



Truckee-Donner Historical Society
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Issue 4

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Well here we are at the end of one year and approaching another. Winter is upon us and the weather has certainly been interesting. I am sitting here today looking at beautiful sunshine when two days ago the Truckee River was cresting because of heavy rains.

I believe history teaches us to always expect the unexpected and be prepared for anything. 2016 has proven this to be true. We have accomplished so much in the Research Library but still have so much more to do that I wonder if we will ever get caught up!

In 2016, we have received some amazing donations of items from various sources. When we complete our inventory, we will be highlighting some of the donations in the near future, so stay tuned.

We are also continuing with our Truckee Veterans Memorial Hall and Rocking Stone Tower research and that is progressing towards our eventual goal, filing an application for National Historic status.

Our relationships with Friends of the Vets Hall, Truckee Donner Railroad Society, Donner Summit Historical Society and the Friends

of the Library continue to become amazing partnerships.

DECEMBER 2016

We have lost good friends, Rest in Peace Pat McCarthy; we have gained new ones and all in all it has been a great ride.

This is short and sweet this time but my most heartfelt statement is that we can't survive without you: the membership and friends. To that end, I say

May each step you take be filled with wonder and may you appreciate the history of those who have walked before you.

Respectfully, Chaun Mortier, President

CALENDAR

Events will be posted online at our website at this link

http://www.truckeehistory.org/tdhs-calendar-of-events.html

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TDHS eNews Editor, Heidi Sproat

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.

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.

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.

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



Some of you may be familiar with these strange looking icons. Ine 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 you 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.



PAT McCARTNEY REMEMBRANCE

Our TDHS family was shocked to learn of the recent and unexpected passing of one of our own team, Patrick McCartney.

Pat had been a member of TDHS for years and was the ever-present docent at the Old Jail Museum.

A former *Sierra Sun* reporter, Pat also served on our Membership team and was always at the ready to assist in our historical events.

Link to Tribute to Pat =

http://www.truckeehistory.org/Pat-McCartney---Tribute.html

Pat recently authored a September 23, 2016 article on Ting Zhao, a 23 year-old Chinese student who volunteered as a docent at TDHS's Old Jail Museum during the summer of 2016.

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.

MA SPINELLI By Karl Pape

The Old Truckee Jail's history has been rumored with hosting a number of famous or "infamous" individuals, including Baby Face Nelson and Machine Gun Kelly. Although the stories vary from glancing to detailed, there is one that is well documented: Juanita Spinelli. Born as Eithel Leta Juanita Spinelli in 1889 in Kentucky, she is reputed to have spent time in the mid-west as a wrestler, nurse, knife thrower and gang member.

Nicknamed "the Duchess" because of her haughty demeanor, she often used her daughter to lure men into her gang and set up robbery victims. In January, 1940, she came to San Francisco with her common law husband, Michael Simeone, their three children, and Robert Sherrard, an inmate of a home for the feeble minded. Once in San Francisco they recruited other members of the gang including Gordon Hawkins, and Albert Ives, another mentally deficient member. On April 8, 1940, they began their crime spree by robbing a San Francisco barbecue vendor named Leland S. Cash on Golden Gate Avenue. During the robbery, Cash, who was hard of hearing, reached for his hearing aid and Ives, thinking it was a weapon, shot and killed Cash.

The gang moved to Sacramento and while having a picnic on the banks of the Sacramento River discussed one of their members, Sherrard, while he was swimming in the river. The Duchess was concerned that Sherrard was talking too much about the killing in San Francisco and needed to be silenced. That evening at a hotel in Modesto she put knock out drops in a bottle of whiskey and give a drink to Sherrard. He passed out and died. The gang dressed him in his swimming trunks, took him to the river, placed his clothes neatly on the river bank, and tossed him in the river to make it look like a suicide. The police were not fooled.

The next day the gang drove their stolen car up the Old Highway 40 towards Reno and spent the evening at a hotel in Grass Valley. Ives feared that he was next to be eliminated and snuck away to the local California Highway Patrol Post and revealed the whereabouts of the gang and their crimes.

Due to ever-increasing costs in printing and mailing, commencing in 2017 TDHS will no longer be mailing out our quarterly newsletter ECHOES FROM THE PAST. To receive our ECHOES newsletter in the future, please look for the latest edition which will be posted on our website at this link

(http://www.truckeehistory.org/newsletters-and-search-tools.html) and, **as a TDHS member**, you will get an email advising you of this availability.

The gang escaped from Grass Valley but was apprehended in Truckee and spent that night in the (Old) Truckee Jail.

The Duchess, Simeone, and Hawkins were transported back to Sacramento where they were tried, convicted of premeditated murder of Sherrad, and sentenced to death in the San Quentin Gas Chamber, making Spinelli the first woman to be executed in a gas chamber in the USA. Ives was committed to the Napa State Asylum for the Insane for the rest of his life.

As a sidebar, while in prison awaiting execution, the warden at the time said Spinelli was the "...coldest, hardest character, male or female, that I have ever known, and was utterly lacking in feminine appeal. The Duchess was a hag, as evil as a witch. Horrible to look at, impossible to like, but she was still a woman, and I dreaded the thought of ordering her execution."

References:

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O'Hare, Sheila, Berry, Irene & Silva (2006). Legal Executions in California: A Comprehensive Registry, 1851-2005.



TRUCKEE'S PLACE IN THE STRIKE OF '94 By Heidi Sproat

Like many of our other *Echoes* newsletter articles, we stumbled on this topic as well. Scanning through anything that mentions Truckee, one of our research staff came upon an excellently researched book entitled *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders* 1877-1945 by Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, ("Laurie")¹ which covers the history of Army domestic support operations with the rise of industrial America. What does this have to do with Truckee?

Skimming through the almost 500 page book, we noticed a map (Laurie, p. 114) that showed Truckee was the site of Civil Disorder in 1894. Curious, we read through the pertinent sections that helped to explain the circumstances under which Truckee found itself under some kind of military oversight.

Coincidentally, on the very next TDHS volunteer day, we also received donations of old *Sierra Sun* newspaper articles and other area newspapers and periodicals that covered years of reporting we have had much difficulty obtaining. To our good fortune, there was one such multi-part article by Doug Barrett, former staff writer for the *Sierra Sun*, who wrote a column titled *My place in the Sun*. After browsing through scores of donated articles, we hit the jackpot with a May 23, 1975 article "Army had big role in Truckee." There was a corresponding image that showed Company "B"s kitchen in Truckee, July 1894 (see p. 7). Intrigued, we started digging deeper.

We learned that the army "occupied" portions of Truckee during the Great Railroad Strike in the summer of 1894. The 'strike of '94' originally started in late May in Chicago and spread throughout the nation in a dispute between the American Railway Union ("ARU") and the Pullman Company. Although Pullman, Illinois, was considered a "model" company town, sparked by the 'Panic of 1893' there was a serious economic recession. The Pullman Company was making successive wage cuts, increasing hours and laying off workers while raising an already high cost of living – especially when compared to the adjacent municipality of Chicago. In May 1894, a committee representing the workers approached the President of the company, Mr. Pullman, requesting that old wages and rates be reinstated. Mr. Pullman refused and was "indignant at the apparent

intrusion of the workmen into the affairs of their business." (Company B, p. 11). Committee members were discharged from service and that is what precipitated workmen striking. Although the railroad companies supported Pullman, the brotherhoods supported the workers led by then ARU President Eugene V. Debs.³ In opposition to the ARU was the General Manager's Association, founded in 1886, consisting of the Pullman Company and 24 railroads, among them the giants of the rail industry. Unable to agree to any kind of settlement terms, the ARU announced a boycott of any trains pulling Pullman cars. The strike was enthusiastically joined by thousands of railroad workers who tied up traffic coast to coast. Although violence in the east on miles of railroad track far surpassed that which occurred in the small town of Truckee, California nonetheless was a pivotal point as trains passed through this town on the main railway line. Both the ARU and the Pullman Company held "uncompromising attitudes" which "assured violence that eventually required federal military intervention to restore order." (Laurie, pp. 125, 133).

As history has taught us, when military intervention is called for, the National Guard is usually called upon to quell disturbances in the majority of domestic disturbances. (Laurie, p. 17). Subject to Constitutional provisions and federal legislation, the President has certain limitations to commit federal troops to aid civil officials. instances, Presidents have sent troops to area disturbances without first obtaining statutory justification for doing so (Laurie, p. 21). The eastern cities had state guardsmen who could restore order, but in the west no such organizations existed. Because the strike interfered with the mails and interstate rail traffic, federal troops were called in.4 Consequently, then President Cleveland enlisted the Army's assistance and directed federal troops to insure that the trains kept running. Because no other capable law enforcement organization existed who could quell the disturbance in the West, regular army troops were assigned to the Sierra Nevada along the Southern Pacific route to prevent any sabotage attempts. Why was this so important to Truckee?

Consider Truckee's geographical position. Recall that the railroad through the Sierra Nevada was completed in the late 1860s and Truckee is, of course, on the railway line. During the 1880s and 1890s, shipping goods by railroad was both expedient and profitable for lines between the West and

eastern destinations. Truckee was a huge lumber district and had a burgeoning ice industry. According to a book published in 1895, The "City Guard": A History of Company 'B," First Regiment Infantry, N.G.C. ("Company B"), p. 9:

Never before in the history of the State [California] had she experienced such a movement as this. Traffic was completely stopped. Business was paralyzed. Goods could neither be received nor sent away. Merchants were laying off their employees and getting ready to close up their houses. Not a wheel of the Southern Pacific Company was turning in the State.

Truckee was among a dozen California cities most affected by the strike. ("**Guard**," p. 3)⁵. The strike involved three-fourths of the US and it was not long before bounds of legality were passed. While men have the right to strike, as long as labor troubles are confined to strict legal rights, usually positive resolution is accomplished. In this case, however, when strikers "indulge in acts of incendiarism, robbery, and even murder, then defeat" is likely. ... (Company B, pp. 87-90)

Never before, in the history of the country, with the exception of the Civil War, was the United States ever menaced by a movement so fraught with danger and terror as this. It had become something of far greater importance than a mere quarrel between railroad corporations and their employees over a matter of wages; it amounted to an armed rebellion against the laws of the United States. (Company B, p. 83)

The public hated the Southern Pacific Company and held much empathy for the strikers. The first train leaving Sacramento since the start of the strike was derailed and a number of soldiers killed. Unbelievably, the crowd actually cheered for what was "one of the most heinous crimes ever perpetrated." (Company B, photo p. 106, July 11, 1894, 3 miles west of Sacramento.) Bolts had been withdrawn from the rails of a small trestle and the train trying to cross was ditched and 4 soldiers killed. In doing this, strikers lost more than they ever could hope to regain. Public opinion finally came to its senses and the press, which had been supportive of them until now, turned against them. Finally, the public recognized that a strike that carried with it destruction of property and life must not be tolerated.

No state suffered more than California, in part due to its isolation relative to the eastern states and the confluence

of rail lines in Chicago (17 lines met there). Goods were shipped by railway from California and a great part of these goods were perishable fruits (Reno Gazette-Journal 27 June 1894, p. 1, column 1 "Long lines of cars filled with perishable freight stand in the yards and cannot be moved." Fruit is typically shipped in early summer months when reliable and timely transportation is critical. When ARU President Debs "ordered" that local unions tie up Southern Pacific Company railway transportation, the strike was in full force. Lines through Sacramento, however, were of paramount importance and Sacramento was, like Los Angeles, a controlling center for all lines leaving California. Baggage, freight and mail was piling up. Donner Pass was a vulnerable area where any train delay or derailment could tie up the entire west-east route for days or weeks. But when mail was delayed, that was Uncle Sam's domain and by late June rumors flew that State troops would be called out to quell the disturbance.

Then Attorney General Olney ordered marshals to take whatever means necessary to insure continued mail Sacramento, however, was a hotbed of passage. discontent: groups of strikers were larger and better organized than anywhere else in the sate and actually dismantled an assembled consist⁶. Because of the unrest in nearby Sacramento, guards were called out to Truckee and neighboring areas (Prosser Creek, Boca, Cuba), and 'details' were formed to guard area bridges - to protect the rail lines and to insure continued uninterrupted transportation. It was a guard's duty to watch the bridge vigilantly day and night and to prevent any kind of loitering on it or in its vicinity; to challenge all persons approaching the bridge, including "hobos," especially after dark; and to escort anyone across the bridge and insure they continued on their way.

Each morning a relief train with a quota of men rode the rails who were dropped off at different posts; they were picked up on the return. Both passenger and freight trains were suppose to be going through. Guards were supplied for every west-bound train and were relieved at Colfax by soldiers of the regular army. They returned to Truckee guarding east-bound trains. When the guards were riding to Truckee, at first they were riding on the tender and engine, to insure no one was interfering with the air brakes or with the running of the train. A guard was kept continually on the platform of the cars, with orders to drop off at each stop and to prevent anyone interfering with the

2016 TDHS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Thank you to all our volunteers who have dedicated their time, talents and energies to continue to serve the mission of preserving our rich Truckee history.

Accomplishments

- * Participated in practice hikes and actual Donner Party Hikes - several THDS members were guides
- * Performed Old Jail Museum and Garden work on a dozen days
- * Assisted with Truckee History Alive series, including The Storm King, Pioneer Women, by Mark McLaughlin
- * Dog Valley Road hike from Verdi with Marshall Fey; several TDHS members involved
- * Old Jail museum tour for 3rd and 8th graders
- * Cleaned up Schaffer Cemetery
- * Worked on info boards for Martis Camp History Tour
- * Participated in Donner State Park Museum one year anniversary party
- * Conducted several private and public tours, including a tour for Tahoe Donner Day Camp children
- * Visited California State Archives at McClellan Air Force Base in June; several TDHS members attended
- * Conducted a tour of the Schaffer Cemetery for the Nevada County Landmarks Commission
- * Conducted special opening of the Hobart Time Capsule at the Old Jail Museum
- * Participated in Streets of Truckee performance on the Capital Building Stage
- * Some members paraded July 4th with Truckee Donner Railroad Society
- * Hosted TDHS information booth at July 9th Truckee Air Show
- * Hosted July 16 Old Timer's Picnic at Truckee Regional Park
- * Re-hung Honor Roll in Veterans Memorial Building
- * Monitored Old Jail Museum driveway work days and archaeological oversight
- * Entertained Foresthill Divide Heritage Festival

Regulators

- * Assisted in reinstatement of American Legion Post 439 at Veterans Memorial Building
- * Represented TDHS at Parade of Nations in Placerville during World Gold Panning Championships; finalists included TDHS members, Miner and Miner's Daughter representingTruckee
- * Facilitated Friends of Veterans Hall Yard Sale Sept. 17
- * Answered dozens of email inquiries about people, places, events, and historical memorabilia, questions of historical interest and significance
- * Received and catalogued five separate multi-box donations
- * Continued involvement with the Blue Star Museum program
- *Continued *Echoes From the Past* quarterly newsletter publications and corresponding eNews issues
- * Continued collaboration for a joint Truckee Donner Historical Museum Committee
- * Maintained Old Jail Museum weekend and Truckee Thursdays opening for a summer count of 4,050 visitors!
- * Fulfilled numerous book orders taken through our website and Pay Pal interface
- * Opened and maintained a presence in the Joseph Research Cabin weekly on Thursdays for public access and individual research
- * Set up and hosted TDHS information booth on a Truckee Thursday
- * Celebrated Veterans Day with the Town of Truckee and hosted luncheon at the Veterans Hall
- * Coordinated and participated in the second Annual collaborative "Fund Raiser" for TDHS with Bar of America: "No One Goes Hungry"
- * Planned and participated in TDHS Annual Dinner
- * Participated in Streets of Truckee celebrations with Richard Blair at Cottonwood
- * Maintained current TDHS website

train's operation. Every bridge, tunnel and trestle was guarded by soldiers. (Company B, p. 173) There were reports that soldiers manned a Gatling gun on a flat car in the middle of Truckee. (Company B, p. 205). Arriving in Truckee, two "tourist cars" were side-tracked and became the guards' home while on duty. (*Sierra Sun*, Guy H. Coates, June 22, 1985, "Fear of unrest brought troops to Truckee in '94;" Company B, p. 177). Some of the cars contained ice and in one instance, guards transported prisoners in cars containing ice, bringing them into Colfax "literally on ice." (Company B, p. 92). In their "off-duty" time, some of the soldiers even visited Charles Fayette McGlashan's Rocking Stone Tower and the Donner Party artifacts. (Company B, pp. 190-191).

After almost three weeks, the unrest subsided, workers returned to their livelihoods, and finally in August 1894, troops were dismissed. (Laurie, p. 30). The railroad strike in Sacramento ended on 22 July 1894. (Laurie, p. 130.)

Retrospectively, it is amazing to think that our little town of Truckee – the place where many folks just "pass through" on their way to somewhere else – played such a role in the Strike of '94. While the railroad may not play such a critical role in the transportation of goods today, it is understandable how important it was back in 1894 to keep the flow of goods and mails moving.

Curiously, this author searched for an advertisement about Pullman cars in several online databases which included area newspapers from the late 1890s - long after the strike ended. Unbelievably, the first search revealed an article from *The San Francisco Call*, November 20, 1897 and was the very <u>same</u> news article we stumbled on last year in researching information about the schooner *TRUCKEE* which sank off the coast of Tillamook, Oregon, stranded on the Umpqua bar. See our article from our September 2015 Echoes, pp. 5, 7. On that same newspaper p. 9, 6th column bottom⁷, was an advertisement for Pullman cars (see below image). How ironic.

References and footnotes are available on our website under Supplemental Content December 2016 Echoes. Photos courtesy of TDHS.

Leave San Francisco 430 P M., Mondays and Thursdays; arrive Kansas City 6 P M., Thursdays and Sundays; arrive at Louis 7 A. M., Fridays and Mondays; arrive at Louis 7 A. M., Fridays and Mondays; arrive Chicago 9:43 A. M., Fridays and Mondays.

DINING CARS under Harvey's management. Buffet Smoking Cars and Puliman Palace Sieeping Cars.

This train carries First-class Passengers only, but no extra charce is made.

The ATLANTIC EXPRESS, leaving daily at 4:30 P. M., carries Puliman Palace and Puliman Tourist Sieeping Cars on mattime. Direct on-nection in Chicago and Kansas City for a 1 points East.

A larger image of this advertisement available on our website. Link.



In the Company B book, there are amusing recollections of life in Truckee while guarding the railroad. Many of the tales deal with the procurement,, cooking, and serving of food to the men on duty. An improvised kitchen on the side of a railroad car had been initially set up for the 50-60 men on rotating duty - all expecting 3 meals a day (see image below). "Life was a howling wilderness to the dudes of the company without milk and sugar for their coffee and butter for their bread." The men had "wolfish appetites," "sharpened by the bracing air of the mountains," but it was not until they made arrangements to board at the Truckee Hotel that there was any reprieve from the dwindling food supplies. (Company B, p. 182). The author's narrative of the guards in Truckee is, at times, hilarious. For example, "The men, when not on guard, divided the time between eating and fishing. Degeneration had already set in - they seemed not to have a soul above their stomachs - meal time was hungrily looked forward to, and the bill of fare considered the only subject worth of discussion." (Company B, p. 203).



In a follow up to our story about the 1960 Donner Ridge Fire in our *Echoes* December 2015 article, we were contacted by a member of one of the fire brigades that helped battle the inferno. If you would like to read Doug Teasley's recollection about that harrowing event, please visit our website and visit our Supplemental Content December 2016. Doug Teasley moved to Portola, California, in the spring of 1959. He attended Portola Jr. Sr. High School until December of 1960 when he moved back to Sacramento to live with his Grandmother. He is married and currently lives in San Diego County.



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SPECIAL DONATIONS: Gift Membership \$_____ In the Name of_____ MEMORIAL DONATION \$____ In Honor of ____

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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: