

Hennes Pass Road Driving Tour

Tahoe National Forest



Welcome to your National Forest. This brochure will guide you along the historic route used by miners, freighters, immigrants and highwaymen in their search for fame and riches.

Starting from either end, visit the historic stops along the road. Learn about the ranchers and stage stop owners who supplied travelers and freight carriers who regularly used the road. Learn about the Indians who lived here before the influx of miners in 1849.

Each stop can be visited independently, letting you take as long as you want at each one. There is no requirement to complete the tour at any one time.

Many of these stops are located at or near archaeological sites within the National Forest, and are protected by the **Archaeological Resources Protection Act** and other federal laws. Removal of artifacts or damaging, defacing or destroying any part of these sites and their features is a felony.

Please help us preserve our heritage for all to enjoy. If you should discover any historical or archaeological sites or artifacts, please leave them alone, and report your find to the nearest Ranger Station or to the Forest Archaeologist, Tahoe National Forest, PO Box 6003, Nevada City, CA 95959.

Travel Tips

Please be sure to plan your trip before embarking. Take your time, visit all or some of the stops. You may want to plan for overnight accommodations. Food and lodging are available in Nevada City, Truckee, Sierraville, Loyalton, Downieville, Sierra City or the Reno area. You can also stay in one of the numerous campgrounds found on or near the route.

Though not required, a high clearance vehicle or four wheel drive vehicle is recommended for this mountainous route.

A Brief History

Originally used as a trail in 1849, the Hennes Pass Road stretched from near Verdi, Nevada over the Sierra Nevada Mountains via the 6700' Hennes Pass, down the ridge between the North and Middle forks of the Yuba River, to its junction with routes into Yuba and Nevada counties.

The road route is believed to be designed by Patrick Hennes in 1849 or 1850. In 1852, the construction of the primitive road made the route over Hennes Pass into a toll road passable for wagons. Records show that as early as 1850, the road was already heavily used.

By 1859 the rush for gold in California was waning. By mid-year, silver was discovered near Reno, and the exodus of miners from



United States
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Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Tahoe National Forest
www.fs.fed.us/R5/tahoe

Sierraville Ranger District
317 South Lincoln Street
PO Box 95
Sierraville, CA 96126

California to the big Silver Bonanza was on. Henness Pass Road, with its easy grades and established mining camps and stage stops along the way, became one of the more popular routes to Virginia City. Traffic along the road became so heavy that it was suggested that freight wagons travel by day, and passenger stagecoaches at night.



Demands for road improvements were constant. Numerous companies were formed in the late 1850's through the early 1860s to construct new portions of road as well as to make improvements on the existing road.

The Comstock mines in Virginia City, isolated in the high desert, were served only by supply wagons that by necessity had to cross the Sierra Nevada. While the mines flourished, so did the freighters and stages that used the road.

But, as mining production dwindled, the boom turned to bust. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1868, the need for horse drawn freight over the Henness Pass Road became obsolete almost overnight.

During the 1950s, the federal government planned to realign and widen Highway 40 over Donner Pass to Reno. A group was formed whose proposal was to have a modern highway follow the old Henness Pass route instead of the Highway 40 route. This proposal was not accepted, and Highway 40 eventually became Interstate 80.

Look for these markers that indicate stops along the route. This brochure starts from the western end of the route and heads east covering 22 formal stops along the route. If you are a westbound traveler, reverse the order of the stops below.



1. Oregon Creek Covered Bridge

The confluence of the Middle Yuba River and Oregon Creek has been the site of varied and continuous use over time. It was first used by the Maidu Indians hundreds of years ago, probably as a seasonal campsite. In the 1860s, the south branch of the Henness Pass Road was constructed to pass this way. The Oregon Creek covered bridge, which is still in use today, was part of this wagon road system.



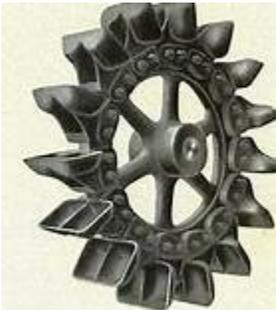
2. Camptonville

Camptonville was originally a stop on the road to Downieville. In 1852 a gold strike was made here, and by 1857 large scale gravel mining was occurring. In 1879, Lester Pelton, a carpenter and Camptonville resident, invented a split bucket water wheel to power a sewing machine. This simple device proved to have more than twice the efficiency of a flat paddle water wheel, and more than 20% greater efficiency than a single bucket wheel. The Pelton Wheel was patented in 1880 and was an instant success. It powered stamp mills, pumps, printing presses, fans, sugar



as Hollow Log. It is said that this roadhouse had a rather “nefarious” and sinister reputation, and was noted for its wildness and as a meeting place for “bad men and women”. Also known as the Sierra-Nevada House, it was run by Madam Romargi, a native of Florida, until it was destroyed by fire on May 12, 1888.

mills and many other machines all over the world. Along with reservoirs and ditches, it was a major component in the development of hydroelectricity. The Pelton wheel is still in use today and provides power at many locations, including nearby Bullards Bar Dam.



5. Mountain House

This stage stop was located at the junction between the road north to Goodyears Bar and south to Forest City. It is believed the stage stop was built in 1849, since it was mentioned as an election precinct in 1850, and was a popular stopping place well into the 1920s. There was once a three-storied structure, with

3. Sleightville House

Sleightville was a stage stop and inn along the road. It is believed to have gotten its name because this was the location that, in the winter, stages traveling along the road towards Downieville had to change from wheeled wagons to sleighs because of the depth of the snow. A large two-story inn was built in 1849, by Peter Yore, with an addition in 1850. The section of road from here to Mountain House was operated, for a time, as a toll road by the Yore Family.



sixteen lodging rooms, a dining room, a bar, and a post office. There were two hay barns located here also, one on either side of the road.

The Florida House, a wayside inn or hostelry, dating back from the early 1850s, was located about two and one half miles southwest from Mountain House along the road on a flat which became known as Florida Flat. It was a short distance north of the Hennes Pass Road.

4. Negro Tent

Negro Tent was another stage stop and inn or roadhouse. It supposedly was originally known

6. Forest City

Established in 1852 at the forks of Oregon Creek, this quaint town once had a population of nearly two thousand residents. Built around exceedingly rich and easily obtainable placer gold deposits, the town, for a time, was a major



center of commerce for the area. Numerous fires, as well as a decline in easily obtainable gold deposits, contributed to the town's decline.

Forest City is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and has an active historical association which offers a museum and a walking tour of the town.

7. Lower Bifurcation

This is the turnoff for the southern route of the road, which led back north through the town of Forest City. Although not a true fork in the road, it is important today as a junction on the roads to Forest City and Alleghany.

8. Fred's Ranch

This stage stop and ranch stood on the ridge which separates the towns of Forest City and Alleghany. Roads led both north and south from here. From this stop, it was said that you could see towns "on all sides."

9. Upper Bifurcation

At this point along the route, traveling east to west, the road split and the decision had to be made as to which route to take. The northern route headed towards Goodyears Bar and Camptonville, while the southern route went down Pliocene Ridge towards Plum Valley, Clerkin's Ranch, Grizzly Fort, Our House, Freeman's Crossing and North San Juan.

10. Cornish House

The Cornish House stage stop and inn was considered a "large and commodious home for the accommodation of the public" that was completed in 1861. This location was also called Nebraska Flat, Nebraska City, and Nebraska Diggings, although the mines were about a mile northeast of the house site.

About a mile west of this location, the Galloway Ridge Road branches north and descends steeply down the mountainside to enter Downieville. This was probably the original end of the road, however, only for a short time.

11. Middlewaters

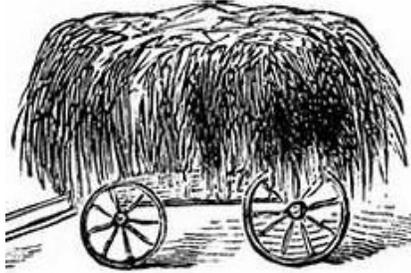
This stopping place was kept in the early 1860s by a Mr. Harris, formally of Forest City. This location was also known as Middle Waters, Harris Meadows, and Harris' Ranch.

12. Milton Reservoir

This was the location for the small town of Milton where in 1861, "the gentlemanly host is always ready to assist you...". This location was also known as Milton's Ranch. The famous Milton Ditch began here and carried water all the way to Nevada City and beyond.

13. Jackson Meadow

Jackson Meadow is now under the waters of the reservoir. Accounts in 1852 indicate that Jackson and Henness ran a ranch at this location and harvested hay from the meadows.



The ranch is most frequently referred to as Jackson's Ranch. Records indicate that in 1861 the property belonged to Richard Rofford, and that he was building "the finest three-storied building that you can find outside of towns."

14. Henness Pass

The pass at 6,920 feet above sea level, was named for Patrick Henness, who sold hay from Jackson Meadows. The original route of the road was pioneered by Joseph Zumwalt, a miner traveling east from his mining claim on the Downie River, seeking a way over the mountains east, to purchase provisions in 1850.

15. Davis Station

Described in historic literature as a ranch of 160 acres on the Henness Pass Road, it was located three miles west of More's Station, and was valued at \$995.00. These values were assessed as: Claim \$200.00, improvements \$500.00, mule \$25.00, two horses \$80.00, three cows \$60.00, two oxen \$80.00 and furniture \$50.00. Features visible today include a dry laid stone foundation for the main house, a rock outline for the corral, an earthen platform that may have been for a large barn, and a hay

press tree that was used to press hay into bales.

16. Independence Intersection

This is an original segment of the road, crossing Forest Service Road 07, one tenth of a mile north of the current intersection of the Independence Lake Road, Road 07 and the current Henness Pass Road. It roughly parallels the new alignment of the Henness Pass Road. It is well graded, about 12 feet wide, with a slightly indented road bed which has rock alignments on either side, where rocks have been cleared to facilitate travel.

17. Kyburz

Described in 1864 as a ranch of 320 acres, with a hotel, barn and stables. This stop includes a handicap accessible boardwalk trail (700 feet long), a restroom, parking for two vans, and 6 interpretive signs with artist reconstructions of what the buildings looked like for More's Station.

There is an American Indian petroglyph rock located here. Some researchers believe these petroglyphs were made by native people who



lived in the area as early as 2,000 years ago.

There is also a site dedicated to the Wheeler Sheep Camp that operated circa 1913-1958. A brochure of the Kyburz Interpretive Area can be obtained through the Tahoe National Forest. There are interpretive signs at these stops as well.

18. Junction House

Listed for the first time in the Sierra County Tax Assessment Rolls for 1865, owned by J. H. Jordon. By 1866, this location was listed as a ranch of 160 acres, at the junction of the Sierraville Road. This road connected the community of Sierraville with Virginia City and other Comstock towns. Sierraville was noted for being the location where, by the middle 1860s, numerous products were grown for and shipped to the Comstock area, including hay, beef, dairy products and lumber.

19. Sardine House

Owned by Chester Warner in 1865, it was the location of a hotel and a barn along with a 1,500 acre ranch in Sardine Valley. It was later known as the Sardine House and was in operation until the 1920s. It is located at the intersection of the road to Loyalton which connected that community with the Henness Pass Road. This connector road enabled hay and dairy products to reach wider markets, especially the miners in Virginia City, Nevada via the use of the Henness Pass Road.

20. 620 Stage Stop

Sierra County maps from the 1860s identify this location as the site of a hotel and way station.

21. Second Summit

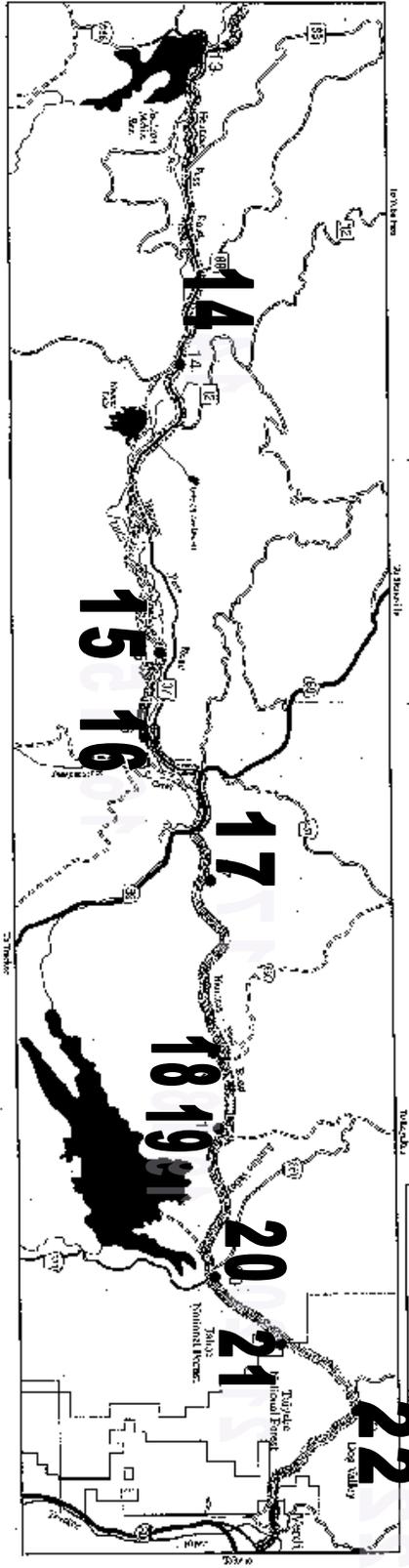
Probably got its name from the original emigrants use of the trail in the mid 1840s. This was the first summit they came to after climbing out of Dog Valley to the east making this the "Second Summit" on the road west after leaving the Truckee Meadows area.

22. First Summit

The Emigrant Trail up the Truckee River was moved to a route over First Summit in 1845 because it was much easier than the route up the Truckee River Canyon. Joseph Baker had a stage stop and hotel servicing traffic along the Henness Pass Road here in the 1860s. This part of the road was also part of the Lincoln Highway in 1915, and the Victory Highway in 1920.

We hope you have enjoyed your "Trip through History". If we have aroused your curiosity about this rich and diverse area of California and Nevada, Please feel free to stop in at a local Forest Service office with your questions. Visit the local museums and displays throughout the area. Stay awhile and enjoy the pleasures of this unique and beautiful area. Please return again and again.

East Portion - Llenness Pass Road Driving Tour



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