

AFRICAN AMERICAN DEMOGRAPHICS

Early Years, Truckee; Particularly Albert Johnson



DECEMBER 2021
Updated March 2025
TRUCKEE-DONNER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Demographics

- **Pre 1870** Information for what became the “Truckee Area” shows the following
 - (1863) One Black male listed on the US Civil War Draft of 1863 (1) at Truckee (Donner) Lake.
 - Johnathan Ackwood, c1834, 29 yrs old, Born Maryland Occupation Cook.
- **1870** Census (2) for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 19,142 people counted; 116 people listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards). Of this number, 70 Males; 46 Females. Under the Listing of “M” (Mulatto) there were 52 listed in Nevada County. Of this number 31 Males; 21 females.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District: Total people counted were 1,655. Total of 13; of this number 8 were listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards), 5 were listed as “M” (Mulatto)
 - (B) 5 males, 3 females. (1 male under 18, 1 female under 18)
 - Of the listed 6 adults there were 2 females, and 4 males; of this number 1 female was married and 1 is single. Males, 1 married and 3 single.
 - Occupations on listed males included Cook, Barber and Porter in Hotel, Saloon Keeper, Only 1 female lists an occupation; Laundress.
 - David Cooper (2), Born New York, c1813. Is single and living in by himself in a residence. Occupation is Cook. ***not in 1880 Truckee Census**
 - Henry Hill, (2) Born Kentucky, c1840, 30 yrs. old, single, living and working in Campbell’s Hotel. Occupation is a Porter in the hotel. ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census. There is an entry in the Cemetery Index (3) from 1889 of a Child of a Henry Hill being buried in the Masonic Section but nothing further on family. Not confirmed as same person.**
 - Grandison Jones, (2) Born Virginia, c1825, 45 yrs. Old, single, living and working in Campbell’s Hotel. Occupation is a Porter in the hotel. **Mr. Jones was also located in earlier years Voter Registrations for Truckee between the years of 1878-1888 (4) His name in this source is spelled Granderson. *Located in 1880 Census Truckee. Name is spelled Granson, and his age shows 47. Listed as a Cook. **Unconfirmed to date, there is an entry for a Grandison Jones, Born 1825 in Mealy Co., Virginia for enlistment, Civil War in the 3rd U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery, Company F. Enlistment date was Aug 31 1863. More research to be done to confirm match.**
 - Charles Henry Prout, (2) Born Maryland, c1821, 49 yrs. Old, married and living in private residence with family. Occupation is a Barber. ***Per mortality report for a John Prout, (4) 5 mos old; the Prout family was**

living in Truckee in 1869. Listed in 1873 Voter Registration (5) for Truckee, by August of 1873 there is a cancellation from the registry. Located in 1880 living in Eureka, Nevada (2)

- Wife, Lobinia Prout, Born Missouri, c1839, 31 yrs. Old, listed as keeping house.
- Son, Henry Prout, Born California, c1863, 7 yrs. Old, listed as at home.
- Daughter, Priscella Prout, Born California. C1865, 5 yrs. Old, listed as at home.
- Mary Wood, (2) Born Pennsylvania, c1820, 50 yrs. Old, Single, living in own residence, Occupation is Laundress. ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate.**
- (M) 5 males.
 - All listed as single. Occupations include Barber, Saloon Keeper.
 - Morris Butler, (2) Born Maryland, c1824, 46 yrs. Old, Single, living in own residence. Occupation Barber. **Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate. *There was a possible match located in the 1852 State census for Sacramento, all items match cut unconfirmed if it is the same subject.**
 - W.A.G. Brown, (2) Born Massachusetts, c1843, 27 yrs. Old, Single, living in own residence. Occupation Saloon Keeper. ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate.**
 - R.H. Morton (2), Born Pennsylvania, c1843, 17 yrs. Old, Single, living in own residence. Occupation Barber, ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate.**
 - J.R. Holland (2), Born Missouri, c1820, 50 yrs. Old, Single, living at Campbell's hotel. Occupation Barber. ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate.**
 - R.M. Gaines. (2) Born Maryland, c1825, 45 yrs. Old, Single living at residence of R.H. Morton. Occupation Barber. ***Not in 1880 Truckee Census, unable to locate.**
- **1880** Census for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 20,848 people counted; 59 people were listed as "B" (African American 2021 Standards). Of this number 40 Males; 9 Females. 85 people were listed as "M" Mulatto (African American 2021 Standards). Of this number 50 males, 35 females.
 - Meadow Lake Township was listed on the census with each individual area counted. Only 1 male (b) was listed in Truckee. Only 1 male (m) is listed.
 - (B) 1 Male
 - Grandison Jones, (2) Born West Virginia, c1825, 57 yrs old, single living in own residence (*is a neighbor of Orange Lewis.*) Occupation Cook. ***From a Will and Probate record it would appear that Mr. Jones passed away in Grass Valley, August 10 1890.**

- (M) 1 Male
 - Orange R. Lewis (2), Born Pennsylvania, c1816, 64 yrs old, Single living in own residence on River St. He is listed as Widower and occupation is a cook. ****Is listed in the 1890 Voter Registration for Truckee, Died in Truckee April 1900 and is presumed buried in Truckee Cemetery. Note: There is a www.findagrave.com entry that puts Mr. Lewis at the cemetery but there is no listing of him in the old journals. He may have been buried in a Potter's Field.***

- **1900** Census for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 18,049 people counted: 71 people were listed as "B" (African American 2021 Standards); 6 were listed as "M". Of this total count of 77; 44 were male and 33 were female.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District: Total people counted were 2,059. Of these numbers 4 people were entered as "B" (African American 2021 Standards). Of this total there was one mixed race Marriage.
 - (B) 1 Male (3) Female
 - James Haywood Cradit (2), Born Alabama, c Oct. 1844, 55 yrs old, Occupation is Waiter. *****Mr. Cradit was located in the 1896 Voter Registration for Truckee. *Not in 1910 Truckee Census. Family had relocated to Oakland, where Mr. Cradit passed away in April 1910.***
 - Wife, Josephine Cradit, Born Florida, c July 1857, 42 yrs old, listed as married in 1894. ****Mrs. Cradit first moved to San Francisco after her husband's passing and then back to Florida.***
 - Anna Wolfe (2), Born Kentucky, c April 1866, 34 yrs old, listed as married in 1878. ****In 1910 Census Truckee, shows 2nd marriage and year married was 1882. She moved from Truckee in 1923 and she died in Sacramento in 1923, still owned property in Truckee on River St., boarding house. Obituary indicates she may have suffered a heart attack due to stress of a shooting that occurred at her property shortly after she left Truckee. Articles of the day indicated that all parties involved were African American, none are listed in any census.***
 - Husband, John Wolfe (2), Born Canada, c June 1836, 63 yrs old, Occupation Shoemaker. Mr. Wolfe is listed as "W" in the census and French Canadian. ****Mr. Wolfe was located in the 1873, 1875, 1876 Voter Registrations for Truckee. He shows immigrating in 1867. There is a John Wolfe in 1880 Census living in Reno listed as a shoemaker, but it does not show Anna. In 1910 Census Truckee, shows info on marriage with Anna as 2nd marriage and year married was 1882. He passed away Feb 5 1915 and is buried in the Truckee Cemetery.***
 - Josephine Wilson, (2) Born California, c May 1888, 12 yrs old, attending school. She is listed as living in the household of John and Anna Wolfe as a lodger. ****Not in the 1910 Census Truckee.***

- **1910** Census for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 14, 972 people counted: 9 people were listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards). Of this total count of 77; 7 were male and 1 female.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District: Total people counted were 2,310. Of this number 5 people were entered as “B” (African American 2021 Standards), (4) Males, (1) Female. Of this total there was one mixed race Marriage.
 - Joseph Burke, Born Rhode Island, c1884, 26 yrs old, Occupation is Painter. ****Listed as a lodger in the household of William Murphy. Indicates south of Railroad. Can Read and Write. Not in 1920 Truckee Census.***
 - Woolrich Hounah, Born Virginia, c1851, 59 yrs old, Occupation is House Keeper at American House (2021 Truckee Hotel), also his residence. Cannot read or write. ****Not listed in the 1920 Census Truckee.***
 - Alexander F. Kenney, Born Kentucky, c1873, 37 yrs old, Occupation is Laborer/Odd Jobs. Able to read and write. ****Not listed in 1920 Census in Truckee. 1910 indicated he is married but no wife listed.***
 - **Albert Johnson, Born Kentucky, c1817. See Additional Bio information**
 - Annie Wolfe, Born Kentucky, c1846. ****See 1900 Census Data for short bio.***

- **1920** Census for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 10, 857 people counted: 9 people were listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards). Of this count 4 Males, 5 females.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District: Total People counted 1,381. Of this number 1 was listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards).
 - Anna H. Wolf, Born Kentucky, c1850, 70 years old. **See 1900 Bio.*

- **1930** Census for Nevada County, CA indicates there were a total of 10, 607 people counted: 8 people were listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards). Of this count 5 Males, 3 females.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District: Total People counted 1,381. Of this number 7 were listed as “B” (African American 2021 Standards). 5 Males, 2 females.
 - Roy J. Carnegie, Born California, c1908, age 22 yrs Occupation Hotel Cook* *lodger in household of Wilbur Maynard (Hotel Manager), relationship to Maynard listed as servant. Can read and write. Not in 1940 Truckee Census, possible matches located in 1910 in Calipartria, Imperial Co. CA, and CA Death index in 1939 in Alameda Co., CA.*
 - Thomas Bowling, Born Louisiana, c1891, age 39 yrs old, Hotel Cook, **lodger in household of Wilbur Maynard (Hotel Manager), relationship to Maynard listed as servant. Can read and write. Possible marriage record shows date of marriage to Willie M. Friday on 30 Sept 1920 in Los Angeles, CA. Not in 1940 Truckee Census. Possible match 1940 located with wife, Willie Mae in Berkely, Alameda Co., CA. He is listed as a Chef and owns his own home. Also, possible match in California Death Index, date of birth listed as 5 Apr 1889, death 2 Jan 1961, Alameda County. Located a WWI & WWII Draft Card. Both indicate his year of birth as 1890.*
 - May Bowling, wife of Tom. Born Texas,c1896, age 34 yrs old. Occupation Hotel Maid. **lodger in household of Wilbur Maynard (Hotel Manager), relationship to Maynard listed as servant. Can Read and Write. Full name: Willie Mae Bowling nee Friday. See Bio for Husband Tom.*
 - Willie L. Weathers, Born Louisiana, c1902, 28 yrs old, Occupation Waiter. *Working and living in the Southern Pacific Hotel, Front St., Truckee. Can Read and Write. Note in 1940 Truckee Census. Possible match located in Chicago, IL. Working for Grand Trunk Western Railroad as a waiter; shows middle name as Leon and full date of birth Oct 18 1901. Also located a WWII Draft Card, next of Kin his wife, Flora. RR employment records list him as a Dining Car Waiter. He was born in New Orleans and died Port Huron Michigan 26 Dec 1979.*
 - Jacqueline W. Taviniere, born New Jersey, c1893, 37 yrs old, Occupation Servant. *Is living in South Truckee, renting her home. She can speak English; parents are listed as from Canada and South America. Not in 1940 Truckee Census, unable to locate any additional information.*
 - John A. Smith, Born Arizona, c1885, 45 yrs old, Occupation Porter in Hotel. *Working and living in the Southern Pacific Hotel, Front St., Truckee. Can Read*

and Write. Not in 1940 Truckee Census, unable to locate any additional information.

- Sam D. Paul, Born Louisiana, c1906, age 24 yrs, Occupation Hotel Dishwasher. .
***lodger in household of Wilbur Maynard (Hotel Manager), relationship to Maynard listed as servant. Can Read and Write**
-
- 1940 Census for Nevada County, CA indicates a total of 86,607 people counted, census shows Total population of people listed as Negro (Black) at 39.
 - Meadow Lake Enumeration District lists a total of 1,013 people counted. Although the census lists two people counted as Negro (Black) it is highly suspect that they are not Negro but Hispanic. Names were Maximo and Tomasa Goicoa with Maximo being from Spain and Tomasa is from Mexico.

Albert Johnson

Although Mr. Johnson does not show up in any census until 1910, it is apparent that he was an active member of Truckee since the early 1870s as evidence by the following news articles and other items that were located. His obituary indicates that he was a resident of Truckee for over forty years and was well known and beloved. He was well known for his fishing abilities and was a trusted guide and also as an amenable host at the summer resort he ran at the West End of Donner Lake. "Historical Statements" indicate he worked for five years for Stewart McKay at the Old Truckee Hotel¹ as a Porter in his early years at Truckee. For the next 35 years he lived at the head of Donner Lake running his resort and acting as a fishing guide and educator of Truckee weather.

Mr. Johnson was born c1817 in Kentucky and died in Nevada City at the County Hospital, April 11, 1911 at the age of 94. If the "historical statements" are correct he would have arrived in Truckee by 1871. The only difference in data matching is that in 1871 the American House had not been built as yet and was opened in 1872 by J.M. Mathews, Mr. McKay did not own it until 1879. Also Mr. McKay did not own the Truckee Hotel until the 1880s. During the time Mr. Johnson would have arrived the Truckee Hotel was owned and operated by J.F. Moody. So, it is difficult, at this time, to actually determine where Mr. Johnson started his life in Truckee. A news article dated July 1927 regarding Wally Gelatt and Donner Lake² states he worked for Mr. Campbell¹ at his hotel at the east end of Donner Lake. What is known and verified is that Mr. Johnson was located in Voter Registrations from 1875 thru 1908 in Truckee and numerous other articles indicated that he did operate a business at Donner Lake and was well known and admired for many decades.

A letter written by William Kennedy, one time watchman at Truckee Lumber Company, and sent to an Iowa Daily Paper contain information regarding Albert Johnson from a conversation he held with him at one point. It was republished in the Truckee Republican. This conversation revealed so many points regarding Mr. Johnson's life and is a priceless piece of information. (1)

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UPDATE: March 2025

In a review of information, it was resolved that Mr. Johnson's resort was at the West End of Donner Lake at Gregory Creek (currently known as West End Beach, 2025). It was apparently called Donner Hotel/Resort which became confused over the years with Donner Lake Hotel which was at the East end of Donner Lake. This difference was added to with a well-known picture of Donner Lake Hotel and Donner Lake being used in his obituary. It has been since determined that although they had similar names, Mr. Johnson's resort was a summer resort

¹ 1867 Voter Registration show William B. Campbell as a Hotel Keeper at Donner Lake but not 1871, He was the proprietor of the Truckee Hotel

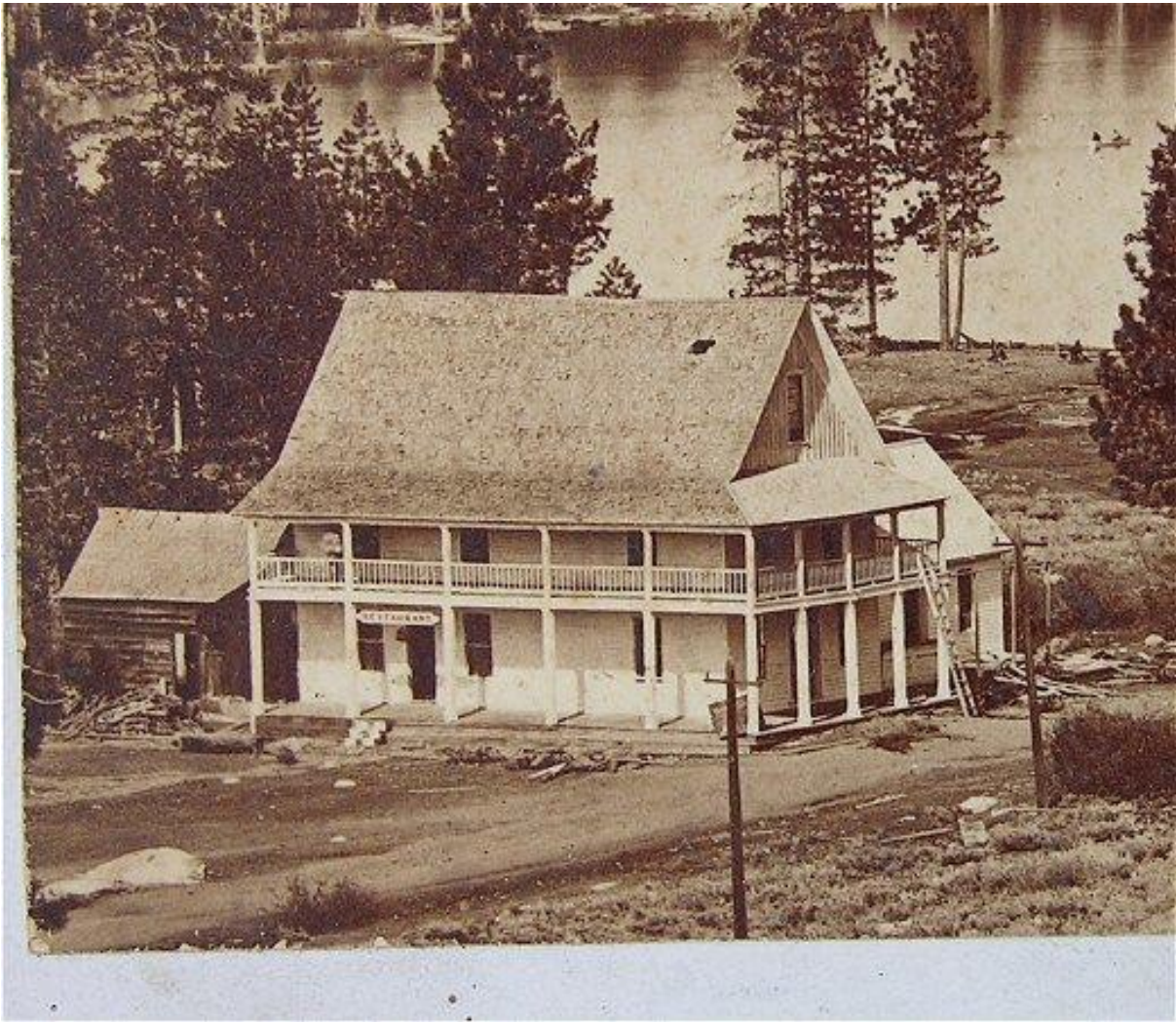
² See pg 13 of this document

situation and named Donner Hotel/Resort and Donner Lake Hotel was a full time Hotel, both are situated on the Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road, now known at Donner Pass Rd. (2025). There is evidence (1890 article regarding "squatting") that he may have lived at the East End during winter months, then was running his resort at the west end during summer.

¹ Stewart McKay did not own the Truckee Hotel until the 1880s, This may be the American House

² Morning Union, Grass Valley 1927 July 22.

Donner Lake Hotel and Saloon (DLK0003) c1911, east end of lake.



News Articles

1884 June 21 Truckee Republican

- Albert Johnson and everyone knows Albert, so long porter at the Truckee, is at Donner Lake taking charge of fishing parties, and learning them how to fish. Albert is an expert and knows the haunts of the trout at Donner.

1884 July 23 Truckee Republican

- A monstrous trout has been seen by several of the fishermen at Donner Lake. He was hooked by Albert Johnson last Saturday, while trolling on the lake, but managed to escape. Those who have seen his troutship declare he will weigh fully 30 pounds.

1884 July 30 Truckee Republican

- Good catches of trout are reported from Donner Lake every day. Albert Johnson caught a fine string yesterday.

1890 May 24 Morning Union

- Quail are coming over the mountains in considerable numbers. In attempting to fly across Donner Lake many fall in and are drowned Albert Johnson saw a whole covey fall in last Sunday. He succeeded in rescuing quite a number.

1890 September 16 Daily Nevada State Journal

Squatter's Title.

- The Truckee Republican says: There is a curious state of affairs in regard to some land at Donner Lake. On the south side of Donner Lake are lots one and two of Section 18. The house formerly occupied by Hugh Porter and at present by Albert Johnson is located on the lots. This land belongs to the Government. Many years ago, it was pre-empted by one McPherson and he proved up on it and paid for it. It seems, however, that he pre-empted more land than the law allowed him to do, so that when a patent was issued the lots mentioned were no included in it. The records shows that the lots have been paid for, so that no one can enter them at the land office. Therefore, whoever fences it in and holds possession of it has the best title. A Mr. Yager, a San Francisco Gentleman of means, was up there not long ago and took a great fancy to Donner Lake. He found out the facts concerning the land and this week he took possession of it and is now fencing it in. We have been told that it is his intention to erect a large and handsome hotel on the site next year. (2)

1891 May 12 Morning Union

Fish Not Biting.

- Albert Johnson was down from Donner Lake Saturday and says that the trout are not taking a hook at all. The cause of this he explains is that Donner Lake is way above high-water mark and the site of the big flat at the head of the lake is covered with water five feet deep. The trees make a forest in the lake and a boat can be rowed through the big grove. Trout will not bite a hook when they can go into the woods and get all they can eat of bugs, worms, grasshoppers, etc. — Truckee Republican.

1902 June 11 Truckee Republican

Received a Just Reward.

- George James, the colored boy, who stole the articles from Albert Johnson at the head of Donner Lake entered a plea of not guilty before Justice Hill, Monday and asked for a jury trial. His trial was held yesterday forenoon and he was found guilty and sentenced to serve sixty days in the county jail.

1905 April 26 Truckee Republican

- William Kennedy was up to Donner Lake Tuesday visiting Albert Johnson who conducts a resort at that place. He says that Johnson has everything now in first class shape for the tourists that visit his resort every summer.

1905 August 16 Truckee Republican

PECULIAR ACTION OF SMALL CREEK

Small Creek Emptying Into Donner Lake Goes Dry During Day Time But Flows at Night

- Albert Johnson the colored veteran, who conducts a summer resort at the west end of Donner Lake was in Truckee yesterday afternoon and in conversation with a representative of the Republican stated that the small stream which empties into Donner Lake is acting very peculiar. For the past three weeks the creek has been drying up between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. and during the remaining time plenty of water flows through the natural channel. Why the water does not run during the middle of the day is what puzzles the old landlord. During the evening, night and morning about four to six inches of water flows while during the middle of the day the stream goes absolutely dry. Thousands of small trout have been killed by the peculiar action of the creek. Mr. Johnson believes that the water sinks. About 300 yards above his house there is a normal supply of water but all of a sudden it goes out of sight. Mr. Johnson has been residing in that vicinity for fifteen years and this is the first time he ever observed the stream running by night and drying up by daylight.

1905 September 6 Truckee Republican

- Albert Johnson who conducts a resort at the upper end of Donner Lake is quite sick with an attack of pleurisy. Doctor Bryant was summoned twice on Sunday to attend the old colored gentleman.

September 20 Truckee Republican

Albert Johnson the colored man who conducts a resort at the upper end of Donner Lake was in Truckee. Wednesday. Mr. Johnson says this has been a very quiet season with him not more than half the usual number of people visiting his place as has been the custom. in the past. He also said that ducks were now landing on the lake and many can be seen all hours of the day.

1906 May 26 Truckee Republican

TO LIVE IN TENTS DONNER LAKE SHORE

- Mrs. C. F. Weber making arrangements for San Francisco families to live in tents around Donner Lake during Summer months
- Mrs. C. F. Weber of San Francisco, stopped over in Truckee while on her way to McKinneys resort on Lake Tahoe, She says there is now considerable talk among the people who are now living in tents in the city to come to this place and live during the summer months while homes are being built for them in Frisco. She says that if the people of the community would make some arrangements for suitable locations many families would come up here about the first of June and remain until cold weather compelled them to return home The cool weather, splendid water and the beautiful environments, if properly advertised, would result in hundreds of women and children residing in the Sierra Mountains for the next three months. In fact, she said, was requested to see if I could not find a suitable location for several families, and someone to cook for them while they were up here. She intends to make a visit to Donner Lake and see if arrangements cannot be made with Albert Johnson for several families to camp near his place. There are many locations around Donner Lake that these people could reside during the summer months, if someone would only head a movement to secure the ground for them to live on.

1907 July 10 Truckee Republican

WILLIAM KENNEDY TELLS ABOUT JOHNSON

Writes an Interesting Letter to a Iowa Daily Paper Concerning Albert Johnson the Well-Known Colored Man.

- William Kennedy, one time night watchman for the Truckee Lumber Company has written an interesting letter to the Daily Gate City, published at Keokuk, Iowa. Mr. Kennedy left here about one year ago for the Beckwith section and from there drilled back to Los Angeles. His story concerning this section of the state contain several columns. Part of the article in his story mention is made of Albert Johnson who conducts a resort on the north side of Donner Lake and who has resided there for many years. The following is only published in part: A character of the Sierras, often seen but more often misunderstood, is the hermit, whose lonely cabin is as likely to be found clinging to some precipitous slope, concealed among the big trees in the bottom of some deep dark canyon, or perched on the top of some lofty mountain, Silhouetted against the sky. as by a roadway or a trail. Because such a one prefers a home in the primeval forest to a domicile in the seething centers of population, he is generally called "eccentric" or "crazy," or in some instances is looked upon as one who, because of some unpardonable sin, has been banished by human society and, an accusing conscience to spend the remainder of his days in solitude, to be consumed by loneliness, melancholy and ???. But I must say that a careful study of the hermit, on my travels through the mountains, has not in any way confirmed this popular impression concerning him. On the contrary, I have been greatly surprised to find the hermit of the Sierras a man of far better parts than I had ever heard or supposed. Albert Johnson, who has lived in a cabin on the shore of Donner Lake, Nevada County, for more than forty years, I found to be both the moral and intellectual equal, as far as I am competent to judge of the average man, either white or colored, who has had the advantages of the schools and long association with his fellow men in enlightened communities. It was late in the spring (or rather early in the summer, the altitude here being something like six thousand feet) when I called at Mr. Johnson's cabin. There still was snow covering the ground between the road and the front door, and as no tracks were visible, I thought perhaps there might be a rear entrance. On passing around a corner of the cabin, I saw Mr. Johnson, a rugged looking man, gazing into the lake, He looked up, with neither a start nor a stare, but quietly, and with a smile, which I soon discovered was not put on for the occasion; it was simply grown onto Mr. Johnson's face—as much a

part of the man as his nose or his ears. Without that smile I am sure the people of the nearby town of Truckee, where he has gone for his mail for forty years, would not know him; they would certainly declare that a new colored man had come to town. Mr. Johnson insisted on my taking some refreshments after my long tramp over the mountains, and we went into the cabin. Of edibles there was no lack. Bacon and beans were especially in evidence and cooked to suit the king's taste. I asked Mr. Johnson where he got his supplies, meaning, of course, at what point on the railroad —Truckee or Summit. He declared that everything came to him "from God's bountiful hand." "He has kept me in dis hyah wilderness for forty years," he said, "and I know I shall not want; He keeps me every hour." Mr. Johnson volunteered a little information concerning his long and peaceful life. He first saw the light in one of the states; I think he said Georgia. He did not seem altogether certain as to the exact date of his birth; at least he did not fix the date in his conversation with me. Even now, more than six feet in height straight as an arrow, and with broad, square shoulders, he is, to all outward appearances, a perfect specimen of physical manhood. One can easily imagine the great value that must have been placed upon this colored man in the days of his youth and early manhood, especially when his manifest faithfulness and staying qualities are taken into consideration, by them who were so fortunate as to own him in the old slavery times. Although born a slave and kept in bondage until about the time that Lee handed over his sword, he seems to cherish only the happiest memories of his old master and mistress, who, in addition to taking good care of him, seems to have imparted to him the very best of precept. He expressed the belief that no one had ever lived a happier life than he, and he looked it. He not only thought this world a very good one but had a very good opinion generally of the people who live in it, only regretting that some young colored fellows, who had been along from time to time and robbed him, while enjoying his hospitality, could not behave better in "dis hyah day and generation-." On his way to California, before days of transcontinental railroads, Mr. Johnson footed it across the Isthmus of Panama. He retains a very vivid recollection of the character of the country along the route of the new Panama canal. He said, "It is no good, no good, absolutely no place for God's people to live, from one end of the road to the other," He managed to get to San Francisco on a slow sailing vessel. From there he struck inland, resolved "with God's help," to make a home for himself in the new Eldorado But, when he scrambled down from the summit of the high Sierra into the little Donner Lake basin, there he found one already made —his for the taking. And there he has remained ever since, enjoying to the fullest what he rightly believes to be God's richest blessings—health freedom, contentment, an abundance of fresh fish and wild fowl, and above all, an abiding faith that

when called upon to leave his earthly habitation it will be to take up his residence in "a mansion in the sky."

1908 March 18 Truckee Republican

- Albert Johnson, manager of the Donner hotel, was in Truckee today, having walked in early this morning on the crust of the snow. He states that the recent snow which fell here, leaving only about three feet of the flakes, gave them fully five feet at the upper end of the Lake.

1909 November 13 Truckee Republican

- Albert Johnson was in Truckee Thursday. He stated that the snow at the head of Donner Lake was twice as deep as in Truckee. Mr. Johnson was in Truckee for the purpose of laying in his winter supplies. E. J. Campbell hauled up the supplies for Mr. Johnson Thursday afternoon.

1910 February 5 Truckee Republican

ALBERT JOHNSON CAME NEAR DYING

Survives Untold Sufferings All Alone in Cabin on Banks Donner Lake Midst Snow from 6 to 8 Feet Deep.

- Albert Johnson colored, known to everyone who travels over the Summit road, a pioneer resident on Donner Lake came very near passing to the great beyond, alone in his resort without assistance unable to communicate with anyone during the time the snow storms were at their worst and the ground was snow covered the deepest. This bit of news was brought to Truckee by William Johnson who made a visit to "Old Albert's" place last Wednesday. Mr. Johnson said he had been very ill and for several days thought death would relieve him of his sufferings. He had fuel and grub, but rheumatic grip held him in bed, until starvation urged him to use every effort to keep life in his body. Suffering untold agony, he managed to start a fire and prepare something to eat. When he retired to bed, he was again compelled to lay there several days without water and food. This experience has taught Albert a lesson and, in a few days, he will come to Truckee and remain until the season opens up. Albert Johnson is now past the four-score mark and has lived in this community for over 40 years. William Johnson who made the trip says the roads are in excellent condition. He believes Donner Lake is covered with a coat of ice about 12 to 18 inches thick.

1910 June 22 Truckee Republican

Albert Johnson Will Sell Exclusively Soft Drinks

- Albert Johnson, who has been conducting a summer resort and a road house on Donner Lake for the past thirty years was in Truckee this morning. While here Mr. Johnson stated that complaint had been filed against him for selling liquors without a license and from now on, he intends to sell nothing but soft drinks. While in town today he placed an order with Charles Thomas for several cases of soft drinks to be dispensed at his resort.

1910 October 8 Truckee Republican

Should Be Persuaded to Live In Truckee

- Albert Johnson, who has resided at the head of Donner Lake for the past 36 years, was in Truckee, Thursday, and while here made the statement that he was going to make his headquarters this winter at his place six miles, west of Truckee. Last winter Mr. Johnson came near dying from rheumatism It is believed by many citizens of this place that the old colored gentleman should be cared for and not allowed to reside alone in his place during the severe winter, months.

1910 December 24 Truckee Republican

AN OPEN WINTER SAYS Albert Johnson

"Colored Albert" Walked to Truckee, Thursday for the First Time for Many Years During Month of December Without Fighting Snow.

Albert Johnson, colored, who has been conducting a road house on the shores of Donner Lake for more than forty years, walked to Truckee. Wednesday evening to secure provisions for the next three months. Mr. Johnson stated that this is the mildest winter he has seen in this part of the state for over twenty years. "It is an unusual season," continued Mr. Johnson, one of these open winters that we have here every once in a while. Think of it, holiday, and no snow on the road. I walked all the way down from my place and the road is just as open as it was in the month of June. The Good Lord has been on my side this fall as the late season gave me time to get my winter's wood in and provisions for the cold, snowy months yet to come. I am well supplied for this winter, having provisions, wood, and a warm building to live in. I am feeling better this winter than I have for a long time. I intend to walk up this Thursday morning." Nearly everyone in this vicinity knows of Albert Johnson. He has resided in this section

for over 50 years. When he first came here, he was employed as a cook in the old Truckee hotel and later accepted a position as cook on a steamer on Lake Tahoe. He is acquainted with all the pioneers of this section and his memory is good in recalling incidents that took place nearly a half century ago. He claims to be ninety-three years old. Last winter he came very near crossing the great divide, being a sufferer from rheumatism, but this year he is much better and says that his health is much improved.

1911 February 25 Truckee Republican

ALBERT JOHNSON BROUGHT TO TRUCKEE

Party of Men go from Here to Head of Donner Lake to Rescue "Old Albert." Has Kept Road House for 40 Years.

- Several men went to the head of Donner Lake Thursday for the purpose of bringing "old Albert", colored, from his cabin, where the old argonaut, aged 93 years, was without food or wood for almost a week. For the past twenty years "Old Albert and his cabin have been a land mark there. This winter together with ten feet of snow, worsted him and for several days the Wilsons at Tamarack, noticed thru their telescope, that no smoke came from his cabin , and upon investigation found him destitute. Food and water were carried him for several days. Mr. Johnson has conducted a road house on the shores or Donner Lake for over forty years and everyone who has ever been to the lake knows Albert. He has resided in this section for over fifty years. When he first came here, he was employed as cook in the old Truckee hotel and later accepted a position as cook on a steamer on Lake Tahoe. He is acquainted with all the pioneers of this section and his memory is good in recalling things that occurred nearly a half century ago. Last winter he came near crossing the great divide, being a sufferer from rheumatism, but this year he is much better and says that his health is much improved.

1911 March 11 Truckee Republican

- Albert Johnson an aged negro who has resided in a cabin at the head of Donner Lake for the past number of years, has been admitted to the county hospital. Mr. Johnson claims to be 93 years old and is a native of Kentucky. He is suffering from the infirmities or old age.

1911 April 12 Truckee Republican

Aged Pioneer Albert Johnson Gradually Sinking.

Donner Lake Famous Figure Passing Away at County Hospital at Nevada City. Old Age, 93 Years Cause of Affliction.

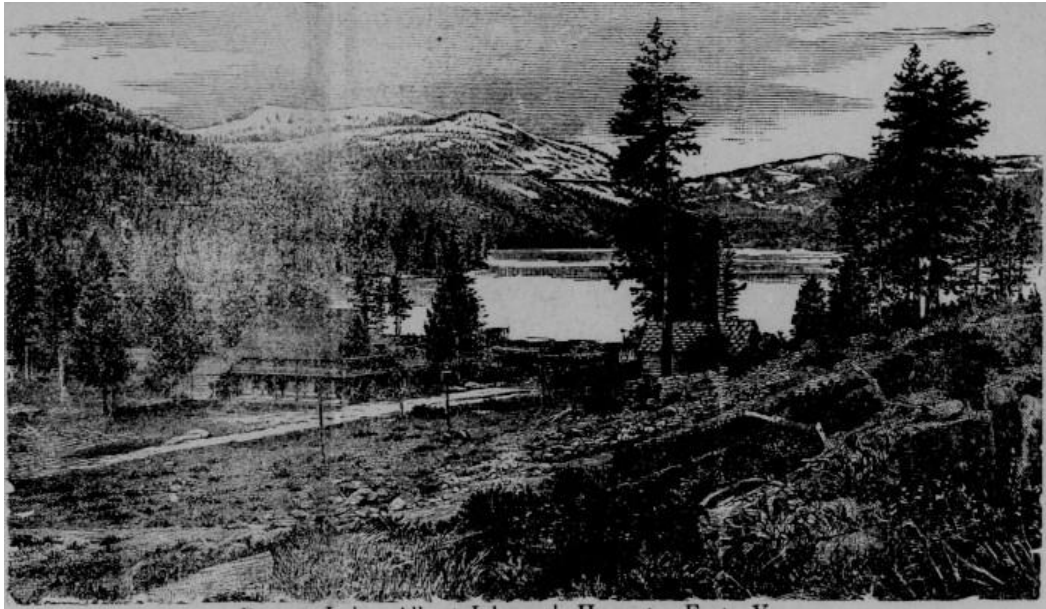
Albert Johnson, colored, known as the hospitable landlord of a few cabins in the cotton wood grove at the head of Donner Lake for thirty-five years or more, is gradually passing away at the county hospital at the ripe old age of ninety-three years. Last week a representative of the Republican visited the hospital for the purpose of visiting 'Albert.' He can scarcely see or hear. The poor old fellow is nothing more than skin and bones. His face is very small, and his arms and legs are as frail as a broomstick. He scarcely recognizes anyone. His memory is slow to act, and his eyes have the death glare. His only request of the attendants is to be left alone. He is gradually sinking away. Mr. Johnson has resided in this part of the state nearly forty years. When he first came here, he worked for Stewart McKay in the old Truckee hotel. After working in Truckee, he went to Lake Tahoe and was cook on one of the steamers. From that place he went to the head of Donner Lake and has resided there ever since, conducting a saloon and renting cabins to summer tourists. No individual is more widely known by residents of Nevada county than Albert Johnson

- on account of his generosity and hospitality. It is believed by the attending physician that he will not live but a few days longer.

1911 April 15 Truckee Republican

Albert Johnson, colored, 94 years old died Thursday at the county hospital in Nevada City. He has been at the hospital for some time for treatment for ailments resulting from old age having been taken over from this place. His faculties have been failing him for months and the old negro had difficulty in recognizing old friends.

The deceased came to Nevada county nearly 40 years ago. For five years he worked at Truckee, most of the time at the old Truckee Hotel when it was conducted by Stewart McKay. For the past 35 years he has lived at the head of Donner lake where he conducted a resort. He was a familiar figure in the eastern end of Nevada county and was extensively known by the tourists and residents of Truckee and those who have spent their summers at the head of Donner Lake. Mr. Johnson is known to every one who has ever been up to his place, as an excellent cook.



1927 July 22 *The Union*

Within an article regarding Donner Camp becoming a well-known resort is an excerpt regarding information on Mr. Johnson. It is as follows: "Gill Varney, a veteran of the Truckee-Donner Lake section, is quoted in a recent article, concerning the former resort period, as follows: ".....A rather large hotel was built down on the site near where the fish rearing pond is now located. There were 22 rooms in it, a man named Cambell owned it, this was in 1854.³ There cooked for him, shortly after the Civil War, an old, freed slave darkey, by the name of Albert Johnson, who was known from one end of the emigrant trail to the other for his chicken dinners—game and fish. He came from Virginia City very shortly after the war.⁴ Right soon he had his own little restaurant and did well. He was free and open-handed, but an inveterate gambler. He had the respect of everyone. He gave away more than he should. No Man ever went away hungry from his little shack. Then he open a saloon and eating shack where the dancing platform now stands. At this time the woods were full of timber packs and miners flooded the hills. The trek of great teams and oxen was a continual parade along the overland trail. It was here that the old darkey took ill. He had given away his very all, and had too much pride to ask any one for help. For three or four days he was missed and his place seemingly untenanted. He was at last found lying in his bunk, very ill, of starvation, and nothing else. We took him lashed to a sled down to Truckee for medical attention, and then later sent him over the Hump to Nevada City to a hospital. It was there that he died, and was buried."

³ 1854 is not a correct date, and it would appear through research that Mr. Campbell only had property within the confines of "Truckee". Mr. Johnson came to Truckee in 1871. Reportedly worked in Truckee until 1875-6, then came to Donner Lake. Also the Donner Lake Hotel was run by James Grant.

⁴ 1911 account of conversation between Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson indicates he came "over the hump"—Donner Summit, saw Donner Lake and never left Truckee after that point, c1871.

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