

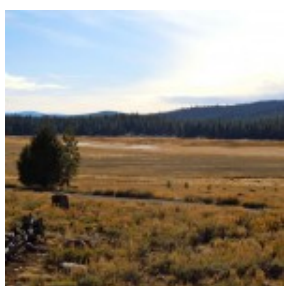
Discovering history en route to a scenic mountain bike ride

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Scanning the vast open space, with tall grasses dancing in the gentle breeze and pines looming overhead, the solitude is extraordinary. That’s what makes it so hard to imagine this used to be a bustling outpost in the mid-1800s.

Called the Hennes Pass, it linked the Gold and Silver states – still does, but not with nearly the same amount of traffic.

A marker at Kyburz Flat says, “Hennes Pass Road was used in the 1850s for travel to the mining camps along the North and Middle Yuba rivers. After the Comstock silver strike in 1859, Hennes Pass Road was improved to attract travel between San Francisco and Virginia City via Sacramento, Auburn, Nevada (City), and Camptonville.”



Wide-open spaces north of Truckee off Highway 89 used to bustle with silver and gold miners.

Photos/Kathryn

Reed

More's Station was a 320-acre ranch.

Three points of interest are marked in this area that is one mile off Highway 89 between Truckee and Sierraville.

In a quest to find someplace new to mountain bike while the ground is snowless in January, we ventured just outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. I can't count the times we've driven by this dirt county road. This time we turned right and drove a mile in.

Wow. What history tucked back into this near pristine acreage that is mostly on Tahoe National Forest land.

A sign talks of a once thriving hotel being two-feet from that marker. It would still make for an ideal place for a lodging establishment. But, selfishly, it is so wonderful to look at such a large swath of undeveloped land.

A little boardwalk makes a loop, with markers pointing out where a hotel, well, barn, corral and root cellar once stood. Rocks that are likely from that time period are still there.

Getting on our bikes, we ride less than a mile to what was the Wheeler Sheep Camp. A brick oven still stands – though volunteers, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, rebuilt it. It works today and can be rented.

It's easy to imagine sheep roaming in the adjacent meadow, munching away on the native grasses.

No one is here.

It's quiet, except for the wind in the trees.

We ride up a bit farther, but the road dead ends. We turn around, but instead of making a left to go back to the Jeep,

we go right to explore more.

Done with our cultural and historical portion of our outing, we get some exercise.

The trail is really more like a logging road. Evidence is everywhere that thinning projects have been going on recently in this section of the forest. The grade is gradual. A few spots have snow and ice, some places are hardpack, while others are dry and dusty.

It's chilly and the light doesn't last as long this time of year. We don't venture that far in. Next time, on a summer day, we'll explore even more.

Getting there:

From the South Shore, get to Truckee going up either side of the lake you like. Then get onto Highway 89 north going out of Truckee.

Between Truckee and Sierraville, which is 25 miles from Truckee, is Sierra County Road 450. Turn right.

One mile in is Kyburz Flat, where we parked. Seven miles is Sardine Valley and 14 miles in is Stampede Reservoir.

A four-wheel drive is not necessary to get to where we parked.

Signs point to where the historical sites are located.

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