

- ◆ WELCOME SPRING!
- ◆ VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
- ◆ BABY SCHEID UPDATE!

*"Working Today to Preserve Yesterday  
for Tomorrow"*

TRUCKEE DONNER HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

## ECHOS FROM THE PAST

### UPCOMING EVENTS & SPECIAL DATES \*\*\*VOLUNTEERS NEEDED\*\*\*

- 5/6 - Grant Writing Class, Sierra College
- 5/6 - \*Crews needed for jail & cabin cleanup
- 5/6-7-\*Docent Orientation Day, Jail preview
- 5/9 - \*Speaker at State Park-need volunteers
- 5/9 - General Meeting @ State Park, 7pm
- 5/12- \*Jail tour for Yosemite school kids
- 5/20-21 - \*Windows on History, need help
- 5/26 - \*Jail tour for Glenshire school kids
- 5/27 - \*Official opening of Jail-need docents
- 6/2 - \*Jail tour for Truckee 3rd graders
- 7/15 - \*Old Timer's Picnic, need volunteers
- 9/8-9- \*Rail Road Days & Parade

### WINDOWS ON HISTORY EVENT

The annual Windows on History celebration in conjunction with the Truckee Donner PUD "Old Fashioned Community Social" will be held May 20-21, 2000. This is a fund raiser for TDHS and offers the community a tour of the cabin along with a chance to meet the members of TDHS. Refreshments will be provided, as well as wine donated by Truckee River Winery, at the Cabin on Sunday the 21st from 7:00 to 8:00 pm.

### Books Help TDHS Revenue

During the month of February sales of TDHS books exceeded \$1200.00. Best sellers and number of issues sold:

- "Fire & Ice" - 44
- "Ordeal By Hunger" - 21
- "History of the Donner Party" - 13
- "Winter of Entrapment" -11
- "Across the Plains in the Donner Party" - 11
- "Patty Reed's Doll" - 10

*Thanks to Judy Williams  
for her hard work with  
the book sales.*

### RUSSELL VALLEY SHEEP CAMP

Documentation and restoration of the Russell Valley Sheep Camp, located south of Stampede Reservoir is being conducted by volunteers in conjunction with the Passport in Time program, under the guidance of the U.S. Forest Service. The goal is to preserve the nation's past with the help of the public. Basque shepherders roamed the area grazing their flocks during the 1800s and left items of historic nature including a domed oven. The U.S.F.S. is looking to record, stabilize and restore the site. Contact Carrie Smith for more information at 587-3558.

### OLD TIMERS PICNIC SCHEDULED

July 15th "Old Timers" from the Truckee area will gather together at the Truckee Regional Park to see old friends and meet new ones. This is the 20th anniversary of the "Old Timers Picnic" and will provide a chance for everyone to brush up on their Truckee history as well as enjoy a day of fun. Refreshments and prizes, compliments of TDHS will be on hand. Participants are reminded to bring a lawn chair, a sack lunch and warm clothing, depending on weather. The gathering will begin at 10:00 am, hope to see you there!

### BABY SCHEID UPDATE - Congratulations Chelsea and John!!

BABY WAS DUE 4/15  
AS OF 4/17 NO BABY



## "The Gold Rush" deserves special mention in local lore, by Guy H. Coates



At least 50 movies have been produced or shot at least partly in the Truckee area. Perhaps the most memorable was a comedy epic set during the Klondike gold rush of 1898.

Filmed in 1925, "The Gold Rush," starring the legendary Charlie Chaplin as the Little Tramp, has been listed by movie critics as among the 10 most important or memorable comedy films of all time. It was Chaplin's first comedy for United Artists and co-starred Georgia Hale, Mack Swain, Tom Murray and featured "John Brown, the wrestling bear."

This classic silent film remained so popular that in 1942, nearly two decades later, Chaplin did a re-make, adding a self-composed musical score and narration in which he spoke himself. The re-issue made the N.Y. Times "Top 10 Film List."

The film portrays Chaplin's famous Tramp character cavorting Alaska's Klondike during the 1890's quest for gold. In his

autobiography, Chaplin claimed that the idea for the film came while he was looking at stereoscopic slides of Alaska and the Klondike and Chilcoot Pass with a long line of prospectors climbing up over its frozen mountain. He had also read the story of the Donner Party and, out of this harrowing tragedy, he conceived the idea of eating his shoe.

In 1924, Chaplin made a trip to Truckee to scout locations where he met the late Karl "Moke" Kielhofer, a longtime Truckee resident. In 1970, Kielhofer provided a taped interview to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society in which he tells a fascinating story of how he and Chaplin chose Donner Summit as a setting for his film.

"Wilbur Maynard was superintendent of the Southern Pacific Hotel in Truckee and his responsibility was to promote the Truckee area to Hollywood film companies. "At the time I was making only five dollars a day working for the railroad," said Kielhofer.

"Chaplin hired me as his foreman for \$100 per week, a tidy sum in those days."

Together they scouted the area and selected the area at the base of today's Sugar Bowl ski area as the site for his film. The only building there at the time was a small hotel, precariously shored up in the side of a gully. Chaplin decided this was the perfect setting for laying out a re-creation of Dawson City.

"I built the town twice," laughed Kielhofer. "I hired 28 carpenters

and hauled lumber, and brought in horses by rail. I built platforms for cameras and when it was finished Chaplin didn't show up. A big snowstorm came and covered all the buildings with twenty feet of snow. I called Chaplin and told him what happened and he told me to build another town right on top, so that's exactly what we did."

When everything was ready, Chaplin came to town on a special train with his crew and were provided rooms by Maynard at the S.P. Hotel. During his stay in town, Chaplin entertained locals, playing piano and singing at the local taverns.

Historians disagree on where Chaplin himself stayed. Some believe he roomed at today's River Street Inn, but it is possible that he may have stayed with his crew at the S.P. Hotel or at the Sierra Tavern, or possibly in his private railroad car. There is no dispute that he was a popular attraction among locals during his brief visit.

The Truckee Ski Club transformed a trail through a narrow defile on the slopes of Mount Lincoln into a reasonable facsimile of the Chilcoot Pass. During the film's opening scenes a long string of miners are seen in an agonizing march up the pass though deep snow.

"We went to Sacramento and hired 1,200 hobos at five dollars per day each and brought them all up to Donner Summit on a train, recalled Kielhofer. There was some concern that the hobos

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would get drunk and harass locals, or worse yet, freeze to death in the snow." So we shot the entire scene in one day and sent them home," said Kielhofer. In "The Gold Rush" Chaplin sought to introduce a touch of sentiment into his famous Tramp character. He found it difficult to get a beautiful girl (Georgia Hale) interested in a tramp. In the film, the girl plays a joke on him, then later feels pity, which he mistakes for love.

All of the indoor scenes and street scenes were filmed at the studio in Hollywood. An arctic set was created on the back lot using 285 tons of salt as snow and 240,000 feet of lumber for buildings. Airplane engines were used to blow up a storm of mica and corn flakes.

One of the most memorable scenes in the film is at the cabin when Thanksgiving arrives and Chaplain is reduced to cooking up one of his shoes which he prepares and serves with the pride and concentration of a master chef, testing it for doneness, and basting it with pan juices. After finishing his "meal," he picks his teeth with one of the shoe nails. The shoe was actually made of licorice with rock candy as nails, holding the sole and uppers together.

In the climatic segment of The Gold Rush, the Tramp and Big Jim McKay return to Black Larson's cabin in hopes of locating his gold strike. While they sleep, a fierce snow storm comes up and the cabin is blown down the mountain and left teetering precariously on the edge of a cre-

vasse. Kielhofer explained that this was done by placing the cabin on skids. "Jim McIver and I came up with the idea," said Kielhofer. "We put horses with snowshoes inside the cabin and drove the cabin around from inside.

The next morning, the tramp notices the cabin rocking a little and blames it on his having had too much to drink the night before. Then Big Jim wakes and begins to move around. The rocking becomes more alarming. The Tramp goes outside to investigate and nearly falls into the abyss. "This scene was filmed entirely in the studio using cables," said Kielhofer. "Chaplin worked with no script," Kielhofer recalled. "He had it all in his head and made it up as he went along. He was a perfectionist but also a kind and generous man." "The Gold Rush" premiered June 26, 1925 at the Egyptian Theater. It was publicized as "the greatest and most elaborate comedy ever filmed and will stand for years to come." The film opened at the Mark Strand Theater in New York on August 15, 1925.

TDHS will be showing the film, "The Gold Rush" at the cabin, watch for showtime and date.

#### TRUCKEE PHOTOS ON DISPLAY

Historical photos of early Truckee will be displayed at the Nevada County Courthouse Building in Truckee.

and volunteers are needed for frame assembly. Please call the cabin for further info.

#### FIBER OPTICS ON BRIDGE

Thanks to public input and especially TDHS member, Joan Hartwell, it has been agreed that no fiber optic lines will be hung from the Donner Summit Bridge on old Hwy 40. Joan attended a meeting on February 16th, sponsored by the Nevada County Department of Transportation with Williams Construction, the contractor for the project, and with the help of her input and others present the decision was made to bore through granite for the installation of lines. Williams Construction was in agreement that it was important to preserve the historic nature of the Bridge and is working with Jones and Stokes Associates, environmental planners, out of Sacramento to see that the Bridge is given National Register status.

#### HISTORICAL WEBSITE ON-LINE

Patrick King, son of Joseph A. King, author of "Winter of Entrapment", has a history based website featuring information and articles on California history. There is on-line research and books on the Donner Party, the Gold Rush, California Missions, Native Californians, Pioneer Women, Pony Express, the Overland Trail and other aspects of California history and history of the Old West. King is looking for volunteer editors who have a passion for any of the following topics:

- On-line magazines
- Research links
- Book recommendations
- Building and sponsoring historical society & genealogical society websites for free.

You can visit the site for more information at [www.kkpub.com](http://www.kkpub.com) soon to be [www.kkpub.org](http://www.kkpub.org)



**NEW EQUIPMENT FOR 2000-**  
A 31" television and a VCR have been purchased by TDHS and are now available at the cabin to show films of historical importance about the Truckee Donner area. To start off, TDHS will be showing "The Gold Rush" starring Charlie Chaplin, filmed in Truckee in 1925. (See related article on Pg 2.) Date & time of showing to be announced.

**ITEMS DONATED TO TDHS-**

**Roy Baker**, Truckee High School Librarian during the 1950's, Past President of TDHS and TDHS Charter Member, has given TDHS four bags of newspaper clippings on Truckee happenings, that he has saved over the years. Thank you for the contribution and the memories!  
**Mrs. Varien Waters**, TDHS member, has donated photos from the soon to be historic Truckee parade of 1981 and an old postcard depicting main street Truckee in the early 1900s. Also donated to the TDHS were copies of the blueprints for the Veteran's Memorial Building from **Tracy Stout with AT&T**. TDHS relies on the contributions from it's members and the community at large to preserve it's great heritage. If you have something regarding Truckee's colorful history, whether it's in print or old stories past down through generations, we'd appreciate hearing from you. We now also have a scanner available at the cabin so we can scan onto a computer your image or document for our files.

**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN**

Nadine Brown, faithful jail docent for many, many years has passed on. She will be missed by the Board and members of the TDHS.

**LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM -**

Authors Chris Enss and JoAnn Chartier will be discussing their book, "With Great Hope: Women of the California Gold Rush", at the Donner Memorial State Park, Tuesday, May 9th at 7:00 pm. The event is in celebration of archaeology month sponsored by TDHS, Donner State Park and the U.S.F.S., Tahoe National Forest, Truckee Ranger District.

**BOARD OF DIRECTOR UPDATE -**

Leanne Atwater of the Donner Trading Post has taken the position of Recording Secretary with the TDHS. Welcome and Thank You! There will be a position open for Correspondence Secretary as Barbara Hill will not be able to continue in this capacity. Also Valerie Green will be vacating the position of Newsletter Publisher and the new replacement will be Rich Griese. TDHS is glad to have Rich on board and thanks both Barbara and Valerie for all their hard work. The Society will also be needing a Jail Curator and docents for the upcoming summer season. Please call the cabin if you have interest in any of these positions.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Spring is the time for flowers to bloom and bears to come out of hibernation, it is also time for volunteers to come forward at TDHS! We need your help in getting the cabin and the jail ready for all our summer visitors. The docent program at the jail is a great way to meet interesting people from all over the world. Helping with the cleaning and organizing at the jail and cabin is a great way to meet the many interesting people of TDHS! We are always in need of repair and maintenance on the old buildings as well, so if you are handy with a hammer and have any free time, please volunteer. Call or come by and we'll put the coffee on!

**MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

TDHS currently has 317 members made up of 268 members from throughout California and 49 from out-of-state. We are looking forward to more members as the town grows. Please call the cabin if you know of someone who would be interested in a complimentary issue of the TDHS newsletter. New members since the last issue are - LOUGHLIN, Chris & Kerri ATWATER, Leanne/ Donner Trading Company ACKERMAN, Paul & Judith BOTTEL, Eddie Welcome and we're glad to have you on board!

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

\* TDHS \*

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