

Efforts under way to preserve old Tahoe toll house

By Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Neomiah Osgood built the toll house in 1859. It is the oldest commercial building still standing in the Tahoe basin.

It was built at the foot of Meyers Grade where the Echo Lake Creek flows into the Upper Truckee River.

During the Comstock Load era there are reports of 400 to 500 people a day coming through South Shore on their way to Virginia City. It is stated that in bad weather the road could be backed up from the toll house all the way to Placerville, and that if someone broke a wheel on a wagon, it could take two days to get back in line.

The toll house operated until the late 1800s and then stood empty for three decades. In 1910 the spring thaw following a very severe winter broke the dam on Echo Lake Creek and sent tons of water down upon the toll house, washing it from its foundation. It was rescued by the Celio family and placed on Celio land in Meyers near the old golf course. It remained on their land until the Celio family sold that land for the renovation of the golf course.

At that time the Celio family contacted the Lake Tahoe Historical Society and basically gave us the toll house if we could move it off their land. After extensive fund raising (about \$8,000), the building was moved to the site of a proposed museum adjacent to the new county library. Funds for the new museum were never raised and the toll house was again moved and now sits behind the current museum building.

The toll house is considered to be the oldest commercial building in the entire Lake Tahoe Basin and is thought to be

the only remaining toll house in the Sierra.

Although the Toll House has been under the care of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society since 1974 we do not qualify for any state or federal grants under the historic guidelines because the toll house has been moved. Neither our city nor the county feels any responsibility toward the toll house and so the Lake Tahoe Historical Society is seeking monetary help from our community to restore the toll house.

Keith Klein is a longtime member of the LTHS and is donating his expertise as an architect to help us with plans, permits, etc. His estimate to restore the building to a capacity where it could be used as another building for our museum is \$25,000 to \$30,000. We have received a grant of \$3,000 from the El Dorado County Foundation and to date we have used about half of that money in stabilization.

We have received about another \$1,500 in donations marked for the toll house and are about \$500 away from meeting Bob Harms matching \$5,000 challenge. Once that is met we will have another matching challenge of \$2,500 by long-time member John McDougal.

Those dollars will bring us about half of the money needed to restore this historic old building. We are hoping the community will see the value in this project and contribute to it.

On April 18, the Tahoe Douglas Rotary will be helping us clean the toll house and catalog items that have been in the toll house for many years.

For further information on the Toll House project, contact the Lake Tahoe Historical Society at 530.541.5458.