

## **Trout Creek's History**

Trout Creek starts here in Tahoe Donner with a history that goes well beyond Tahoe Donner's creation in 1971. Trout Creek is one of several creeks that feed into the Truckee River and has been used for many things including logging, water and recreation. Its beginnings start at Tahoe Donner but what it supported went beyond our small community.

### **Trout Creek's story was not always environmentally friendly**

Misuse of the creek started in 1863 when Joseph Gray built a way station at the foot of the Trout Creek watershed on the California Emigrant Trail. Elle Ellen built the first logging flume in the area that ran from Tahoe Donner (near Coyote Moon golf course) and near where C.F. McGlashan's water works got their water. When Trout Creek ran low in the summer, water for Ellen's flumes came from the 2 large springs near Ellen's mill. The railroad and logging industry continued to hurt the creek. Trout Creek was rerouted for the development of downtown Truckee and to power a lumber mill in a flume. The flume roughly followed the old Trout Creek river bed and ended up at the mill pond located at the east end of town. None of the lower portion of Trout Creek follows its original channel.

Tens of thousands of board feet of Truckee's forests went down flumes along Trout Creek ending up in the Comstock shoring up the mines, up in smoke for heat/steam power, or part of the 40 miles of railroad snow sheds covering the Central Pacific Railroad through the Sierra. The Truckee forests didn't give up easily. It took massive human labor to fell the trees and drag or float them to the flumes down to the mill.

### **Trout Creek Today**

We are working to restore Trout Creek. The Trout Creek Restoration Project is underway with beavers reintroduced between 1934 and 1949 to prevent stream degradation and promote wetland restoration. Beaver dams remove sediment and excessive pollutants from traveling downstream and increase deciduous vegetation. Logging is no longer a part of Trout Creek. If you look into the hills you will see that most of the trees are of the same height. Truckee and Tahoe Donner were clear cut 2 times in the past. We used to have a much greater variety of trees but the fast growing pines won. Today you see mainly Jeffery, Lodgepole, Ponderosa and some Sugar pines in our forests.

The richness of Truckee's history on how they helped open the West is remarkable. It is amazing to see what the loggers and railroad workers did using manual labor and how the forest has now reclaimed its territory. Once you know what to look for, traces of the lumber railroads are evident throughout the forest. Large trees growing between old railroad ties let you know something unusual happened here.

Trout Creek is an important part of our history and Tahoe Donner can claim that it all started here. Enjoy our creek and appreciate how we are making sure it will be here for future generations.

Author: Judy DePuy is a retired civil engineer, marketer and entrepreneur who now lives fulltime in Tahoe Donner.

**Sidebar:**

Truckee Donner Historical and Railroad Societies are always looking for people passionate about history. Even if you are a part-timer here in Tahoe Donner you can be part of a rich community. For more information on the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration activities of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad go to [goldspike.org](http://goldspike.org). You can also contact the Truckee-Donner Historical Society or Railroad Society at either [www.truckeehistory.org](http://www.truckeehistory.org) or [truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com](http://truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com)

**Bibliography:**

- Town of Truckee Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, Truckee Creek Trail, March 2014.
- Email from Denny Dickinson, UNR Trout Creek Research Study Request, March 10, 2014.
- Wikipedia: Trout Creek (Truckee River).
- Trout Creek Flume & Old Stone Building poster (for 150<sup>th</sup> Passport program, input from 150<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee members).
- Dean Eppley, Tahoe Donner 4-wheelers.
- My Place in the Sun, "German Native Ran Early Lumber", Sierra Sun, 2/16/79.