



The steamer "Governor Stanford" delivers mail to Tahoe City in 1873.

Chapter 7: Placer and Nevada Counties - Tahoe City, Truckee and vicinity

Tahoe City is justly conceded by all to be the best point of observation for a general panoramic view of the lake, as from here almost every location of interest is within the range of vision aided by a field-glass of ordinary power. Glenbrook, fourteen miles across the water, is distinctly seen. During winter the snow often falls at Tahoe City to the depth of five or six feet, and in summer the climate there is called the coolest of any place upon the lake. The water of the lake is wondrously clear and blue, so that when in repose fish and other objects can be readily discerned at a depth of thirty or forty feet. It is also very cold, but has the peculiarity of never freezing in the winter. The deepest soundings ever made were 2,800 feet.

Following the lake shore from Tahoe City, the Island House is approached in a distance of a couple of miles, over a fine stretch of country; thence Observatory Point, a sharp

... the Indians
of the present
day never cross the lake,
affirming the belief that an
evil spirit would draw them
to the bottom were they to
make the attempt.





Many mountain valleys of small size are found in the eastern portion of Placer County, that are among the best in the world for summer pasturage for horned cattle, and for dairying purposes, the herbage being sweet, and not causing distasteful flavor to dairy products, while the cold, pure water insures cleanliness and solidity to the article. Nearly all of these are occupied for this business, and a great deal of butter is made, which, as a rule, finds ready market without leaving the mountains—at the tourists' resorts, the logging and wood-chopping camps, lumbering mills—and it is from this source that the well-to-do resident of the Silver State usually secures his annual supply.



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The Custom House, Tahoe City

prominence running into the lake at the lower end of Carnelian Bay; following up the beach, where are found many smoothly-worn and variagated silicious pebbles, the rocky point on the north is passed, and the shore of Agate Bay greets the traveler. Not far from here a small creek enters the lake, about the mouth of which is some pretty meadow land. Griffin's saw-mill is on this stream. East of this a few miles are the Hot Springs, near the State line, now the property of Sisson, Wallace & Co.

The lake is twenty-two miles long and twelve and a half wide, and is fed by the waters of more than thirty streams of various sizes, which have their sources in the surrounding snow-clad hills, and are ever pouring their volume into it—sometimes in gently flowing brooklets; at others in leaping, laughing, beautiful cascades, and again in fierce and angry torrents.

Tahoe City which was first laid out in 1863, by a party of men who, having congregated during that summer and fall at the new diggings in Squaw Valley District, in anticipation of the commercial importance of the place, and in view of its commanding position, located "city" lots, each proprietor digging a trench around his plat. It lies on a gently sloping plateau, at an elevation of about fifty feet above the water of the lake, to mark the boundaries. The following year a wharf was begun by John Chesronn, which was afterwards purchased by J. O. Forbes, Jr.,

and J. B. Campbell, who completed it. It extends into the lake some 200 yards, and is constructed upon cribs built of strong timbers and anchored with rock—the bottom found in the lake here being too hard to drive piles to sufficient depth in. About 300 feet from the shore, upon the wharf, is situated the “Custom House,” a building used as a saloon and post-office, now owned by J. B. Campbell. Beyond the wharf, some 200 feet into the lake, one strong pier has been sunk, where steamers are moored in bad weather, when too rough to lay up at the wharf. The first public house built there was the Tahoe House, by William Pomin, who is yet the owner and proprietor. He also built a brewery there. Later, as the place began to be visited by pleasure-seekers, as steamers began to ply the lake, and a wagon road was constructed from Truckee, after the completion to that point of the Central Pacific Railroad, the want of more extended accommodations was felt, and another hotel was built. This, after passing through numerous managements, has at length merged into one of California’s palatial hostelries under the ownership of A. J. Bayley, and is now enduringly established, with a world-wide reputation, as the Grand Central Hotel.

The marine interests of Placer County were first noticed by the Assessor in 1866, when he, that year, listed upon the assessment roll for taxation two schooners which were then plying upon the lake. The lake portion of Placer did not become populated as early as some other parts, owing to its isolation

Tahoe City, 1899



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...let us simply note the thrill of awe and wonder with which we gazed up the walls of the Blue Cañon, one thousand feet of sheer precipice, while far below winds a narrow ribbon of blue water curving to the curve of the foothills, and sweeping around their craggy feet, avoiding the jagged points, and lending grace and beauty to the stern and rugged scene in a manner altogether feminine. By the way, how true is that instinct which makes every one call a river she, and a mountain he!

Miriam Squier, 1877

