

History: Formation of LTUSD, what fire protection used to be

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Some 60 years of Lake Tahoe memories were nostalgically reflected upon at the March meeting of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society by longtime local resident, Stanton Meyer.



Meyer first saw Lake Tahoe in 1915 when his parents purchased the Porterfield cottage as a second home. This cottage is still standing today on the corner of Tallac and Oakland Avenues in the Al Tahoe area.

His first trip to Tahoe was via the Southern Pacific to Truckee, then via narrow-gauge railway to Tahoe Tavern, and then aboard the Steamer 'Tahoe'.

Arriving at the Al Tahoe area, the steamer debarked at the end of the long pier which extended from the lake front, between Pasadena and Riverside Avenues, straight out into Lake Tahoe approximately one-quarter mile.

Meyer noted that the long Al Tahoe pier had been built by Al Sprague who not only had conceived the community name 'Al Tahoe' by tacking his nickname of 'Al' onto Tahoe, but also pioneered Al Tahoe's lakefront property, and built the original Al Tahoe Hotel in 1910 (in 1925, the hotel became Globin's Al Tahoe Inn).

"During my younger years at Tahoe, we held an annual bonfire in the backyard behind our log cabin, and invited all the

folks in Al Tahoe.”

“There were many chipmunks in those days; also red-headed ground squirrels. I made a few dimes and quarters by trapping and selling them. One fall, I took a dozen red-heads to Sacramento and gave them to McKinley Park.”

Meyer recalled that in 1916, and for many years thereafter, the road running from the Tahoe Valley ‘Y’ to Bijou was on a considerably different alignment than our present day Highway 50. He noted that in those days the road came due north, past the one-room Lake Valley Schoolhouse (then located where the Safeway store stands today), past Dunlap and Anderson’s Dairy, and then over Trout Creek Meadow where there were several gates to open; from there, the road entered the Al Tahoe tract, near where Phil Greuner’s home stands today. He said that children would frequently be at the gates to open and close them, thereby earning a little extra pocket money.

After leaving the meadow area, the road extended on down to the lakefront (along the line of present day Bellevue Avenue), and from there is turned east and followed the shore (via present day Lakeview Avenue) to Bijou.

After buying the Al Tahoe property in 1933, it was suggested to Meyer that he become a candidate for Justice of the Peace in Lake Valley Township. “I planned to do so, but I was called to active duty with the Civilian Conservation Corps. I was assigned to Camp Riverton, about two miles up the old Ice House Road from the Riverton Bridge. In the Spring of 1934, a tent camp was established at Rubicon Point, and the initial work in developing what is now Bliss State Park was begun.”

The summer of 1937 found Meyer once again a civilian, and instrumental in the formation of the Al Tahoe Property Owners Association. He said that during that year, at a tax sale in Placerville, he bought two 50 x 100 lots in Al Tahoe for \$15.00. “Would that I could have looking into the future ...”

"Fire protection in those years was provided by a Forest Service pumper stationed at Camp Richardson. The Property Owners Association purchased a device which enabled the pumper to pump directly from the lake, or a stream. One winter, the association arranged to pay rent to Lakeland Garage so the Forest Service pumper could be garaged there, and thus provide fire protection during the winter."

Along with others, Meyer said that he went to Placerville to argue for high school facilities at South Lake Tahoe. Eventually, the Trustees of the El Dorado Union High School District established a branch high school which was housed in the auditorium of the American Legion Building. The auditorium was divided into four classrooms. The first year, a freshman class was enrolled; the second year, both freshmen and sophomores were in attendance.

He noted that on Dec. 7, 1951 voters at South Tahoe approved the formation of a Unified School District, and elected five trustees – Lou Rogers, who owned the Tahoe Cottage Court near the 'Y'; Lou Fitzgerald, owner of the Blue Crystal Chalets on Ski Run Blvd.; Francis Hodgkins, owner of Phillips Resort along Echo Summit; Don Clarke, and himself.

"I felt that formation of the Unified School District would keep our school taxes at home, and that we would have more local control over how the tax money was spent."

"However, when I learned that three of the trustees had selected as Superintendent of the District the principal of the Lake Valley Schoolhouse (who had not applied for the job, so far as I knew), and had agreed to pay him \$1000 more per year than the four applicants who had come before the board for interview, I felt it useless to stay on the board, and therefore resigned. Previously, however, the new District had, on my motion, been named the Lake Tahoe Unified School District."

In 1955, Meyer became a year-round resident of South Lake Tahoe. In July of that year, he was sworn in as acting postmaster of Al Tahoe.

Meyer recalled that immediately after he became postmaster, he was told to move the Al Tahoe Post Office from the Globin property to the Tahotel Building.

“The evening after my clerk and I moved the post office, Golda and I were in attendance at the Rowan and Martin show at Harrah’s. We had a small table to ourselves. Under the table, I placed my briefcase with my stamp stock and postal funds because there was no safe in the new postal quarters!”

Meyer served as postmaster until 1963, when the Al Tahoe Post Office became a branch of the Bijou Post Office. At that time, he became Superintendent of the branch, serving in that position until 1971.

In June of 1972, Stan and Golda moved ‘off the hill’ and over to Carson City. “I decided I had all I wanted of snow shoveling!”