

TOLL ROADS

Johnson's Cutoff, also called the Carson Ridge Emigrant Road, passed over Spooner Summit and down Clear Creek from 1852 through 1854, but was rugged and little used. With discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859, Spooner Summit became a focal point on the most heavily traveled branch of the bonanza road system linking Placerville, California, and the new towns east of the Sierra Nevada. Territorial governments granted franchises to private individuals or companies, allowing them to build and maintain toll roads. The Rufus Walton (Clear Creek) Toll Road replaced Johnson's Cutoff in 1860, providing a better route around the southeast shore of Lake Tahoe via Glenbrook.



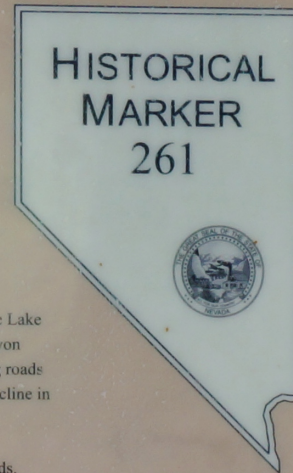
FREIGHT TEAMS AT SWIFT'S STATION
IN THE 1860s
California Historical Society

This route was improved in 1863 with completion of the Lake Tahoe (Bigler) Wagon Road, also called the Kings Canyon Road. About 5,000 teamsters were moving goods along roads leading to the Comstock in 1863, but traffic began to decline in 1875.

Stations were built at convenient intervals along the roads. Swift's Station was about two miles east of Spooner Summit on the Kings Canyon Road. In 1863, Spooner's Station, located near the current junction of US 50 and SR 28 (a mile west of here), had a hotel, saloon, houses, blacksmith shop, and two barns.



SPOONER'S STATION
IN THE 1860s & 1870s
Nevada Historical Society

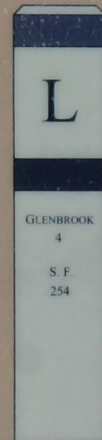


AUTOMOBILE AND ROAD CUT
ON THE KINGS CANYON ROAD
IN THE 1910s
Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno

In 1913, the Lincoln Highway Association designated the road up Kings Canyon, over Spooner Summit, and through Glenbrook as part of the Lincoln Highway. The highway was a private concept intended to enhance long-distance automobile travel by establishing the first transcontinental route. Actual work on this section began in 1914 when the Carson Good Roads Association placed redwood markers every mile. Each marker displayed the highway symbol and distances to Carson City, Glenbrook, and San Francisco. During this period one motorist described part of the road as "a narrow shelf along a barren, rocky mountain side."

EARLY MOTORING

Introduction of automobiles into the Tahoe Basin rapidly changed the character of the place, making it accessible for far more people as a growing tourist destination. Early in the twentieth century, the decaying bonanza system of wagon roads had to serve the needs of automobile travelers.



1914 LINCOLN
HIGHWAY MARKER
Lincoln Highway
Association

SPOONER SUMMIT

LUMBER FOR THE COMSTOCK

Massive amounts of wood were sent to the Comstock Lode from the Carson Range and the Tahoe Basin. Initially wood was hauled by wagon, but soon the transport system included trains, steamboats, and water flumes.

Spooner Summit is in the midst of a former logging landscape. In 1873, logging in the area was consolidated by formation of the Carson and Tahoe Lumber and Fluming Company. Workers were housed at a small settlement called Summit Camp, built along one side of the toll road. From 1875 to 1898 the company operated the Lake Tahoe Railroad along 8.75 miles of line from Glenbrook to this spot. The difficult route included switchbacks and a 487-foot tunnel just west of the summit. The narrow-gauge railroad's sole purpose was to haul timber and lumber for building purposes and cordwood for fuel. This wood was transferred to an 11-mile long V-flume that extended from Spooner Summit down Clear Creek to Carson Valley. There the wood was loaded on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad for the rest of its trip to the Comstock. At its peak the Comstock consumed about 80 million board feet of lumber and 2 million cords of firewood each year. About 300,000 board feet of wood passed over Spooner Summit each day.

THE LOCOMOTIVE "TAHOE"
UNLOADING WOOD



SUMMIT CAMP IN 1876

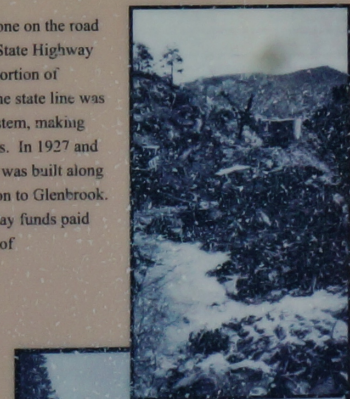


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Little more than light maintenance was done on the road even after it was included in the Nevada State Highway System as part of Route 3. In 1923, the portion of Route 3 between Spooner's Station and the state line was incorporated into the Forest Highway System, making funding available for major improvements. In 1927 and 1928, a graded two-lane automobile road was built along Clear Creek, over Spooner Summit, and on to Glenbrook. A combination of state and Forest Highway funds paid for the work. The new road became part of US 50. In the 1930s, the road was oiled and surfaced with asphalt. Snow removal allowed year-round access to the lake. Finally, in the late 1950s, this portion of US 50 was upgraded to the present four lanes.



SNOW REMOVAL IN 1937



CONSTRUCTION AT CLEAR CREEK IN THE
LATE 1920s AND THE FOREST HIGHWAY
ABOVE GLENBROOK ABOUT 1930

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