

April 14, 1987 Nelson Stone Life in Old Time Truckee – audio recording

Truckee was comprised of Irish and Italian ethnic communities of immigrants. If a newcomer to Truckee was not one of these ethnicities, it was difficult to get employment.

1930s.

Xmas 1929 first came to Truckee and left a car parked at Alta at the end of the road. Nelson met his brother at his brother's Lake Mary shack. Nelson went down old road on skis with his brother and skied to his brother's girlfriend house in Truckee. He hitched a ride on Mali (?) (forward cab locomotive). Rode train through tunnels back up to Donner Summit. [Sierra Pacific purchased power from PG&E.]

In the 1930s Nelson came on foot or skis only. In Truckee in the 1930s, there were only a dozen cars which were all put up on blocks in the winter.

John Corbett video. ??

Truckee's first turkey???

Entered high school and wanted to be a Doctor. Returned every summer to Truckee for work as he felt community offered him something more than just becoming a Doctor. He thought Forest Service would suit him, firefighting, "thunderdogs" (?) and accepted full time employment and was with Forest Service for 38 years spending most of his time in Truckee. In the war years, with the Japanese fire bomb threat, Stone was detailed to the west slope of the Sierras. Believes Truckee population was about 400. Cabin along Donner Summit Lake Mary and skied down the road with 3' snow. 1st building was a 2 story barn – roadhouse at Donner Lake, SW corner of the lake, believes it was Brown's Hotel/Palace.

Walked on ice on Donner Lake. 1 room office across street from CHP in summer only. Closed during winter, so he thought he could find temporary help.

Next was Jim McIver house, now plumbing business, where freeway crosses the east end of the meadow. 1 house destroyed by lightning, 1 torn down for the freeway. Go back in time 60 years – same scenery, just west of Standard Station was Texaco Station. Ran station before he got hired with Forest Service. Gas was 17 cents a gallon!! Marked up by 4 cents. It was a great day when he pumped 100 gallons for customers. Standard station in same place.

Flying A station.

Near Johnsons' Truckee River Bank operated by Ben Cooper who sold Signal Gas. What Texaco charged him still more expensive than Reno or in the Valley.

Highway 40 downriver recently completed. Started in 1926 near the completion of the Old Lincoln Highway. Bug station still on Dog Valley Road then. Main station on south side Glenshire Dr. Another station Highway 89 near the trailer court.

Highway 267 was a dirt road then, maintained by Forest Service and ended in Kings Beach. There was NO road to Incline or Spooner.

Highway 50 – Spooner Summit same 89N and 50. 89North changed more swinging onto east & Prosser Lake into Hobart Mills.

Then any winter movement was by train with Southern Pacific RR narrow gauge.

Old Joe Sanders retired fireman from Hobart Mills & __. 1940 narrow gauge torn up and roadbed remained. Man bought Hobart Mills, rebuilt RR to standard gauge and dismantled the town and sold off everything. Stuff went to Japan and "came back 2

years later" (meaning WWII). Common site was sled dogs, most common for transportation. [time 20:32]

Transportation in community was Tahoe steamers. Tahoe Tavern southerly once a day around lake dropped off mail Tahoe Pines, Homewood, nothing at South Shore except a cow pasture, then Richardson, Zephyr Cove.

Interested in Zephyr Cove and stationed in area and got mail from girlfriend in Santa Rose.

Steamer sank.

Had steady Forest Service work.

Gas launch Duranger (?) Kings Beach to east side of the lake, no road. But Forest Service had fire responsibility all the way to Nevada and had 30' gas launch to cross the lake. Boat was abandoned after 2 years. Stone recently found the flags from the ships and believes they are in Nevada City.

Primitive method of transportation and the nation was becoming air conscious.

Beacon lights were installed. Stone involved with installing them and sought winter time work when Forest Service job was only summertime. Stone got the job maintaining 16 beacon lights between Auburn and Reno. Then Boeing was flying by Truckee air mail flights and they needed an emergency landing fields in 1919.

White Rock Airport was the airport for the Boeing planes/ also called Boeing field.

White Rock is still visible today. Take Road to Prosser Lake Dam, about 2 miles off of 89 the road coming from the freeway, BEFORE houses, there should be a big rock with white paint. Most paint gone, but can still identify. Today, however, not even a fly can land there because of all the power lines now. Field abandoned.

Started work on Construction Truckee Emergency Field. So identified today, new Truck Stop on right – sagebrush is gone, lower pine trees than around was the Old Truckee Emergency landing field. Stone lived there 12 years in a little house completed in 1930. The U.S. Weather Bureau manned the field and it was "quite the set up" with teletypes and weather equipment and maintaining beacons. Boeing pilots flyers needed to see the ground in those days as there were only visual flying then. United States started more flying then. Recalls an employee of United Air Lines in 1930 in a new airplane, unfamiliar with the area and plane controls, set the plane down on what was called Summit Meadow. 8 passengers were aboard and while no one was injured, the pilot was soon looking for a new job. He became a good ranger since he wasn't such a good pilot. Man who worked for Nelson bought out new airplane Rick Livesey.

Services

About 18-20 doctors in town.

1930s if you got hurt, there was no hospital in Truckee. But the injured would go see Dr. Nordon? Masden? Bernard???? Office on upper floor of the Elks Building in town. Really appreciated Dr who would put on snowshoes and come to house to assist illnesses.

There was a hospital at Hobart Mills later. 1 Doctor was there. Nelson's 1st niece born there.

Who was the law at the time? Since Stone worked for the Forest Service, it was pretty much the law itself. They did search & rescue, deputy coroner, Truckee rep

law and managed nuisances. Recalls the story of the screaming peacocks on East River Street. Peacocks at the ranger station and if the wind was blowed just the right way, you could hear them at the airport 2 ½ miles away.

Constable Harry in Tahoe City had a beautiful dog team.

Judge Wilson's team. If jury needed, they'd grab the required number of jurors "off the street" then and there - a much better way than today. Judge Bliss (lady). Had 1 summertime patrolman Bill ____.

Fire protection. Truckee had a new truck. Tahoe City had a truck Old Bill Henry was Chief. Responsibilities included areas of Sierraville to South Shore to the Summit on west and peak on East of Washoe Lake. Any fire not confined to the structure, Forest Service was responsible for extinguishing. Community growing and his job then included more self protection and helped to form and organize fire companies in Squaw Valley, Northstar, Alpine Meadows, Kings Beach, etc., all separate districts to get the companies going.

Bug Stations operated with a 4 man contingent, but not on the highway. Officers met EVERY train, passenger and freight and checked for bugs. Officers went through all passenger luggage.

Los Angeles had a police contingent and Truckee had 4 entrances into town. There was a sign posted "LA City Limits." Insured you never got west of Truckee if you didn't have lots of cash in your pocket. LAS policemen in dark blue uniforms were unwelcome.

Established campground at Boca. Freeway now goes right through the camp. Recalls kids fleeing the poverty and dust storms of the Midwest and wound up in California. They followed the 'Emigrant Trail' and they eventually figured out what to do and where to go.

"LA Cops" spent 6-8 weeks in town and left. Bark ? Charlie White & BofA.

Storekeepers were bankers of the town - you know, where you went and left ¾ of the money you earned with the store keeper, and kept only ¼.

Wilkie Truckee Market, besides all the training, would NOT segregate dynamite and blasting caps from one another. [17 - 17:20]

Claire Dodge now Alpen Glow (Stone Garage) Frank Bowan Buick agency. Lots of buicks in Truckee - maybe as many as Reno.

Post offices were everywhere: Hobart Mills, Richardson, Tahoe City, Truckee, Boca, Floriston, Tahoe Pines, Meeks Bay, Carnelian Bay, Agate Bay, Homewood, Brockway Hot Springs, Glenbrook, and Zephyr Cove.

Questions:

Lumber mill turn of the century, Stampede.

Only sawmill was Hobart Mills in existence when Nelson arrived. About 350 men at Hobart then. Only the box factory remained operating, but was all closed by the time Nelson arrived.

When news of depression hit, spurred Nelson up 'over the hill.'

Hobart Mills and north was all government land. Exchanged Hobart Mills Estate for virgin timer land and ____ National Forest. Land was exchanged in Hobart offer to government in exchange for timber in the Incline are (the hill) to Sand Harbor, where drainage was north. ?? Select land was held apart from timber land. Hobart estate wanted \$60,000 for this piece. Request was turned down in a Washington

office. Area doesn't sustain comparable timber values. Nelson likes to think he wasn't that dumb.

Was there a school at Lake Mary? How many people at the Summit? 120 V line to north near Lake Angela.

Was Boca built where the reservoir is now? No. Under water now is a series of ice houses harvested at Boca Ice Pond on the river. Bill Wiley was then the postmaster at Boca. Post Office and store and school had about 8 children.

Ice houses ceased operating in 1914. In 1930, Nelson's brother operated a hamburger joint adjacent to the 'bug station'; after refrigeration got ice from removed sawdust and took the blocks of ice. Originally, ice blocks weighed 300 #s each. Yet, after 16 years, packed in sawdust, the blocks still weighed 200#s. Old ice houses were all caving in before reservoir filled.

Floriston was a very active town. Sand (?) camp train to Floriston, Pulp Mill, shutdown in 1922 because of contaminant acid release in the Truckee River. After the war, Crown Zellerbach Preston White FHA got GIs to buy houses. \$20,000 purchases of 23 houses hotels, and stores.

Across Floriston bridge on the left, there are still yellow gravel stains in the rock which still reveal the acid stains left by contaminant deposits even after 60 years ago when they ceased doing so. There was a 150 man hotel mostly of single men in Floriston as well. Forest Service wrecked the old mill site.

Bricks from the old mill site were used to build the Carson City Ranger Station.

Nelson could talk "about another hour" about life in old Truckee, so the audience and he agreed to be invited back in the Fall of 1987 to continue "Part II."

Someone also mentioned that Tom Macaulay was previously interviewed and that listening to his take on life in Truckee in the old days would be worthwhile.

Transcription attempt 7/13/2018 Heidi S.