

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



What is this???? see p. 2



Truckee Donner Historical Society
P.O. Box 893
Truckee, CA 96160
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www.truckeehistory.org

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

MARCH 2016 ISSUE 1

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Springtime is approaching and for us that means a lot of fun and work. There are many things on the agenda in preparation for the opening of the jail for the season.

The Town of Truckee anticipates that they will be starting the work on Phase 3 of the Brickelltown project which will also include the re-grading and installation of pavers in our driveway. We will be monitoring this project to be able to gather any artifacts that pop up. This project also includes bringing electricity to the Memorial Garden so we can put in some lighting. We enjoy people using the garden as much as they do but unfortunately some of the very late night activities are not what we want. So to help out the local constabulary we are looking to put some type of unobtrusive motion lighting to discourage its use at night.

At the same time, we will be doing some clean up and planting in the Garden. We planted quite a few drought resistant plants last year and will be planting more this year while we are repairing the watering system. Volunteers Greg Zirbel, Karl Pape and Dennis Beeghly worked hard bringing stones from the Town Hall that were saved for us. When the fire wall fell down to the East of Moody's, all the rocks were saved for our use so another piece of Truckee's history is in the Garden.

If you haven't visited our new website at www.truckeehistory.org, please take the time to do so. Heidi Sproat and Billie Cornell, with help from Robert Bousquet of New Leaders, have done an amazing job and I am very proud of the new site. We are continually working on adding pages that will benefit the society and let the public know what we do have available in the way of research items.

Our representation on the Truckee History Museum committee has been an amazing experience. It is a joy to work with the representatives from the Truckee Donner Railroad Society. Even though we have a long road ahead of us, we are developing a wonderful working relationship with the Railroad Society to a mutually beneficial end. Our goal is to revise the Old Jail Museum into a history of Truckee's Law Enforcement Past.

On March 1 we will have our first brainstorming session at the Old Jail Museum for the cleaning of the jail and revival of the exhibits. We will also look at the Garden and see what repairs are needed and do some cleanup.

I would like to give a very heartfelt thank you to my support team and to all the membership. You all make the job of President a joy.

Respectfully, Chaun Mortier, President

CALENDAR

Events will be posted online
at our website at this link.

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Truckee Donner Historical Society ("TDHS") Board meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 2:30 p.m. at the Joseph Research Library at 10115 Donner Trail Road, Truckee. Board meetings are open to the public.

TDHS does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information in these articles.

TDHS retains the right to republish submitted material. Please contact TDHS for permission to use any content in this publication.

Notice to Members

In 2015, the TDHS Board of Directors approved a change in membership renewal to reflect the Society's bi-annual renewal schedule - January or July. For specific details, please visit our website.

QR CODE or the squirley-looking black & white icon on the front page

Some of you may be familiar with these strange looking icons. The black & white crosshatched icon on the front page represents our new website at truckeehistory.org. If you have a "smart" phone or iPad with a 'QR Reader,' all you need do is scan your device OVER the icon and you should be directed to our website. And what would one use this for? On any printed material, you could 'scan any QR code' and be taken to their website immediately. In our case, you can go immediately to our truckeehistory.org website and see the **Calendar** for upcoming events.



SEEKING SUMMER DOCENTS FOR OLD JAIL MUSEUM

Summer will be here before you know it and starting Memorial Day through Labor Day, Truckee's Old Jail Museum will be open on the weekends, holidays and Truckee Thursdays. We are looking for docents to give visitors jail tours, some of the history of the jail and museum and Truckee in general. You don't have to be an expert in the history. The Historical Society trains and mentors docents. If you are interested please call 530-582-0893 and tell us how to contact you or e-mail the "docent master," Karl Pape at kdpape@me.com.

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.

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR!!!!

Last year we worked on the Memorial Garden area to improve the walkway from the cutoff and this year will include even more work on the garden to improve the health of the plants and continue to encourage the public to sit and enjoy it.

The Town of Truckee will be re-grading the driveway and installing pavers in up to the base of the Masonic arch. This will create a friendlier atmosphere. In conjunction with that project we will be taking a very hard look at the irrigation system and some design issues to improve the area. We worked with Village Nursery last year to pick out some drought resistant plants and those were planted around the garden. We will be going to them again this year for some advice on the irrigation system and adding other plants. We received a donation of a large number of Iris bulbs from Duane and Diane Brunson, Hirschdale, so those have been planted. Our goal is to provide as much color as we can with drought resistant plants. If anyone has any bulb type plants that they need a new home for please let us know. We don't take just artifacts!



Photos courtesy of Chaun Mortier.

VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING - INTENT TO SEEK NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK STATUS

After an in-depth initial review of available documentation about the Veterans Memorial Building (site of Charles Fayette McGlashan's original home) and the neighboring Rocking Stone Tower (formerly McGlashan's Rocking Stone Tower Museum which housed his extensive Butterfly Collection, and the relics from the Donner Party), our research staff has concluded that we are going to move forward and register Veterans Memorial Building with the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service **National Register of Historic Places**. (Form 10900). This effort is a monumental undertaking, but given the historical nature of the properties and our desire to see the area properly protected, we can do no less.

The Veterans Memorial Building was designed by famed architect George Clinton Sellon in 1939, was built and dedicated in 1941. This year, 2016, marks the 75th anniversary of the building.

To date, our TDHS research staff has consulted hundreds of newspaper and other articles dating back to the 1890s - many of which are on antiquated microfilm - reference materials, Town of Truckee documents, Nevada County records, maps, interviews, government documents, similar filings, images and other materials too numerous to list. In preparation for this submission, our staff is actively preparing a Timeline that documents the salient developments of the property where the Veterans Memorial Building now resides. That timeline will be posted on our website in the near future. Please keep your eyes open for any new developments.

We urge you to please review your personal inventories of any items- especially dated images - relating to the Veterans Memorial Building and the adjacent Rocking Stone, as well as older records about the McGlashan mansion. We ask that you contact one of our researchers should you turn up something in your search. We can be reached at (530) 582-0893 or by email to history@truckeehistory.org or info@truckeehistory.org.

PROHIBITION

By Karl Pape

Truckee has always been known as a drinking man's town. The 1911 *Truckee Republican* reported 30 saloons and suggested a petition to stop the explosion of the number of saloons. It further observed that Truckee had become a dull town due to the excessive consumption of alcohol. This all changed July 3, 1919.

From 1920 to 1933 the United States carried out a social experiment, Prohibition. Except for a few exceptions, (using alcohol, particularly whiskey, for medical use), the production and distribution of alcohol was banned. Other countries, including Canada, Iceland, Norway, Finland and Russia also experimented with one form of prohibition or another for non-religious reasons. The results were the same as in the United States, with most of the aforementioned countries abandoning their forms of prohibition by 1933.

On July 3, 1920, Prohibition became effective and most of the remaining 10 saloons in Truckee became "cafes" (speakeasies) overnight. It was illegal to advertise any alcoholic beverage and for awhile the sale of booze declined. But the citizenry of Truckee was not to be long denied their libations. If they couldn't legally buy it ... they'd make it.

During this time, a new brand of entrepreneurs, Capone, Kennedy, Rothstein, and Schultz, supplied booze to the mid west and east coast; and on the west coast there was Truckee? Yes, Truckee. Geographically, Truckee was an ideal place to produce, distribute and consume gin, whiskey and wine. The volume of distilling was so large that there was a report that the resulting mash was clogging the sewers.

There was only one road in and out of Truckee, the Old Highway 40, and for a good portion of the year it was snow bound. The only access to Truckee in the winter months was the Southern Pacific Rail Service.

The Southern Pacific supplied much of the raw material for the stills. There wasn't much in the way of grains or grapes in the Truckee area, but the Sacramento Valley

was rich in moonshiners and wine makers' material needs. Either by east bound train or over the old Highway 40, when it was snow free, Truckee became a major consumer of produce.

One grandson of a Southern Pacific Freight Manager remembers his grandfather talking about an arrangement with the Southern Pacific where in the winter months, the bootleggers would load their elixirs, labeled as innocent cargo, on the west bound trains and have them unloaded at either Colfax or Auburn, then transferred to autos and continued on to San Francisco.

Some of the old-timers also remember the winter as a time when the likes of Pretty Boy Floyd, Machine Gun Kelly and other "bad guys" would spend time in Truckee. One would think that crime would escalate, but instead it was rather peaceful. The criminals became part of the community, friendly with the bootleggers and local law enforcement. If a criminal got off of the train with ill intent, he would find that the constable and citizens would encourage him to leave immediately and he was usually on the next train out of Truckee.

After Prohibition ended in 1933, Truckee continued to produce what remained illegal alcoholic products. The federal taxes on booze was so high that it was still profitable to make the local product. But, alas, as Truckee became a tourist destination and more "civilized," the bootlegging dollars were replaced by tourist dollars.

Moonshining has never quite disappeared, nor has the Prohibition Party. This author used to read electric meters in the foothills and the Sacramento Valley and found a fair number of pump houses with the copper coils and tanks. There were few enough of these "stills" that the "feds" didn't see a need for enforcement. (Ignoring the still often led to a sample or two).

For those still fighting demon rum, a recent publication of *Atlas Obscura* noted that the Prohibition Party remains the third oldest political party in the United States. It is on the 2016 ballots for at least three states, Colorado, Arkansas, and Mississippi. Attempts are being

made to include Florida, Iowa, New Jersey, South Dakota, and several others.

So when you lift that glass of wine, whiskey or gin, do so in the rich past, present and future history of Truckee ... a responsible drinking person's town.

References:

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Truckee Republican, July, 3, 1911. Prohibition to Start.

Truckee Republican, November 6, 1919. Saloons Closing.

Provost, Robert, November 7, 2015 Interview about Southern Pacific during Prohibition.

Coates, Guy, April 4, 2002. Echoes From The Past: How Truckee survived Prohibition, *Sierra Sun*.

Richards, Gordon, 2007. Speakeasies were Truckee's answer to Prohibition. Truckee-Donner Historical Society monograph.

Giaimo, Cara, March 2016. The Prohibition Party Still Exists, *Atlas Obscura*

SNOWBALL SPECIAL

In the December 2015 issue of *ECHOES*, mention was made of '*Snowball Special*' dedicated trains that ran the railroad line from the San Francisco Bay Area after midnight to arrive in Truckee the next morning in time to participate in all the daytime snow fun. In that article, we referred the reader to an advertisement link for the train. We have since located an image of a *Snowball Special* that we thought you would enjoy. Sierra-bound passengers were eager to participate in "a royal big snow frolic."

'Snowball Special' January 1938 (below)



Photo Courtesy of Truckee-Donner Historical Society Archives

CIVIL DEFENSE CARDS AND OTHER 2015 ARCHIVE DONATIONS

Among the many donations TDHS has received throughout the years, this particular donation was an eye-opener. In the wake of the Pearl Harbor bombing on December 7, 1941, citizens of Truckee mobilized – many just four days later, December 11 – and itemized their particular trades, skills, vehicle ownership and access, and armaments including rifles, shotguns, and accompanying ammunition. These donations made to TDHS, including original Nevada County Civilian Defense Council credit-card size inventories, reveal local civilian expertise. All of the cards were completed by Truckee residents, or those who worked in Truckee - and may, in fact, have been completed in the Veterans Memorial Building itself. Two in particular state "[Air Raid Warden](#)," Truckee, CA. (See this [link](#) for more information). A sample of the card follows. On the reverse side is a right thumbprint and a place for a photo. Although neither of these cards has a photo, they are interesting in that they also complement another donation.

On 3 x 5 index cards the following categories of occupations are listed in groups and some identify unique citizen skill sets: Ambulance Driver, Pharmacist, Ski Patrol, Fireman, First Aid, Baker, Radio Equipment Operator, Nurse, and Police. There are categories of armaments and who owns what: Ammunition, Rifles, Revolvers, Shotguns, Automobiles, Trucks and Miscellaneous.

In ammunition, we have one gentleman listed with 150 rounds and 2 rifles; another with 40 rounds; another with 1 32 Rem Pump 1-22 Rem Pump; another with a 30-40 Crag; others with a 22 rifle and 32 rifle; even someone with a Luger 30 Auto Revolver. There is an electrician who owns a 1931 Chevrolet Sedan; a specialist in gas masks; a blacksmith; and a publicist.

A third category of materials includes over 150 "**Volunteer Enrollment for Defense**" [cards](#), approximately 6 ¾ x 7" in size. The cards reveal the name, residence, employer, naturalization, physical condition, radio equipment, motor vehicles, job assignment, firearms, ammunition, and other capabilities

Donations - Continued from p. 5

of individual Truckee citizens. It is fascinating to read what ordinary citizens did to mobilize immediately after December 7, 1941. These citizens preemptively subscribed to the 'eternal vigilance' doctrine. Their immediate action is noteworthy, patriotic and eye-opening for a small mountain community then comparatively untouched by modern communication media.

Among the [Civil Defense Cards](#), all dated December 1941 or January 1942, some of the more interesting occupation entries include (see endnote): a ski instructor/patrolman; forest service; rock scaling; a pre-med student at the University of Nevada; a newspaper publisher who served 2 years in Army War Service; a gentleman who "can shoot gun straight;" an Air Raid Warden; a Barber who was "willing to do anything" to assist the cause; owner of the Truckee Coca-Cola Bottling Company; an interpreter of Italian, Spanish and French; Special Police who spent 6 years in the Navy and 2 years Deputy Sheriff; 4 years Fireman and Electrician in Navy; a pharmacist of the Truckee Drug store; Pastime Club and Gateway Motel owner; pastor of the Community Methodist Church; State Highway Department of Public Works employee; wholesale lumber representative who spent 7 years as a National Guard in California and who served as a marksman. He also owned a relative arsenal including 1 30-30 rifle, 2-12 gauge shotguns, 1-38 revolver, 2 boxes 30-30 shells, 1 box 38 pistol shells and 1 box 12 gauge; likewise, a Druggist who also owned a number of firearms including a rem auto rifle, 69A shot gun, 32 auto pistol, and assorted other firearms; Sierra Tavern manager who earned a Marksman Medal for pistol and rifle in the Marine Corps; a State Department of Agriculture employee who served as a chief observer for the 4th Interceptor Command, and Special Police; a "bouncer in speakeasy;" Division of Highways employee who held Restricted radio telephone Operator License and was then Chief Operator of Division of Highways Station KQED in Truckee; a 66 year old who "can handle any kind of firearms and shoot straight;" and an 84 year old who "at my age am willing to do anything for the defense of my country."

Donations - continued on p. 7

ON WINGS OF TERROR - WE HONOR THEM

By Heidi Sproat

You never know quite what you'll find when you're looking for something else. At the Joseph Research Library looking for map information on an entirely different topic, we came across a newspaper account of a terrible airplane crash that occurred some 70 years ago on March 20, 1946. Examining the newspaper clippings more closely, several of our volunteer researchers at the cabin were curious as to the details.

On March 20, 1946, there was a reported downed plane that crashed into the Sierra Nevada mountains about 7 miles north of Truckee near the abandoned town of Hobart Mills. Caretakers of the abandoned Pioneer Lumber camp at Hobart Mills provided an eyewitness account. It appeared that the plane disintegrated in midair and the pieces came down very hard in a heavily wooded 8-12' deep, snowy area near the swollen Prosser Creek at an elevation of about 6,500'. The C-47, sometimes affectionately nicknamed the "Gooney Bird," an Army Air Corps C-47B Skytrain #45-1085, was carrying 26 Army and Navy men, including some high ranking Army and Navy officers and many enlisted men who were en route to separation centers for discharge. One of the victims was the son of Missouri's former governor, and another was a decorated sailor with "three rows of campaign ribbons."

Several things struck us as noteworthy. The young men killed were very young, and the crash was reported to be one of the worst plane disasters in peace time. This was a terrible loss in 1946 given that World War II had ended. Recovery of those killed in the crash was physically challenging due to the remote, snowy, nighttime location. When rescuers were interviewed later, they just could not talk about the crash. More research revealed that there were 13 states whose papers had front page headlines about the crash from as far away as Augusta, Maine. But the next discovery was equally haunting.

Reading through a dozen newspaper articles about the C-47 crash, I kept noticing *ANOTHER* airplane crash on

VOLUNTEER ENROLLMENT FOR DEFENSE

Date July 14, 1942.

Full Name _____ Age 24 Sex Male

Residence Address Truckee, California Phone 1S-J

Employer None

Employer Address _____ Phone _____

Citizen Yes Naturalized _____ Native Penn

Dependents Wife

Police Record (Felonies) None

Physical Condition Fair

Present Occupation Unemployed Trade or Profession Carpenter

Military experience Vet Spanish War Police experience None

First Aid training None

Capabilities other than above Will do anything for which I am qualified.

Motor vehicles
Type and year Ford V-8 Coupe 1936

Availability After May 1st

Liability and other insurance carried on automobile Full coverage in summer

Heavy motor equipment (tractors etc.) None

Firearms None Ammunition None

Remarks At my age am willing to do anything for the defense of my country

Signature _____

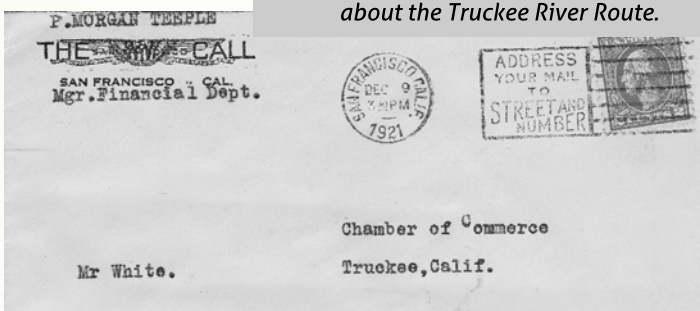
Sample Civil Defense Cards

Endnote: Out of respect for the identity of these individuals and their families, their names have been removed. All of these original donated materials are available for review in the Joseph Research Library.

Lastly, there are several original signed "petitions" supporting affirmation for the selection of the Truckee River Route vs. the Dog Valley Grade when building the then anticipated road between Reno and Truckee. The representative petition sample is stamped October 15, 1921. There was a San Francisco to Reno Highway Association headquartered in Truckee, California whose letterhead boasts "The Truckee River Route – Central and Northern California's Scenic Highway" where "Good Roads talk for Themselves." (Some of these images are on our website under Supplemental Content for March 2016 ECHOES.)

Our own TDHS Joseph Research Library also has a fascinating account of how the Truckee River Route was selected - over the Dog Valley grade through Verdi. This account was written by Wallace B. Gelatt, Manager of the Donner Lake Company and provides an insight into the history of the route.

One of the envelopes stamped Dec. 9, 1921 about the Truckee River Route.



In a September 6, 1921 *Oakland Tribune* article, "Auburn-Reno Road Survey Explained to Association," the author wrote: "The scenic beauty of this highway along the Truckee River is on an equal comparison with the Columbia River display in the state of Oregon and is worth more to the state of California from an advertising standpoint than many times its cost. This road will not be over a 3% grade on any part."

In summing up these two roads, [the Truckee River Canyon road or the Dog Valley grade road], the distance from Truckee to the state line by the Dog Valley road will be about 24 miles. The distance on the new proposed road down the Truckee river from Truckee to the state line will be about 15 miles. The Dog valley has only *one* building on the entire route with no service to the traveling public, whereas the Truckee River road will be open to the following towns with populations of about 1000 people in Boca, Floriston, Iceland, Mystic, Farad and other towns."

Finally, the Truckee River route was expected to be open about 11 months of the year whereas the Dog Valley grade only 7 months and maintenance costs were expected to be less on the Truckee River Route.

Wings of Terror - continued from p. 6

the same day, due west of the C-47 crash near Hobart Mills. Apparently, a B-29 reported engine trouble, looked for a place to land, and wound up circling blindly for over four hours in a dense fog over the San Francisco Bay with one engine "out" and fuel running low. Sadly, it crashed on a 3,820' snow-covered peak near Livermore, California, some 30 miles southeast of San Francisco. The pilot crashed only 10' from the peak's top. Another seven crew were killed.

Here is a sample of the headline from one of the newspaper clippings we found. We pause today to remember those military men who sadly perished in those two separate airplane accidents this March 20 – 70 years ago.

Photo credit excerpt from *The Bismarck Tribune* March 20, 1946



Fear 33 Dead in 2 Plane Crashes



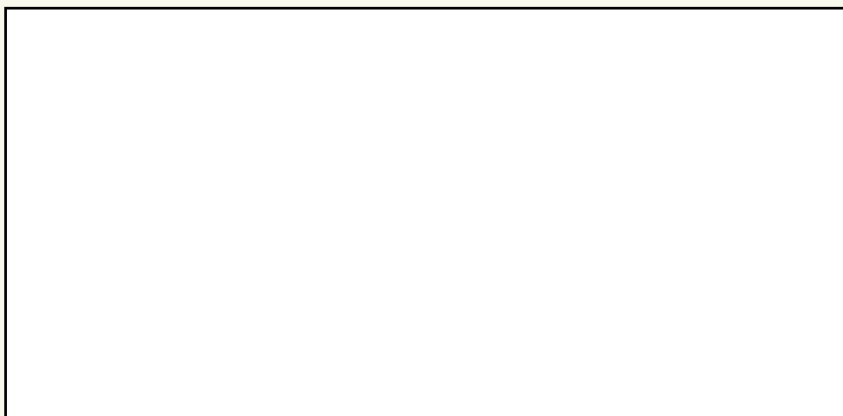
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Contact me on ways I can volunteer Are you willing to docent at the Old Jail Museum? Yes / No

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