



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

**Truckee Donner Historical Society**  
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## ECHOES FROM THE PAST

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

#### Dear Members

Our "train town" is excited to be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Added to this momentous occasion, the Society received wonderful news in February: The Town of Truckee approved use of space at the train depot for the Truckee History Railroad Museum!

The Museum is its own 501(c)(3), with members from the Truckee-Donner Historical Society and the Truckee Donner Railroad Society participating. The new museum space will allow both TDHS and TDRS to offer more exhibits in a central location downtown, still keeping the Old Jail Museum and Truckee Railroad Museums open as well. A 'soft' opening for the new museum is planned for **May 10** - the anniversary of the actual date of the driving of the Golden Spike in Promontory, Utah. Displays and exhibits will be created and installed throughout the summer.

The new museum will be open at least 5 days a week year round (per the agreement with the Town), so new docents are being welcomed to cover all those new shifts. You do not already have to know Truckee history or be a railroad expert to be a docent - your enthusiasm is your best asset. Please contact us at [info@truckeehistory.org](mailto:info@truckeehistory.org) to express your interest.

### MARCH 2019 ISSUE 1 VOLUME LIII

**Celebrating 50 years  
1968 - 2018 !!!**

Donations of photographs, documents, and artifacts continue to be catalogued by regular volunteers at the Joseph Research Library. We are often surprised at items that we come across in a file or a cabinet, something tucked away long before any of the current researchers were involved with the Society. It is like working in a gold mine - nuggets are there, you just have to

*Presidents' message continues on page 3*

### CALENDAR

Events will be posted online at our website

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Echoes From The Past Newsletter

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Webmaster* [Heidi Sproat](#)

**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.

TDHS Board of Directors will again be amending our Membership renewal schedule in 2019.

We hope you have been continuing to enjoy this quarterly newsletter. We realize that sometimes printed copies are much easier to grab, but we will continue to distribute our Newsletter electronically. As always, the newsletter will be readily available online and accessible on a quarterly basis. If you are a TDHS member, an email will be sent to you advising you of posting.

Editor's Note: This Newsletter is interactive - it is designed to be read *online* and contains links to relevant source material and in many cases, links to larger images for easier viewing.

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.

Truckee-Donner Historical Society ("TDHS") Board meetings are held on monthly at the Joseph Research Library at 10115 Donner Trail Road, Truckee.

*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.*

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keep looking. I invite you to be part of the discovery. The Joseph Research Library is open every Thursday, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Do join us, and find treasures of your own.

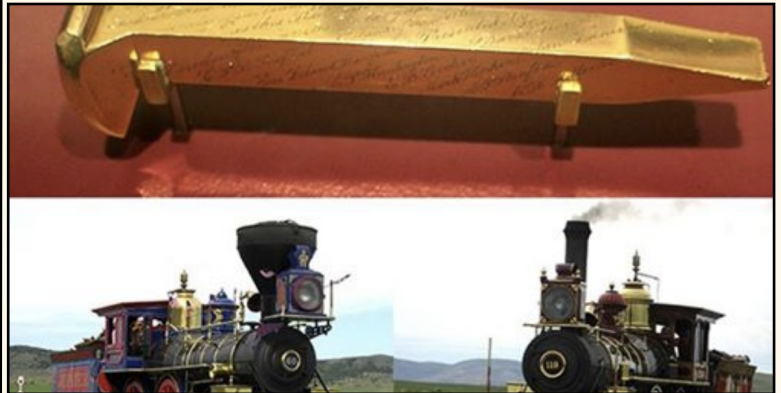
Katie Holley, President

To see more details about the combined Museum, please visit the facebook page for the Truckee History - Railroad Museum. If you would like to see a short video about the plans for the new Museum, please visit this link.

This article (right), Happy Sesquicentennial appeared in the 10 Jan. - 13 Feb. issue of Moonshine Ink. Unfortunately, we cannot locate an online edition.



2019 GOLDEN SPIKE EVENTS



If you haven't been following the information about the upcoming Sesquicentennial Celebration for Truckee in 2019, please see our Donner Summit-Truckee Golden Spike Celebration on our TDHS facebook page for more information, or our TDHS Calendar of Events.


These are just a few of the kinds of historical presentations that will be part of our celebratory 150th anniversary events:

- Railroad Snow Removal
- Transcontinental Railroad
- A City within a City -- Truckee's Chinatown
- Auto Travel to Donner Lake on the Lincoln Highway
- First Bicycle Over Donner Summit
- Lake Tahoe Railway and Transportation Company
- Ladies of Truckee's Jibboom Street
- Truckee's Ice Industry
- Theodore Judah -- Engineering Visionary for the Railroad
- The Great Bore over the Sierras

Please plan on joining us to attend these events. They will commence May 10th.

To read more about the upcoming 150th Celebration, please visit this link in our community publication, **Northwoods Tahoe**, Jan. - Feb. 2019, p. 8 (reproduced at bottom left).

**The Impact of the Railroad to Donner Summit**



One hundred and fifty years ago, on May 10, 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, forever changing the landscape of Donner Summit and the Truckee area. The railroad made traveling across the Sierras relatively painless. Instead of taking four months or more to go from New York to San Francisco, the railroad shortened the trip significantly. By 1876, the Transcontinental Express railroad made the trip cross country in less than four days!

The railroad brought both freight and travelers to Truckee. The train helped create our local lumber and ice industries. Writers and artists came to capture the beauty of the area. The railroad led the way for the first transcontinental highway system, telephone line, pipeline and postal air route. It opened Donner Summit to snow sports, summer activities and the filming of numerous movies (over 140) in the area.

The Truckee-Donner Summit Historical and Railroad Societies invite you to join us in celebrating this wondrous feat. From May 10 through Labor Day, 2019, enjoy various activities in our area including:

- 4th of July hometown parade in Truckee with a Transcontinental/Railroad theme.
- Passport program where visitors and locals can pick up 'passports' that they take to various locations around Truckee and Donner Summit to learn about our history. At each location people can get their passport 'stamped' with a unique stamp at the site.
- Steam and electric train runs at the Truckee Regional Park for children and adults.
- Then and Now displays around Truckee to see what the town looked like from 1862 to 1926.
- Throughout the summer, there will be various historical/educational walks and hikes in Truckee-Donner Summit, as well as a speaker series.
- The Old Jail and Railroad caboose museums will be open on weekends to celebrate our history.
- Look for regular articles to highlight the history of Truckee and Donner Summit.

These activities are family friendly. Look to the Northwoods Tahoe publication for a more detailed list of fun things to do while visiting Truckee and Donner Summit.

For more information and to keep up with the latest information on how to experience Truckee-Donner Summit history, visit the facebook page: Donner Summit-Truckee Golden Spike Celebration or <https://truckeehistory.org>.

To view a larger print of the article above, please click on the article, and see p. 8.



## KEN MICHAELSEN MURAL

If you haven't had a chance to see the Ken Michaelsen mural at Pizza on the Hill in the Northwoods Clubhouse in Tahoe Donner, you might want to stop in and take a look. ***The Western Movement through the Donner Pass*** and other historical notes mural. The mural was originally unveiled January 30, 1972 by Jack Kirby, then President of Lakeword (Lakeworld), a division of Dart Industries, the developer of Tahoe Donner, then TDHS President, Mrs. Dorothy Mae Fordham, and then Tahoe Donner Acting General Manager David Hanley. The mural was dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Truckee-Donner-Lake Tahoe area. Of particular interest are the notes around the map. The Map Legend includes the Donner Trail, California Emigrant Trail, Southern Pacific Railroad Route, Pony Express Route, Overland Stage, the John C. Fremont Route, and the Oregon Trail.

Other historical notes include: 1 – railroad pushes through 1865; 2 – Oxen used for log hauling; 3 – Fremont Discovers Tahoe; 4 – James Marshall discovers gold; 5 – first wagon train to California; 6 – Emigrant Gap Road; 7 – Central Overland Stage 1859-1865; 8 – Pony Express; 9 – Transcontinental Railroad; and 10 – the Oregon Trail. If you would like to read any of these historical notes, please visit this link to see the **images** of all the photos that were taken by Ed Czerwinski in May 2018.

If you click on the image link above, you will be able to view much clearer images of the entire mural as well as its individual parts.





## MOVIE UPDATES

By Ron Rettig and Heidi Sproat

Our resident movie expert, Ron Rettig, came across a 1928 silent movie *Red Dance*, which shows a horse-drawn sled going past the then 10 year old Pioneer Monument. When you watch the movie, notice the old Wohlbruck "canteen", the snow-covered building in the right of the screenshot below. The Donner Summit Historical Society's research efforts unearthed this image of T.C. Wohlbruck's Canteen Service Station B in this image link (see pages 2-3) from Norm Saylor's photo collection. Note too Wohlbruck's business card dated September 1921 which lists Truckee as Canteen Service Station B next to the Pioneer (Donner) Monument.



Screenshot, above, taken from 1928 *Red Dance*.

Although a silent movie, *Red Dance* was one of the first to be released with synchronized music and sound effects (Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Red\\_Dance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Red_Dance)). The Russian storyline, although a bit preposterous, is not unusual for the movie era at the time. The movie was filmed in part in Truckee.

In addition to the Donner Monument, there is a shot in the movie of an airplane taking off from Airport Flats (at end of film, 1:56), with Boca in the background (top right).



## MISCELLANEOUS TIDBITS

(1) Browsing through W.F. Edward's 1883 *Tourist Guide and Directory of the Truckee Basin*, "Republican" Job Print, we noted this about the Old Truckee Jail, p. 109.

Committee.

**THE TRUCKEE JAIL.**—This public institution, small as it is, has been of incalculable service to the officers of Truckee. It stands in the rear of Grazier & Stoll's saloon, and is a solid building. It was completed in September, 1875, and the first prisoner was a rough known as William Hart, who was incarcerated for fighting, and received a fine of \$40.

## (2) 1882 FOUNDATION RAILROAD TOUR BROCHURE

If you've not read through the 1882 Foundation's 20 page Railroad Tour Brochure titled "**Exploring the Path of Chinese Railroad Workers**", it is exceptionally well done and worth the read. Topics include: Bloomer Cut, Cape Horn Passage, Secret Town Fill, Summit Tunnel, Summit Camp & Central Shaft, China Wall, and Tahoe Catfish Pond. The brochure can be found at this link. (NOTE: The 1882 Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, which seeks to broaden public awareness of the history and continuing significance of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882). The historical photographs, many of which are "then" and "now" comparisons, are very interesting.

*Tidbits continued on page 6*

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*Tidbits continued from page 5*

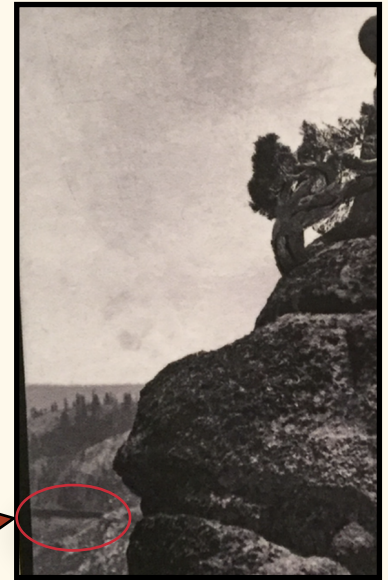
The Tahoe Catfish Pond section, p. 19, was particularly interesting as we believe that this "pond" has also been referred to as 'Maiden's Retreat'. No one we have contacted so far can definitely attest to both names referring to the *SAME* Catfish Pond, but we are still exploring that possibility. To date, we have found only one map that specifically references Maiden's Retreat, and even that map may have been altered from the original Donner Summit Topozone map which does not so identify the pond. (Conjecture on our part, but maybe the "pond" is somehow affiliated with Ann Brigman's early 1900 photographs. See article on Anne Brigman photographic collection below).

**(3) ANNE BRIGMAN EXHIBITION**

On Saturday, January 12, volunteer Barbara Czerwinski and Heidi Sproat ventured down to Reno to view Anne Brigman's photographic exhibition at the Nevada Museum of Art. Who was Ann Brigman? Brigman (1869-1950), is best known for her iconic landscape photographs made in the early 1900s depicting herself and other female nudes outdoors in the Sierra Nevada. Controversial at the time of their original release, there are over 300 photographs that chronicle Ms. Brigman's life exploring various geographical areas including the Sierra Nevada mountains, Yosemite, and the California Coast. Several of Ms. Brigman's photographs include views of the snow shed tunnels with Donner Lake in the background. The exhibit only ran through January 27, 2019, but we were fortunate to see some of these images of places that this year, 2019, marks the Sesquicentennial of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad through Truckee, and ironically, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Ms. Brigman's birth. To get an idea of the kinds of images, go to google images and search on her name. There is one particular photograph we are trying to obtain permission to republish in its totality, because we believe it shows the railroad snowsheds along the Shallenberger Ridge. As yet, however, we have not received permission to republish it. Stay tuned.

Brigman's connection to Truckee? In 1905, Photographer Anne Brigman did a portrait of Nonette V. McGlashan of Truckee. They were contemporaries with San Francisco artist groups.

*Cropped screenshot, right, of one of Brigman's images. We believe this view is from atop Donner Peak. It shows the train snowshed on the lower left along Shallenberger Ridge.*



**(4) Theodore Judah and the Blazing of the First Transcontinental Railroad Over the Sierra Nevada** by J. David Rogers, March 2018 ; <https://bit.ly/2U3oxZi>  
This is an intriguing history of the Civil Engineer Judah and how the railroad would not have been built on its existing route had it not been for Judah's direction, foresight, and vision.

**(5) The life of noted Truckee lumberman, E.J. Brickell, is presented in a new book by Mr. Brickell's grandson, James E. Brickell. The book, *The Lion in the Shadows* (2018), by Brickell, James E. and King, Chuck, explores the fascinating life of E.J. Brickell, and how and what he did in Truckee before he moved to the Spokane area in the 1880s. The book is well written and chronicles E.J.'s life in the west from Illinoistown, Placer County, earning a living mining, and his resettlement in then Coburn's Station (now Truckee) about 1867. The book is a interesting look at E.J.'s life and the development of the Truckee Lumber Company. There are many references to Edward's 1883 *Tourists' Guide and Directory of the Truckee Basin*. If you are at all familiar with the Truckee area in general, the book is a great insight into how the lumber industry burgeoned and prospered. In essence, one of the ways Truckee got 'put on the map.' For book purchase, click here.**



## WHAT I LEARNED IN MY CAPTIVITY

### Part II

BY Katie Holley

*This is the second of a two-part article begun in the September 2018 Echoes, in which the author recounts her experience of being inadvertently locked in the bathroom of the Joseph Research Library during which she discovers a trove of newspapers from Meadow Lake Union High School.*

The vibrant lives of the teenagers at Meadow Lake Union High School in the 1930s had held me in thrall during my 3-hour confinement (caused by a broken door latch) in the bathroom at the Joseph Research Library in the summer of 2018. I was happy ultimately to be rescued from my unexpected imprisonment, but I was happy also to have been introduced to the youthful students of Truckee through the quarterly student newspaper, *The Static*.<sup>1</sup> Their world of academics, theater, sports, romance, and pride in their community is an intriguing one, and worth considering in more depth.

In the 1930s the student population at Meadow Lake Union High School was small in number, sometimes with eight students per grade,<sup>2</sup> sometimes with no one in a grade at all. In the winter of 1938, Ray Saibini was the only student in the Sophomore class.<sup>3</sup> Some students moved on and off the hill with the seasons, some going to Reno,<sup>4</sup> some going farther west in California.<sup>5</sup> Getting another student in your class was something to take note of and celebrate.<sup>6</sup>

Winter weather often kept the girls inside studying during the period that would be used for physical education during fine weather. The boys spent time skiing and ice skating, but at least in the early 1930s the girls did not appear to be encouraged to do the same. By 1937 this pattern had begun to change, as the Sports section reported that some of the girls had found good skating on the river, and that they were waiting for snow so that "they may indulge in winter sports of which so many of them are fond."<sup>7</sup>

Springtime in 1936 drew the boys' baseball team onto the field, with Frank Giovannoni showing such promise as a pitcher that some thought he might head to a big league. Angelo Besio earned the title of "home run king" because of his tendency to hit balls consistently into the stands.<sup>8</sup>

Skiing was a passion for Frank "The Great" Titus and Robert Bowers. In the fall of 1937, the boys convinced the student council faculty advisor Mr. Hofmann to urge the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to hold the state meet in Truckee.<sup>9</sup> (As a collegian, Frank Titus was on the University of Nevada Ski Team.<sup>10</sup>)

Boys enjoyed hunting season in the mountains. Karl Kielhofer was lucky to "bag his buck" in the 1937 season, as no other high school boys were successful in hunting.<sup>11</sup> The following year Jack Tolles and Keith Weeden together bagged a buck weighing 180 lbs.<sup>12</sup>

Organized sports at the school were weather dependent. In an early example of some disparity in opportunity offered to girls and boys, the girls often had to stay idle when the boys were permitted to go outdoors to get physical exercise in the snow. In fair weather the boys and the girls both wanted to be able to use the fields or the sports court. A compromise was reached in the fall of 1938 regarding access to the sports court. The agreement decided upon by the faculty was that the girls could use the court on Mondays and Wednesdays, the boys could use it on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and both groups could have access on Fridays.

Some girls were undeterred by previous low expectations of their gender regarding snow sports. In the spring of 1939 two girls proudly participated in the Truckee Ski Meet. No other area schools had girls in the meet. Tina Gini and Dorothy Barrett "carried away the honors in the Slalom and Cross Country respectively."<sup>13</sup>

It would be another 30 years before pioneer activist Bernice Sandler began her campaign that led to the

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*Captivity articles continues from page 7*

passage in 1972 of Title IX, prohibiting gender discrimination in public education in all 50 states. Her work benefited girls and young women wanting fair access not only to sports facilities, but also to admissions, financial aid, and other assists in pursuing education.<sup>14</sup> This champion of fairness passed away on January 5, 2019, as I was researching this article.

Someone who might have esteemed Bernice Sandler was the hearty girl who skied the 7 miles home to Hobart Mills from Truckee each weekend, then back to Truckee at the start of the week so that she could attend high school.<sup>15</sup> Typically a bus provided transportation for the Hobart Mills students, but heavy snow in the first half of February 1937 interfered, and the staff of *The Static* was "handicapped by the fact that its girls sports staff, Ida Stewart, and its joke editor are snowed in along with the other three students from that dying metropolis."<sup>16</sup>

By January 1938 the tone of some articles in *The Static* began to shift. No longer writing only about high school activities and relationships, the contributors began writing about world events. Concern about political instability in Europe and what that could mean for the youth of America in a future armed conflict underlay an editorial in the first issue of that year. Douglas Barrett had listened via radio to President Roosevelt's message to Congress urging peace, and Barrett expressed concern that he and his contemporaries would be affected by war in the years just after high school. He argued that world leaders would recognize the pointlessness of war if only they could come to Truckee to see the beauty of the forest and the sky. The young editor believed, "If more of us would get closer to Nature and God we would have a peace insurance policy that would pay dividends."<sup>18</sup>

In the Thanksgiving issue of 1938, editor Tina Gini was grateful for the ocean that separated the United States from looming conflict in Europe, fearing for a civilization

*Captivity article continues on page 9*

### Hobart Mills

*Hobart Mills, north of Prosser Creek and east of Truckee, flourished from 1896 to 1936 as a lumber and mill town, but all that remains in 2019 are bronze markers at the turnoff from Highway 89 north out of Truckee.<sup>17</sup> At its peak, the town had an elementary school, post office, housing for workers and families, a mercantile, a fire department, electric lights, and a modern (for its time) sewage system. The mill closed and the town shut down in 1936.*

### Doug Barrett Serving in the War

*The Sierra Sun and Truckee Republican* issue of January 7, 1943, contained a column<sup>19</sup> written by Pvt. Doug Barrett, in which he describes the conditions as being not like "Gateway Park for the comforts of home," and shares the following:

*We came up by boat, naturally, and today I could kiss that naval recruiting man right on top of his shiny bald head for turning me down last December. Sick, friends, I'm telling you I was miserable. Max McGwinn, Hes Cardnal, Ang Besio, Ad Nelson, Bob Leamon, Bill Waters and the rest of them can have the sea. I'll admit they're better men than I am on the water. The navy is a noble organization is not praised highly enough for what they have to take. And I can tell my former School marm, Anna Munro, that that man Masefield just overdid this "take me down to the sea again" stuff.<sup>20</sup>*

*Well, that just about exhausts me so it's Merry Christmas and*

*Yours for Victory, Doug*



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*Captivity article continues from page 8 - left column*

being "demolished and desecrated by a mad-man with a megalomania" and a "continent of people living in constant fear of war and its accompanying disaster."<sup>22</sup>

By spring 1940, many European countries were already facing starvation or food shortages because of the war. Editor Dorothy Barrett promoted the "Children's Crusade for Children," an effort to raise money by children in the United States to "aid children of such war-torn countries as China, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Spain, Poland, Germany, and others."<sup>23</sup>

These young, vibrant teenagers were looking at their future, and what they saw was war. It was a sobering moment for me, upon reading their articles, to take in that for the high school students in Truckee in the 1930s, under the jokes and beyond the stage plays and sports competitions were deep fears about what was happening in Europe and what they as Americans might be called upon to do to help.

Sadly, the fears and predictions of the Meadow Lake Union High School students regarding war were realized, as many young men did fight in World War II in both the European and Pacific theaters. The five sons in the Waters family all served in the war, as did Frank Titus as a naval aviator.<sup>24</sup> Thankfully, many of those who went to serve were able to come home. Many returned to Truckee and lived full lives knowing that they had done their part for God and Country to make the world a safer place. They contributed to the rescue of the European continent and the securing of peace in the Pacific, an affirmation that the nations friendly to the United States were not alone in their struggle.

<sup>1</sup> *Chipmunk Annual*, 1935. *The Static* was named by freshman Juanita Moralez in 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Barrett, Dorothy, "Regrets and Felicitations," and "Four Plus, One Minus," under freshman section, "News of the Under Dogs" by Rosie. Meadow Lake Union High School, *The Static*, 29 Oct. 1937; [no Volume given].

<sup>3</sup> Barrett, Dorothy, "Sophomore Doings: Lamentations," , 21 Jan. 1938; [no Vol. given] pg. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Moke II, "Senior Class News: So Long Tootses," *The Static*, 21 Jan. 1938; [no Vol. given] pg. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Pierce, Mary, "Sophomore Goings On," *The Static*, 12 Feb. 1937; [no Vol. given] pg. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Petroni, Rosie, "Freshman News: Gain?" *The Static*, 21 Jan. 1938; [no Vol. given].

<sup>7</sup> *The Static*, 12 Feb. 1937.

<sup>8</sup> *The Static*, 17 Apr. 1936.

<sup>9</sup> *The Static*, 29 Oct. 1937.

<sup>10</sup> *The Static*, 2 Feb. 1940.

<sup>11</sup> *The Static*, 29 Oct. 1937.

<sup>12</sup> *The Static*, 18 Nov. 1938.

<sup>13</sup> *The Static*, 31 Mar. 1939.

<sup>14</sup> Seelye, Katharine Q., "Bernice Sandler, 'Godmother of Title IX,' Dies at 90," *The New York Times*, Jan. 8, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Stewart, Ida, "Girl's Sports: Long Distance Skier," *The Static*, 25 March, 1938. Vol. IV, Issue No. III.

<sup>16</sup> "Hobart Mills Students Snowed in Homes," *The Static*, 12 Feb. 1937; [no Volume given] pg. 12.

<sup>17</sup> The markers have images of the mill and lumber yard, the magnificent Hobart Inn, and the trestle over Prosser Creek.

<sup>18</sup> Barrett, Douglas. "Pax Regit," *The Static*, 21 Jan. 1938, pg. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Barrett, Pvt. Doug, "My Place in the Sun," *Sierra Sun* and *Truckee Republican*, 7 Jan. 1943.

<sup>20</sup> Masefield, John, "Sea Fever." <https://bit.ly/2FTn29x>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54932/sea-fever-56d235e0d871e>

<sup>21</sup> Gini, Tina, "Let Us Give Thanks," *The Static*, 18 Nov. 1938, pg 4.

<sup>22</sup> Barrett, Dorothy, "Editorial," *The Static*, 15 March 1940, pg. 2.

<sup>23</sup> TDHS archive 2016.12.46: "Letter dated 21 January 1943 to Mr. and Mrs. George B. Waters in appreciation of their five sons "have entered the armed forces of the U.S. during the current war" as follows: Edwin R. Waters AUS, Orlin O. Waters AUS, Erving D. Waters AUS, Roy F. Waters AUS, William G. Waters USNR. Signed by Henry L. Stimson, 45th U.S. Secretary of War."

<sup>24</sup> TDHS archive 2018.9 includes Frank's aviator goggles and a photograph of Frank wearing the goggles.

## 10<sup>th</sup> MOUNTAIN DIVISION

By Heidi Sproat

So very much has been written over the years about the 10th Mountain Division and its exploits that we do not want to rehash information. Many books have been written, many movies\* have been made, and many articles have been offered about the experiences of the men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.

However, stumbling on this 2015 article in *Tahoe Quarterly* about the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and seeing the dedicated road signs around the Tahoe area, I couldn't help but include a short review of a documentary of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division which I recently watched, *Fire On the Mountain*. It reminded me of the incredible sacrifices these men of the 10<sup>th</sup> endured in their mountain assaults, and of their skiing lives after the war ended. The film also specifically mentions men of the 10<sup>th</sup> - or associated with the 10<sup>th</sup> - who settled in this area or in the skiing industry and continued the skiing tradition – names like Atwater, Bechdolt, Bennett, Gratz-Powers, Klein, Knowlton, Leonard, Mikkelsen, Parker, Pfeifer, Poschman, Prager, Saylor\*\*, and so many others.

*Fire on the Mountain* is the story of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division of elite skiers and mountain climbers who were trained in mountain warfare skills in the United States at Camp Hale, Colorado, and other venues. Men were then deployed to the mountains of Italy “as an audacious fighting force” to regain ground which had been occupied by the Germans. It is a intriguing story of some 12,000 – 14,300 men training for 6 week stints at elevations of 13,000'. The men maneuvered outside while executing war game scenarios carrying 100 pound rucksacks at Mt. Rainier and Camp Hale training facilities where temperatures could reach 30 below zero. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain men trained for the demands of mountain warfare: outmaneuvering adversaries skiing, rock climbing, and mountaineering, and surviving and fighting in any weather on any terrain under any conditions. Of the 12,000 men who passed through the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division training, close to twenty percent had been recruited through the National Ski Patrol.

(*Skiing Heritage*, p. 19). During one unusually snowy winter, there was so much snow at Mt. Rainier's Paradise Lodge, the soldiers' lodging facility, that to exit, soldiers had to go to the third floor just to walk out of the building. [After Truckee's 2019 "Februburied" record snowfall amounts, this probably sounds familiar.]

The physical demands of outdoor training and perfecting cold weather survival skills prepared the men well for the exhausting rigors of mountain fighting, but nothing prepared them for the brutalities of war. The men became a very close knit brotherhood of unique outdoorsmen who were united by the rigors of skiing and outdoor physical demands. This created a sense of camaraderie that to this day remains incredibly well preserved. As the narrator says, these men were college boys and cowboys, “surefooted and sharp-witted.”

14,300 of these troops were eventually deployed to the Italian mountains to reclaim land which had been occupied by the Germans. There were hundreds of casualties and even more wounded. Sharing a love of the mountains, men who had been on that inaugural 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division assignment 50 years ago reunited to share their lives and what they had been doing since the war ended. To this day, they find it exceptionally difficult to talk about those friends and colleagues who did not make it home. The war ended, they came home, they got on with life.

In February 1995, 50 years to the day after the first mountain assault, 10th Mountain survivors reconnected and re-enacted the initial assault of Riva Ridge in the Italian Apennines mountains, but this time as 70-somethings, not robust men in their 20s. They were honored by the Italian community for their bravery and for regaining Italy's freedom, the men found the visit incredibly moving to recall the deep affection for those that didn't make it home. Atop Riva Ridge, a memorial ceremony honored those of the 10th who did not return home. The Fall 1995 issue of *Skiing Heritage* magazine (Volume 7, Number 2) is dedicated to the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain's 50<sup>th</sup> Memorial



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10<sup>th</sup> Mountain article continued from page 10

Day. It recounts much of the history of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain, elaborating on some of its members, and honoring those who served. This issue is available on google books at this link. There is also a detailed timeline (pp. 10-13) which explains how this mountain skiing training team evolved. As the editor Morten Lund wrote:

There were hundreds of veterans in their twenties eager to escape office routine that would have undoubtedly been their fate had not the war intervened. Once they had skied with the world's best, it was hard to keep 'em down on the desk chair.

The men of the 10<sup>th</sup> formed a small but determined self-selected elite that constituted a brotherhood in the sport during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The men of the 10<sup>th</sup> were the spark-plug of the rising interest in alpine skiing. **More than 2,000 veterans of the 10<sup>th</sup> became ski instructors.** [Emphasis added.]

... And many of the 8,000 who learned to ski in the 10<sup>th</sup> soon became husbands who took their wives and kids skiing at the resorts run by old buddies from the 10<sup>th</sup>. It is not too much to say that the effect on U.S. skiing was little short of miraculous." (*Skiing Heritage*, p. 3)

Not unsurprising was the relationship between engineers and ski lift builders. It seems odd to mention a tramway designed by a mining engineer in the same sentence as front-line combat. However, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division ran one. "There is a close historical connection between skiing and mining: downhill skiing in the U.S. was born in Western mining communities. In fact, the first recorded mechanical device to take skiers uphill was by an ore tram in the Sierra." (*Skiing Heritage*, p. 22). But the men of the 10<sup>th</sup> devised a *PORTABLE* tramway that was invaluable in taking casualties out more quickly.

*Fire on the Mountain* also showcases the lives of some of the mountain men who, after the war, sought outdoor employment and recreation based on their years of service in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. In so

doing, they revolutionized outdoor life in America. They were "addicted" to skiing and outdoor activity. 62 American ski areas were founded, managed by, or had a ski school run by 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain men, long before the mega-ski corporations were on the scene. They became: ski instructors, founders of ski villages, outdoor equipment and wilderness companies, foresters, Nike founders, climbing expedition leaders, university recreation leaders, leaders of handicap ski groups, a founder of Braille Trail, an architect for Snowmass and Vail outdoor trails, a falconry expert, master ski racers, and many other outdoor activity leaders. Having survived the horrors and trauma of war, they lived their lives based on the philosophy of helping one another in outdoor environments.

For them, skiing was a way of life, and not just a sport. They were addicted to the outdoors and exercise, some known as "snowfarmers". It is testament to the time they spent together as young men forging those relationships while training for war and their dependence on one another as a team that lends credence to their remarkable closeness today.

So, if you haven't had an opportunity to see this documentary, sit back and watch *Fire On the Mountain* at this YouTube link. You too will be amazed at their can-do, daring-do dedication – a salute to the hard charging outdoor men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.

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\* Movies include: *The Basic Principles of Skiing*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *Ski Patrol* (a recruiting film), *I Love a Soldier*, *Mountain Fighters*, (movies made at Mt. Rainier and Camp Hale brought in recruits)

\*\* Norm Saylor has been a resident of Donner Summit over 55 years, 46 of which he was in charge of all operations at Donner Ski Ranch. He still maintains his residence there. In 1956-58, he was the last of 18 soldiers who were part of the Mountain and Cold Weather Training Camp at Camp

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10<sup>th</sup> Mountain article continues from page 11

Hale, Colorado. He helped close the camp in 1958. He is an avid collector of books, memorabilia and pictures of Donner Summit. He was instrumental in having old Highway 40 designated as an historical highway. From Donner Summit Historical Society website.

Books include: **Downhill Skiing, The Mountain Training Center, Aleutian Echoes, Soldiers on Skis, Good Times and Bad Times, Ski Troops in the Mud, Mountain Troops, The Tramway Builders, The Life and Death of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain**, a list on p. 33 **Skiing Heritage**

Newspapers: a 10th Mountain newspaper, **Blizzard, Skiing Magazine**

Wikipedia entry, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division

McLaughlin, Mark, **Longboards to Olympics: A Century of Tahoe Winter**, Chapter 9, specially dedicated to the 10<sup>th</sup> and the locals involved

<https://unofficialnetworks.com/2012/05/28/10th-mountain-division/>

10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division article about the history and the connection to Tahoe; **The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division: WWII's High-Altitude Heroes**, Written by Matthew Renda in **Ski & Ride** 2015, Tahoe History, Tahoe Quarterly; <https://bit.ly/2UTopZg>

**The Last Ridge**, a 2007 documentary about the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division

On a visit to speak with Norm Saylor about an entirely different subject, Norm pulled out an incredible map that was donated to him and the Donner Summit Historical Society about the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division's wartime exploits. This is a **Map of Operations**, Third Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Italy, 23 December 1944 - 25 July 1945, given to Norm by a 10<sup>th</sup> soldier. The detail is amazing. To see this map in its entirety, please visit Norm at the Donner Summit Historical Society, Soda Springs. Clicking on the above link doesn't do the map justice.

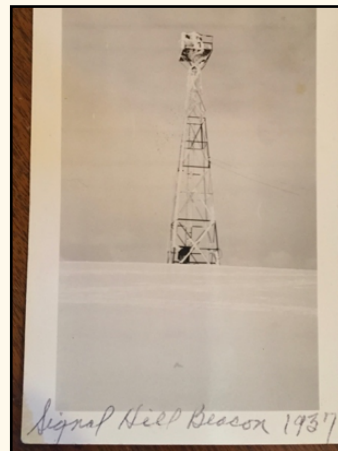


(Above) Heidi Sproat, Norm Saylor, and Barbara Czerwinski, March 24, 2019 visit

**UPDATE ON AIRMAIL BEACONS**

**By Heidi Sproat**

Yes, I'm still following the airmail story that keeps garnering my attention - I guess in part by reading some of the first hand accounts of the pilots who flew the inaugural routes. Intrepid souls they were. Browsing through a collection of Red Rockholm images, we came across these two pictures of the tower and beacon atop Donner Ski Ranch, "Signal Hill", 1937.



Click on the image to the left for a better resolution.

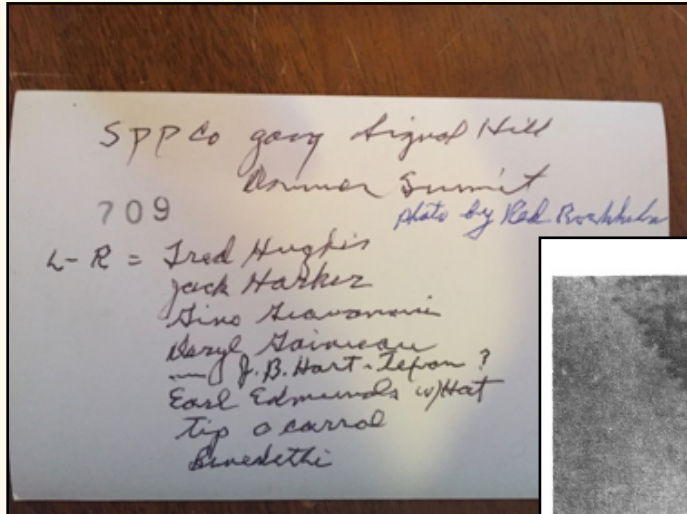


Photo (above) courtesy of noted local author Mark McLaughlin



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Beacons continued from page 12



In our prior June 2018 Echoes issue, p. 12, about the airmail arrows and beacons, I mentioned the display board (pictured below) currently at the Tahoe Truckee Airport, showing a photo by Nelson Stone of the Truckee Intermediate Field. Dissatisfied with the quality of the image from that newspaper article in the display board, I hunted down a better quality copy, below. Enjoy.

Text in image at right:

The Old Truckee Emergency Landing strip which was abandoned in the early 1960s when the new Truckee-Tahoe Airport was constructed. In the 1930s and early 40s the average number of recreational planes landing at the Truckee strip was about five. Here is an aerial shot showing three of the planes at the strip which was used as a civilian pilot training school during Word War II.

(Photo courtesy of Nels Stone of Truckee).



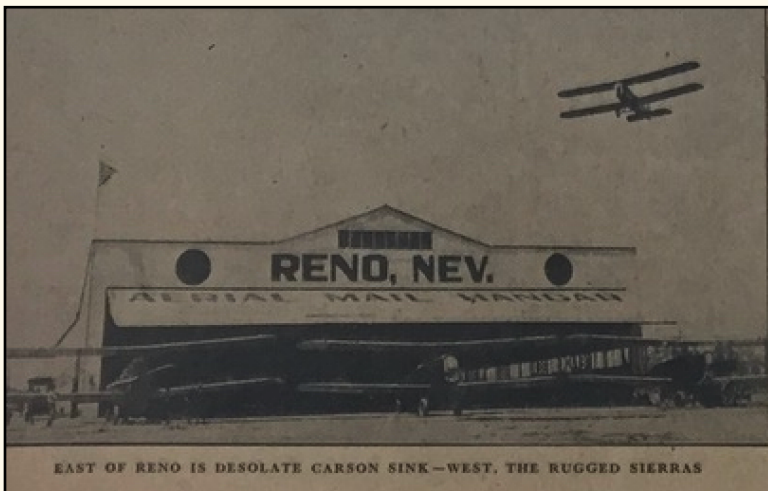
THE OLD TRUCKEE Emergency Landing strip, which was abandoned in the early 1960's when the new Truckee-Tahoe Airport was constructed. In the 1930s and early 40s the average number of recreational planes landing at the Truckee strip was about five. Here is an aerial shot showing three at the strip, which was used as a civilian pilot training school during World War II. (Photo courtesy of Nels Stone of Truckee)



## Echoes From The Past Newsletter

*Airmail beacons article continued from page 13*

Again reviewing additional articles about airmail, I came across this image of the Reno airfield in a February 1925 article in *The Country Gentleman* called *Flying With the Air Mail* by Samuel Taylor Moore. There was a photo I had not seen before of the Reno "Aerial Mail Hangar". The author of this article accompanied the pilot on a cross country airmail trip from New York to San Francisco. Most unfortunately, he had the misfortune of experiencing not one but two crashes. The first crash, he and the pilot landed safely in a haystack which appeared to be "heaven-sent"; the second, due to motor trouble, the hurried descent did not result in a crash. Truly, these early airmail pilots were of a different ilk than the rest of the world.



## MORE AUDIO RECORDINGS AVAILABLE BY Katie Holley

*Have you heard?* We have new audio recordings available on our website.

Ice harvesting was big business in the Truckee area into the 1920s. In 1977, the historical society captured the oral histories of Earl Smith, Tony Ghirard, and Lawrence Kearney, who worked at the ice camp at Iceland, east of Truckee, along the Truckee River, Boca, Prosser, Floriston, and Polaris. You can hear men who "worked on the ice" tell their stories in their own words. Find out what a "Hot Tamale Man" did, hear how the men maneuvered the 720-pound blocks into position in the ice houses, and marvel at what was accomplished with raw muscle and determination. Transcriptions of these histories are available for most of the recordings.

Do you want to hear more about ice harvesting? Listen to Tom Macaulay's recording from 1987.

### Printable Calendar of Events for the 150th Celebration

Courtesy of Bill Oudegeest of the Donner Summit Historical Society, in the April 2019 *Heirloom* newsletter issue, p. 7, there is a printable calendar of the events planned to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad. Do keep this handy to be in the know about all the planned events. We hope to see you there!

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So what is this "QR CODE" or the squirley-looking black & white icon Some of you may be familiar with these strange looking icons. The black & white cross-hatched icon 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.

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