



By Heidi Sproat, Barbara Czerwinski, & Judy DePuy

Following a lengthy, multi-year submittal process, Truckee's Veterans Memorial Building and Rocking Stone Tower are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Truckee-Donner Historical Society and other supporters worked tirelessly to obtain approval from the California State Historical Resources Commission for this site to be designated on the United States Department of the Interior registry. The property was approved due to its association with the history of Truckee as well as its notable architecture.

Nestled between Interstate 80 and historic downtown Truckee, the Veterans Hall and Rocking Stone, as they are locally known, are located on a three-quarter-acre lot atop a hillcrest overlooking the Town of Truckee at 10214 High St. Veterans Hall was completed in 1939 and dedicated in 1941. Similar to a Gothic-arched structure, it features arched entrances on its north and south elevations, resulting in a cruciform mass. The Rocking Stone Tower, a 14-sided polygon, was built of Kaiser steel columns in 1959 on a glacial erratic. Today the Rocking Stone Tower has 14 pillars that match the original C.F. McGlashan tower footprint, which occupied the site from 1893 to the 1950s.

Veterans Memorial Building

Veterans Hall and the rocking stone are located on the site of Charles Fayette McGlashan's mansion, which was erected in 1901. McGlashan was one of Truckee's most ardent supporters and an important citizen. Born in Wisconsin in 1847, he came overland to Placerville with his father and sisters in 1854. He attended Sotoyome Institute in Healdsburg and the Williston Seminary in Massachusetts, but by 1872 he had settled in Truckee. There he served as principal of the public schools. In 1875, McGlashan not only began practicing law, he also became editor and owner of the local newspaper, the *Truckee Republican*. He died in Truckee in 1931.

For the first three decades of the 20th century, the mansion and tower were the architectural and social focal points of Truckee. The mansion burned in 1934 and the original stone tower was demolished in the 1950s following vandalism and neglect. On Jan. 7, 1938, the McGlashan property was sold to Nevada County for \$10 and the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building was erected on the site soon thereafter.

The 1939 Veterans Hall was designed by noted Sacramento architect George Clinton Sellon. Although Sellon designed numerous public buildings in California, Veterans Hall was unique in its style. He also served as the first State Architect of California from 1907 to 1909. The structure is modeled in an unusual design reminiscent of a Gothic arch, suggesting the stylistic influence of military aircraft hangars or Nissen huts.

With its spectacular view overlooking downtown and the local surroundings, the hall was built as a symbol of how the community supports and advocates for its veterans and is one of many ways Truckee has memorialized and honored U.S. Armed Services of World War I and all subsequent foreign wars. This year, Veterans Hall celebrates its 80th anniversary.

The hall retains its community association as a gathering place for three generations of veterans, residents, and visitors. Since its inception, Veterans Hall has served the community in

a multitude of ways. It's been used for smaller scale purposes like personal and family social events, youth sport teams, educational classes, community center activities, and of course, a meeting place for veterans. But the hall has also served a more crucial role throughout its history in housing military troops, as a shooting range for law enforcement agencies, hosting emergency/disaster staging and training areas, and being a World War II and Cold War defense siren location. More recently, it's been the site of the Emergency Warming Center during winter months and served as an American Red Cross Emergency Shelter during the Caldor Fire.



HISTORIC UNDERTAKING: Members of the Truckee-Donner Historical Society gather to celebrate the designation of Truckee's Veterans Memorial Building and Rocking Stone Tower being listed on the National Register of Historic Places following years-long efforts. Photo courtesy Greg Zirbel

Rocking Stone Tower

The Rocking Stone sitting above Truckee is a natural phenomenon. The rocks were left behind by the receding glacier that had filled the Donner Lake/Truckee Valley at the end of the last ice age. The glacier must have had a sense of humor to have so deftly balanced the glacial erratic (granite rock left behind by a glacier) above what would become Truckee. People have admired the balanced rock for generations.

Native Americans used the Rocking Stone as a sacred spot. Prior to the western settlements by Europeans, the Wel Mel Ti — northern Washoe people — inhabited the greater Truckee area during the summer months. Long ago the stone was easier to wobble. When a strong wind blew, the stone would rock without being pushed. The motion would scare away animals, and smaller critters had difficulty climbing on it. The Washoe Indians were known to have kept their grains, skin hides, dried fish, and meat on the Rocking Stone, safe from animal predators, even birds.

In 1893, C.F. McGlashan built a 14-sided polygon structure on and around the glacial erratic that was on his property. In 1901, he then built his mansion alongside the stone and used the enclosed Rocking Stone area to house the largest collection of Donner Party memorabilia and his daughter's massive butterfly collection. (Remains of the collection are now housed at Truckee-Donner Recreation & Park District community center on Truckee Way). McGlashan's mansion burned down in October 1934 and throughout the subsequent years the tower surrounding the rocking stone fell into disrepair and was demolished in the 1950s.

Rocking Stone Tower had become an eyesore and safety issues were a great concern. As early as 1956, newspaper accounts noted that the Truckee Chamber of Commerce (1938), the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (1940), and Truckee American Legion Post 439 all sought to rebuild the tower. In 1956, Squaw Valley, recently renamed Palisades Tahoe, was chosen to host the 1960 Winter Olympics and there was a huge push to construct a facsimile of the original tower. Rehabilitation of the Rocking Stone Tower was funded by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors in 1959. In February 1960, the tower was selected as a staging area for the

lighting of the Olympic torch on its way to the Olympic Games. The torch-lighting ceremony culminated Truckee community's support, excitement, preparation, and involvement in the 1960 Winter Olympics. Rocking Stone Tower and the Olympic torch and cauldron together served as a beacon for those traveling from I-80 south to Olympic Valley on State Route 89.



C.F. MCGLASHAN'S MANSION was rebuilt as the Truckee Veterans Memorial Building. In the ensuing years, the tower surrounding the Rocking Stone fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished in the 1950s. Photo courtesy Greg Zirbel

Supporting the Community and Its Veterans

Rocking Stone Tower and Veterans Memorial Building have played important roles in the development of Truckee from the late-20th century through today. The National Register of Historic Places approval indicates that Truckee continues to honor its veterans for their service and sacrifices. A celebration of Veterans Day will be held on Nov. 11 at Independence Plaza on

Donner Pass Road, along with a ceremony dedicating a plaque proclaiming the National Register of Historic Places designation at Veterans Memorial Building and Rocking Stone Tower. It is fitting that the Veterans Hall dedication plaque mirrors the two neighboring United States Marine Corps dedication plaques to 1st Lt. Nathan Krissoff and Sgt. Phillip Allan Bocks, both of which overlook their hometown of Truckee.

Truckee Area National Registered Sites

National Historic Landmark

> Donner Camp Sites, 1961, Jan. 20 #66000218

National Register of Historic Places

> Donner Camp, 1966 Oct. 15 #66000218

> Boca Dam, 1981 March 25 #81000712

> Kruger (White) House, 1982 June 17 #82002220

> Commercial Row-Brickelltown Historic District, 2009 Oct. 8 #09000803

> Truckee Veterans Memorial Building & Rocking Stone Tower, 2021 July 16 #100006720

California Historical Landmarks (also on National Register)

> #780-6 First Transcontinental Railroad-Truckee

> #134 Donner (Pioneer) Monument

Donner Camp Sites are included in the state of California; *Donner Memorial State Park*, 12593 Donner Pass Rd., Truckee (exit 184 from eastbound Interstate 80); and *Donner Camp Picnic Area*, U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest, Interstate 80 to Highway 89 North, near town of Truckee.

~ Heidi Sproat is a volunteer researcher, website administrator, and facilitator for the Truckee-Donner Historical Society's Image Collection. She is a retired library system administrator. Barbara Czerwinski is a Truckee-Donner Historical Society volunteer researcher and Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commissioner. She is a retired registered nurse. Both dedicated women love the Truckee community and vowed to see this historic national approval succeed. Judy DePuy supports the prior women in writing and lives in Truckee with her husband, Dave, and their dog, Morticia.

Originally published in Moonshine Ink on October 15, 2021 at this link - <https://www.moonshineink.com/tahoe-news/history-in-the-making/> .