

Truckee's winter economy started with chicken wire, water



The first Ice Palace was next to the Truckee Hotel. Photo/Truckee Donner Historical Society

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

In the autumn of 1894, snow came to Truckee earlier than usual. The temperatures dropped to sub-zero in the evenings, but despite the cold, one man stood over a pile of manmade ice while looking out over Truckee from the famed Rocking Stone and his mansion on the hillside.

For weeks following the snowfall he twisted chicken wire, shoveled snow, and each night watered his creation with tender loving care. Why was this man watering ice, you may ask? His son asked him the same question but the man wouldn't tell.

Charles McGlashan, the ice maker, wasn't just avoiding household chores – the giant icicle was his idea of economic expansion for Truckee.

At first, locals were skeptical about whether people living in the Bay Area would ever travel up to Truckee in the winter, even for a festival.

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