAL VETERANS BUILDING
George Clinton Sellon AIA (1881 - 1954)**

By Karl Pape

On the site of the McGlashan Mansion stands the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building. The building has always seemed a little out of place, but it is a significant stop in the progression in style of the architect George Clinton Sellon AIA. Born in San Francisco in 1881, the grandson of Judge Sellon a Forty-niner and notable jurist, he later moved to Chicago where he finished high school and began his work in architecture. (See Editor's Note.)

He returned to Sacramento in 1907 and was appointed as the California State Architect by Governor Gillette in 1907. For the next three years he designed state buildings, notably San Quentin Penitentiary, The California Building at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle and the Agnew State Hospital (The entrance road was named after him, "Sellon Circle"). After he left the position as State Architect in 1911 he began a practice that produced public and private structures up to his death in 1954.

In 1938 he designed the Truckee Memorial Veterans Building under a contract with Nevada County. The architectural style was "pointed arch" or "gothic" a progression from the previous Classical Revival style.

In a 1998 California Department of Parks and Recreation survey, the report concluded that the building was "the only one of its type architecturally" and "The building is recommended to be a contributory property to the proposed Truckee Historical District which reflect the changes in the community and architecture during this transitional period between the

Gateway and Modern years."

Many of his buildings have been noted as National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

As Sellon continued his career he progressed through a number of styles, below are some examples. Many of his buildings have been noted as National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and by local historical organizations.

Following are some examples of his work:

- 1907 - Inescapable, San Quentin Penitentiary - San Quentin, Marin County
- 1907 - Mediterranean Revival, Agnew State Hospital, Santa Clara, Santa Clara County NRHP
- 1908 - Gothic, Sonoma State Hospital Administration Building, Marin County, NRHP
- 1909 - Spanish Renaissance, Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition - Seattle
- 1909 - Bungalow/Craftsman, Prairie School Style, Cranston-Geary House - Sacramento County, NRHP
- 1912 - Spanish Colonial Revival, Granite Center School, Folsom, Sacramento County, Folsom List of Historic Places, NRHP Candidate
- 1917 - Classical Revival, Old County Courthouse - Susanville, Lassen County, NRHP
- 1920 - Neo-Classical, County Courthouse - Quincy, Plumas County
- 1922 - Classical Revival, Tehama County Courthouse - Red Bluff, Tehama County
- 1926 - Chicago Vertical/Renaissance Revival, Cal-Western Building (Sacramento's first skyscraper, 14 stories) now Citizen's Hotel,

Sacramento County

- 1926 - Mediterranean Revival, Colusa High School, Colusa County, NRHP
- 1930 - Spanish Colonial Revival, Ramona Building, Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources, Sacramento County
- 1932 - Art Deco, County Courthouse - Nevada City, Nevada County, Listed in the Guide to Art Deco in America
- 1935 - Art Moderne, Auburn City Hall and Fire House - Auburn, Placer County, NRHP Candidate
- 1938 - Gothic, Truckee Veterans Memorial Building - Truckee, Nevada County
- 1939 - Art Deco, Old County Courthouse - Jackson, Amador County
- 1954 - Modern, County Courthouse - Downieville, Sierra County

A final note: We are continually finding and seeking new information about George C. Sellon and the Truckee Memorial Veterans Building. If you have any information about this building or it's architect please



Veterans Memorial Building.

Photo courtesy of Heidi Sproat, April 20, 2014

Editor's Note: This editor searched for a photograph of architect Sellon, but instead stumbled upon an April 29, 1906 newspaper article that recounted how George Clinton Sellon accompanied a group of 14 other architects from Chicago who went to the aid of San Franciscans after the 1906 Earthquake. Link = <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/34518884/>

LITTLE KNOWN TRUCKEE FACTS

- 1863** – 44 men Registered for the Civil War from the Truckee Area which included Dog Valley, Stampede and Truckee Lake.
- 1870**- First census, 1675 People
- 1871** – Fire on River Front forces Red light district to relocate to Jibboom Street
- 1875**- Jake Teeter opened Truckee's first Fish Market, imported lobsters, oysters, etc.
- 1879** – First move to incorporate Truckee
New invention on exhibit at Hurd's Hall: the Phonograph!

WHERE THE HAY IS GELATT, CA?

By Chaun Mortier

Tucked up against the mighty granite hill and nestled next to the beautiful lakeside, the small locale of Gelatt, California was given birth.

Of course, not known by this name today, it holds its story still the same. June 14, 1919 was the beginning of this location and it continued on for many years after that. During the summer of the years 1923-1935, it had its own post office stamp and was a thriving scene for those that enjoyed the Truckee summers.

So that doesn't answer the first question does it? Let's try Donner Camp. Okay still not ringing any bells? Truckee Donner Recreation and Parks, West End Beach, West End Homeowner's Beach? Ah, now it makes sense.

There have always been those that saw the potential in the tourist trade for Truckee and Wallace B. Gelatt was among those, if not in the lead. World War I had ended in November 1918 and America was still in a recovery stage. The need for relaxation was at a peak and Mr. Gelatt provided that by developing the west End of Donner Lake as a summer camp area.

Continued on page 7

Echoes From The Past Newsletter

Stones article continued from page 3

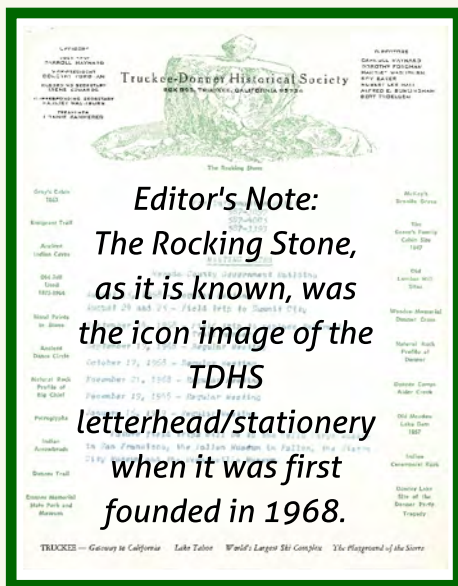
Reminiscent of a Druid monument, Rocking Stone has diligently stood guard over the community as long as anyone can remember. At one time the slightest breeze or touch of the hand could set the 17-ton smaller boulder rocking.

According to a Washoe Legend, the large flat rock provided a place where the ancient hunters could dry their food, while the continuous movements of the smaller stone kept it safe from scavenging birds and animals. It was also believed that Rocking Stone was a very sacred place that served as a natural altar to worship the Spirit God.

"This story may well be a local non-Washoe legend," says Lindstrom. I have never found any ethnographic evidence to support it."

One geologist recently examined the site believes that native tribes painstakingly chipped away the other rock to flatten the top and somehow rolled the smaller boulder on top, thus creating a primitive monument. Other experts believe that Rocking Stone is merely a relic of the glacial age.

While experts may never agree on its origin, there is little doubt that it must have provided ancient people a first-class view of the 20 mile-long lake that once covered the entire Truckee basin.



VETERANS HALL FUNDRAISER

The Friends of the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building are holding a fundraising event noted below on May 27th. The event is to gather money to begin the restoration and renovation of this historic structure. The building and its history are highlighted in the Truckee Donner Historical Society's June 2014 *Echoes From The Past* newsletter. We're suggesting a \$10 donation, but any amount is appreciated.

If you cannot attend the fundraising event, but would like to contribute to the cause, a check can be written to: The Truckee Donner Recreation and Parks District with a note stating contribution "for the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building" and sent to: Friends of the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building, c/o Dan O'Gorman, Truckee Donner Recreation and Parks District, 8924 Donner Pass Road, Truckee, CA 96161.

Most of all, this event is to preserve for the community a remembrance of those veterans past, present and future who have or will serve our country.

Fundraiser for YOUR Veterans Memorial Hall Building!

@ Bar of America
May 27th - 6-10pm

Multiple Bands - Drink Specials

Come on down & celebrate our town!

We're making great progress, stop by & see for yourself how this building will once again be the pride of Truckee.

Special thanks to Bar of America, the Bands, the Friends of the Vets and You

Gelatt article continued from page 5

As summer approaches and if you might be spending time at the West End beach, sit for a moment and reflect on days gone by. Ninety-five years later, it is still a place for families to gather and enjoy time together. Happy Anniversary Mr. Gelatt!



Donner Camp

Photo courtesy of Truckee Donner Historical Society



Top, front of postcard; Bottom, back of postcard stamped Gelatt, Calif. Aug 9, P.M., 1925

Photos courtesy of Truckee Donner Historical Society

Please get involved with your Truckee Donner Historical Society (TDHS). The only way we can offer programs and events is if YOU, as a volunteer, step up and get involved. TDHS is an all-volunteer, 501 (c)(3) organization so any and all donations are gratefully appreciated and tax deductible. Our mailing address is Truckee Donner Historical Society, P.O. Box 893, Truckee, CA 96160.



Donner Camp

Photo courtesy of Truckee Donner Historical Society

Continued from page 1

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Additional information:

Who: Cathryn Fairlee as Virginia Reed Murphy

What: The second of the Truckee's History Alive! Series for 2014

When: Friday, June 27, 2014, at 7 pm

Where: Veterans Hall, 10214 High Street in Truckee

Why: To delight and enlighten the Truckee-Tahoe community with a local history program series

Contact: The Truckee Library 530-582-7846

How: Portrayal of Virginia Reed Murphy performed in Chautauqua-style.

In addition to the scheduled events listed in the Calendar of Events on page 1, there are several other events whose dates have not yet been set. Please check our website at www.truckeehistory.org for those dates to be announced. Those events may include:

- * Railroad Society History Day
- * Donner Hike
- * Mystic Hike
- * Field Trip to Pyramid Lake Tribe Museum



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Enclosed please find my check for: **MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES** (please check one)

Junior (under 18 yrs old) \$10____ Individual \$20____ Family \$30____ Business \$40____

Non-Profit Organization \$25____ Sustaining \$75____ Contributing \$100____ Other Donation \$____

SPECIAL DONATIONS: Gift Membership \$____ In the Name of _____

MEMORIAL DONATION \$____ In Honor of _____

Other \$____ () Old Jail Museum () Joseph Research Library () _____

Contact me on ways I can volunteer Are you willing to docent at the Old Jail

Museum? Yes / No

Areas of Special Interest and/or Comments/Suggestions:

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