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Rick Stafford, President
Truckee-Donner Historical Society
P.O. Box 893
Truckee, CA 96160

RE: Gateway Cabin Relocation Project
Cultural Resource Evaluation

Dear Rick;

This letter is to serve as a brief report summarizing the findings of the cultural resource evaluation for the Gateway Cabin Relocation Project.

Project Description and Background

In 1989 a cultural resource evaluation of the 10.5-acre parcel at the junction of Highway 89 and Donner Pass Road in Gateway, west of Truckee, California, was performed in conjunction with the development of a commercial center by Wall Street Property Company. During the archaeological reconnaissance the site of the Gateway Motel was formally recorded and evaluated. This motel facility, which once served travellers through the Truckee gateway, consisted of 27 quaint, peaked-roof cottages. Richard Joseph, the brother of Roxie Archie and Victoria McIver, purchased 310 acres in Gateway from the Union Ice Company in 1935 and opened the hotel for business by 1939.

The site of the Gateway Motel was evaluated according to the significance criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places and CEQA Appendix K. While it was not determined as meeting the criteria of significance for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, which would have required its preservation, structures within the motel complex were deemed to possess some design value reflective of their era. Accordingly, in order to mitigate project impacts to the motel site, it was recommended that a complete documentation package, consisting of historic photographs and architectural drawings and contemporary photographs of all buildings scheduled for demolition, be assembled prior to the initiation of project activities. This work was completed by Architectural Historian, Paula Boghosian. Full documentation of these initial archaeological evaluations is provided in Lindstrom (1989) and Boghosian (1990).

Later, a community interest in the preservation of the old motel structures, initiated by the Truckee-Donner Historical

Society (TDHS) with additional support from the Nevada County Historical Society and other interested individuals, prompted the ultimate preservation and relocation of two Gateway Motel buildings. The move was the result of a broad-based community effort to save at least a representative sample of the 1930s motor court era buildings from demolition. While most of the old Gateway Motel cabins were demolished in early May 1990, in preparation for the Gateway at Donner Pass Shopping Center, two of the cabins were saved, among them are the motel office and one larger duplex cabin (number 16 and 17) which were donated to the Historical Society by Wall Street Properties. A site upon which to place the cabins was donated by the Truckee-Donner Recreation and Park District (TDR&PD) and the Truckee-Donner Public Utility District (TDPUD) at Meadow Park, located directly behind the TDPUD building (Figures 1, 2 and 3). Because the TDPUD owns the property and the TDR&PD leases the land, both had agreed to the cabins' relocation. The TDHS plans to use the old motel office building as an administrative office, museum and meeting room and the two-room duplex cabin will be used by the TDR&PD for a public restroom facility at the park.

In keeping with Nevada County's procedures in the adoption of CEQA guidelines, an additional archaeological reconnaissance of the area beneath the old building, site and of the area containing the new proposed building site was conducted during May and September, 1991 by Susan Lindstrom, consulting archaeologist to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society.

Methods

On May 21, 1991, soon after the old motel office and duplex cabin were relocated to the Meadow Park site, an archaeological reconnaissance containing areas beneath and surrounding the original site of these buildings was completed, in order to detect the presence of any additional cultural resources that were not observed during the original reconnaissance in 1989 (Lindstrom 1989).

The old motel office rested on a concrete "vault" foundation with concrete slab basement. This vault construction accommodated the steam heating system of the building. As such, the original ground surface was obscured and could not be examined. No prehistoric artifacts or historic artifacts (other than those associated directly with the building) were observed.

The old motel duplex cabin was placed on a combination concrete and wood pier foundation. Enclosed within this area, an ashy layer consisting of burned earth and large charcoal chunks was noted on the ground surface and emanating out from the building's southwest corner. No charcoal or burned earth was

observed in the building's southeast corner. The charcoal stain was shallow (no more than an inch or so) and was underlain by a tan-orange layer of soil. No prehistoric artifacts or historic artifacts (other than those associated directly with the building) were observed. One wagon rim was collected from beneath the duplex by the TDHS and is on file at their museum (Stafford, personal communication 1991).

John Corbett (personal communication 1989), in recounting some colorful events surrounding the history of Gateway, noted that during the warmer months, a batch of tar was kept on top of the large rock outcrop (known as "hooligan rocks" in the former motel garden) to keep it soft, ready for a Truckee tar-and-feathering party at short notice. The duplex cabin is located not far from these rocks and whether or not this burned layer represents an area where tar was melted for the alleged "tar and feathering" events is still a matter of conjecture (Stafford, personal communication 1991).

On September 23, 1991, the new site of the buildings at Meadow Park was given a surface archaeological reconnaissance. At the time of the survey, the structures were positioned off the ground on supports and the area directly beneath the buildings was fenced off. An examination of the ground surface surrounding these structures disclosed no prehistoric or historic artifacts. However, for both the motel duplex unit and the office building, the ground surface was obscured by a thick lawn cover and cinder-gravel parking area.

According to Dave Rully, Operations Foreman for the TDPUD, the ground surface containing Meadow Park has been significantly altered. Rully's observation of the drainage pattern of the area indicated to him that the area may once have contained a pond (in the vicinity of the northeast corner of the park) which drained through the site of the new TDPUD facility. The pond was filled-in and Rully speculates that fill (up to several feet deep) was likely added to areas adjacent to the pond, areas which are proposed to contain the two relocated cabins. Rully suggests that the lack of trees on either building site within the recent past also supports the presence of fill. An initial attempt was made to locate old topographic maps within the TDPUD files which may have shown the original contours of Meadow Park, but none were found.

In order to confirm and clarify Rully's ideas about the original Meadow Park topography, several long-term residents of the Truckee area were contacted (Giovannoni, Meiss, Tonini, personal communication 1991). According to Giovannoni, a lifelong resident of Truckee, born here in 1908, a damned pond was once located behind the current TDPUD facility, upon which he

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used to ice skate during the 1920s. Elden Tonini, also a long-term resident born in Truckee early in this century, noted that the project area was once "way out of town" and that no structures were ever built on the Meadow Park site. Neither he, nor Thelma Meiss, a resident of Truckee since 1949, recalled a pond in that location, however, only that it was a flat undeveloped area until recently.

Results and Recommendations

Based upon a ground surface archaeological survey and results obtained from several oral histories, the project, as it is currently planned, should not adversely impact any potentially significant cultural resources and the project may proceed as planned with the following recommendation. Monitoring by a qualified archaeologist is recommended during the excavation of utility lines and structural footings to insure that no potentially significant subsurface artifacts are present. Although it is likely that the project site contains several feet of introduced fill material, oral history reports are somewhat conflicting at this time and monitoring will insure that no yet undetected cultural remains are properly evaluated.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Susan Lindstrom
Archaeological Consultant