

The original Tahoe cowboy



Bud Jones decided how he was going to leave Squaw Valley. Photo/Truckee Donner Historical Society

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

No one can remember Bud Jones ever changing his clothes. His garb was Levi jeans and jean jacket, a cowboy shirt, big boots, and a black floppy hat with grease rings around the top. He usually kept a tin of Star Tobacco and a flask of whiskey close by, and reportedly sold his wife to a shepherd for the price of a horse, forever claiming he got the better end of that bargain. Yet beneath his tough exterior lay an industrious entrepreneur and surrogate parent with a fierce dedication to a still wild Squaw Valley, when cows and horses outnumbered skiers.

In 1931, Bud – then a rancher from Folsom – arrived in Squaw Valley (to be named Olympic Valley when the valley was chosen as the site for the 1960 Olympics) with his cattle and horses and founded the Squaw Valley Stables. For the next 31 years

Bud would run the Squaw Valley Stables, and a pack station, which supplied visitors to the valley with tools for backcountry fishing and hunting trips. He also supplied milk to residents in Tahoe City and along the Truckee River all summer long. He embodied the rough independence for which this high mountain area is known, an attitude that shakes up local debates – for example about how to manage the land, and how much you can tell people what to do – even today.

Locals who knew him well will never forget him. He resided in a small, shingled cabin that was “completely lopsided,” recalled Mazie Carnell, a longtime Tahoe and Sierra Valley resident who spent her summers with Bud in the '30s and '40s milking cows and driving horses. It was one of the only houses in the valley at the time, she said. It was located right next to the horse corral and had no running water. Bud leased the land the house and corral sat on from the Smiths and eventually the Poulsens.

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