

# The forgotten history of Memorial Day

By Richard Gardiner, *The Conversation*

In the years following the bitter Civil War, a former Union general took a holiday originated by former Confederates and helped spread it across the entire country.

The holiday was Memorial Day, and this year's commemoration on May 28 marks the 150th anniversary of its official nationwide observance. The annual commemoration was born in the former Confederate States in 1866 and adopted by the United States in 1868. It is a holiday in which the nation honors its military dead.

Gen. John A. Logan, who headed the largest Union veterans' fraternity at that time, the Grand Army of the Republic, is usually credited as being the originator of the holiday.

Yet when Logan established the holiday, he acknowledged its genesis among the Union's former enemies, saying, "It was not too late for the Union men of the nation to follow the example of the people of the South."

I'm a scholar who has written – with co-author Daniel Bellware – a history of Memorial Day. Cities and towns across America have for more than a century claimed to be the holiday's birthplace, but we have sifted through the myths and half-truths and uncovered the authentic story of how this holiday came into being.

## **Generous acts bore fruit**

During 1866, the first year of this annual observance in the South, a feature of the holiday emerged that made awareness, admiration and eventually imitation of it spread quickly to

the North.

During the inaugural Memorial Day observances which were conceived in Columbus, Ga., many Southern participants – especially women – decorated graves of Confederate soldiers as well as, unexpectedly, those of their former enemies who fought for the Union.

Shortly after those first Memorial Day observances all across the South, newspaper coverage in the North was highly favorable to the ex-Confederates.

“The action of the ladies on this occasion, in burying whatever animosities or ill-feeling may have been engendered in the late war toward those who fought against them, is worthy of all praise and commendation,” wrote one paper.

On May 9, 1866, the *Cleveland Daily Leader* lauded the Southern women during their first Memorial Day.

“The act was as beautiful as it was unselfish, and will be appreciated in the North.”

The *New York Commercial Advertiser*, recognizing the magnanimous deeds of the women of Columbus, Ga., echoed the sentiment. “Let this incident, touching and beautiful as it is, impart to our Washington authorities a lesson in conciliation.”

### **Power of a poem**

To be sure, this sentiment was not unanimous. There were many in both parts of the U.S. who had no interest in conciliation.

But as a result of one of these news reports, Francis Miles Finch, a Northern judge, academic and poet, wrote a poem titled “The Blue and the Gray.” Finch’s poem quickly became part of the American literary canon. He explained what inspired him to write it:

*"It struck me that the South was holding out a friendly hand, and that it was our duty, not only as conquerors, but as men and their fellow citizens of the nation, to grasp it."*

Finch's poem seemed to extend a full pardon to the South: "They banish our anger forever when they laurel the graves of our dead" was one of the lines.

Almost immediately, the poem circulated across America in books, magazines and newspapers. By the end of the 19th century, schoolchildren everywhere were required to memorize Finch's poem. The ubiquitous publication of Finch's rhyme meant that by the end of 1867, the southern Memorial Day holiday was a familiar phenomenon throughout the entire, and recently reunited, country.

Logan was aware of the forgiving sentiments of people like Finch. When Logan's order establishing Memorial Day was published in various newspapers in May 1868, Finch's poem was sometimes appended to the order.

### **'The blue and the grey'**

It was not long before Northerners decided that they would not only adopt the Southern custom of Memorial Day, but also the Southern custom of "burying the hatchet." A group of Union veterans explained their intentions in a letter to the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* on May 28, 1869:

"Wishing to bury forever the harsh feelings engendered by the war, Post 19 has decided not to pass by the graves of the Confederates sleeping in our lines, but divide each year between the blue and the grey the first floral offerings of a common country. We have no powerless foes. Post 19 thinks of the Southern dead only as brave men."

Other reports of reciprocal magnanimity circulated in the North, including the gesture of a 10-year-old who made a wreath of flowers and sent it to the overseer of the holiday,

Col. Leaming, in Lafayette, Ind., with the following note attached, published in the *New Hampshire Patriot* on July 15, 1868:

“Will you please put this wreath upon some rebel soldier’s grave? My dear papa is buried at Andersonville, (Georgia) and perhaps some little girl will be kind enough to put a few flowers upon his grave.”

President Abraham Lincoln’s wish that there be “malice toward none” and “charity for all” was visible in the magnanimous actions of participants on both sides, who extended an olive branch during the Memorial Day observances in those first three years.

Although not known by many today, the early evolution of the Memorial Day holiday was a manifestation of Lincoln’s hope for reconciliation between North and South.

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**Public’s help necessary to keep Lake Tahoe blue**



Sudeep Chandra, Darcie Goodman Collins, and Alan Heyvaert talk about Lake Tahoe issues. Photo/Linda Fine Conaboy

**By Linda Fine Conaboy**

RENO – Citizen scientist—maybe you’re familiar with these two words. You may have even read about them in *Lake Tahoe News*. Maybe you are a citizen scientist.

At any rate, a citizen scientist is an individual who voluntarily contributes his or her time, effort, and resources toward scientific research in collaboration with professional scientists. They can work alone, but don’t necessarily have a formal science background.

Turns out that this cadre of citizens is becoming more and more important to the health of Lake Tahoe as efforts heat up to protect the lake from the harsh reality of climate change, increasing amounts of sediment makings its way in the lake and just plain old human disregard for nature.

Because there are not enough classically trained scientists

available to continually monitor the lake's health, citizen scientists are becoming the eyes and ears on the lake, reporting their findings regularly.

In an attempt to shed some light on Tahoe's declining health and the increasing importance of citizen scientists, representatives from Reno's Desert Research Institute, The League to Save Lake Tahoe and UNR teamed up to present an overview of the current state of Lake Tahoe at a seminar last week hosted by DRI and the Discovery in Reno with support from Patagonia Outlet Reno.

Alan Heyvaert, director of the Center for Watersheds and Environmental Sustainability at DRI, reminded the substantial crowd gathered at Patagonia in Reno that Lake Tahoe is 95 feet below the base of Carson City. It's a small watershed, he said, and stays clear because it's so small—the only lake clearer is Crater Lake in Oregon. It would take 650 years to refill it if it were drained.

Heyvaert described the Secchi disk, a plate-like object suspended into the water and used to determine the lake's clarity. He said monthly measurements prove that over the years, Lake Tahoe is losing its brilliance, which, he said, is caused mainly by suspended sediments floating in the water.

"We have lost a large amount of the clearness because of sediment," he said, saying that this sediment consists of fine particles from roads and urban areas that wash continually into the lake. Measurements of the near shore prove that there is far less clear water on the South Shore in the vicinity of Tahoe Keys than at other parts of the lake.

According to Heyvaert, Mark Twain, in his novel "Roughing It," written in 1870, estimated the lake's clarity close to 100 feet; today, it's less than 70. "Mark Twain actually gauged the details of the lake's size and depth very closely," Heyvaert said, giving a nod to Twain as perhaps the first

citizen scientist. "He was a riverboat captain, this probably helped him gauge the measurements."

He also spoke about the Pipe Keepers program, the League to Save Lake Tahoe's project launched as a way for citizens to monitor 34 of the roughly 300 pipes continually spilling their contents into Tahoe's waters. "Pipe Keepers monitor and report on a particular pipe, collect samples and collect weather data," Heyvaert said.

Pipe Keepers are trained by the League to collect, among other data, stormwater samples from pipes located throughout the Tahoe basin. According to the League to Save Lake Tahoe's website, unchecked 20th century development paved over much of Tahoe's marshes and wetlands, which acted as natural pollution filters. Now, when rain hits the roads and parking lots, it washes off fine sediment pollution, which is drained into the Tahoe's waters via a series of pipes funneling directly in the lake.

Sudeep Chandra is the director of the Global Water Center at UNR, and as such heads up a team addressing the multi-faceted and complex issues facing, as he says, one of the most precious resources, water.

Chandra is also deeply concerned about the nutrients cascading into the lake as well as the non-native species which are now quite happy within their Lake Tahoe habitat, eating the food designated for the lake's original inhabitants.

"Even slight changes in clarity can alter big habitats," he said. "There is now almost no plant growth in the very deep bottom of the lake—only 4.5 acres of plants left. These plants feed the 10 species of invertebrates living at the bottom."

Chandra said crayfish (a non-native species) are in abundance in Lake Tahoe. "Crayfish are cattle grazers," he said. "They are eating the plants."

In addition to non-native crayfish, many other species have been introduced over the years for one reason or another. These introductions have resulted in the demise of native Lahontan cutthroat trout.

“In the last 20-25 years, most of the invasive species of fish and plants live and swim in the near shore—like bluegill bass and Eurasian watermilfoil. There are even goldfish, and in 2014, a freshwater skate was sighted,” he said.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe was ably represented by Darcie Goodman Collins, its executive director.

“Citizen scientists are one of the best ways to monitor Lake Tahoe,” she said. “Tahoe has 20 million visitors annually, but does not even have the protections offered to national parks.”

Collins said the enormous amount of traffic within the basin contributes to a loss of clarity in the lake. Besides pipes feeding it pollutants, climate change makes the lake’s waters warm and then becomes hospitable to invasive species.

The good news is, according to Collins, marshlands are being restored, especially in the Upper Truckee Meadows, and there are efforts to mitigate reliance on cars—think Lime Bikes. Presidential visits bring much needed money into the coffers.

Collins touted the importance of citizen scientists. “If you’ve participated in a beach clean-up, you’re a citizen scientist,” she said, adding that trash is a huge problem at Tahoe. “More than 16,000 pounds of trash has been accumulated since we started collecting data.”

Consider that along with hundreds of thousands of plastic bottles, more than 60,000 cigarette butts have been accounted for. “The Lake Tahoe shoreline is under assault,” she said, introducing the League’s Eyes on the Lake program that requests people protect the lake while they play at the lake and then report their findings.



In addition, Collins described Watershed Watchers where civilians can adopt a watershed, monitoring it over time.

It is evident that the assault on the lake is not being taken lightly by these three entities. Anyone interested in any of these programs, should contact the League to Save Lake Tahoe at 530.541.5388 or [info@keptahoeblue.org](mailto:info@keptahoeblue.org).

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## **Nev. casino companies, suppliers have promising outlook**

**By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Executives in boardrooms across the gaming industry had to be smiling when first-quarter results began rolling in. Shareholders, too.

The final earnings reports for the three months that ended March 31 were filed with regulators last week.

The reports revealed that casino companies and their suppliers got off to good starts in 2018, and that the outlook for the rest of the year is promising.

The reasons?

The economy is cruising along.

**Read the whole story**

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# El Dorado, Placer home prices surge

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County had the highest median home sales price in the region last month, at \$486,000. Placer's median home price in April was \$482,000. Both were up substantially over the past year.

The median price has now risen every month in the last six years, hitting \$357,000 in April, according to CoreLogic, a real estate data company. That's 12 percent higher than the \$317,000 median sales price a year ago.

[Read the whole story](#)

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# Outdoor recreation powers Lake Tahoe economy

By Susan Wood

"In or out?" This was the question posed by many mothers to their children in respect to the opening and closing of their home's front door.

It appears these kids grew up opting for the outdoors – opening the door to growth in the lucrative outdoor recreation market now measuring at least \$373 billion by the federal

Bureau of Economic Analysis.

With Lake Tahoe being an outdoor paradise, the lifestyle is the norm for the two states it straddles.

From fishing charters and coolers to e-bikes and smaller backpacking gear, the stuff we do and carry has created a big business to shops catering to enthusiasts on all four sides of the lake and Reno.

“The desire for people to get outdoors is strong. We get mothers who have had their kids, and it’s opened a window for a whole new market,” said Jared Lopez, the gear guru at REI in Reno. “There’s definitely something going on.”

Lopez made the case for basing the outdoor gear giant’s surge in growth to people wanting to escape being a slave to their electronic devices. It seems the manufacturers have answered the call.



Fly fishing guide Matt Heron never gets tired of his sport. Photo/Keith Brauneis

For those needing power, solar generators by Goal Zero are compact and energy efficient in a 150-watt package starting at

\$199 retail. This represents an ideal alternative to the noisy, stinky, clunky gas-powered versions.

REI can barely keep up with the demand for Yeti coolers that are bear resistant – a must for car campers and fishing enthusiasts. The big-boy Tundra model at 160-liter capacity often sells out and could put you out \$350 retail.

The Roadie is smaller with a handle but can still support a person standing on top of it.

“A lot of fishermen have to stand on coolers to get a cast,” Lopez explained.

Fly fishing tour guide Matt Heron has found his sport “tagged the rich old man’s sport” is no longer just that as it’s changed into new generations and genders.

The Truckee River guide has seen his North Shore business grow. In 12 years, the season starting in May has increased from an average of one person a day to 12.

“There’s a better quality product for entry level anglers, and more people can afford it,” Heron said. Some of these people can pop over \$500 for the right rod, now wrapped in a flexible graphite.



MSR stoves come with radiant heat, so no problem with wind. Photo/Susan Wood

Heron recently took out two first-timers who had the time of their lives. The two women represent Resort Mountains Cities, a 29-year-old destination management company that appeases clients seeking outdoor adventures.

As if Heron ordered it, both women landed fish right away.

“It’s pretty magical out there,” RMC saleswoman Stacie Krenicki told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We’re always in a rush. When you’re fishing, you have to calm down and relax and be yourself.”

Her colleague in RMC operations, Jaime Haddad, was shocked by how much she enjoyed the sport.

“I would have been out there all day. I truly have the bug,” said Haddad, who clad in chest-high waders caught a 20-incher.

In California, outdoor recreation generates \$92 billion in consumer spending, according to a 2017 report by the Outdoor Industry Association. Over the border, OIA states Nevada spurs

\$12.6 billion in purchases. Much of this figure comprises receipts for outdoor gear.

After all, Nevada Travel's mantra is "Don't fence me in."

The same thing could be said for quantifying the industry totaling \$887 billion in size. The OIA used a methodology that included touring companies, travel expenses and outdoor gear made here and overseas.



SUP Tahoe owner Brandon Miller has a fleet of VESL boards to show off. Photo/Susan Wood

The BEA's figure is less than half that because it chose not to factor in travel expenses on recreation trips less than 50 miles from home and gear manufactured outside the country.

Even with the discrepancy, U.S. officials have discovered an often-overlooked means of consumer spending that comprises 2 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product – something Tahoe recreation-oriented businesses have long known about.

According to the OIA study, over half of residents in Nevada's 2nd Congressional and California's 4th Congressional District

where Tahoe lies on the map participate in one of the activities that consist of fishing, backpacking, climbing, hunting and cycling.

South Lake's Tahoe Sports Ltd. has launched a fleet of e-bikes in the hopes of expanding on its human-powered variety. Owner Mark Gandt is giddy with excitement over the new German-inspired technology. One lithium battery charge can power the 20-speed, pedal-assist Haibike for 30 miles.

"This is the future," he said, comparing it to the fat ski evolution. "It's the biggest change in the sporting goods industry in years."

Pedaling can easily prompt the bike to travel 30mph. Like cycling technology overall, the price range isn't for the faint of heart, running between \$2,500 and \$6,000.



Carabiners are lighter in weight, but more durable. Photo/Susan Wood

At age 83, retired South Lake Tahoe surgeon Larry Foster didn't hesitate popping that much at the South Lake Tahoe shop.

“I’ve been mountain biking for 40 years. Once I turned 60, I can no longer make it up the high country trails. The e-bike allowed me to go back to my old trails,” he told *LTN*.

Traditional mountain bikes have still ruled the pedaling market. These days, the rage there lies in full suspension bikes to overcome the shock of hard objects encountered. Tahoe’s steep hills also require a quick release on the seat post – up for the ascent, down for the descent.

“People come from all around the world and want to ride our terrain,” said Russ Stewart of Village Ski Loft. The Incline Village shop offers several demos and rentals.

Tahoe adventure seekers who pound the trail may also take solace in technological breakthroughs with hydrophobic sleeping bags, in which every feather is treated. Plus, the pads they sleep on are twice as thick but weigh the same as those from four years ago – 1 pound, 5 ounces, Tahoe Sports Ltd. gear hound Jay Sell noted.

Backpacks have gotten lighter with larger capacities too and adjustable holes for better fitting.

Stoves have become more efficient by using radiant heat. The MSR Windburner even comes equipped with a pot at \$159 suggested retail.

Climbers will also find carabiners are now lighter yet stronger for building rope anchors and confidence belaying off them. With just a small addition of a metal piece planted at the carabiner opening, a swift bang on a rock won’t open the device.

From rock to water, outdoor gear has changed dramatically over the last five years.

With that revolution, paddleboards have surged in popularity. One obstacle remains the price for the new sport.



The early adopters who took up the sport back then are now graduating from a beginner board to more of a touring board that allows them to go farther without breaking the bank.

“Many people going on the second board want something with enough volume that’s stable, but 95 percent of these people are price conscious,” SUP Tahoe owner Brandon Miller told *Lake Tahoe News*. That’s why the South Lake Tahoe business provides 11-, 12- and 13-foot VESL boards this summer to find that happy medium between speed and stability – ones sold for under \$1,000.

“It’s a balancing act,” he said.

Balancing is something Dax Willards is hoping will catch on quickly as he sells and rents the Onewheel at his West Shore shop. Billed as an alternative to a skateboard, a user propels forward with simple weight shifts. The one center wheel is durable enough to handle the rocks and ruts of Tahoe terrain. It retails for \$1,499.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber Chief Executive Officer Steve Teshara hopes the feds will invest in the infrastructure since studying the industry’s merit.

“It’s great the federal government recognizes outdoor recreation now, but it’s critical (it) puts the emphasis on operations and management and invests in it,” Teshara said.

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## **Oldest Pearl Harbor survivor reflects ahead of Memorial**

# Day

By David Wright, CNN

Ray Chavez is the oldest survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor that launched America's entry into World War II in 1941.

At 106, the indefatigable veteran has been traveling around the country for years, attending memorial services and commemorations. This week, he met with President Trump in the Oval Office while in Washington for a series of Memorial Day events.

Ahead of the Memorial Day weekend, Chavez reflected on his service, and recounted his experience on the day that President Franklin Roosevelt declared would "live in infamy."

[Read the whole story](#)

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## Efforts failing to save U.S. West sagebrush land

By Keith Riddler, AP

BOISE, Idaho – Public lands managers are losing a battle against a devastating combination of invasive plant species and wildfires in the vast sagebrush habitats in the U.S. West that support cattle ranching and recreation and are home to an imperiled bird, officials said.

The Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in a 58-page report released this month says invasive plants on nearly

160,000 square miles of public and private lands have reached enormous levels and are spreading.

That could mean more giant rangeland wildfires that in recent decades destroyed vast areas of sagebrush country that support some 350 species of wildlife, including imperiled sage grouse.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Chief of STPUD prepping for retirement**



Richard Solbrig is retiring as general manager of South Tahoe PUD in January 2019. Photo/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

Stability. It's one of the reasons South Tahoe Public Utility District is as successful as it is.

Richard Solbrig is only the third general manager the district has had since 1977. The district has started looking for its fourth, as the 68-year-old plans to retire in January.

It is the culture he has helped build that he is proudest of. It's a team; where when an emergency happens people don't hesitate to come in to work no matter the hour or if it's a weekend. Collectively there is a commitment to their jobs, which is really a commitment to the area of the South Shore the district serves.

"When you are delivering services that are required for life, you don't want them compromised," Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The board this month began discussing the general manager recruitment schedule.

Solbrig said the fact that there has been such little turnover at the top is a "testament to the boards that have been here. They haven't suffered drama, micromanaged or surprised staff."

Solbrig came to the district in 1990 as assistant general manager, becoming the top guy in 1993.

He grew up in New York, went to MIT to study civil engineering, then earned a master's in sanitary engineering at Cal. While working for a Bay Area firm he was the construction manager for a \$30 million project at Lake Tahoe. That three-year stint in the late 1980s gave his wife and two kids a taste of the mountains. They wanted to stay. That led him to commute before the STPUD job opened.

Solbrig has much to be proud of when it comes to accomplishments during his tenure. The last time the district exceeded the wastewater requirement was in 1995.

"We've always regarded ourselves as environmentalists. I'm proud of our record," Solbrig said.

The district is regularly replacing infrastructure. While much more needs to be done, he said STPUD is ahead of the curve compared to other agencies.

The district is still working on having the proper capacity to fight fires. In many ways it was lucky in 2007 that the Angora Fire erupted where it did because those lines had been upgraded and there was better storage capacity compared to what exists even today in some locations of the city.

The one big issue that won't be resolved before he leaves that frustrates him is the PCE contamination at the Y. Tetrachloroethylene was used by dry cleaners and automotive shops. Officials have known since 1989 that a plume is in the local groundwater.

The water districts affected by the contamination are at the mercy of Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to determine who is liable and to come up with a remedy.

"Lahontan's focus is on the process and not on the end product," Solbrig said. "Their action has been creating process. The process is laborious and slow."

Since the **last meeting in February** about the PCE issue the district received a \$504,295 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board to conduct a feasibility study of remedial alternatives to mitigate PCE contamination. The objective is to collect information on the aquifer characteristics and water quality to design strategies to control and/or remove PCE from groundwater. The field work should be completed by late June.

Dealing with contamination issues is not new to Solbrig. He was here during the MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether) debacle. In 1997 the gasoline additive was found to have contaminated wells. Shell Oil ended up paying the district millions of dollars to settle the case.

Solbrig has no plans to slow down between now and January. His desk is full of papers. It shows a man who still has much more to accomplish.

Still, he also has a clock on the desk counting down to the second how much time he has left.

Once retired he hopes he'll be able to enjoy the area a bit more. Relaxing and traveling are what he looks forward to. He's quite the dancer and hopes to be spending more time doing that as well. Solbrig also has a whole list of things to do inside and outside the house that need tackling – things that have been neglected while he's been tending to the sewer and water needs of much of the South Shore.

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## **Memorial Day travel to rise for fourth straight year**

**By Reuters**

U.S. travelers will hit the roads, rails and airports this Memorial Day Weekend by the largest numbers in more than a decade, despite the highest gasoline prices in four years, the nation's largest automotive advocacy group said on Monday.

More than 41.5 million Americans will travel 50 miles over Memorial Day weekend, the highest travel volume since 2005, when there were some 44 million travelers, according to the AAA, or American Automobile Association.

The holiday period, which traditionally marks the start of U.S. summer vacations, is defined this year as May 24-28.

**Read the whole story**

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# Debate turns ugly as Tahoe snowmobilers fear forest closures

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The debate over snowmobile access in the Tahoe National Forest has taken an ugly turn with a spate of emails, social media posts and online comments filled with foul and abusive language.

Several people pushing for more restrictions on snowmobiles in the 800,000-acre forest that straddles the Sierra Crest have been the targets of online abuse.

The problem has gotten bad enough that Forest Service officials disabled a portion of the online comment system when they suspected people used it to target other commenters with nasty emails.

**[Read the whole story](#)**