ECHOES FROM THE PAST

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

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

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

At the same time, we will be doing some clean up and planting in the Garden. We planted quite a few drought resistant plants last year and will be planting more this year while we are repairing the watering system. Volunteers Greg Zirbel, Karl Pape and Dennis Beeghly have done an amazing job and I am very proud of the new site. We are continually working on adding pages that will benefit the society and let the public know what we do have available in the way of research items.

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

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

Respectfully, Chaun Mortier, President

CALENDAR

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

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- Civil Defense Cards, Truckee River vs. Dog Valley Route & and Other 2015 Donations - p. 5
- On Wings of Terror: We Honor Them - p. 6
Not to Members

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

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

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

SEEKING SUMMER DOCENTS FOR OLD JAIL MUSEUM

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

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

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

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

One of the envelopes stamped Dec. 9, 1921.

70 years ago.

Wings of Terror - continued from p. 6

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

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

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

Photo credit excerpt from The Bismarck Tribune March 20, 1946 BMWZ
ON WINGS OF TERROR - WE HONOR THEM

By Heidi Sprat

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

On March 20, 1946, there was a reported downed plane that crashed into the Sierra Nevada mountains about 7 miles north of Truckee near the abandoned town of Hobart Mills. Caretakers of the abandoned Pioneer Lumber camp at Hobart Mills provided an eyewitness account. It appeared that the plane disintegrated in midair and the pieces came down on a heavily wooded area. An unidentifiable victim was the son of Missouri’s former governor, and another was a decorated sailor with three rows of campaign ribbons.

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

Researching materials at the Veterans Memorial Building, we found that there was an entry for the crash and also a C-47 crash, I kept noticing. Reading through a dozen newspaper articles about the crash cited above, we were able to read that there was another crash on March 20, 1946, farther away. This crash was equally haunting.

IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR!!!!!

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was only one road in and out of Truckee, the Old Highway 40, and for a good portion of the year it was snow bound. The only access to Truckee in the winter months was the Southern Pacific Rail Service. The Southern Pacific supplied much of the raw material for the stills. There wasn’t much in the way of grains or grapes in the Truckee area, but the Sacramento Valley was rich in moonshiners and wine makers’ material needs. Either by east bound train or over the old Highway 40, when it was snow free, Truckee became a major consumer of produce.

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

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

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

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

For those still fighting demon rum, a recent publication made of ‘a royal big snow frolic.” Sierra-bound passengers were eager to participate in the San Francisco Bay Area after midnight to arrive in Truckee the next morning in time to participate in all the daytime snow fun. In that article, we referred the reader to an advertisement for the train. We have since located an image of a Snowball Special that we thought you would enjoy. Sierra-bound passengers were eager to participate in “a royal big snow frolic.”

SNOWBALL SPECIAL

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

The Snowball Special was another name for the railroad’s annual free-winter-weekend getaway. The first one was held in 1932 and a donation of $2 allowed a rider and two children to enjoy all the festivities. During the 1940s and 1950s, tickets were $3 and a “child” could be any age under 12.

On March 2, 1941, the Truckee Republican ran an advertisement for this event and the following year’s event in The Sierra Sun. For truckee residents, newspaper subscription were a仅为 $3.00 for a year.

The trains would depart from San Francisco for Truckee at 11:00 p.m. and arrive before dawn. The next day was spent at the resort, then the commuters would catch the train home at 9:00 p.m. with their suitcases filled with gifts and souvenirs.

In 1912, a snowball fight broke out in the Horsehead area near Truckee and everyone thought the snowball fight was a good idea. By the 1920s, the festival evolved into a full-fledged event.

A third category of materials includes over 150 “cards” listing the names of those with expertise. All of the cards were completed by Truckee residents, or those who worked in Truckee — and may, in fact, have been completed in the Veterans Memorial Building itself. Two in particular state “Air Raid Wardens,” Truckee, CA. (See this link for more information). A sample of the card follows. On the reverse side is a thumbprint and a place for a photo. Although neither of these cards has a photo, they are interesting in that they also complement another donation.

CIVIL DEFENSE CARDS AND OTHER
2015 ARCHIVE DONATIONS

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

In ammunition, we have one gentleman listed with 150 rounds and 2 rifles; another with 60 rounds; another with 1 32 Rem Pump 1-22 Rem Pump; another with a 30-40 Crag; others with a 22 rifle and 32 rifle; even someone with a Luger 30 Auto Revolver. There is an expert in gas masks; a blacksmith; and a publicist. There are categories of armaments and who owns what: Ammunition, Rifles, Revolvers, Shotguns, Automobiles, Trucks and Miscellaneous.

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A third category of materials includes over 150 “Volunteer Enrollment for Defense” cards, approximately 6 ¾ x 7” in size. The cards reveal the name, residence, employer, naturalization, physical condition, radio equipment, motor vehicles, job assignment, firearms, ammunition, and other capabilities...
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Snowball Special January 1918 (below)

Photo Courtesy of Truckee-Donner Historical Society Archives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Board meetings are open to the public.

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.

Echoes From The Past Newsletter
March 2016 Issue 1

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.

Donations - continued from p. 6

In a September 6, 1921 Oakland Tribune article, “Auburn-Reno Road Survey Explained to Association,” the author wrote: “The scenic beauty of this highway along the Truckee River is on an equal comparison with the Columbia River display in the state of Oregon and is worth more to the state of California from an advertising standpoint than many times its cost. This road will not be over a 3% grade on any part. In summing up these two roads, [the Truckee River Canyon road or the Dog Valley grade road], the distance from Truckee to the state line by the Dog Valley road will be about 24 miles. The distance on the new proposed road down the Truckee river from Truckee to the state line will be about 15 miles. The Dog valley has only one building on the entire route with no service to the traveling public, whereas the Truckee River road will be open to the following towns with populations of about 1000 people in Boca, Floriston, Iceland, Mystic, Farad and other towns.”

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

Wings of Terror – continued from p. 6

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

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

Photo credit excerpt from The Bismarck Tribune March 20, 1946

The Bismarck Tribune
March 20, 1946

Fear 33 Dead in 2 Plane Crashes
Springtime is approaching and for us that means a lot of fun and work. There are many things on the agenda in preparation for the opening of the jail for the season. The Town of Truckee anticipates that they will be starting the work on Phase 3 of the Brickelltown project which will also include the re-grading and installation of pavers in our driveway. We will be monitoring this project to be able to gather any artifacts that pop up. This project also includes bringing electricity to the Memorial Garden so we can put in some lighting. We enjoy people using the garden as much as they do but unfortunately some of the very late night activities are not what we want. So to help out the local constabulary we are looking to put some type of unobtrusive motion lighting to discourage its use at night.

At the same time, we will be doing some clean up and planting in the Garden. We planted quite a few drought resistant plants last year and will be planting more this year while we are repairing the watering system. Volunteers Greg Zirbel, Karl Pape and Dennis Beeghly worked hard bringing stones from the Town Hall that were saved for us. When the fire wall fell down to the East of Moody’s, all the rocks were saved for our use so another brave effort and we have more to work on adding pages that will benefit the society and let the public know what we do have available in the way of research items.

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

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

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

Respectfully, Chaun Mortier, President

Membership Application | Renewal Form
I /WE want to JOIN or RENEW (circle one) MY/OUR MEMBERSHIP in the TRUCKEE DONNER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.truckeehistory.org | info@truckeehistory.org | (530) 582-0893

Make checks payable to TDHS | Mail to: P.O. Box 893 Truckee, CA 96160

Go Paperless* (check here) (____) to receive eBill Renewals** and e-editions of our newsletters
I Prefer Paper Renewals (____)

* [a valid email address is required] **Pay by Check or Credit Card (you choose your payment method)

For Renewals: Check if there are any changes below: (____) If known, your renewal month: ________

MEMBERSHIP NAME:_________________________________________________________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS:________________________________________ CITY, STATE, ZIP:_________________________

E-MAIL ADDRESS:___________________________________________________________________________________________

HOME PHONE:________________________________________ CELL PHONE:________________________

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

Individual $20____ Family $30____ Business $40____

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

Select renewal month: _____ January or _____ July (see TDHS website for membership details)

SPECIAL DONATIONS: Gift Membership $_______ In the Name of ____________________________

MEMORIAL DONATION $_______ In Honor of ____________________________

Other $_______ () Old Jail Museum () Joseph Research Library () ____________________________

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

Areas of Special Interest and/or Comments/Suggestions:________________________________________________________

Contact us at:
(530) 582-0893

www.truckeehistory.org

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