NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION OF THE RUBICON TRAIL, ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST, EL DORADO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Prepared for:

U.S.D.A., Forest Service
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Prepared by:

PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC.
P. O. Box 160756
1906 21st Street
Sacramento, CA 95816

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Author:

Cindy L. Baker, M.A.

October 12, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rubicon Trail is located east of Georgetown in El Dorado County, California. The trail crosses both private and public lands, including Eldorado National Forest (ENF) Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, and Tahoe National Forest. ENF hired PAR Environmental Services, Inc. (PAR) to assess the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of a portion of the Rubicon Trail, with a study area extending from Airport Flat to the El Dorado/Placer county line. Other properties along the trail, including the sites of historic resorts and springs (e.g. Wentworth, Rubicon, Gerle's, Dobba's Ranch, etc.), are not evaluated in this report. This work was completed in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations found in 36 CFR 800. The scope of work entailed archival research, interviews with persons who have knowledge of the trail's history and maintenance, coordination with ENF employees, and report preparation.

The portion of the Rubicon Trail evaluated for this report is referred to as Segment A and Segment B. Segment A extends east from Wentworth Springs to the El Dorado/Placer County line. Segment B extends east from Airport Flats to Wentworth Springs.

The Rubicon Trail has three periods of significance. The first period extends from its use as a transportation route connecting Georgetown and Lake Tahoe, dating from earliest use in 1855 to 1887, when the owners of mountain resorts began altering the road. The second period is related to its use for tourism, carrying travelers to the resorts that developed along the trail beginning in the 1887 to 1926 when the Rubicon Springs Hotel closed. After that year, the road fell into disrepair and the traveling public could no longer easily drive the route. Its third period of significance dates to its use specifically as an off-road vehicle (OHV) excursion road, starting in 1946 when Jeeps first began appearing on the route, and continues to the present, as it remains among the premiere OHV recreational trails in the United States.

Integrity for the first period of significance is hard to determine. The early pack trail and wagon road overlapped with Segment A. It had fewer improvements that would indicate today where it was located. Despite these challenges, evidence does exist on the ground of the historic location, although more study is needed to bring these to light. Because of this, Segment A retains sufficient integrity to be considered eligible under the first period of significance (1855 to 1887) under criteria A, C and D. Segment B was not part of the pack trail and is not eligible for this period.

The second period of significance (1887 to 1926) relates to its use as a destination-oriented road carrying tourists to the resorts along the trail and at Lake Tahoe. The trail's integrity of location, association, setting, materials, workmanship and design for the second period of significance (tourism destination travel) is strong. As a result, both Segments A and B of the Rubicon Trail appear eligible for listing in the NRHP under criteria A, C and D for this period of significance at a local level.

The third period of significance extends from 1946 to the present and relates to its use as a recreational off-road vehicle excursion destination, including its association with Mark Smith. The Rubicon Trail retains a high degree of integrity from this period of use. As a result, both Segments A and B of the internationally famous Rubicon Trail appear eligible for listing under criteria A, B and C in the NRHP for this period of significance at a local, state and national level. The trail does not appear eligible for this third period under Criterion D, as there is clear documentary evidence that reveals how the road has been maintained since 1946 and no further information can be attained from study.

The Rubicon Trail is an excellent example of an historic recreational use area associated with the early tourism on the Georgetown Divide, as well as the site of the historic Jeepers Jamboree and on-going internationally recognized off-road excursions. It is nearly unchanged in its appearance and use and is prized for its historical importance to the Georgetown Divide, and to a large and diverse population of four-wheel drive enthusiasts. As a result, the Rubicon Trail should be considered a historic Cultural Landscape.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Rubicon Trail is iconic in northern California and, to a certain extent, internationally. Preparing this report was a daunting task, knowing the great community interest in the trail and its complex history. I am grateful for, and humbled by, the tremendous assistance I received from individuals who shared their time and extensive knowledge. First and foremost, this report would not be nearly as complete without the incredible generosity of Harald Pietschmann. Harald provided maps, photographs, GPS data, and personal research related to his more than 30 summers as a Rubicon guide. When I asked Harald how he accumulated so much information, he said he gets tired of riding, so he walks. When Harald walks, he pays attention. Clearly he is a natural historian and investigator. Thank you, Harald, for making this report a document that will help protect the road.

Merlin Scott, Mark Smith, Steve Morris and Rick Morris were very generous with their time and knowledge. Merlin provided his mapping and research on the trail. Mark Smith, leader of the Jeepers' Jamboree, has worked with Merlin for decades. Merlin has paid close attention to the present and historic routes and is a devoted protector of the Rubicon. He spends his summers on the trail, camping at Spider Lake and sharing information with trail riders. Mark provided background on the Jamboree and the trail itself. Mark's enterprising mind helped launch Jeep adventuring world-wide and a visit to his office in Georgetown, with its reminders of off-road exploration around the globe, is clear proof. Steve Morris and his son, Rick Morris, were also invaluable sources of information. Steve can pinpoint locations for historic photographs from memory formed over nearly 50 summers on the trail. Rick's book, *Rubicon Springs and the Rubicon Trail: A History,* was a natural starting point for this report and is an essential and informative read for anyone interested in the Rubicon.

This report looks as good as it does because of PAR's staff. Mary Maniery carefully edited it and helped strategize the complicated evaluation. Amber Rankin did wonders with the graphics, proving that an illustration is worth a thousand words. Thanks to Marshall Millett for figuring out the GPS data. Jessica O'Connor, thank you for making it all look good in the end!

Lastly, I cannot say enough about the support and kindness of Katy Parr, Krista Deal and Jordin Serrin, the ENF personnel who hired our firm to prepare this evaluation. Katy's confidence in my ability certainly surpassed my own. Krista generously shared her extensive knowledge formed over decades on the trail and in the forest. Her passion for the trail and the landscape it covers is a testament to the value of the Forest Service in protecting our public lands. Jordin shares that enthusiasm and provided insight from his recording efforts. Thank you all for giving us this opportunity.

Thanks again everyone. It was a pleasure to make your acquaintance and, as Mark Smith would say, "See you on the trail!"

INTRODUCTION

The Rubicon Trail crosses National Forest System lands on the Pacific Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest (ENF), the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and the Tahoe National Forest. Portions of the Rubicon Trail crosses land owned by the United States and managed and administered by the Forest Service, with additional segments of the trail crossing land owned by private parties over which El Dorado County has jurisdiction. Pursuant to federal Revised Statute 2477, El Dorado County is asserting a right-of-way known as the Rubicon Trail over National Forest System lands. In its adoption of the Resolution 142-89 on May 30, 1989, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisor's reaffirmed the August 3, 1887 declaration and declared the Rubicon Trail as a non-maintained public road in that county. ENF's has granted a right-of-way easement for a segment of the Rubicon Trail on federally owned land to El Dorado County, California (Figures 1, 2a and 2b). The Rubicon Trail is more than 50 years old and has not been evaluated as an historic resource. Other properties along the trail, including the sites of historic resorts and springs (e.g. Wentworth, Rubicon, Gerle's, Dobba's Ranch, etc.), are not evaluated in this report.

ENF's Land and Resource Management Plan identified the Management Area for the project as MA 4 – Special Areas. The Rubicon Trail is listed as a Candidate National Recreation Trail. The management emphasis for MA 4 is to give recognition to, among other things, National Trails Special Areas.

The easement and related maintenance activities has the potential to affect historic properties. This project, therefore, is considered an undertaking (per 36 CFR 800.16[y]), that may result in adverse effects to historic properties. PAR Environmental Services, Inc. (PAR) was hired by ENF to conduct the National Register of Historic Places assessment of the section of the trail on ENF-managed lands between Airport Flat and the Placer/El Dorado County line. The contract entailed archival research, interviews with knowledgeable persons, coordination with ENF staff, and evaluation report preparation.

Historical research and evaluation of the trail were conducted by PAR's senior historian, Cindy L. Baker. Ms. Baker has a M.A. in Public History, related B.A.s and over 18 years of professional experience. She conducted the archival research and interviews and served as the author for the report.

Project Area

The study area extends from Airport Flat to the El Dorado/Placer County line; part of the Rubicon Trail located due west of Lake Tahoe and about 80 miles east of Sacramento. The trail is part of the historic Georgetown to Lake Tahoe Road (GLTR), which runs 42 miles from Georgetown at Highway 49 to Lake Tahoe near Tahoma. Parts of the road cross the ENF, Tahoe National Forest, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, as well as private property.

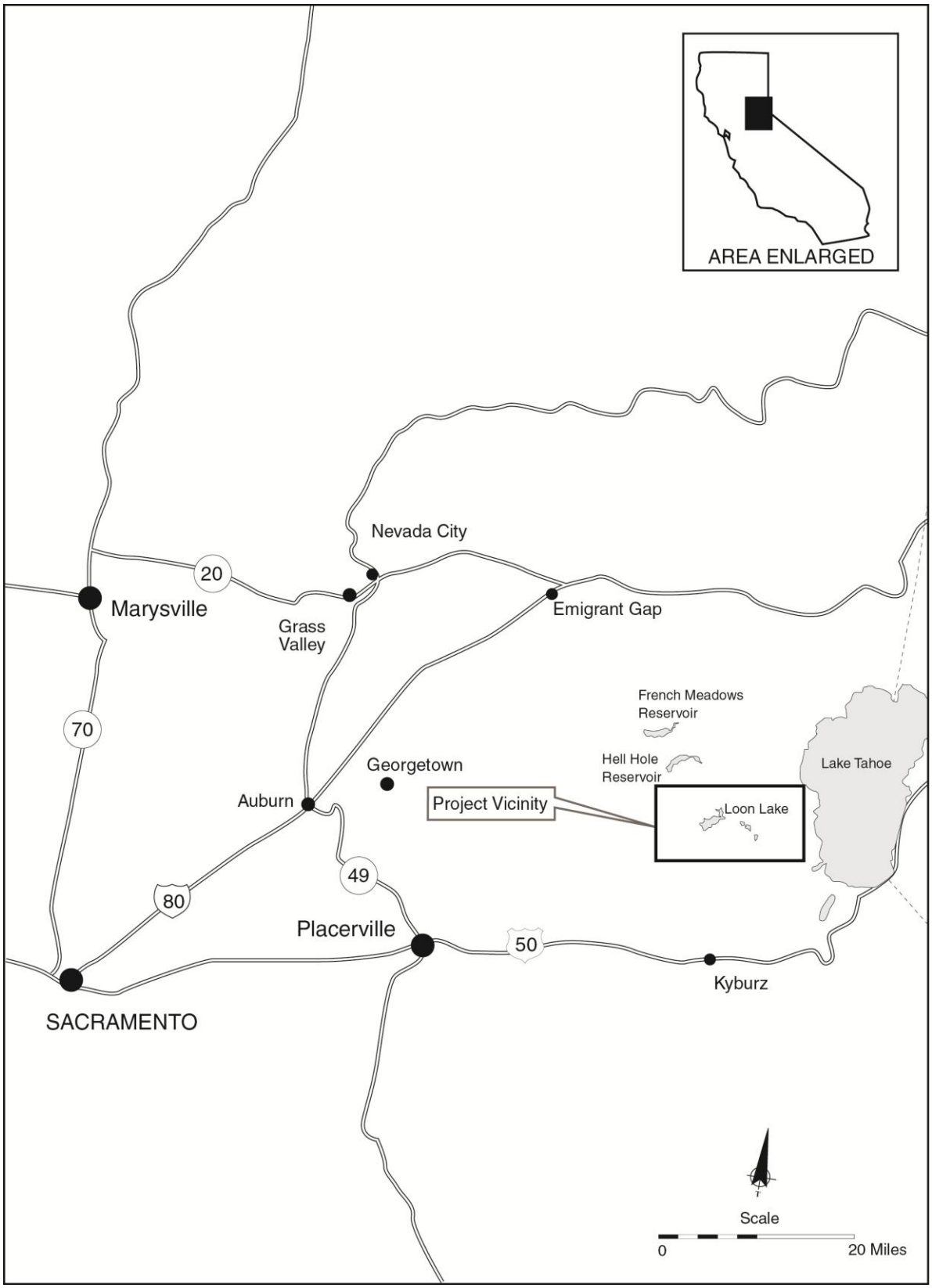


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map.

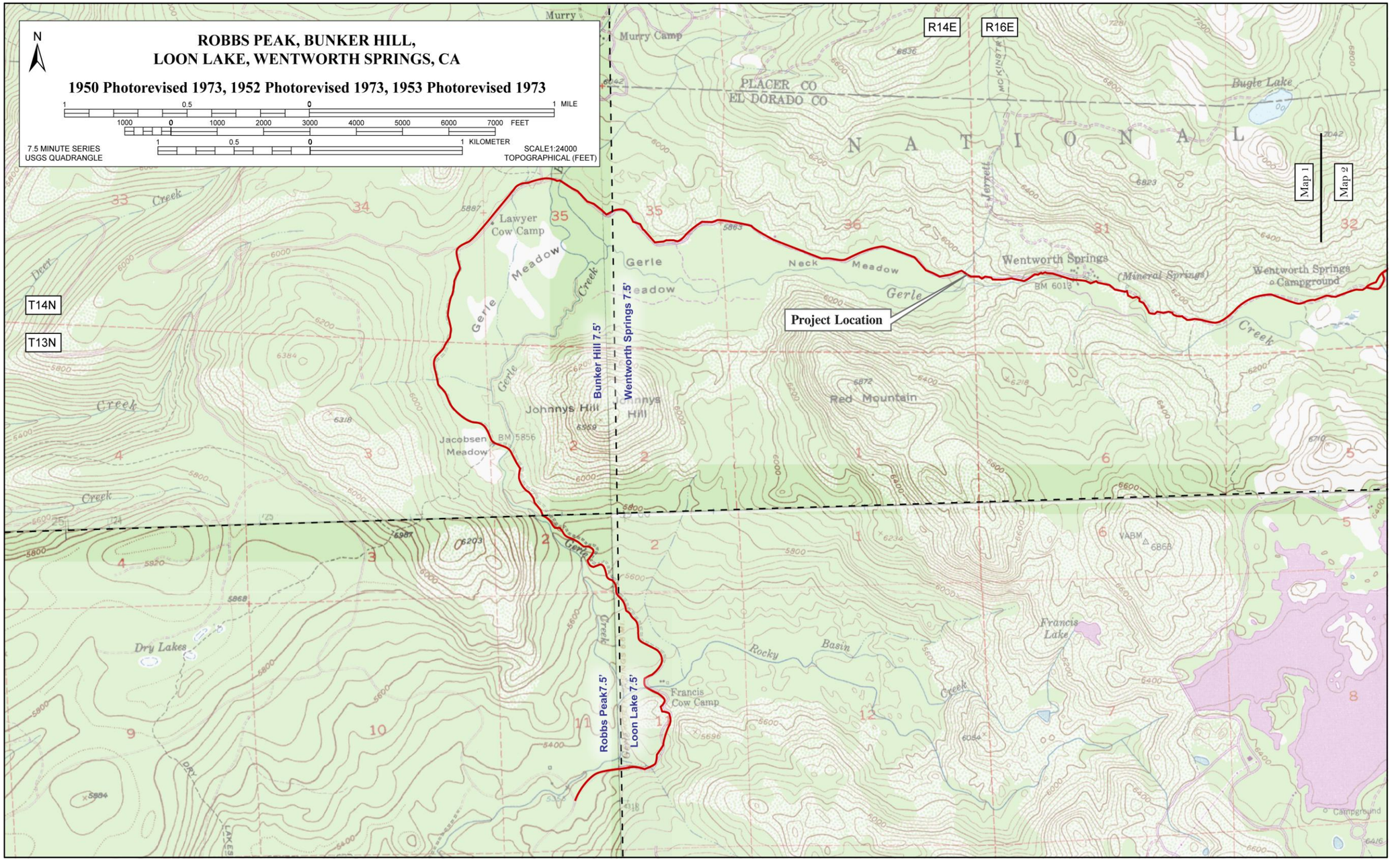


Figure 2a. Project Location Map. Georgetown at Highway 49 to Lake Tahoe near Tahoma. Parts of the road cross the ENF, Tahoe National Forest, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, as well as private property.

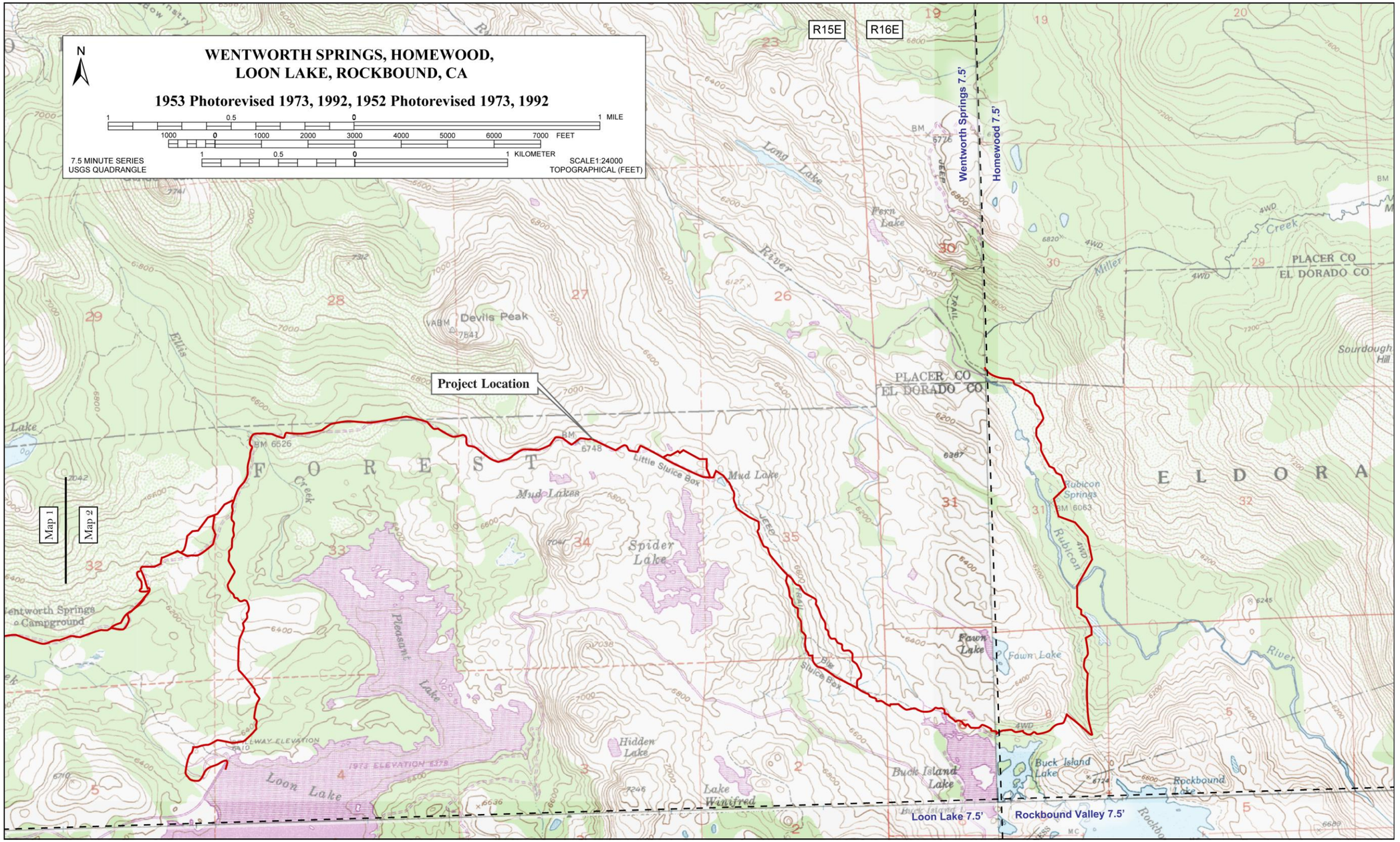


Figure 2b. Project Location Map. Georgetown at Highway 49 to Lake Tahoe near Tahoma. Parts of the road cross the ENF, Tahoe National Forest, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, as well as private property.

The section of the GLTR between Georgetown and Wentworth Springs is a maintained road. From it, there are two access points to the Rubicon Trail. One starts at Airport Flat Campground and extends east through the Wentworth Springs Campground to Ellis Creek. A second access, known as the Ellis Creek Intertie, starts at the Loon Lake Dam and extends in a northerly direction to its intersection with the trail near Ellis Creek. From that point, the trail runs easterly to the Little Sluice Box/Spider Lake area and the Buck Island Lake area, then north through the Rubicon Springs area to the El Dorado/Placer County boundary where the current project area ends. The trail then continues on through Placer County to Lake Tahoe. The trail winds through the trees, meadows and rugged granite landscape.

METHODS

Archival Research

Archival research focused on identifying events or persons associated with the construction and use of the Rubicon Trail. Research was conducted in 2012 and contacts were made to gather site-specific information. These places and people contacted or visited include:

- Krista Deal, Pacific District Archaeologist, Eldorado National Forest, Placerville;
- Katy Parr, Forest Heritage Program Manager, Eldorado National Forest, Placerville;
- Jordan Serin, Archaeologist, Eldorado National Forest, Placerville;
- Debbie Gaynor, Resource Officer, Pacific Ranger District, Eldorado National Forest;
- Dana Supernowicz, former Eldorado National Forest Service Historian;
- Merlin Scott, Rubicon Trail Foundation historian;
- Harald Pietschmann, Rubicon Trail Guide;
- Mark Smith, Mark A. Smith Off-Roading, Inc., Jeepers Jamboree Founder
- Christopher Henry, Geology Department, University of Nevada, Reno;
- Nevada Historical Society, Reno;
- Special Collections Library, University of Nevada, Reno;
- Delmar Map Library, University of Nevada, Reno;
- Jack Sweeney, Supervisor, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, Placerville;
- Karen Feathers, Special Assistant, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors;
- Vicki Sanders, Rubicon Trail Coordinator, El Dorado County Department of Transportation;
- Mary Cory, Director, El Dorado County History Museum, Placerville;
- Ellen Osborn, Docent, El Dorado County History Museum;
- Dee Owens, Docent, El Dorado County History Museum;
- Jarel Culver, Docent, El Dorado County History Museum;
- Debbie Poulson, Placer County Archives, Auburn;
- Steve Morris, Rubicon Trail Historian; and
- Rick Morris, Rubicon Springs and Trail Historian/Archaeologist.

The ENF recorded the Rubicon Trail during the summer of 2011, generating extensive and thoroughly documented site records, photographs and GIS information (Castro el al. 2011). These documents were utilized in the preparation of this report.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The Rubicon Trail is a modern name for a twelve-mile-long off-road vehicle section of the old Georgetown to Lake Tahoe Road. But there is another Rubicon Trail that exists in the public lore. It is, in part, a prehistoric hunting path, a miner's pack trail, a wagon road for summer tourists, and a challenging playground for Jeepers. It is a road set in spectacular surroundings with history that sparks the imagination. In the unchanged forest, we can almost see a horse-back party of panicked immigrants, grizzled miners, ranchers with their herds, well-dressed ladies of the Comstock seeking restoration, and World War II vets capturing the freedom and optimism of post-war America. Today its fame is international as one of the first and finest off-road destinations in North America. Yet it also ties into the early history of northern California and the rich heritage of Lake Tahoe and the Georgetown Divide.

Native American Use

Humans have lived in and around the Rubicon Trail area for at least 6,000 years and quite probably 10,000 years. Archaeologists have determined that the area was used primarily by the Nisenan Maidu (who wintered on the west slope of the Sierra) and the Washoe (whose permanent villages were east of the Sierran crest). Both groups likely used the area as a corridor, as well as an area to gather resources, including pine nuts, acorns, deer, fish, plants and other resources. The Northern Sierra Miwok, along with the Nisenan and Washoe, would, according to archaeologist Krista Deal, "venture into the higher elevations, often in the late summer or early fall, where they would gather to socialize, share information, trade and exchange marriage partners" (Deal 2005:3, 6).

Native American knowledge of the Sierra was unsurpassed, having developed numerous routes through the mountains for travel, hunting and other resource procurement. The area between Lake Tahoe and the Rubicon River gorge was best passed in summer and fall before snow made travel difficult at the highest elevations. This area included forest, as well as high elevation meadows with ample water. The springs that appear throughout the area left mineral deposits, a natural attraction for game. Deer and other wildlife flourished here, providing excellent hunting. McKinney Creek also created a natural path up and over to the west.

One route well known to the Washoe over the Sierra included the eastern part of what would become the Rubicon Trail. Their foot trail extended along the northern rim of Lake Tahoe to McKinney Creek, then followed it up to Rubicon Springs. Stacked rock piles have been found around the springs that may have been used as blinds for hunting animals attracted by the mineral salts. Washoe people collected berries and plants along the creek, as well as

medicinal and sacred plants (Freed 1966:80-81; Lekisch 1988:78). Much as non-native people would do in the future, Native Americans sought the mineral waters for "intestinal complaints" (Deal 2005:6). The dense population of deer also made excellent hunting. The Washoe would camp at the springs for a few days before continuing on to Bunker Lake, where they would stay while hunting deer. Nisenan men would spent up to a week hunting, while the Washoe, who had traveled a greater distance, would spend from two weeks to a month hunting and drying deer meat to carry back to their winter villages (Deal 2005:6).

Native Americans were the first to tell non-native people about the route that led west toward the Sacramento Valley. Their directions followed landmarks anyone unfamiliar with the area could understand. They suggested following the western shore of Lake Tahoe to a creek that led up to a pass, then following the waterways west. This took the inexperienced travelers up McKinney Creek to the headwaters of the Rubicon, which, when followed, eventually led to the American River and into the big valley below.

Historian Guy Nixon refers to this route as the Washoe's Sunset Trail, a Washoe trade route used to bring obsidian from the Mono Lake area to the Nisenan living on the Georgetown Divide. Later, he reports, they used it as an escape route when Paiutes invaded the Washoe territory in Carson Valley capturing slaves. The Washoe reportedly fled to Markleeville or around Lake Tahoe and down the Rubicon Trail to reach a refugee camp provided by the Nisenan on Traverse Creek (Nixon 2010:64).

Coppa Hembo, a Nisenan Maidu whose mother was one of the Washoe refugees, was known for having shown new settlers the old routes through the mountains. When he died in 1892, his obituary in the *Georgetown Gazette* noted, "Many white men will regret the death of the poor old man, who is at least 100 years old. He was a very old man when the white people settled here in '49 and '50, and many a noble act of kindness he has rendered to the whites when they made the long tedious journey across the plains, on narrow trails over the mountains without money or food. He has went without being asked and without recompense to pilot those unfortunate men through, taking with him men and food as far as he dared go without interference from other tribes" (*Georgetown Gazette* March 24, 1892).

The First Non-Native Crossing: 1844

The first known crossing on at least a portion of the trail by non-native people occurred in 1844, when a group of six on horseback broke away from the Murphy-Stephens overland immigrant party (Deal 2005:8). The Murphy-Stephens party had blazed a trail for overland immigrants breaking off the Oregon Trail to come into California. The group managed to move as far west as Truckee Meadows by November that year, following the directions of a Paiute named Truckee they met as he led a hunting party. He told them of a river to follow into the mountains. Following what they named the Truckee River, they reached a confluence of the Truckee with Donner Creek and couldn't decide which way to go. At this point, it was mid-November and snow was beginning to fall. As it was later recalled, "there was some difference

of opinion as to the best route to follow in crossing the mountains, certain of the party who were impatient to reach the other side determined to leave the main body with the wagons and to push forward on horseback up the main stream and so reach some settlement on the western slope" (Farquhar 1965:45).

A party of six fit individuals broke off from the main group to try to make it to Sutter's Fort in the Sacramento Valley, hoping to alert the settlement and send help in the way of fresh animals and supplies. The party consisted of two women and four men, all younger people in their 20s and 30s and able to travel much faster on horseback than those bogged down by wagons. Among the group was Elizabeth Townsend (the 34-year old wife of Dr. John Townsend), Francois Deland and Olivier Magnent (two French Canadians hired to help the Townsends on the overland journey), and three Irish siblings, John Murphy, Daniel Murphy, and Ellen Murphy (McLynn 2002; Truckee History 2012). The immigrants split up their provisions and gave the break-off group eight horses, clothes and blankets. While the main group headed west and ended up mired in the rugged granite landscape around Donner Lake, the break-away party followed the Truckee River south to the shores of Lake Tahoe (McLynn 2002:224).

As advised, they rode south along the west shore until they reached a creek heading west. This was the Washoe route, likely up McKinney Creek, which led them into the mountains. From there, they followed a river down to a fork of the American River, which led them ultimately to the main American River near modern Folsom and then down to Sutter's Fort in Sacramento. Given this information, it likely they stayed on the south side of the Rubicon after crossing, following the steep gorge above Hell Hole and winding southwest to meet the Middle Fork American (Figure 3) (Scott 2012).

As for the rest of the party they left in Truckee Meadows, they struggled on over the Sierra and all ultimately survived. The cabin built by three of the men who stayed the winter with their wagons would ultimately become a fixture of the story of the ill-fated Donner Party in 1846 (Farquahar 1965:45-46).

When the wagon-bound immigrants arrived at Sutter's Fort, they found the horse-back party was already there. According to one historian, "They had ascended the canyon and come to a large and beautiful lake (they were thus the first white people to actually walk along on the shores of Lake Tahoe), then headed west along the lake and found an easy pass, probably at the head of McKinney Creek. Next they descended along a stream which flowed into the American River. They likely took McKinney Creek and followed the Rubicon River. The lower canyon was so rough they had to ride and walk down the riverbed. One of their party was almost swept away in the frigid December water." But they made their way to the American River and on to Sutter's Fort, arriving on December 10 (McLynn 2002:224).

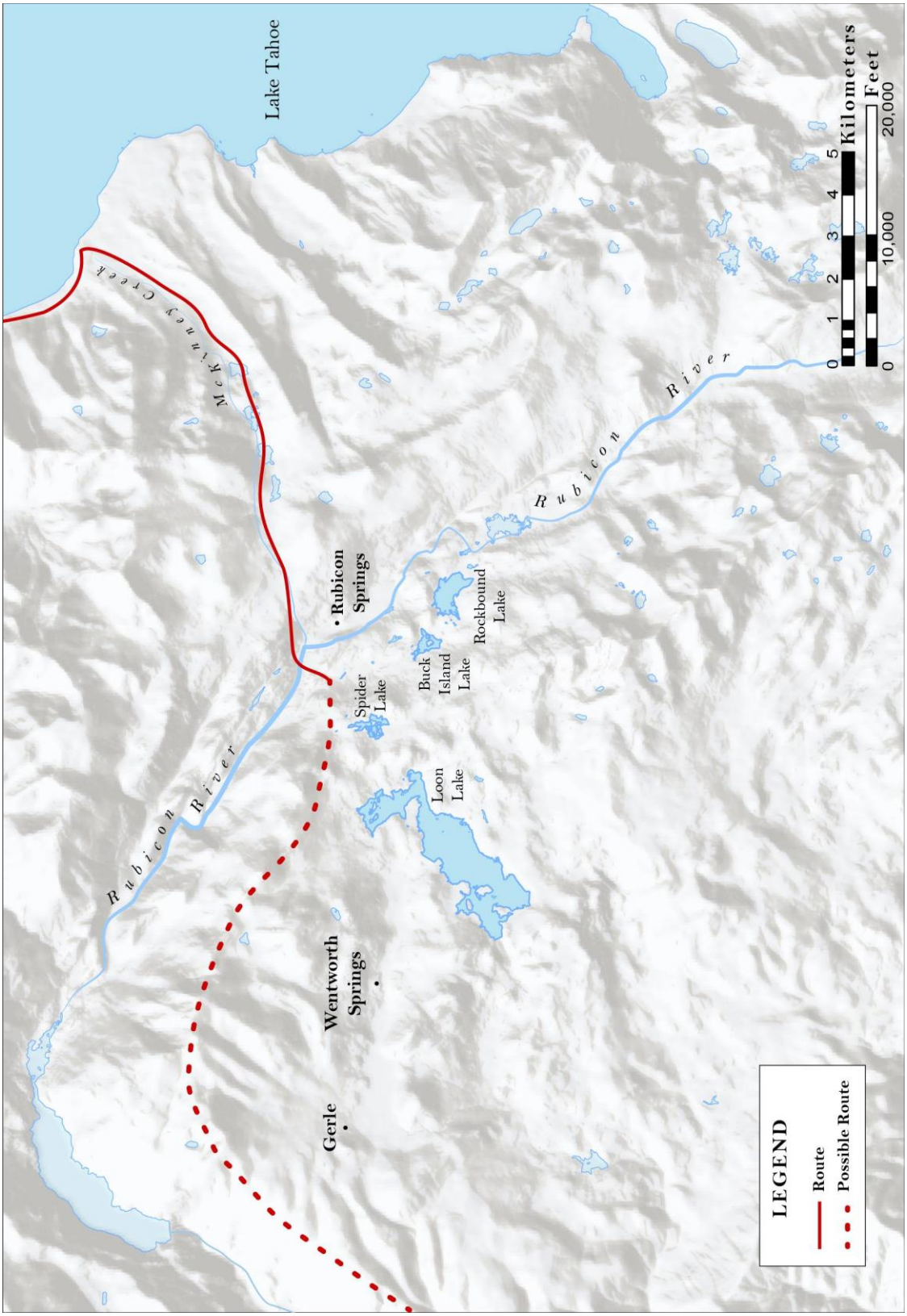


Figure 3. Possible 1844 Murphy-Stephens Horseback Route.

Surveying the Mountains

Many are credited with mapping the eastern portion of the Rubicon Trail, although it is uncertain who, if anyone, mapped it first. Perhaps partially because of the bad press generated by the Donner Party's horrific experience, California and its promoters would make efforts to aid the immigration of settlers, especially after the territory received statehood. This was especially necessary, given the huge increase in immigration following the 1848 discovery of gold at Coloma on the American River. Their first priority was finding the best route over the Sierra.

On April 28, 1855, the California State Senate passed a bill providing for the survey and construction of a wagon road for immigrants coming across the Sierra. When the appropriation was declared unconstitutional, communities in the motherlode region decided to raise funds for such a purpose. El Dorado County, for instance, furnished some funding and Georgetown residents paid the balance to hire Sherman Day to search for a wagon route along the North Fork of the American River to Lake Tahoe (known then as Lake Bigler). Day determined that route wasn't advisable, given the deep canyon of the Rubicon. That summer, Day and George Goddard explored the region, each issuing separate reports the same year (Farquhar 1965:97).

In his report, Goddard noted a low pass at Lake Tahoe while surveying good locations for wagon roads between Placerville and Carson Valley. This pass was likely Burton Pass, along McKinney Creek (Supernowicz and Petershagen 1993:16, 20). McKinney Creek (or possibly the wagon road running along it) became the dividing line between Placer and El Dorado counties (James 1915; Lekisch 1988:79).

Day examined various routes in his report titled, *Wagon Road Exploration*, which was submitted to Surveyor General S. H. Marlette. His first goal was to tie Placerville into the existing U. S. Land Survey efforts and map the main peaks, lakes and other landmarks near the south end of Lake Tahoe (Supernowicz and Petershagen 1993).

Day started from Georgetown up the Middle Fork of the American River, up and across the Rubicon River and then across the mountains over a "smooth and low pass" to the middle of the western shore of Lake Tahoe. This appears to be over Burton Pass and along McKinney's Creek to Chambers Lodge. Day described the pass as, "a flat meadow draining westward, and scarcely separated from two upland lakes draining to Lake Bigler. The canyon descends by an easy grade with good earthy surface for road to Lake Bigler, except for about a quarter of a mile, where large granite boulders are encountered, but presenting no insuperable or very formidable obstacle" (Day as cited in Supernowicz and Petershagen 1993).

The 1860s Rush to the Comstock

The second mining shock wave to hit California started in 1860, when silver was discovered in the Comstock District of Nevada, nearly centered on the opposite side of Lake

Tahoe. The towns of Virginia City, Gold Hill, Genoa and Carson appeared practically overnight. Miners and merchants, just a decade or so off the California rush, were anxious to take an early role in this new venture and quickly began setting up links to the silver mining areas. Those who had established themselves in California or in a particular type of enterprise sought to adapt and profit from the boom. For stage lines carrying freight and passengers, this meant quickly finding the fastest route between San Francisco and Sacramento to the Comstock (Wright 1985:14).

For towns, their prosperity might depend on whether or not they played a part in that traffic. Georgetown, for instance, had benefited as being an important mining center in the gold rush. Narrow emigrant trails over the Sierra were soon inundated by teams hauling mining equipment, building supplies, consumables and whiskey into Virginia City (Wright 1985:14). As main transSierran routes began to emerge (roughly following today's Highways 50 and 80), Georgetown advocated for its own preferred route, a trail known as the Georgetown and Lake Tahoe Road (GLTR).

In 1861, the *Mountain Democrat* reported on the survey of the meadows around Rubicon Springs by Thomas Wren that year, pointing out the superiority of the GLRT, as well as the abundance of hay in this area. One of the men on the survey, E. Harkness, wrote, "The People of Bigler Lake Valley came up last season to the Georgetown Pass (which is a fine meadow) and with their wagons hauled together and carried away a considerable quantity of hay. Mr. Wren, our surveyor, being pressed for time, did not run his grade line from the summit down to the lake, the slope being so gradual that it was obviously within the extreme grade. The opinion of Mr. Wren, with some 20 others who have since passed over the route, is that the whole descent from Georgetown Pass to Lake Bigler is less than 500 feet, which is some 1,100 to 1,200 feet lower than the Strawberry Valley (old Johnson) pass as now traveled. Have not all of your difficulties [with the passes] been with snow? If so, we have nothing to fear on the Georgetown route. Again, the average elevation Georgetown to the Lake is less than from Placerville to Slippery Ford. Have you ever been obstructed by snow between these two points?" (*Mountain Democrat* December 28, 1861).

Citizens in Georgetown continued to press for the new road over the pass to terminate on Lake Tahoe. They proposed that steamers would ferry the traffic across the lake and then down King Canyon over a new road then under construction. Those in favor of the Placerville route argued that there couldn't be enough steamers to carry the traffic and the promotion of the GLTR died down in a couple of years (Smith n.d.:62).

The traffic was indeed substantial. When William Brewer explored California with a field crew in 1864, he approached Lake Tahoe from the south after passing over Carson Pass. He noted, "the trade to Washoe, being so enormous, other roads are being built across the mountains." On the route that would become Highway 50, he observed, "Clouds of dust arose, filling the air, as we met long trains of ponderous wagons, loaded with merchandise, hay, grain – in fact everything that man or beast uses. We stopped at the Slippery Ford House. Twenty

wagons stopped there, driving over a hundred horses or mules – heavy wagons, enormous loads, scarcely any less than three tons" (Brewer 1930:440).

The GLTR was little more than a pack trail at that time, acceptable for travel by horse or foot, but not by wagon. This route did have certain advantages not found on the Johnson's Cut-off (Highway 50), primarily lower elevation and less snow as its promoters reported, but it had one insurmountable disadvantage. The GLTR terminated near the middle of the western shore of Lake Tahoe and there was no road established to the south around the lake to connect to the route to Genoa. The old native trail, as a result, was relegated to limited use by local ranchers, fur trappers, hunters and the Native Americans who had always used the route.

Various surveyors have been credited with "discovering" the trail. For instance, Lauren Upson (the U. S. Surveyor General for California) reportedly named McKinney Bay "Upson Bay" in the early 1860s after he "blazed" the Georgetown-Lake Tahoe Pass, the old Washoe trail (Lekisch 1988:81).

A Lt. M. M. Macomb reported that McKinney had been the one to "blaze the trail." He wrote in 1876 that, "A good trail, opened some years ago by Mr. McKinney, runs from here to Georgetown, crossing a branch of the Middle Fork of the American some eight miles from McKinneys, and called by him the Rubicon" (Lekisch 1988:102; Wheeler 1889). However, despite these early descriptions and crossings, it would be years after the 1849 California gold rush and the 1860 Comstock silver rush in Nevada that the trail came into general use.

It may have been the Hunsuckers, Potter or some others along the route that instigated the first road work on the GLTR. In 1866, the Placerville *Weekly Recorder* published four letters describing a trip over the trail. One states that, "this trail was cut out some four or five years ago by the citizens of Georgetown, who subscribed liberally to raise the funds necessary to carry the trail from this point to Lake Tahoe" (*Weekly Recorder* August 22, 1866). Stops along the way included Uncle Tom's, McKinstry's Ranch, Red Mountain Lake, Barker's, Loon Lake, Ellis's cabin, Barker's Peak, Table Rock and Clise's cabin (*Placerville Weekly Recorder* August 29, 1866).

By 1869, the GLTR showed up as a trail on another map, heading from Sugar Pine Point (McKinney's) on Lake Tahoe, up Burton's Pass, crossing the Rubicon and dropping southwest to the west shore of Loon Lake (Holt and Gibbes 1869).

McKinney's

The Comstock populations grew quickly. By 1863, Virginia City had a population of 15,000 with ore flowing in from dozens of mines nearby (Wright 1985:14). The towns of the Comstock needed supplies, including food for humans and hay for livestock. Market hunters set their sights on deer hunting grounds around Lake Tahoe. In 1862, John McKinney built a public house known as Hunter's Retreat along the outlet of the creek that would come to bear his name. The previous year he had established a hay ranch at Burton's Pass just up the hill

from the shoreline along a creek. McKinney's Creek was a distinctive landmark and his cabin was one of the first structures built on Lake Tahoe. To improve transportation, he built a dock and pier out into the lake to receive boats. His hunting lodge quickly became a tourist attraction (Lekisch 1988:79; Morris 2011:114; Siloli 1883:78).

The site was perfectly suited for tourism. Climbing Pyramid Peak in 1864, Brewer commented on the scenic beauty of this particular region. He wrote, "The view is the grandest in this part of the Sierra. On the east, four thousand feet beneath, lies Lake Tahoe, intensely blue; nearer are about a dozen little alpine lakes, of very blue, clear, snow water. Far in the east are the desolate mountains of Nevada Territory, fading into indistinctness in the blue distance . . . It is one of those views to make a vivid and lasting impression on the mind" (Brewer 1930:441).

As Brewer so perfectly captured, Lake Tahoe itself was already a tourist attraction. He wrote, "The lake is the feature of the place. A large log hotel [possibly McKinney's] is here, and many pleasure seekers are here, both from California and from Nevada. I was amused at a remark of a teamster who stopped here for a drink - the conversation was between two teamsters who looked at things in a practical light, one a stranger here, the other acquainted:

No. 1: "A good many people here!"
No. 2. "Yes."
No. 1: "What they all doing?"
No. 2 "Nothing."
No. 1: "Nothing at all?"
No. 2. "Why, yes-in the city we would call it bumming (California word for loafing), but here they call it pleasure." Both take a drink and depart for their more practical and useful avocations" (Brewer 1930:442).

McKinney was famous for meeting his guests on the dock. One guest at his resort remembered him this way, "McKinney was a tall, rawboned silent man, dressed in a dark suit of good material, light woolen shirt, no necktie (I doubt he ever wore one), and he had beaded Indian moccasins on his feet. His coat pockets were stuffed with jerkey (dried venison) which he prepared himself and this he would give out to his friends. I often think that it was the best jerkey that I have ever tasted" (Lekisch 1988:79; citing *Oakland Tribune* July 23, 1944).

John Muir was a frequent visitor to McKinney's, especially during the quiet winter season. He once stayed a week at McKinney's during the late winter. He wrote of his experience, "We . . . spent rare evenings by the huge fire in McKinney's old cabin. The log walls are covered with trophies of the chase, for our host has been a great hunter in his day. Two live pet coons were frolicking on the floor while our grand old host smiled benignly and played with them, the firelight gleaming on his weathered face. How big he seems, thus brought into relief, and what a shadow he casts! The fragrant rosiny fire is the very god of the home. No wonder the old nations, with their fresher instincts, had their fireside gods" (Lekisch 1988:80; *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 3, 1878).

McKinney's pier created the transportation link that would make-do until a road could be built to connect his place to the main transSierran roads. By 1865, two schooners traveled the lake carrying summer tourists and small quantities of freight, such as hay and deer meat. As the traffic grew, other boats were added, including the newly launched Governor Stanford, a steamer that carried passengers and freight to strategic landings, the largest at Tahoe City (Siloli 1883:79).

Potter and the Hunsuckers: Hay for the Comstock

As noted above, the Comstock boom brought an increased market for hay. The Nevada side of Lake Tahoe exists in a rain shadow and, without the benefit of summer rains and numerous lakes, the Comstock lacked the natural feed necessary for their animals. In an industrial era reliant on horses and oxen, feed was essential. The natural meadows along the eastern side of the GLTR provided tons of hay without effort and, by the mid-1860s, some men, including former miners from Georgetown, were building cabins to harvest the hay on land they either patented or settled. Among them were George and John Hunsucker, two brothers who had made enough money mining to change occupations and settle near a little soda spring just off the GLTR (Scott 2012).

The Hunsuckers came from North Carolina in 1849 to the Kelsey mining district. In 1867, 40-something brothers began exploring the Rubicon Valley, possibly taking a break from their nearly two decades of hard mining. They built a log cabin on the Rubicon River near a mineral spring, along with a corral and some outbuildings (Presba and Presba 1983:208).

Another who settled in this area was Clark Potter. Potter apparently knew the Hunsuckers. Although the names were a little different, a local newspaper reported that brothers George and John Potter had worked a claim together with John Hunsucker in 1866. Their mining area was located on Dutch Creek, between Kelsey and Coloma, and was producing gold at the time. The three men shared a cabin and must have been fairly good friends (*Sacramento Daily Union* October 29, 1866). It is likely that this was the same Potter and Hunsucker who ended up as neighbors on the beautiful springs above Lake Tahoe.

Potter settled in a nice meadow that included another spring, soon named Potter's Spring, located slightly southeast of Rubicon Springs. Potter also harvested hay and is reported to have used a path directly east from his place down to the shore of Lake Tahoe. Deal believes his path also may have been an old Washoe trail, since most good routes had been established over the centuries by the people using that area (Deal 2008, 2011, 2012; James 1915:196; Scott 2012).

Agriculture and Water Resource Development on the Georgetown Divide

Before the Gold Rush, most early immigrants settled in the San Francisco Bay area or on fertile valleys, like the Sacramento, and eastward into the foothills. Still, their numbers were

few. After the strike at Coloma on the South Fork of the American River, the state's population exploded, with miners scouring every streambed and hillside throughout the California motherlode area, especially near the discovery site in El Dorado County. Georgetown was established by 1850, along with the county itself. This town was centrally located and popular enough to be considered a serious contender for county seat. The town and the surrounding area became known as the Georgetown Divide (or simply The Divide), a community that required resources, including food and a ready supply of water, to prosper.

Agricultural Development

The high elevation meadows in the area around the trail may have been used by dairy and sheep ranchers as early as the 1850s, as a pack trail developed between Lake Tahoe and Georgetown (Deal 2005:8). Gold rush communities were burgeoning at that time. The growing population needed food, including fresh meat and dairy, and soon the corrals, barns and farm houses of ranches became more common on the landscape. As historian Paulo Siloli wrote in 1883, "farming entirely depends on the mines; from 1849 to '60 were the 'flush times' of the mines, producing largely, then money was plentiful and spent lavishly, making Georgetown and surrounding country the liveliest spot of ground" (Siloli 1883:190).

The high elevation portions of the trail were well-suited for summer grazing of livestock. Wet green meadows were especially useful for dairy cattle, since milk production required an ample water supply. Cattle and sheep ranchers from throughout Placer and eastern Sacramento counties made it a practice to bring their herds up to these meadows, often establishing ranches either by homesteading government patents or simply by building a corral and a cabin and setting up a summer camp. The names of many of these earliest ranchers are evident today on maps, including Gerle, Orelli, Bassi, Filippini, Hartless, Forni and numerous others. Many of these families had year-round homes in Georgetown and led their livestock up and back each spring and fall. Bassi, for instance, purchased his range on the South Fork American in 1870, where he kept 80 cows in winter and then spent the summer on Silver Creek. Rinaldo Filippini, another Swiss Italian immigrant, was a dairyman and general merchandiser in Garden Valley by the 1860s and by the 1870s had a large mountain range known as Filippini & Co.'s Ranch, grazing up to 120 cows at their summer range covering 1,592 acres (Burton 1891; Siloli 1883:132, 243). Augusto Orelli was yet another Swiss Italian dairyman who moved to the Georgetown area in the early 1870s and started other businesses as well, including a hotel and an undertaking parlor. Orelli's mountain range added to the use of the trail (Rambeau 2010:71).

Francis Cow Camp remains a fixture on the trail. It was originally settled in 1872 by Alessandro Fransioli, a Swiss immigrant. Fransioli came to California during the Gold Rush and engaged in a variety of activities, until becoming a butcher on the Divide in 1858. He also owned a sheep ranch near Folsom. Fransioli, who became known as A. A. Francis, became a popular merchant in Georgetown, where he remained in business as late as 1900. He also became a fixture in the Gerle Creek area (Brattland 1996).

Other local geographic features were also named for these agriculturalists. Ellis Creek, for instance, was reportedly named for Jock Ellis, a dairy rancher on the east side of Ellis Peak. For many years, he sold his products to travelers at Tahoe and on the GLTR, then later became a sheep rancher. Ellis also has a lake and a valley named for him in Placer County north of the road (Brattland 1996).

Gerle Creek, sometimes spelled "Gurley," takes its name from Charles and Cyrus (Christopher) Gerle, Swedish brothers who immigrated to California in 1851 and 1854 respectively. The two men worked as miners and gradually settled in El Dorado County running cattle. By 1861, they had a ranch on a meadow area near a creek that took their name. They are reported to have purchased the land from Native Americans, but they also filed homestead patents for their summer ranch. The rest of the year they lived near Coloma. They initially used the land in spring and summer for cattle and hogs, taking their products over the GLTR and then on to Virginia City. After the establishment of Wentworth Springs, Gerles Ranch became a noted watering and stopping point on the road (Brattland 1996).

One of the first actual public houses on what today is known as the Rubicon Trail was Uncle Tom's Cabin, a trapper's house that welcomed ranchers to stop, have a meal, get water and rest on their way up to their summer grazing lands (Morris 2011:120). Uncle Tom's, along with other stops such as Forni's, Eleven Pines and Hartless, would remain popular (as long as the summer herding of cattle, hogs, sheep and turkeys continued on the trail) well into the twentieth century (Deal 2005:8). Turkeys were also driven up from the Tahoe side to Sourdough Hill near Rockbound Lake to spend the summer. This use became an important function of the region that would last for decades. In fact, as late as the 1970s, sheep were still grazed in Miller Meadows (Scott 2012).

The California Water Company

By the 1870s, the Georgetown Divide was in decline. Within just six years of the 1849 gold boom, the excitement was already beginning to fade and, lacking a road to the Comstock, the silver boom of the 1860s had done little if anything for the local economy. In 1874, local surveyor Amos Bowman wrote, "Decadence and dilapidation in shanties; and stranded human waifs in tatters; ruins suggestive of lawless activities and heroics, in those Troys and Pompeiis of the period – Johnstown, Kelsey's, Volcanoville, and Mt. Gregory, where now everything is extremely dead - the logic of events branded into the unsuccessful average miners soul and coined into words, 'exhausted and mined out'" (Bowman 1874 [cited in Gernes and Deibert 1999:65]).

On the Georgetown Divide, placer and drift mining was becoming played out by the 1870s, just as hydraulic mining was coming to the fore. Bowman, like many others, believed that water development for mining, domestic and agricultural use could rejuvenate the flagging economy. Grand plans were made that envisioned tunneling all the way to Lake Tahoe to provide water not only for the divide, but for Sacramento as well. This renewable resource

could provide future generations revenues in perpetuity. More modest plans sought primarily to bring water from Loon Lake into Georgetown (Gernes and Deibert 1999:65).

The California Water Company (CWC) sought to supply the town, as well as the miners, with water. This new company was formed by San Francisco financiers who (as was often the case in the motherlode) purchased older ditch companies and their water rights. The CWC acquired rights to tributaries to the Middle Fork of the American River from the Pilot Creek Ditch Company and, in 1872, began building a small dam at Loon Lake and a canal to carry that water by flume, ditch and tunnel back toward Georgetown (Siloli 1883:88, 109). Their activities, no doubt, made use of existing trails and helped define new ones.

Their principal reservoir was Loon Lake, where they built a large stone dam to increase storage and connected its drainage to nearby Pleasant and Bixby lakes. They also surveyed and secured water rights along the Rubicon River. From Loon Lake, water was drained into Gerle Creek for about seven miles, then three miles by ditch to a junction with the Little South Fork Ditch, which carried it to the head branch of Pilot Creek through a tunnel at Hog Back. This water flowed across the divide through 300 miles of ditches, flumes and iron pipes for mining, domestic and agricultural use. The completion of the dam at Loon Lake made it the dominant water company in the area (Siloli 1883:110, 189).

By 1873, their Little South Fork Ditch was a major feature on the landscape. A map (Figures 4 and 5) drawn that year by Bowman labeled the GLTR as the Lake Tahoe Trail coming west from the lake as a wagon road up to Miller's Ranch and as a trail extending west and up to the Rubicon River, then southwest over another creek around the north and west sides of Spider Lake and then south along the western shores of Pleasant and Loon lakes. Back at the Rubicon River crossing, a branch trail cut almost due south to Potter's Cabin, crossed the river and then proceeded south to Rockbound Lake. At this time, before the settlement of Wentworth Springs, there appears to have been no connection between Gerle's ranch eastward toward Spider Lake. Instead, a wagon road came almost due north through Orelli's ranch up to terminate at Gerle's (Bowman 1873). From that point, the numerous ranchers in the area branched off on smaller trails to reach their summer grazing range.

Rubicon Resort Era: 1880 to 1926

While summer ranching, hunting and water development brought some traffic over the trail, its true development would ultimately depend on a new economy based on recreation. The southwest shore of Lake Tahoe was the first area around the lake to be settled. By the

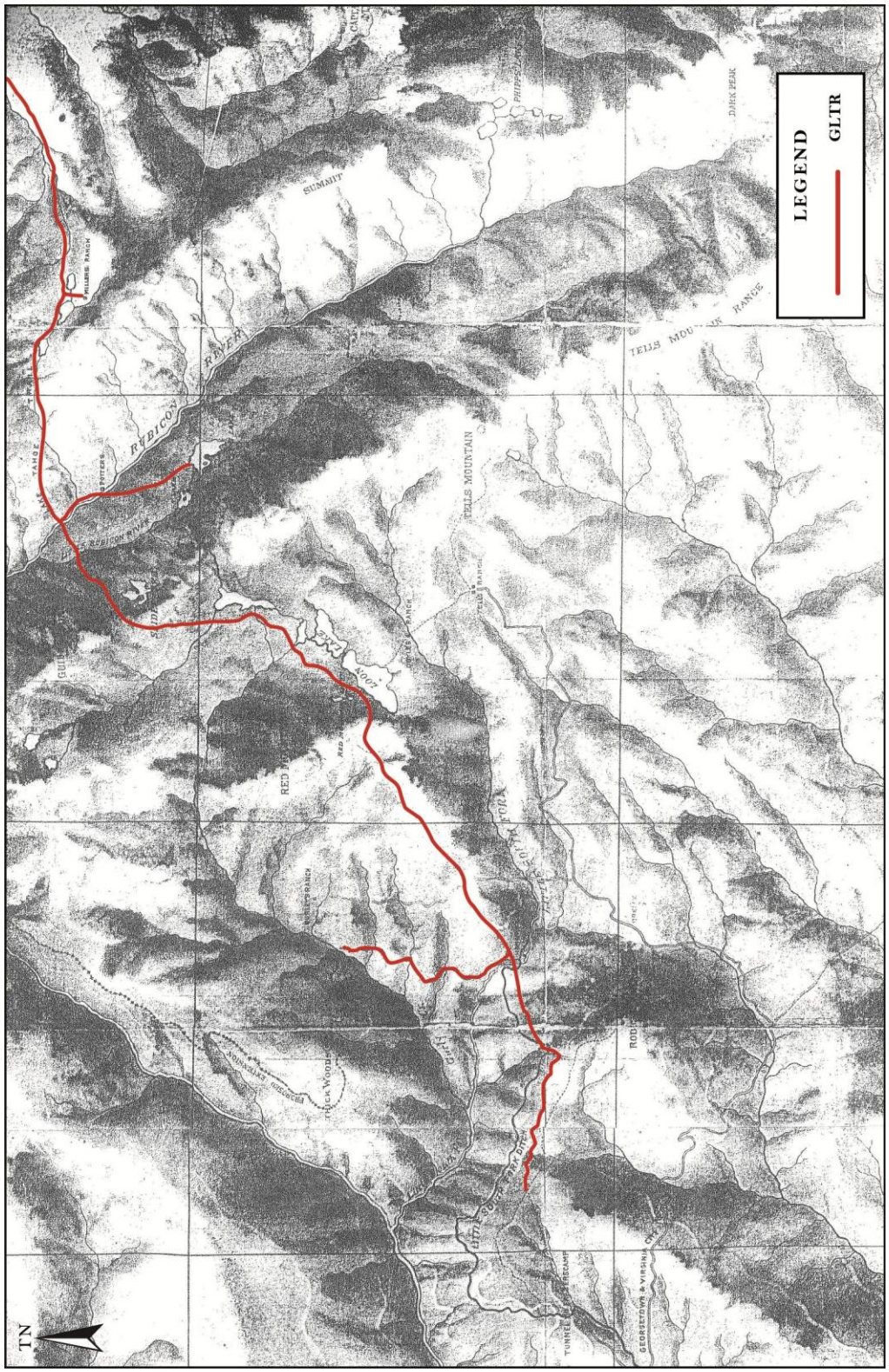


Figure 4. Amos Bowman 1873 map of El Dorado County with redline depicting Georgetown to Lake Tahoe road (GLTR).

Figure 5. Amos Bowman Map, 1873 Overlaid on a Modern Relief Map.

1870s, little communities that consisted primarily of hotels were patronized by tourists and health seekers coming to the grand lake to enjoy the clean cool air in summer. Guests from both California and Nevada came to these resorts, which included Lake House, Tom Rowland's place, the Tallac House and the Fishmarket. McKinney's ranked among the most popular (Siloli 1883:78).

McKinney's pier and cottages (Figure 6) under the pines made it a picturesque scene along the lake shore. About half a mile south of McKinney's a dead snag stood 500 feet off shore and came to be known as the Georgetown Snag, no doubt because it became a landmark associated with the GLTR take-off point at the creek (Siloli 1883:78).

Hunsucker Brothers

As tourism for recreation and health increased in the 1870s, mineral springs became a great attraction. These springs were considered to be naturally healing and their waters were bottled for profit. The Hunsucker brothers recognized the value of their spring at their summer hay ranch and quickly began bottling it in individual and gallon-sized bottles for sale on the open market and wholesale to local hotels. The *Tahoe Tattler* newspaper reported that, "the Rubicon Soda Water back of McKinney's is the best of its kind . . . the Hunsucker brothers are not now able to pack out enough to supply the demand" (Presba and Presba 1983:208-209).

The Hunsuckers were content to just sell water from their springs at first. In July 1880, George Hunsucker, Clark Potter and a friend, Robert Carothers, all left their homes in Garden Valley and "started for the Raging Rubicon, where they will spend their summer" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 9, 1880). They continued to sell tons of hay, bringing it down the hill for shipment off McKinney's dock. No doubt visiting at McKinney's successful resort planted the seed in their minds that those who bought their soda water might want to come to the source. In 1879 they stocked Quail Lake with trout to sell at market in Nevada (R. Morris 2012). That fishing would soon become an added attraction in itself for their use or for possible guests. It appears they opened to the public for the first time between 1877 and 1880.

McKinney's continued to draw in the tourists, much to the benefit of the Hunsuckers. In 1881, the *Tahoe Tattler* described McKinney as "fat and jolly as ever and happily doing a lively business with twenty cottages all newly painted" (Lekisch 1988:80).

By the early 1880s, McKinney's resort had grown to a true attraction. One paper wrote, "Handsome Hunter's Home is nine miles from Tahoe City. It is a village of 18 pretty brown cottages, situated in a pine grove immediately on the shore of the lake. Genial host McKinney has accommodations for 60 guests, and the old Georgetown Trail runs ten miles south to Rubicon Mineral Springs" (Scott 1957:85). Another described it as having 25 cottages "bordering a clean pebbly beach away from the reach of high water, a main building that includes a dining hall, and 200 feet of wharf leading out into the lake to admit steamers, upon which is built a 22 by 32-foot saloon two stories high" (Scott 1957:85).

Figure 6. McKinney's, circa 1870. The resort was open by the 1860s and grew in popularity into the 20th century. It became the jumping-off point for tourists heading to Rubicon Springs (courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Nevada, Reno).

Tourists did indeed want to visit the springs and drink directly from them (Figure 7). The Hunsuckers were more than happy to oblige. By 1881, the newspaper described the Hunsuckers' resort, saying, "This water is coming into note, and the place is a splendid resort, and the owners cannot afford to be dependent on a trail, hence it is more than probable that it will be completed" (Presba and Presba 1983:209). Already the pressure to improve the road for tourism had begun. In 1883, they improved the trail heading up from the pier to their resort. They also built additional accommodations (Figure 8) near their cabin and set out places for tent campers.

Editors of newspapers in Nevada and Georgetown soon spread the word, resulting in an increase of traffic (James 1915; Siloli 1883:79). One poet wrote of the springs above Lake Tahoe, "From off its southern shore, the mountain side from climbing visitors no more shall hide, the Soda Springs; romantic place to all who love the woods, the rocks, the water fall" (Siloli 1883:79).

McKinney's became the point of entry for hundreds of guests who would visit the Rubicon Springs area for decades to come. After arriving at McKinney's Resort, they could either stay at the lake for a few days or go directly up to the springs. Tourist, hunters and health seekers traveled by foot, horse or wagon up the road to the springs, spending a day to a month in the clean mountain air. Wagons often staged at the end of Lily Lake. This gave the drivers a chance to load passengers or cargo before heading up the steeper parts of the grade (Scott 2012).

Although most travelers came to Rubicon Springs from the Tahoe side, the Hunsuckers also sought to build their market by improving the road to the west, trying to attract visitors from the Georgetown side. An 1879 map showed the wagon road up McKinney Creek that turned to trail near the Burton's Pass, then switchbacked up and over the Rubicon River. It's possible that the Hunsuckers actually built this switchback, although no clear record exists of when and who built it. Nonetheless, it was a great improvement over the short and steep route (known today as the Lost Trail) that had proceeded it (Figure 9). The GLTR at this time headed west and southwest to the north and west sides of Pleasant and Loon lakes (see Figures 4 and 5). The road to Gerle's ranch still terminated at his place with no connection eastward toward Spider Lake or the GLTR.

The Hunsuckers were anxious to improve the last section of road separating them from Georgetown. In 1881, they reported to the Tahoe Tattler that they would have the road to Georgetown open by the next season, "to give visitors a better chance to see the wonders of that wonderful place and to expedite the ways and means of getting out the famous soda water" (Georgetown Gazette October 28, 1881). There were ample stages into Georgetown and definitely the will to carry passengers 40 miles farther east to the springs. Horse-drawn stage lines were established in Georgetown by 1850 and continued until the 1920s, when cars finally replaced them (Rambeau 2010:52).

Figure 7. Rubicon Springs, circa 1885. Here vacationers gather at the spring itself, protected beneath the gabled platform. Packing crates for spring water bottles can be seen stacked on either side of the drainage trench (Courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Nevada, Reno).

Figure 8. Tourists at Rubicon Springs, circa 1885. (Courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Nevada, Reno).

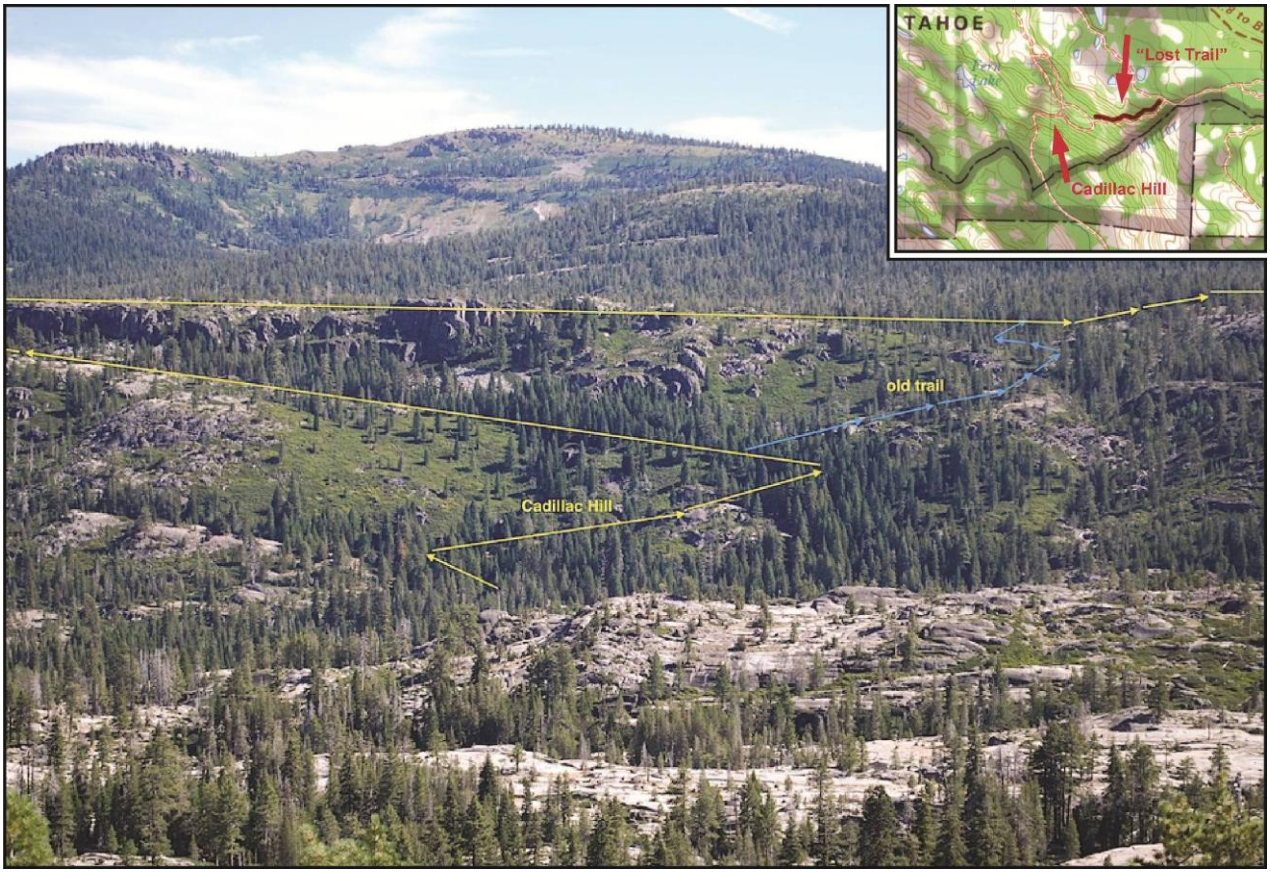


Figure 9. The Old Trail and Later Switchback on the Road up from McKinney's. The Illustration was prepared by trail historian Harald Pietschmann based on field inspection looking for the original trail up the hill in relationship to the current road (Pietschmann 2012).

Improvements at Loon Lake

As the California Water Company grew, their finances allowed them to improve their storage reservoir at Loon Lake. In 1881, they began building a much larger granite block dam. This effort required major construction, including quarrying local rock. A road was extended to the dam site off the GLTR, which would have experienced heavy use over the next few years as work crews and equipment were hauled in and out. The *Georgetown Gazette* reported in 1883, "This dam . . . is by far the finest work of the kind . . . Within 75 or 100 yards of the dam, they have a great mountain of granite, which is taken out in large blocks, and of which they have constructed two walls, about 20 feet apart and 30 feet high, between which they fill in with lighter material. When this dam is completed the company will have not only the finest dam in the State, but also water enough to supply any probable demand on the North Side for many years to come" (*Georgetown Gazette* August 11, 1883).

Wentworth Springs: 1881

Not long after the Hunsuckers opened their resort, another important soda springs was developed. This site was located about eight miles west in an area that had never known a road. Its development would reroute the GLTR (and ultimately the Rubicon Trail) to its current alignment.

In 1879, Nathan Wentworth was hunting east of his home in Georgetown when he discovered another mineral springs, which he soon acquired and named Wentworth Springs. Wentworth was a native of Maine who had come to Placer County as a miner in 1851. From 1876 to 1880, he had taken up a number of enterprises, including town butcher in Georgetown, farmer and teamster. When he found the springs, he was 51 years old and ready for a new summer occupation, that of rustic inn keeper (Davis and Rambeau 1987:A28).

During his first tourist season in 1881, Wentworth's place was already becoming a welcome addition in the area. One tired hiker wrote, "We went on and on until a little after eight, the lights of Wentworth's filled our hearts with joy. A good supper and a comfortable bed were appreciated that night" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 22, 1881).

The hiker described the road going east from Wentworth Springs (on what would become the future road), saying,

> The next morning we started on a blind trail hoping to reach the lake before dark. For a couple of miles our way lay through a narrow meadow shut in by mountains, but all at once we came out upon a broad sheet of granite that stretched up to the summit of the ridge and far away on each side. The trail here was indicated by occasional heaps of stones. After an hour's climbing, we reached the brink of a beautiful little body of water called Pleasant Lake and in a short time we stood on the summit of Tell's range . . . We lost the trail and the

> more we searched for it the more we lost it. We . . . followed the river until we found the springs. Just as we were about to give up in despair we came out in a little clearing where there were a couple of log cabins. This was the summer resort known as Hunsucker's Soda Springs. It is a beautiful place and the water is very palatable. We were still ten miles from Tahoe, so we didn't tarry long at the springs, but after being shown the trail commenced our climb up the cliff to the summit. For the next few miles our trail was almost level and wound through beautiful meadows and by small lakes . . . a sharp turn in the trail brings to view the matchless lake (*Georgetown Gazette* July 22, 1881).

Wentworth built a road to continue the GLTR toward his place. Before this time, historic maps show the road heading along to the west shore of Loon Lake and then northeast. A dead-end wagon road branched off that road southwest of Loon Lake and went due north to Gerle's place. Wentworth apparently continued the road from Gerle's east a few miles to his new resort (Figure 10). The *Georgetown Gazette* reported, "Through their determined energies, the Wentworth brothers have finally constructed a wagon road through to the Springs, from South fork via Jacobson's and Gurley's dairy ranches, which is now very passable, and will be improved still more in time for next summer's travel" (*Georgetown Gazette* September 8, 1882).

Unlike the Rubicon, this made Wentworth Springs fairly accessible so that it could be reached by wagon coming from Georgetown after crossing the swampy area at Gerle Creek. Wentworth kept a house and campground to accommodate travelers. Like the Hunsuckers at the Rubicon, he advertised his new "resort" as a health and pleasure destination and sold bottled soda water in bottles and kegs (Rambeau 2010:72). For a round trip fare of $10, passengers could ride the stage from Georgetown that came up on Tuesdays and returned on Fridays. For those who came on their own, hay, barley and good pasturage were available for their horses (Figure 11).

In August 1882, the editor of the *Georgetown Gazette* optimistically wrote, "Since dieting a few days on bottled water from Wentworth's Soda Springs, we feel like a new man.

> If you feel out of rig, take a trip to Wentworth's Springs. The time is not many years distant when thousands of health seekers will flock to Wentworth Springs" (*Georgetown Gazette* August 4, 1882). Apparently the new man wanted another drink and the editor shut down his presses and headed back to Wentworth's to spend the next three weeks. On his return to Georgetown in September, he wrote, "we arrived at Wentworth's Springs and were surprised to find so many people there – ten camps besides 12 or 15 boarders which Mr. W. and his energetic wife were accommodating. We counted more than fifty people there the following day. Quite a number were from Sacramento, City and County, and Georgetown. Greenwood and vicinity were largely represented. We found this health and pleasure resort a much better place than we had expected. The water is very palatable, sparkling and health giving to all who

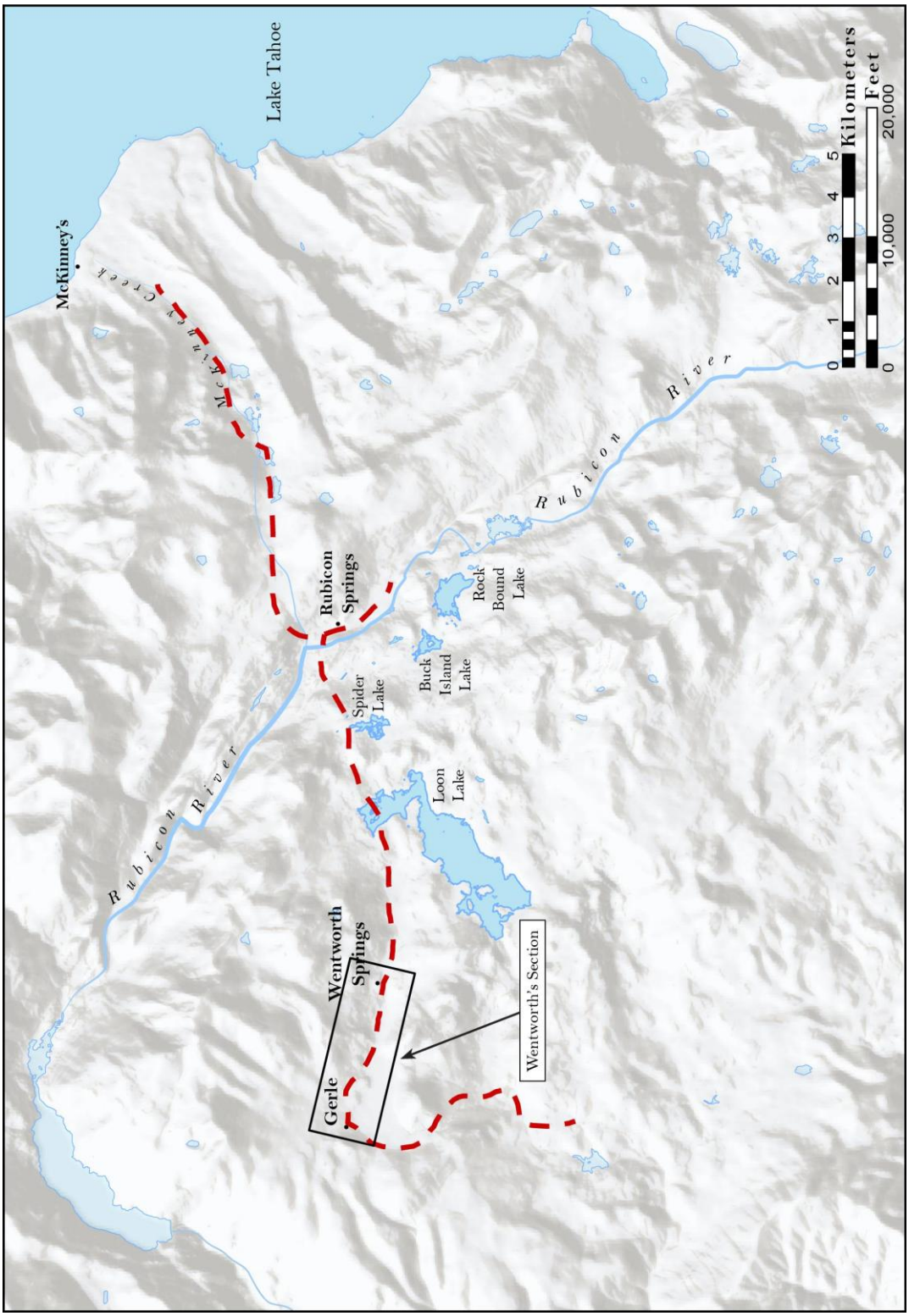
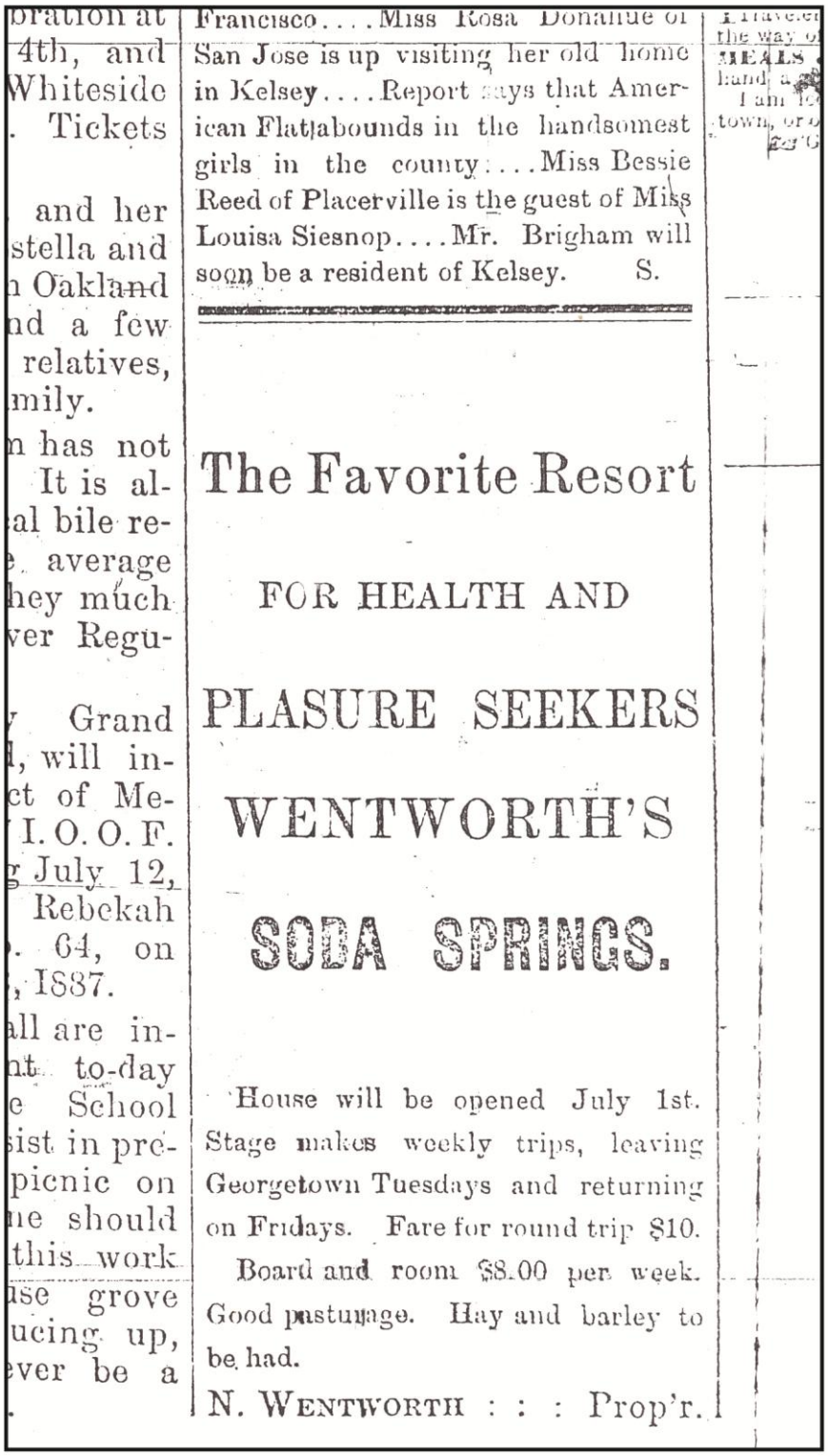


Figure 10. Wentworth's Section, 1881. Wentworth apparently connected the road from Gerle's ranch to his springs and public house, rerouting the GLTR.



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Francisco....Miss Rosa Donahue of San Jose is up visiting her old home in Kelsey....Report says that American Flat abounds in the handsomest girls in the county....Miss Bessie Reed of Placerville is the guest of Miss Louisa Siesnop....Mr. Brigham will soon be a resident of Kelsey. S.

The Favorite Resort

FOR HEALTH AND

PLASURE SEEKERS

WENTWORTH'S

SODA SPRINGS.

House will be opened July 1st. Stage makes weekly trips, leaving Georgetown Tuesdays and returning on Fridays. Fare for round trip $10.

Board and room $8.00 per week. Good pasturage. Hay and barley to be had.

N. WENTWORTH : : : Prop'r.

Figure 11. Newspaper Ad for Wentworth's Soda Springs (*Georgetown Gazette* July 2, 1887).

> drink it and 49 out of 50 prefer it to the coldest and purest fresh water. We are highly pleased with its health restoring properties and in common with many others feel determined to visit the spring next season . . . Mr. Wentworth is building a fine two and a half story frame house 24 X 34,which will be completed this fall . . . a number of small houses will also be put up for the convenience of familys who come up to camp. Board and Bed are $8 a week and $7 without bed" (*Georgetown Gazette* September 8, 1882).

Indeed the new hotel did open for a new season on July 1, 1884. In an advertisement, Wentworth wrote, "In our new and commodious House all can be accommodated at reasonable terms. Soda water in bottles or kegs to be had at any time. Tables furnished with the best the market affords. Passengers carried from Georgetown to the Soda Springs at reasonable rates" (*Georgetown Gazette* June 13, 1884). Unfortunately Wentworth died at the resort that year. By that time, he had already made a significant impact to the GLTR and what would become the Rubicon Trail. His family continued to operate the resort until they sold it as part of a large land deal to the famous movie actor Lon Chaney Jr. 60 years later (Rambeau 2010:72).

The Georgetown to Lake Tahoe Road Improvements

By the early 1880s, the GLTR was fairly well defined on maps (Figure 12). When General Land Office surveyors came through updating maps after Wentworth had developed his resort, they found a well defined wagon road heading north up past through the summer ranches, including the A. A. Francis property to Gerle's ranch, passing barns or little cabins about every mile. From there the road turned east and headed toward a few structures at Wentworth Springs. At that point, the wagon road became a trail passing through swamp and then granite, running north of Spider Lake, until it headed northeast. Just before reaching the Hunsuckers' place on the Rubicon River, the route became a wagon road again, indicating a better path. After crossing the river, the road split, with the northbound side curving down to Lake Tahoe and the southbound side heading to Rubicon Springs (labeled House and Soda Springs) and then down to another road just north of Rockbound and Buck Island lakes. That road led east to a "Soda Springs" and west where it ended at the Rubicon River and was likely used by hunters and day-trippers from the resorts or summer grazers (California Water Company 1880; United States Department of the Interior [USDI] 1880, 1882a, 1882b).

The eastern route from Rubicon Springs to McKinney's still required a strong wagon despite the Hunsuckers' improvements. In the summer of 1883, Georgetown wagon maker H. M. Dains made an express wagon to run the route between the springs and McKinney's, likely with modifications to help with the steep and rugged grade (*Georgetown Gazette* June 9, 1883). The brothers' resort had in just a few seasons become a thriving resort that could support the cost of a daily wagon and driver.

In 1885, George Hunsucker continued work on the "new" road from his place down to Lake Tahoe. In July that year, the *Georgetown Gazette* reported that he deserved much of the credit for the good job on its construction. The paper stated, "Johnny Poor, who is running the

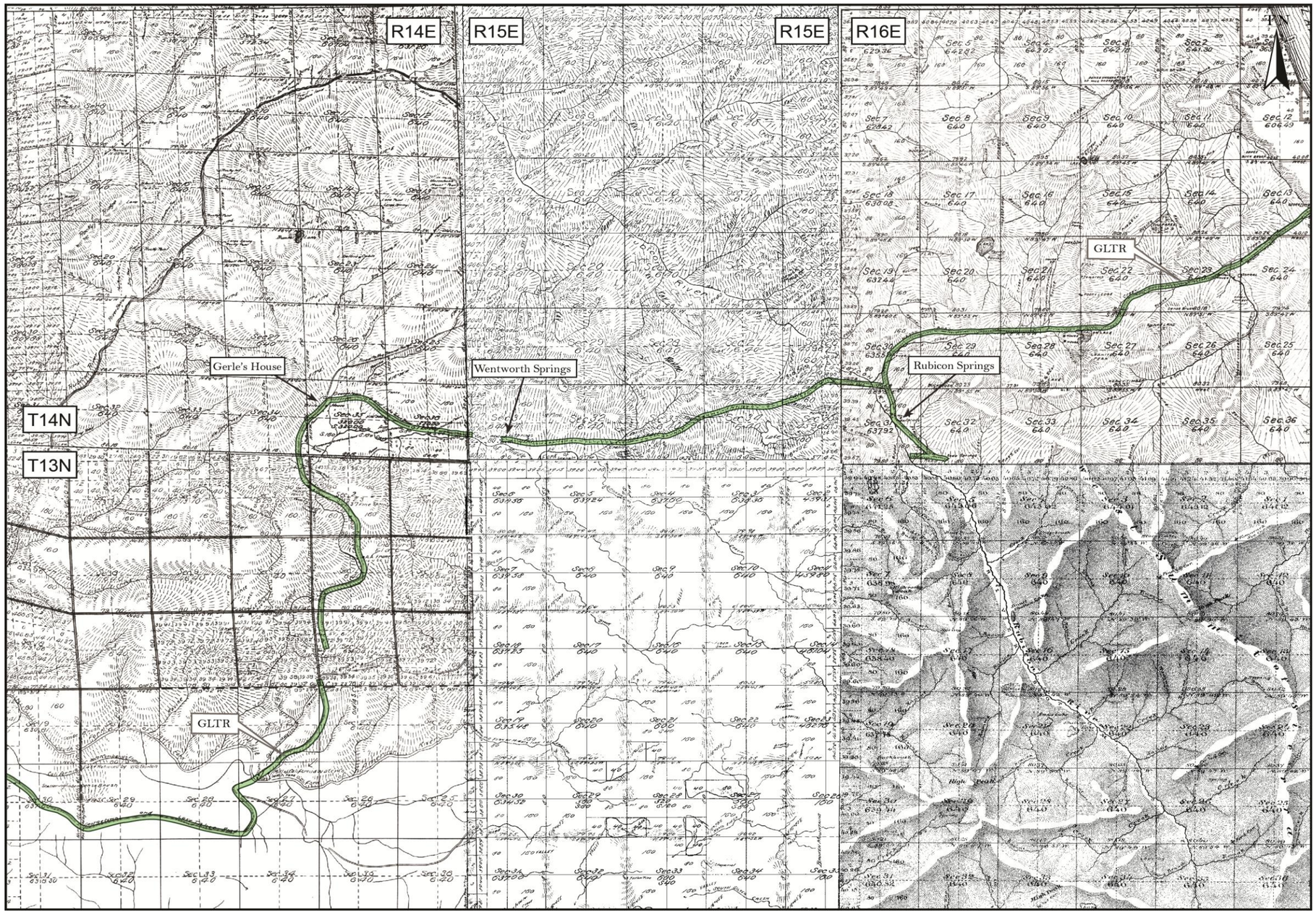

Figure 12. General Land Offices Maps Connected to Show the Alignment of the GTLR during the Mid-1880s. Note this shows the road after the establishment of Wentworth Springs and the extension of his road to the GLTR in 1881, but before the El Dorado County Construction to connect to the road from Rubicon Springs toward Rockbound Lake**.**

stage on that road now sends a four-in-hand down the road as though it was level ground . . . since the 4th, the health and pleasure seekers are coming in more freely. There remains on a short piece of road to be made between Rubicon and Wentworth's to complete the wagon road from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 8, 1885).

Uncle Tom's Cabin, also on the GLTR, was also becoming a popular tourist stop (Figure 13), thanks to the traffic to the resorts. The local paper wrote," Uncle Tom's Cabin, 27 miles east of Georgetown, is fast becoming a popular place with the traveling public. Leaving Georgetown in the morning, the traveler reaches Uncle Tom's in the evening where splendid accommodations are to be had for man and beast. Professor Cromwell just down from there informs us that 15 to 25 travelers receive accommodations for themselves and horses daily. This is on the road to Wentworth's Springs, Rubicon Springs and Lake Tahoe" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 17, 1885).

A traveler that summer reported to the *Sacramento Daily Union* about their horseback trip from Greenwood to Lake Tahoe. He wrote, "At the eastern terminus of the desert is the Eleven Pine Hotel, owned by Richard Hartless, of Garden Valley. Spiritual refreshments, food and grain are always 'in hand' or such as need. About three miles further eastward we come to 'Uncle Tom's' hotel, well kept by a Swiss-Italian. Judging by the print upon the sign board the painter must have been a college student with the renowned Artemus Ward or Josh Sillings. Leaving Uncle Tom's, then in the true sense of the words "onward and upward" the traveler goes until arriving at the renowned Wentworth Hotel, where are found the mineral and health-restoring springs, forty miles east of Georgetown. There we had the pleasure of meeting acquaintances from San Francisco and the Sacramento valley. Some board at the hotel, while many have tents, wagons and carriages, and camp in the meadow. The scenery was beautiful. One would think he was in the midst of a military camp, music and singing resounding from all sides. Leaving Wentworth's, we soon arrived at Loon Lake . . . Leaving Loon Lake upon horseback, we soon arrived at Hornsucker [sic] Soda Springs, on the Rubicon river. The hotel is kept by Frank Forbes and his esteemed wife, who are ever kind to guests. Leaving the Rubicon, after traveling fifteen miles we arrived at Lake Tahoe, the wonder of wonders" (*Sacramento Daily Union* September 5, 1885). Apparently the Hunsuckers were more akin to mining and bottling water than dealing with tourists and had hired a manager.

Sierra Nevada "Vade" Phillips Clark

By the next summer, George Hunsucker continued to be more interested in selling water than playing hosts to tourists. The local newspaper stated in June 1886 that he would "largely engage in bottling and shipping water from his springs this summer" (*Georgetown Gazette* June 11, 1886). In 1888, he sold Rubicon Springs to a young woman whose parents had owned and operated Phillip's Station along the main road to Lake Tahoe through El Dorado County (today's Highway 50). Sierra Nevada "Vade" Phillips was a hard-working, enterprising woman who could do it all. Trail historian Merlin Scott describes Vade as "the sparkplug of the Rubicon Trail" who, "had a vision to bring them in and had the money to do it" (Morris 2012; Scott 2012). In addition to keeping house, she cooked and greeted guests and then entertained them in the evening with piano and song (Rambeau 2010:58).

Figure 13. Map Showing Route of the Georgetown to Lake Tahoe Road with stops for Uncle Tom's, Wentworth's, Rubicon Springs and McKinney's.

Vade added Clark Potter's spring to her new resort, increasing her attractions. She also built a much larger hotel (Figure 14), beyond the log cabins built by the Hunsuckers. Her new two and a half story hotel (completed in 1891) had 16 rooms, complete with curtained glass windows, a parlor and organ and a dining table set with linen and silver (Morris 2011: Presba and Presba 1983:209).

To make the trip up from McKinney's, she bought a six-passenger four-horse coach known as the Rubicon Flyer. Each day, the stage carried people up and back down the jarring, rugged road to Lake Tahoe. Others came from the Georgetown side by horse or private wagon, although the use of a vehicle made the section eastward from Wentworth's a trial in its own right (Morris 2011; Presba and Presba 1983:211).

One of her drivers was R. G. "Bob" Ward. Ward described the difficult descent from the rim below Miller Meadows, down steep granite switchbacks to the banks of the river. "The stage leaned and rolled, lurching like a ship at sea, passengers bumped over ridges of rock and blocks of granite. When the brakes on the six-team stage did not hold the rear wheels were tied fast and the coach slide down the grade like a sled. From Rubicon Springs to Potters Springs or Buck Island Lake it was necessary to cross the bridgeless river. At a point about one half mile south of the resort the river runs fairly quiet in a big bend to the east. [the driver] would unhitch his team, carefully secure his passengers and freight to the stage, swim the team across the river leaving a stout line fastened to the rig. When the team was safe on the other side he would carefully drag and float the stage across" (Taylor 1959).

Vade worked to improve the roads accessing the resort, hiring her own workmen with picks and shovels to keep the road in good shape. She is credited with doing the first significant work on the road, although the Hunsuckers had done work previously on the grade from Rubicon Springs down to McKinney's. Each spring and summer, Vade hired three or so men to maintain the road up from McKinney's. These improvements still left much of it equivalent to a cobblestone road though (Presba and Presba 1983:212; Scott 2012).

County Road Improvements in the 1880s

There are varying reports of work being done by El Dorado County in the 1880s, including working with Placer County in 1884 to make the last seven miles of the road between the two resorts passable by wagon. However, there is no public record of that work in either county archives. The first well documented work occurred in 1887 and 1888 (Figure 15), when crews constructed a wagon road through the difficult stretch between Wentworth and Rubicon Springs. This work was the result of the concerted efforts of residents of the Georgetown Divide.

Numerous citizens lobbied the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to improve the GLTR, leading to improvements in 1887 and in 1888. Locals expressed some frustration with the condition of the road as a whole. The *Georgetown Gazette* wrote in July, "during the past twenty years there has been expended, by the citizens of the Georgetown Divide in opening a

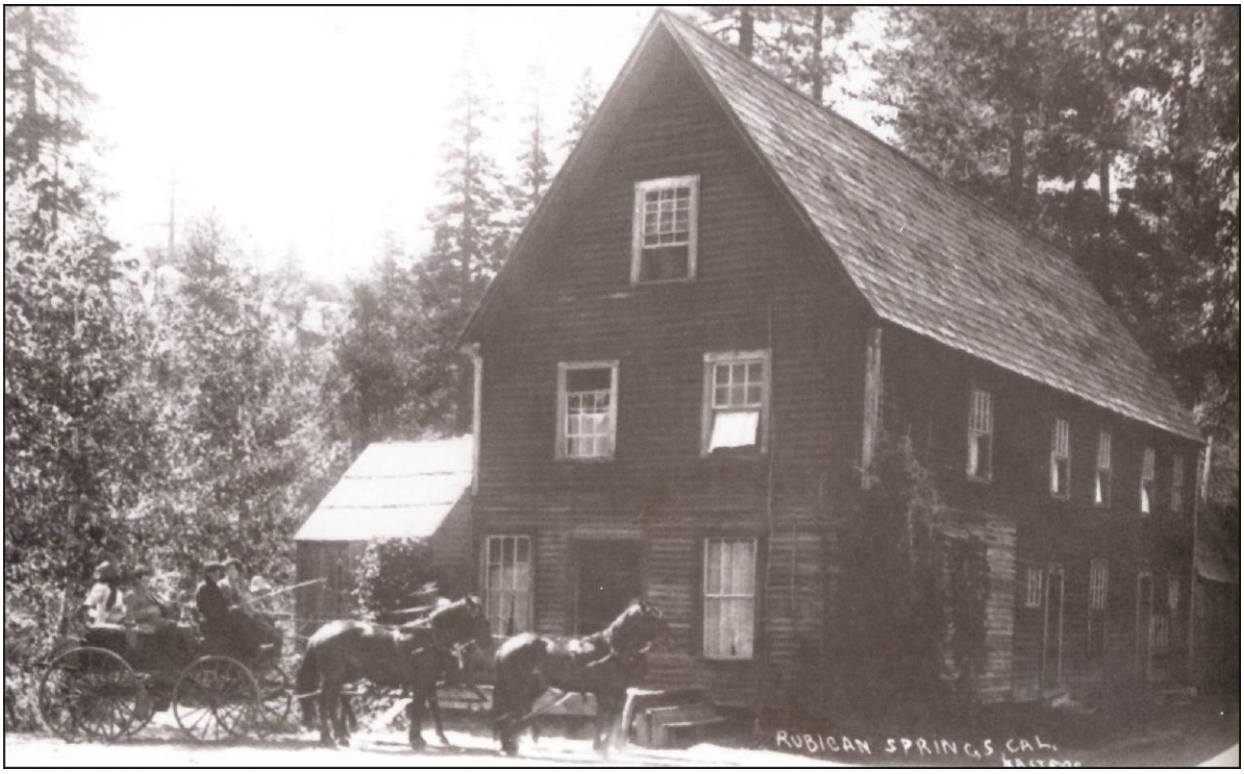

Figure 14. The Rubicon Springs Hotel Built by Vade Clark and completed in 1891 (Courtesy of the El Dorado County Historic Museum).

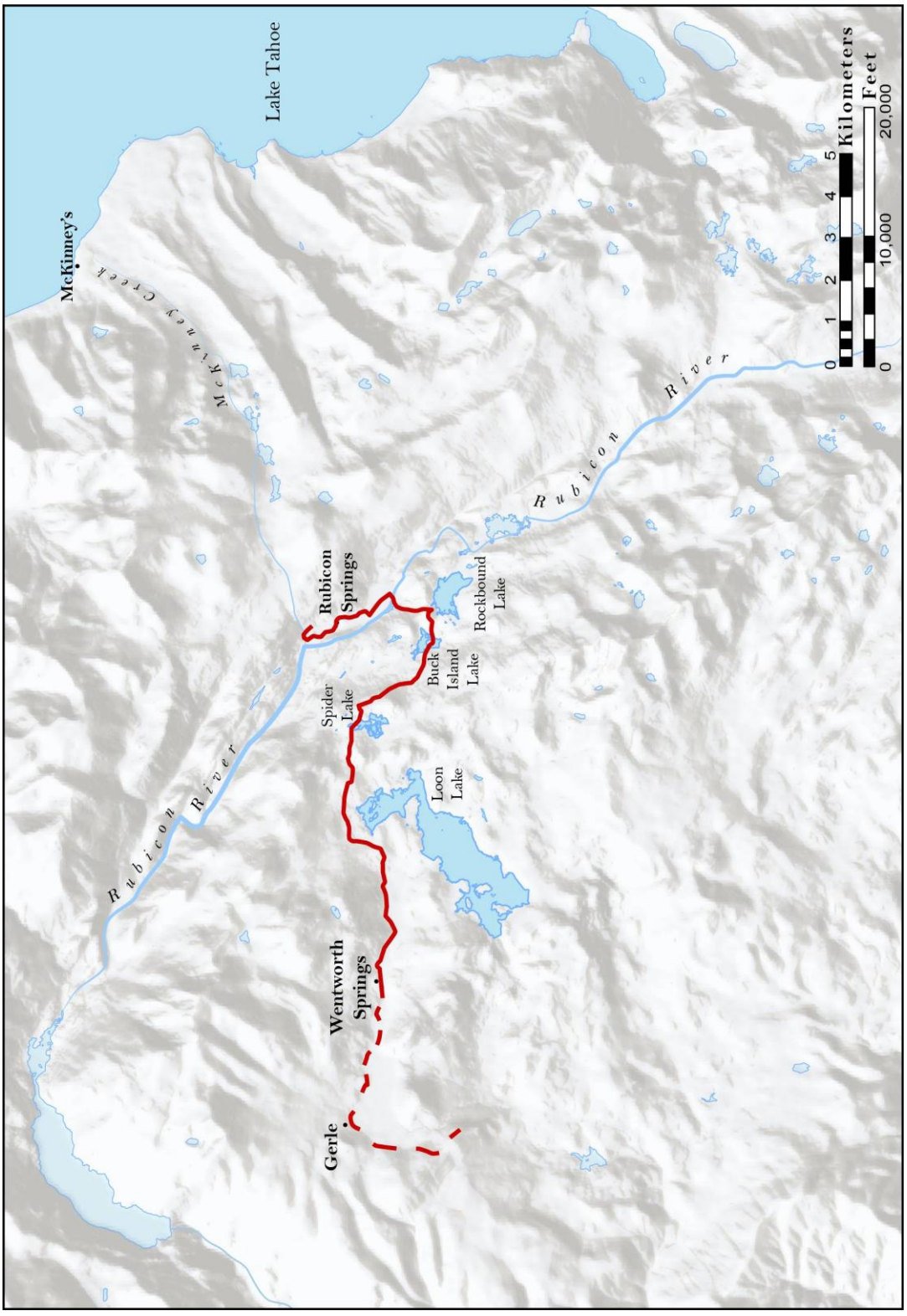

Figure 15. El Dorado County Road Improvements, 1887-1888. The solid line indicates the County's road improvements, while the dotted line shows the rest of the GLTR.

wagon road to Tahoe, no less than $10,000. It is now completed to Wentworth Springs, 42 miles from Georgetown, and from Lake Tahoe to Hunsucker's springs about 10 miles, leaving about 10 miles between those points to be opened. The road has always been free to anyone who desired to travel it, and no person ever received back any of the money expended. To complete the road will cost at least $3000. To raise that amount by private subscription has been found impossible; yet a portion could be raised and if some assistance has been rendered by the County, the road could have been opened this year" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 16, 1887).

That week, a group of citizens met with Supervisors Swendt, Long and Bryant in Georgetown to lay out their proposition. They informed the supervisors that the road was a public necessity and improving it would be a great convenience, as well as likely to increase local prosperity. The residents offered to pay a third of the cost through subscriptions, if the county would pay the rest (El Dorado County 1887:287).

The County collected money specifically for road work through road taxes in that era. In El Dorado County, all men between the ages of 21 and 55 were required to register with the road overseer. Their tax could be paid in either cash or labor. Labor was actually preferred (*Georgetown Gazette* June 18, 1887). These funds, however, were spent only on public roads spread throughout the county and the GLTR had never been officially declared a public highway.

After the meeting, over 200 citizens signed a petition appealing to the Board of Supervisors. In a letter to the editor, Georgetown real estate agent E. L. Crawford wrote, "The opening of the road would have carried a large number of pleasure seekers to pass from the southern portions of Placer and western Sacramento County up the divide. Last season at one time there were 30 wagons at Wentworth's, many of whom would have made the trip over to the lake. It may be true that the natural advantages of this route for campers would draw away many who now go to the Lake by way of Placerville, yet we are content that with two routes the travel would be largely increased" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 16, 1887). Crawford, who was also the County's deputy assessor, suggested that their tax dollars were being spent more liberally on roads near Placerville than in their area.

Crawford became one of the big promoters for the road improvements. A week later he wrote about the road again, describing it as, "the people's natural route and the sooner we can clear a track over the mountain of granite, the better it will be for the county" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 23, 1887). County Supervisor Bryant "inaugurated the initial work of constructing the piece of road between Wentworth's and Hunsucker's Springs, by directing [County Road Master] Cushman to proceed at once to mark out the route of the proposed road, and break a trail sufficient so the Board can at their next meeting declare it a public highway" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 30, 1887). That week, Robert Cushman headed up with a crew to start work on the road (*Georgetown Gazette* July 30, 1887).

On August 3, 1887, the county's road book has an entry regarding a portion of the Georgetown and Lake Tahoe Road being declared a public road. This description of the road, interestingly, gives the best currently available location of where the "old" or original 1860s trail headed northeast two miles west of Spider Lake. It reads:

> The petition of E. L. Crawford and 19 other citizens and taxpayers of Georgetown Township and taxable therein for road purposes, praying that the Board of Supervisors declare as a public highway that certain trail or highway in Georgetown and Lake Valley Townships described as follows: commencing at Wentworth Springs running up the Valley of Gurly Creek in S. S. E. [note: this is incorrect] course 1 ¼ miles to a point about ¾ mile north of Loon Lake, thence S.E. 1 mile to Ellis Canon about 1 mile north of Dobba's Ranch at the head of Pleasant Lake, thence nearly the same course to the pass near old trail about 2 miles, then about 2 miles nearly S.E. to and leaving Spider Lake 1/4 mile south, crossing the Little Rubicon at the outlet of Buck Lake, thence nearly E. ¾ mile to a point about 1/3 mile north of Rockbound Lake, thence Northerly to Potter's ford on the Rubicon River about ¾ miles, thence down the northerly bank of the Rubicon River ¾ mile to Hunsuckers Spring connecting with the Hunsucker Grade, having been considered and it appearing that said trail or highway should be declared a public highway, and there being no objections made thereto, it is ordered that the said trail or road as herein before described be and the same hereby is declared to be a public highway and ordered to be recorded as such [El Dorado County n.d.:300; County Road Book:210].

The petition approved, the road was therefore considered public highway and, as a result, county funds could be spent improving it. The Board of Supervisors agreed to pay two-thirds of the total cost, estimated to be $3,000, with the rest coming from local subscriptions. On August 13, a committee was appointed to solicit the community funds on the divide. Their first meeting, interestingly, was held at the offices of the California Water Company in Georgetown. Committee members included Crawford, Harmon Sornberger, J. Dixon, R. Filippini, R. Smith, Nate Wentworth, and A. J. Bayley. Crawford and Sornberger were businessmen in Georgetown, Filippini was a rancher with pasturage along the road, and Wentworth and Bayley both had summer resorts on or near the road. Wentworth and Crawford volunteered to canvas the route for additional subscriptions. After their visit, George Hunsucker also joined the committee (*Georgetown Gazette* August 13, 1887).

A crew hired by Cushman set about continuing improvements on this section three months later. Their work included blasting granite obstructions, clearing away boulders and moving the rock debris off to the edge of the road. Two-thirds of the improvements were indeed paid by the county. When Cushman applied for reimbursement, the county paid $899.74 of the total $1,349.62 bill (El Dorado County n.d.:213, 214). The remainder was paid through the citizens' subscription. Evidence of this blasting is still present on the road today (Pietschmann 2012).

The next spring, calls to improve the road continued. The local newspaper urged residents of the Divide to start chipping in again for the work. The editor wrote, "As Spring has now opened, it is time the people of this divide were making some move looking to the early completion of the Georgetown and Lake Tahoe wagon road. Half of the road was built last season and it will now be necessary to raise money to commence work with this season . . . Lake Tahoe is one of the grandest Summer resorts in the State, and the Georgetown divide is the most direct and best route for many tourists who visit 'the gem of the Sierras' every summer and every resident of the divide should feel interested in the opening up of this route. There is less than five miles of road to make to have a road the full length of the divide, over which any team can pass to Tahoe and the various other health and pleasure resorts on this divide. With less than five miles of road to build and two-thirds of the money appropriated by the county, if we do not complete the road this summer we ought to feel like getting out of sight of every stranger who comes on the divide" (*Georgetown Gazette* March 22, 1888).

During that summer and fall, the wagon road was completed between Georgetown and Lake Tahoe. It was improved enough that loaded teams could pass over it. In October, two four-horse loaded wagons from the Grand Central Hotel at Tahoe City came over the new road, proving its viability (*Georgetown Gazette* October 18, 1888). Residents in Georgetown were optimistic it would improve the local economy. The paper wrote, "With two daily stage lines plying between Placerville and Auburn, making Georgetown an important junction, it is believed that by next spring business will justify a daily line between Georgetown and Lake Tahoe" (*Georgetown Gazette* October 11, 1888).

Travelers also continued to come in from the Nevada side during this period. A report in the Sacramento newspaper stated, "A large majority of the camping parties that have left this city during the present season have gone to the Rubicon Springs in the Georgetown divide where the scenery is grand, trouting excellent and game plentiful. In speaking of the Rubicon Spring, the *Virginia City Enterprise* says: 'Just at present there is a rush from all ports of Nevada to Rubicon Springs. They must now take the water about as fast as it makes its appearance. The medicinal spring at Rubicon is one of the smallest in the Sierras. Its whole flow is through a hole in the rock about the size of a lead pencil. It might be bottled as fast as it flows. It comes up hissing with gases and is all the stronger for being small in quantity. The water is very pleasant to the taste, yet it is strongly impregnated with various kinds of minerals. The man who drinks the water of this spring soon wants four square meals a day.' For some reason Californians do not seem to have discovered the virtues of this spring as a rejuvenator. While the Rubicon continues to flow it is all nonsense for Pacific Coasters to cross the ocean in search of water at any other spa" (*Sacramento Daily Union* September 5, 1888).

By the summer of 1889, the summer tourism industry around Lake Tahoe was well established, with McKinney's remained an important stop (Figure 16). The ships of Captain J. M. Todman, headquarted in Tahoe City, plied the waters daily. The steamer *Tod Goodwin* carried passengers and mail on a regular route. When the Truckee stage arrived, the boat left on a circuit to the resorts and towns around the lake. The route stopped at McKinney's, Bellevue, Rubicon Park, Emerald Bay, Tallac, Yank's, Bijou and Glenbrook, then connected with

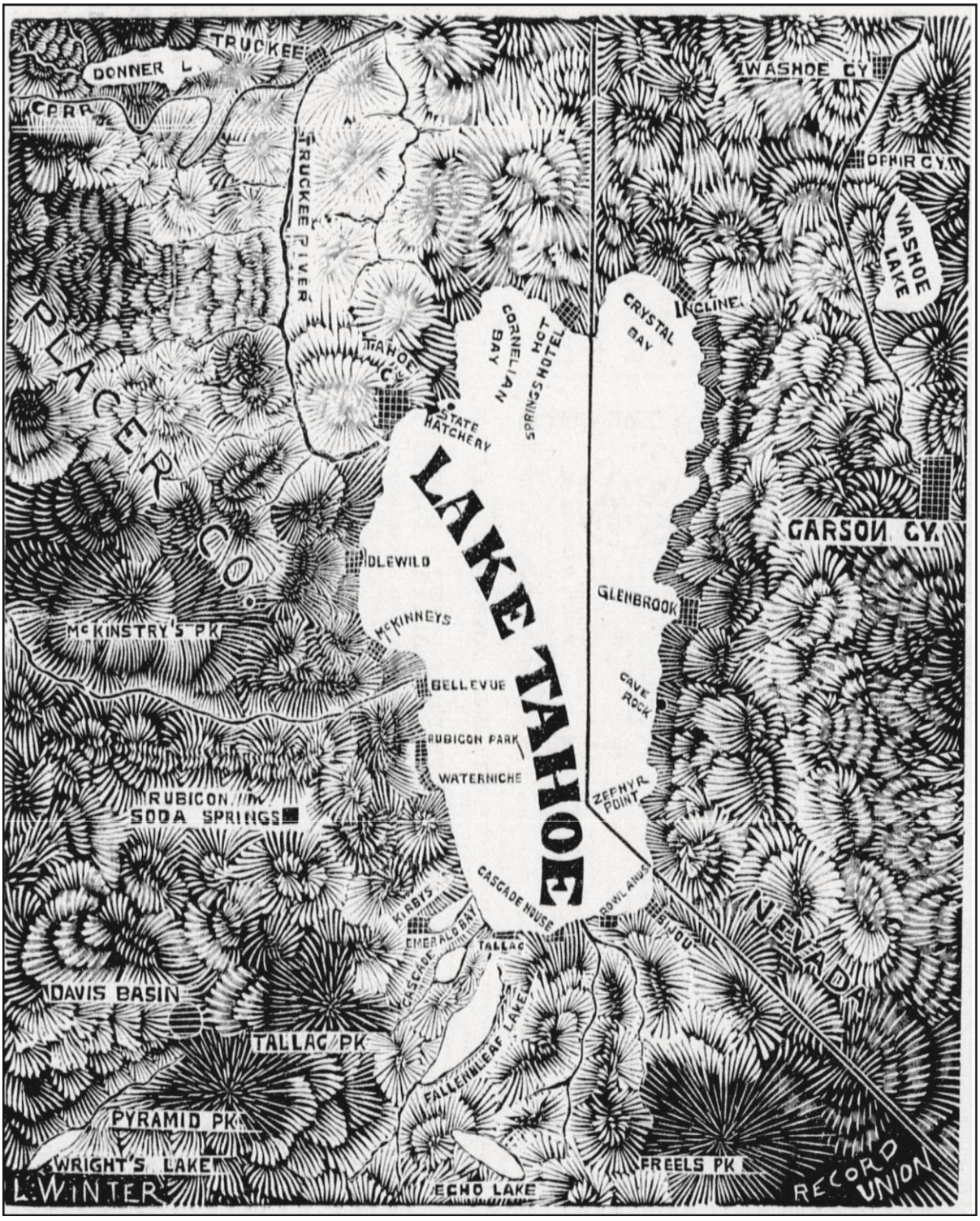

Figure 16. Map of Lake Tahoe, *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 6, 1889. This map shows the growing number of tourist attractions and resorts around the lake.

the stage bound for Carson City and Reno. Those returning came directly across the lake to Bellevue, then to McKinney's and back to Tahoe City to connect with the afternoon stage back to Truckee. Another steamer carried passengers around the north shore, while a third took charter parties on little excursions around the lake (*Sacramento Daily Union* July 6, 1889). No doubt the increasing tourism only added to the prosperity of the Rubicon Springs resort.

By 1889, government surveyor William Burton described the area around Rubicon Springs in his field notes. He wrote, "The land along this line is in general very rugged and broke. It was with the greatest of difficulty that the line was surveyed, especially over the south 80 chains [near Rockbound Lake]. The land is of little value for timber or otherwise . . . except in the bottom of the Rubicon River, where the timber is good and the grazing fair" (Burton 1889).

Burton also attested to the attractions of this high elevation resort area. His notes state, "Numerous deer, bears and other kinds of game find their favorite haunts in this township. Fish are plentiful in the streams. With these attractions, a salubrious climate and much fine natural scenery, this region will continue to be a popular resort for summer tourists" (Burton 1889).

It should be noted that the entire GLTR was not declared a public highway during this time, rather segments of the road were so declared when citizens petitioned the county for improvements. For instance, in 1889, local dairyman Rinaldo Filippini and 34 other residents petitioned to declare the 300 yards before and 350 yards after Uncle Tom's Cabin as public highway in order for the county to use its funds to make repairs. This petition was approved and recorded by the Board of Supervisors and, in all likelihood the work was done soon after (El Dorado County n.d.:230).

Despite the work done by the County in 1887 and 1888 between Wentworth and Rubicon springs, it appears the old trail and new road were both pretty sketchy as to location. Maps and first-hand accounts provide conflicting locations over the decades. When federal crews surveyed the area in 1889, the road was altered to continue east from Wentworth Springs all the way to just north of Buck Island and Rockbound lakes, then north to Rubicon Springs (the section the County improved in 1887 and 1888). The old wagon road that crossed the granite terrain to the north was no longer depicted. The trail also showed the switchback as it began heading east along Miller Creek to McKinney's (USDI 1896). Both of these alterations would have provided a more gradual grade better suited for wagons, which tended to slide on wet granite and have poor braking systems (Scott 2012).

The Peak of the Resort Era

Apparently those actually using the road on a regular basis were not confused. During the summer season of 1890, the six-horse stage from Wentworth's made regular trips from Georgetown all the way to Lake Tahoe (*Georgetown Gazette* August 28, 1890). With the route in place, the population along the road seemed to increase. A petition was circulated on the divide in the spring of 1892 to bring a summer mail delivery twice a week between Georgetown

and Lake Tahoe during the active summer season between June 1st and September 30th. The petition requested post offices at 12-mile House, Pilot Creek, Uncle Tom's Cabin and Rubicon Springs. Between locals and resort guests, there were as many as 800 people who would benefit from this route (*Georgetown Gazette* March 24, 1892).

The summer season in 1892 continued the increasing visitation. The local paper noted, "Travel to the Rubicon Springs, Wentworth Springs and Lake Tahoe, via Georgetown, has been larger than usual this season. The camping resorts along this great natural highway are now the abode of hundreds of people. This favorite resort up the Georgetown divide is becoming very popular" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 28, 1892). The improvements of the GLTR had made the whole area along what is today the Rubicon Trail a tourist destination in itself.

The Rubicon was at its peak during the 1880s and 1890s, sought out by both recreationalists and those seeking to restore their health. One health resort writer observed, "The Springs are situated in a beautiful garden valley on Rubicon River some eleven miles from Tahoe. These waters are good for consumptives, asthmatics, persons suffering from chronic bronchitis, catarrh, etc." (Scott 1957:79).

The hotel and tent cabins were full of visitors from far and wide. One man, Otto Lutgens, a butcher from Gold Hill, became lost at the resort in August 1892. He was afflicted with "mania" and wandered off from a person hired to watch him. As the days passed, a search party was organized. The *San Francisco Call* reported, "Dick Bender, a Washoe Indian, left Carson today for Rubicon Springs, from which point one Otto Lutgens wandered away some days ago and has not since been heard of. Dick is a skillful trailer and is thoroughly acquainted with the Sierra Nevada mountains. If he finds his man, he is to receive $200 and expenses" (*San Francisco Call* August 30, 1892). It is unclear if Bender ever found his man. There are numerous stories of the encounters in the Rubicon Springs area with mountain lions, bear and reportedly even wolves. An incompetent person would not have had much of a chance of surviving more than one night alone.

Another more august sightseer that season was California's Governor Markham, along with his Private Secretary M. H. Higgins, Judge W. C. Van Fleet, Colonel J. L. Wright and Captain Charles Aull who traveled from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe. The party traveled by carriage, over the "old Georgetown road," and were expected "to have a glorious time" (*Sacramento Daily Union* August 20, 1892).

Ongoing Road Maintenance

Road maintenance continued during the 1890s. Most work appears to have been done by El Dorado County. The paper reported in 1894, "For years the question of constructing a wagon road from the vicinity of Wentworth's springs and the great storage reservoir of the California Water Company, to Lake Tahoe via Rubicon Springs, has been discussed. Finally Supervisor Bryant took the matter in hand, and through his herculean influence, backed by contributions of leading citizens, the County, although lean in funds, put its best foot forward

and built the road . . . Fortunately, for this route, Mr. Breedlove was selected to take charge of the mountain road district. For his energy and skill in providing and keeping the roads in order, he has won the praise and goodwill of teamsters and travelers generally, Jim Breedlove's fame as a roadmaker ranks him with that of Tom Stevenson of Greenwood district, if public opinion of his district is anything to judge from" (*Georgetown Gazette* September 6, 1894).

Constant erosion on the road made Breedlove's yearly work necessary. However by 1896, some considered the road unsafe. One correspondent to the *Georgetown Gazette*, M. P. Bennett, wrote (in a confusing series of run-on sentences):

> Most residents of the county are familiar with the natural advantages of the Placerville road, the liberal hospitality of the Inns along the way, and the climax of scenic grandeur, when from the western summit of the Sierras, Lake Tahoe, fifteen hundred feet below, breaks into view . . . there has been for many years a road from Georgetown to Wentworth Springs and despite some pretty steep hills, it is a good mountain road. I first traveled it in the summer of 1877 and it was a most delightful renewal of my early impression through the mighty timber . . . Wentworth Springs . . . owned by Nathan Wentworth whose well built hotel is in a beautiful valley, in which a number of sparkling, health-giving springs are an attraction that annually bring thither numerous tourists from this county as well as Sacramento and Placer counties. Many stop here and venture no further because the wonderful beyond, like all the fabled wonders of antiquity, is approachable through only the most perilous way. From Wentworth Springs to the Rubicon Springs, is not exceeding ten miles, measured in feet and inches, but a mile of good road is a mile, and how far a mile of this road is, I do not dare state. Some portions of it are called "Sluice box" and one of our party designated it "Devil's Sluice Box" to go with "Hell Hole," not far off. To make this road passable, from three to five hundred dollars should be spent on it and the investment would be a most judicious business proposition for El Dorado County . . . As McKinney's stands for progress on the western shore, so does Tallac with its beautiful new hotel building, at the south end of the Lake, but there is a woeful want of land communication between two places. A good road is constructed from Tahoe City to McKinney's, and from Tallac to Bringham's, and a wagon has been through from McKinney's to Mr. Frost's Rubicon Park, but from that place to Dr. Brigham's a distance, I think of, probably five or six miles, there is no wagon road. We have in Lake Tahoe one of the greatest natural wonders and beautiful of the world. Does not fairness to the North Divide . . . demand that the approach to the lake over the Georgetown road be made safe and comfortable? (*Georgetown Gazette* September 24, 1896).

Bennett's was the first written account of the use of the name, "Sluice Box." More importantly, his article illustrates the growing network of roads on the Lake Tahoe end of the road, which gradually brought more vehicles to McKinney's, where before only steamer passengers disembarked to head up to the springs. He suggested that better roads along Lake

Tahoe would ultimately connect to the GLTR and its resorts. This plea for a better connection between Tallac and McKinney's would be answered three years later when the State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 417, providing for the construction of a free wagon road between these two points along the western shore of Lake Tahoe (*San Francisco Call* March 9, 1899).

The GLTR, despite its flaws, continued to be used each year by stockmen from the counties below. They needed nothing much more than a horse trail to bring in their livestock and had made the annual trek for decades before the improvements were in place. In late May, 1898, ranchers with their herds from Weaver Creek, Folsom, Garden Valley and Cool all passed through Georgetown on the GLTR bound as far as McKinney's with cattle and sheep. Undoubtedly these parties included hundreds of animal on hoof, as well as men on horseback and a wagon or two of supplies (*Georgetown Gazette* June 10, 1898).

The GLTR at the Turn of the Century

Tourists escaping the summer heat continued to make the trip to the mountain springs an annual event. In August 1900, there were 75 guests at Wentworth's as well as a large party at Rubicon Springs and Uncle Tom's Cabin. In addition, more were camping in the woods (*Georgetown Gazette* August 9, 1900). Also, for the first time, the road became increasingly traveled for the experience of the drive itself. In 1901, the *Georgetown Gazette* reported on a local man who set out to retrace the route after 30 years. It wrote, "Patrick Morgan, 73 years old, of Georgia Slide, struck out last week with his horse and buckboard for McKinney's Lake Tahoe. He left the Slide on Monday morning and arrived at the lake on Wednesday morning. A distance of about 60 miles over rough mountain roads. Mr. Morgan had not been over the road since the silver excitement at Virginia City, and then it was only a trail and he went on foot" (*Georgetown Gazette* August 29, 1901).

Vade Clark sold the Rubicon in 1895 back to the Hunsuckers, returning for another four years as manager before finally breaking ties with the isolated resort. Her involvement with the Rubicon is legendary (Rambeau 2010:58). Subsequent owners, in turn, kept the hotel open for seasonal visitors, maintained the road to McKinney's, but made few changes to the road (Morris 2011).

A 1902 map included in the *Register of Mines and Minerals in El Dorado County* created by the State Mining Bureau, a highly accurate source, clearly shows both the old and new wagon routes. This included the old trail heading northeast from Spider Lake, and the new route heading southeast down toward the two lakes and then back up along Rubicon Springs where it again connected with the road heading down to McKinney's (Aubury 1902). This map also depicted the California Water Company's sawmill where the road crossed the company's Little South Fork Ditch, and, amusingly, the Hartless place labeled, "Heartless." Uncle Tom's Cabin by that time included a house, a barn and a hotel, indicating its prosperity along the road.

By 1905, the GLTR was still a challenge to cross. After a two-month family summer trip throughout the Sierra, a young girl wrote a colorful description of her experience on the route. Her letter to the *Amador Ledger* described it vividly writing, "From McKenneys to Wentworth

Springs we had terrible roads. We went through sluice boxes they called them. As far as you could see was rocks, big bowlders in the road and walls of rock, but we pulled over them all right with two horses and a large wagon . . . I never had such a good outing before, and I enjoyed ever bit of it. Portia "Madge" Griffith, Age 11, and in Seventh grade Drytown" (*Amador Ledger* September 22, 1905).

While Portia might have enjoyed her trip, Marion Walcott did not when she brought the first automobile up from McKinney's to Rubicon Springs three years later in 1908. After surviving a segment at the top of the hill she called the Sluice Box (reached before Observation Point) they made it to the springs. On their return to Lake Tahoe, they had to use planks and block and tackle to get over the rocks before reaching the point. She advised other travelers, "Go by way of Placerville if you want to visit Rubicon country and it is well worth your while . . . leave your automobile at McKinney's and be satisfied to go in on the stage or on the back of a horse that knows how to climb over rocks. I expect to go there again some time myself, but in an automobile? NEVER AGAIN!" (Morris 2011:41).

It's not clear what happened with the Buck Island and Rockbound lakes segment after Vade left. The Rubicon Springs were purchased in 1908 by Ralph Colwell, the owner of the Moana Villa Resort on Lake Tahoe, and his focus was primarily on the road up from McKinney's. By 1908, the official county map for El Dorado County no longer depicted the road between Spider Lake and Rubicon Springs, reverting instead to the old wagon road heading north from Spider Lake. The western portion of the road heading back from Wentworth Springs to Georgetown remained well defined and in its same orientation (Bosquit et al. 1908; Presba and Presba 1983:212-213).

The Electric Railroad Scheme

In 1906, a new idea was proposed for the route. Amazingly, businessmen thought it might be possible to run an electric railroad to connect Sacramento with McKinney's Lake Tahoe by way of Georgetown. The *Georgetown Gazette* reported, "J. M. Crowder of Sacramento was circulating a petition here last week which will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at their next meeting, asking for a franchise for the El Dorado Electric Railroad Company to construct and operate a railroad by power other than steam, to run from Sacramento, entering El Dorado county at the public road, Mormon Island. The route of the proposed road is via Pilot Hill to Bayley's, Cool, Greenwood and Georgetown, 12-mile house, Eleven Pines, Hartless' sawmill, around the north end of Loon Lake and along or near the El Dorado and Placer county line, to McKinney's Lake Tahoe the road to run the greater part of the way long side the public road. The company is said to be composed of representative business men of Sacramento, W. T. Phipps of Sacramento is attorney for the company" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 20, 1906).

A month later, the buzz was still in the air. The local newspaper editor wrote, "J. M. Crowder, one of the promoters of the El Dorado Electric Railway, writes that already $150,000 has been subscribed toward building the road and that the enterprise is an assured success.

Mr. Crowder says the road will be operated every day of the year to Georgetown and through to Lake Tahoe during the summer season. There will be 150 miles of track, including branches. The estimated cost of the road is $1,500,000. Stock will be sold to raise that amount. If the people of this divide will only let the outside world know of our many resources and help instead of knock every enterprise that shows a disposition to come our way, we may yet arise out of the gloom of semi-obscurity in which we have existed these many years" (*Georgetown Gazette* August 10 1906). The railroad was not to be. But its promoters did spend many months surveying through the Divide, hoping to find a suitable grade for their tracks and got into a few gun battles while they were at it.

Establishment of the National Forest

In 1906, the federal government began management of parts of the forest the road ran through. The Forest Service had been established the previous year under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, taking on the job of managing the federal lands reserved for the public in 1891 (Joslin 1995:1). The local paper reported, "President Roosevelt has issued a proclamation declaring the Tahoe Reserve and the Yuba Forest Reserve. All persons are warned not to make settlement on such lands" (*Georgetown Gazette* October 5, 1906).

ENF was formally established on July 28, 1910 from a portion of Tahoe National Forest. The new federal control caused a rush of sorts, as interests began to compete to acquire certain rights. The paper reported, "The recent trouble in the forest reserve above Georgetown is about as stated in the S*an Francisco Examiner*, from which we quote, 'a pitched battle with rifles between rival claimants for rights within the forest reserve in the Hell Hole country on the Rubicon River, high in the Sierra Nevada mountains, just west of Lake Tahoe, was narrowly averted last week. The interested parties were the Rubicon Water and Power Company and the Sacramento and Lake Tahoe Railroad Company. The former company has a water right permit from the Bureau of Forestry, while the railroad company has a permit for the right-of-way, A. S. McDonald of Oakland and San Francisco is the ostensible head of the Rubicon Corporation and H. D. Jerrett of Georgetown, El Dorado County, and J. S. Curtis of San Francisco are looking after the immediate interests on the ground. The sensational affair has brought to light that E. H. Harriman and W. F. Herrin are the real partners in the Rubicon Company. Harriman has planned to spend $6,000,000 on developing an electric power transmission plant up there. One of the objects of the plant is to supply electric power to Southern Pacific trains, both freight and passenger, over the mountains, in three or four years, after the proposed six-mile tunnel through the mountains, a short distance west of Truckee'" (*Georgetown Gazette* August 16, 1907).

As companies battled for control of land and water rights, El Dorado and Placer counties tried to resolve their boundary lines. In 1907, the paper reported, "Dispute has again risen over the Placer and El Dorado boundary line. The land in dispute is about 2,000 acres lying between Gerle Creek and the Rubicon River. The land we understand is assessed and claimed by both counties" (*Georgetown Gazette* December 13, 1907). Ultimately the line remained drawn up McKinney Creek and remains unchanged today.

Deterioration and Road Work

The road between the springs continued to deteriorate without the regular maintenance by the resort owners. The county was called upon in 1910 to make repairs on the route. The Georgetown paper reported, "A petition has been in circulation here this week, which will be presented to the Board of Supervisors asking that august body to repair the wagon road between Wentworth Springs and Rubicon Springs in a substantial manner and to put it in a safe and good condition for travel. This is the nearest and most accessible road to Lake Tahoe, living on the north side, and it is also extensively traveled by Sacramento and Placer counties, not withstanding the road is in very bad condition. It is the only way by which tourists can go to this lake by one route and return another, without going into Nevada and it will be a great benefit to the county if the road is put in good condition so as to attract more tourist travel this way" (*Georgetown Gazette* March 31, 1910).

The route was, of course, impossible to cross by vehicle during the winter. Some did venture over it then, but only under extreme conditions. In 1910, a group working for the Loon Lake Water Company ventured up the trail on business. The report of their trip as described by the *Georgetown Gazette* sounded harrowing. The paper wrote, "H. D. Jerrett, local manager of the Loon Lake Water and Power Company, accompanied by E. W. Stanton and James Bryson, returned Tuesday from a trip which extended as far as McKinney's Lake Tahoe. The trip was made by a party of eight on snowshoes and it was a strenuous one. While crossing the western summit, the party suffered from a wind storm, the velocity of the wind was about 100 miles per hour. It blew the snow in all directions and fairly lifted the men off their feet. The thermometer registered 25 degrees below zero and several of the party had their fingers and toes frostbitten. The sights seen and the hardships endured, especially in the hours crossing the summit, cannot be described in words. The snow on the summit averaged a little over 6 feet in depth. Camps were established at South Fork and Rubicon Springs where the flow of water will be gaged for the company. Emmett and Eliza Williams are stationed at the Rubicon . . . Mr. Jerrett secured some very interesting photographs along the route, some of which would make beautiful paintings" (*Georgetown Gazette* February 10, 1910).

El Dorado County did get back to work on the road during the summer of 1911. Part of this included a new piece of road as a bypass around what was called the "Sluice Box." Supervisor Morgan went to check the work in August, stating that the resulting work would be a permanent repair. By late September, a five-man crew including Frank Irish, Joe Rodoni, Jim Davey and George and Peter Morgan returned after working all summer from the segment between Spider Lake and the Rubicon Springs area. In addition, they also made other "permanent and needed improvements" no doubt using dynamite or blasting powder once again (*Georgetown Gazette* September 28, 1911). This work would have been on the original Big Sluice, now known as the Old or True Sluice (Pietschmann 2012).

It should be noted that there have been numerous locations called Sluice Box, True Sluice, Lost Sluice, Micro Sluice, Little Sluice and Big Sluice over the years. As a result, the Sluice Box being repaired in 1911 is not likely to have been one of those in current use. According to

Harald Pietschmann, a trail advocate guide who has studied the trail for over 30 years, Sluice Box, Old Sluice and True Sluice (Figure 17) are one in the same (Pietschmann 2012). He states, "The original Big Sluice is about half way between Spider Lake and Buck Island Lake. The Jeepers Jamboree adopted the Indian Trail (Granite Slab) bypass in 1988 to avoid the user torn-up Big Sluice section of the Trail. They needed a new Big Sluice to fulfill the expectations of the participants. So, the steep grade from Buck Island Lake to Scout Hole (one-mile south of Rubicon River bridge) was since then called Big Sluice. The entrances of the original Big Sluice are only visible to the trained eyes - they are not marked. But the [rock crawlers] still use the Old Big Sluice."

The work done by road crews really did not vary much through the decades. Most work either modified a grade, stabilized a road bed, removed boulders or blasted out granite to widen or smooth the route. Pietschmann has documented numerous drill holes and dynamite blasts where crews have done work. These sites provide an excellent documentation of blasting and work along the road (Figure 18). His careful observation has noted both star-shaped drill bit holes, indicating work in the 1880s, and round smooth-bore holes from mechanical drills of the twentieth century (Pietschmann 2012).

Other work included laying gravel in road beds to fill and stabilize the route. Pietschmann has found two quarry sites for this gravel located northwest of Wentworth Springs. This sort of work would have been necessary on a fairly regular basis, as erosion from traffic constantly wore away the dirt surfaces (Pietschmann 2012).

The Forest Service also performed maintenance on some sections of the GLTR. In 1912, the paper reported that, "Men working under the direction of Forest Supervisor Evan Kelly have completed the road from Eleven Pines to Onion Valley, a distance of two and a half miles. This road will improve that part of the route between Georgetown and Uncle Tom's 150 percent. Pilot Creek does not have to be crossed now, thus cutting out a bad piece of roadway. This road is especially important in that it makes a direct route from the ranger station to the south side of Pilot Creek to the main Georgetown and Lake Tahoe road" (*Georgetown Gazette* October 24, 1912).

Surveyors and cartographers during the 1910s and 1920s continued to appear to be reliant on outdated maps or confused by the deteriorating road conditions. Their maps provide conflicting locations for the road between Wentworth Springs and the top of the grade heading back down to McKinney's. For instance, the Punnett Brothers 1914 El Dorado County map shows the old wagon route heading northeast from Spider Lake. Yet the James 1915 map for the Georgetown Divide shows only the route heading down toward Bucks and Rockbound Lake and the new switchback at the top of Miller Creek. An El Dorado National Forest Map in 1916, which was likely the best representation, provides a more nuanced approach. The road heads eastbound as far as Wentworth Springs, but from there, it becomes a trail that passes around the north side of Spider Lake then seemingly disappears from the map. It also shows the switchback at the top of Miller Creek with the road heading south to Rubicon Springs and continuing on to near Buck Island Lake (El Dorado National Forest [ENF] 1916).

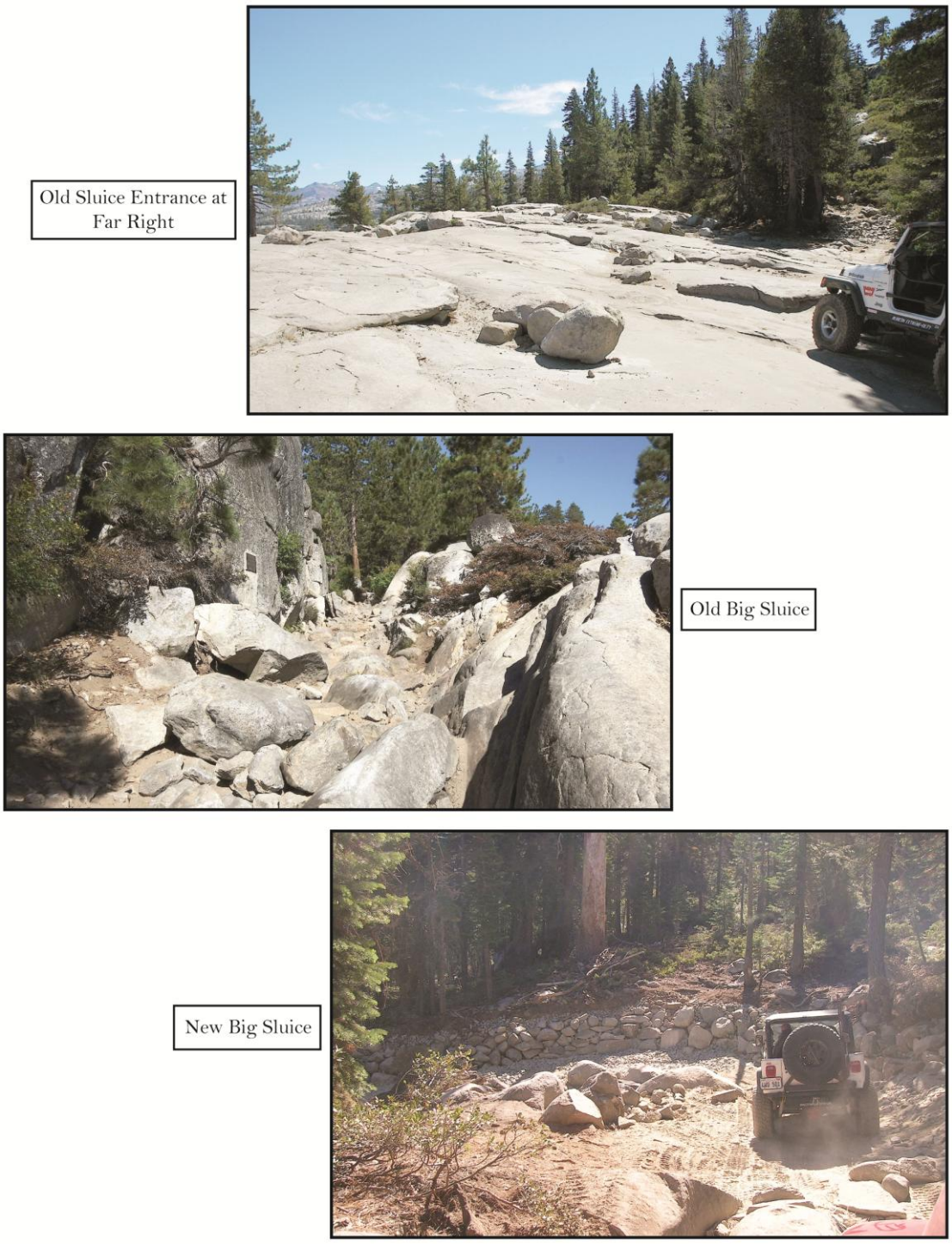

Figure 17. Old Big Sluice, New Big Sluice and Old Sluice as they appear today. The original Big Sluice is halfway between Spider Lake and Buck Island Lake. The Jeepers Jamboree adopted the Indian Trail (Granite Slab) in 1988 to avoid the deteriorated Big Sluice on the trail. To create a new Big Sluice that presented a better challenge, they renamed the steep grade from Buck Island Hole to Scout Hole (one mile south of the Rubicon River Bridge), which is now known as the Big Sluice (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

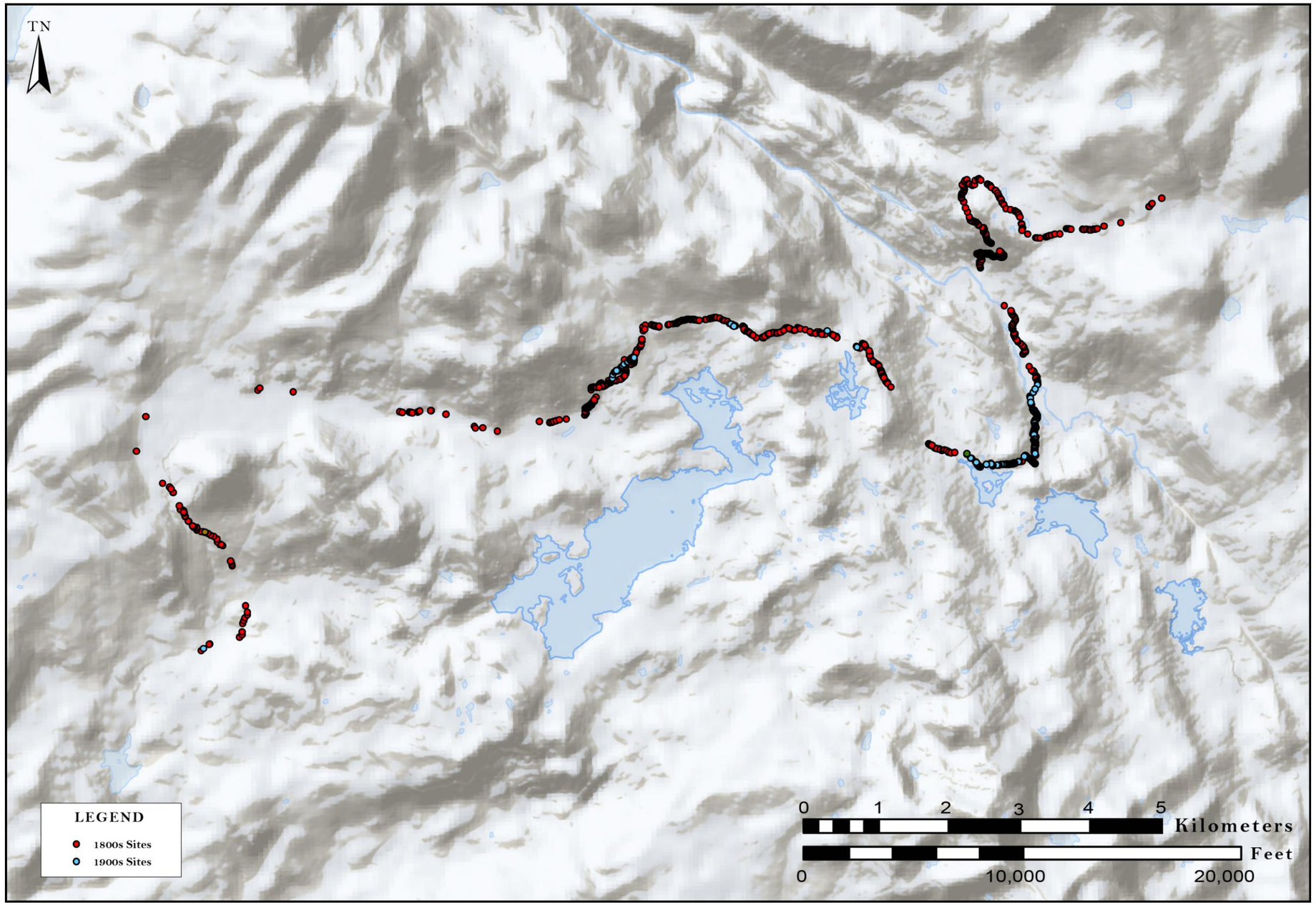

Figure 18. Harald Pietschmann Blast Sites Map. The color variation on these points indicates blast sites from the 1800s versus those from 1900s.

One visitor pointed out the reasoning for the change in the route. In 1915, George Wharton James wrote of visiting the Rubicon Springs area. He hiked from the springs south to Rockbound Lake. On his return hike, he described a trail off the main trail at the Rubicon River. He wrote, "the old trail from McKinney's used to come over the divide from the east and strike the Rubicon near where we then stood, pass by the springs and then follow the river, but to avoid the steep grades the road had to be constructed around Buck Island Lake" (James 1915:196).

Regardless of the alignment, visitors found it a difficult road. James famously described it as "a stern road that would make the rocky road to Dublin" look like a "flowery bed of ease." Yet, he said, "the Georgetown Road is an important feature of the Tahoe Region, for it connects Georgetown with Virginia City and it was the former place so many Tahoe Pioneers came" (James 1915:220,347). The GLTR was indeed a rough one. The grade down to McKinney's was a challenge for two-wheel drive cars, which had to use ropes and planks to get over some boulders. In other areas, block and tackle were necessary to pull wagons and cars up the hill or to lower them back down (Scott 2012).

James described the road as follows, "While automobiles have gone over it, it is scarcely good enough for that form of travel, but cattle, sheep and horses are driven over it constantly, campers make good use of it in the summer and though it has not the activity of the days when it was first built, it has fully justified its existence by the comfort and convenience it gives to the sparsely settled population of the region" (James 1915).

Apparently tree blazes and signs (Figure 19), in addition to rock cairns, were used to mark the trail in places where it grew dim. James wrote, "about a mile from the [Rubicon] springs we came to a tree on which a "cut-off" sign was placed. When the road was being constructed the builders started a new grade at this point and after going for a mile or so found it was so steep that it had to be abandoned and a lesser grade found by going around" (James 1915; Pietschmann 2012). Wetlands also created a challenge closer to Gerle Creek, especially with the increasing use of cars. Automobiles were becoming more widespread throughout the state by that time. By 1919, there were 374,721 automobiles registered with California's Motor Vehicle Department, including 595 from El Dorado County (Georgetown Gazette February 13, 1919). During the summer of 1915, the county did work around the swampy areas near Gerle Creek. The paper reported, "Supervisor P. F. Morgan spent several days of last week at Gerle creek laying out a new piece of road so as to eliminate the dangerous crossings of the creek at Francis ranch. When the piece of road is complete, it will enable automobiles to go to Lake Tahoe via Georgetown, Wentworth and Rubican [sic] Springs without difficulty. At this season of year the water is high in Gerle creek and automobiles are unable to ford the stream" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 8, 1915). It appears the County considered the entire road to be a public road by that time because they did this work without first declaring the segment a public highway.

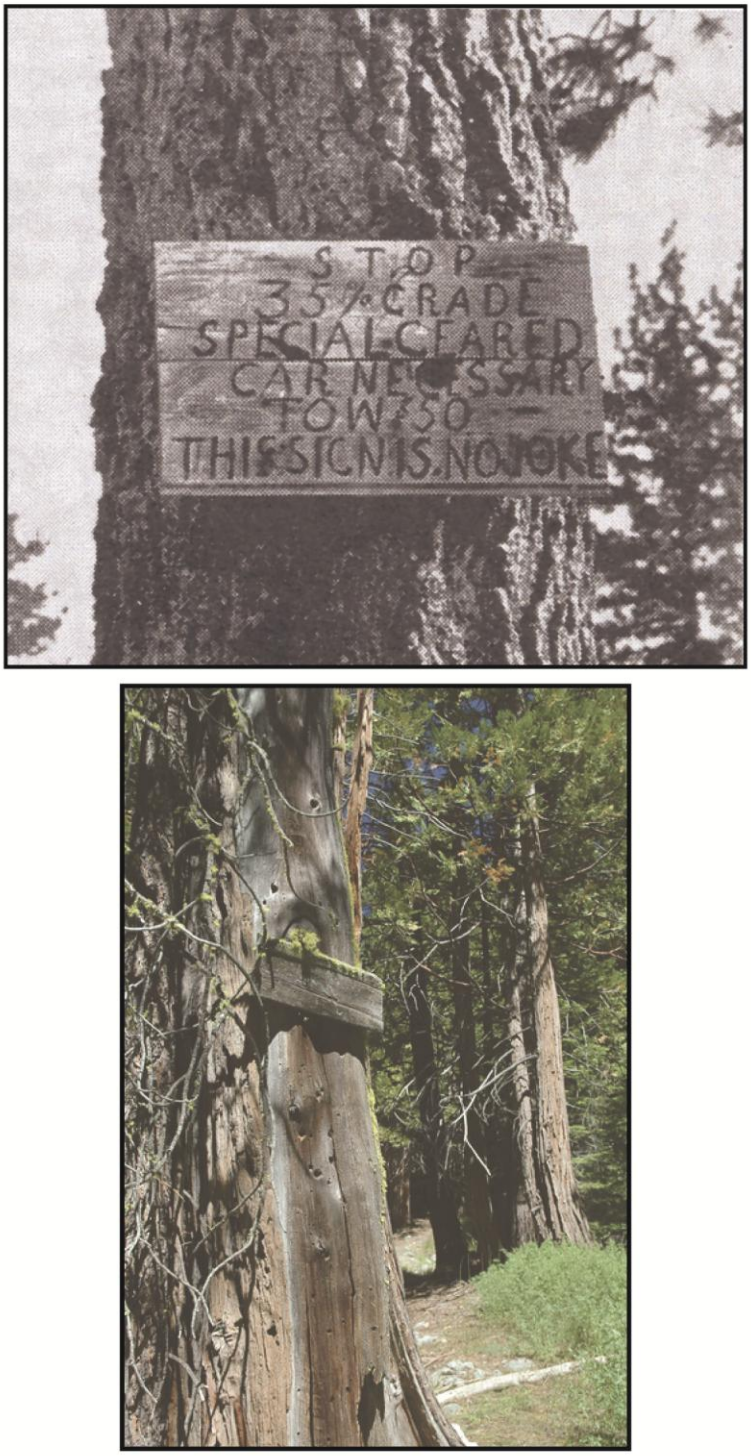

Figure 19. Road Signs on the Rubicon Trail.

Top: Warning Sign Reads, "STOP 35% GRADE. SPECIAL GEARED CAR NEEDED, TOW $50. THIS SIGN IS NO JOKE." (from Presba and Presba 1982).

Bottom: A remnant of an historic sign still present on the trail today (courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

Work on the GLTR seems to have been a cooperative effort during these years, shared between the Forest Supervisor and the County Board of Supervisors. In 1919, for instance, the forest supervisor, Mr. Kotok, said the government would improve the road by eliminating the Tunnel Hill and Hog's Back grades, making the road to Wentworth Springs and Lake Tahoe much easier to travel. The Forest would do the work, if the county could donate an additional $10,000, as well as individuals who could also contribute another $1,000. The paper favored the proposal, reporting, "The project is a good start for better roads on the Georgetown divide with Government aid. After the proposed improvement is completed the Hog's Back and Rubicon Springs grades will be given attention and eventually there will be a good road through to Lake Tahoe. Wentworth Springs and Rubicon Springs are located on this route, and with good roads these resorts will be visited by thousands of tourists every season. There, there are the scenic attractions, the finest in the country, which will entice thousands of tourists to come this way" (*Georgetown Gazette* April 19, 1919).

Another attraction that added traffic was a much smaller resort at Buck Island Lake. Victor Wikander built a cabin on one of the islands in Buck Island Lake in 1922. Wikander, a native of Finland, first came to the area in 1909, when he acted as a hydrographer for the Stone and Webster Company and began skiing every week for the next three years between Georgetown and Lake Tahoe taking water measurements in winter. Wikander fell in love with the area and got a 99-year-lease from the Forest Service to a small island at Buck Island Lake for a retreat. When he began building his cabin, no road was available to bring materials in. Instead, he drove his supplies to the Lake Tahoe side and packed it in, right down to the lumber. He eventually built additional cabins for summer visitors and made a mini-resort of his own, including an easier shortcut to his location known as the Wikander. He remained a well-respected fixture in the area for decades (Brattland 1996:2; *Nevada State Journal* September 4, 1950; Presba and Presba 1983:114; Scott 2012). While Wikander wasn't a huge draw for summer visitors, he was a significant presence on the trail and remained an annual visitor until he was too old to manage the rustic living.

Early Runners of the Rubicon: the 1920s

As the enthusiasm for automobiles and the freedom they offered began to blossom in the public's mind, drivers began taking on increasing challenges to prove their vehicle's abilities. The earliest on the Rubicon was Marion Walcott, who drove a 1908 Mitchell Model I Touring car from San Francisco via Tahoe City to McKinney's and up as far as Rubicon Springs in 1908. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Walcott's subsequent newspaper article actually served as a warning to those who wanted to visit by car, instructing them to get there by foot, horse or wagon, but not by automobile.

In 1923, the road was described in the Touring Edition of the Automotive Section of the *Oakland Tribune*. It reported the road to be impassable to automobiles from Wentworth Springs to Lake Tahoe, but that Wentworth Springs had gasoline, oil and supplies for any motorist making the trip to "the best hunting and fishing area in Eldorado National Forest" (Brattland 1996:7).

As car suspension and gearing improved, the pleasure of driving began to take hold as a recreation in itself. Some of the more daring owners picked the Rubicon to test their car's ability. In 1924, for instance, Georgetown brothers Howard and Lester Golden took their Buick on a one-day trip on the Rubicon, including through the "Devil's Sluice Box." The route was described by the local newspaper as, "one of the hardest to make with a car anywhere in the Sierras" (*Georgetown Gazette* June 30, 1924).

In 1926, at least five tours headed over the trail. Two were organized as promotional tours, one was likely a scouting trip, and two were private excursions. The private trips included Elmer Foose and another friend from Georgetown, who made it through the entire trail in a regular car. Foose was a mechanic at the Georgetown service station and could have fixed his vehicle if needed (Sweeney 2012). Carl Balch also took the trip that year and again in 1928, photographing along the way. He found the dust by Wentworth's to be very deep and provided the pictures to prove it. He also found the Little Sluice Box an "easy jaunt," while the Big Sluice was "pretty rough, we knew we could never get out by going back" (Presba and Presba 1983:149).

Other than the Foose trip, the other three known tours were all instigated by Clarence Collins, owner of the Forget-Me-Not Garage in Georgetown (Figure 20). Clarence and a friend, Stewart McNash, took a 1926 Dodge Standard Touring car from Georgetown to Rubicon Springs, likely scouting for the future trips. They photographed the ride as they went through (Morris 2011:156-157).

The first promotional tour was supplied with vehicles by the owner of a Studebaker dealership in Auburn and carried Collins, a photographer, El Dorado County supervisor P. F. Morgan, and three other men loaded in two modified Studebakers. Their trip began at Uncle Tom's Cabin (Figure 21) and continued at least as far as Morris Rock (Figure 22). Collins and Morgan were trying to raise funds to yet again, improve the road between Wentworth's and Rubicon Springs. The Studebaker dealer, no doubt, was trying to prove the reliability and endurance of his cars, which were painted with bright white lettering along their sides for all to see, especially in photographs. One of the declarations stenciled prominently on the side of the car read, "First Car Over Donner Pass April 24, 1926", while another said, "Auburn Chamber of Commerce", suggesting they had the support of that organization. More importantly, the back of the car read, "Studebakers Break In - Where Others Break Down" (Figure 23). A follow-up story ran in the Auburn newspaper and photos from the trip were displayed in the Georgetown post office (Morris 2011:142-145).

Figure 20. Clarence Collin's "Forget-Me-Not" Garage in Georgetown (Clarence was one of the earliest runners and promoters of the trail) (Courtesy of the El Dorado County Historic Museum).

Figure 21. Studebaker Tour Begins, Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1926 (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

Figure 22. Studebaker Promotional Tour, 1926, at Morris Rock (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

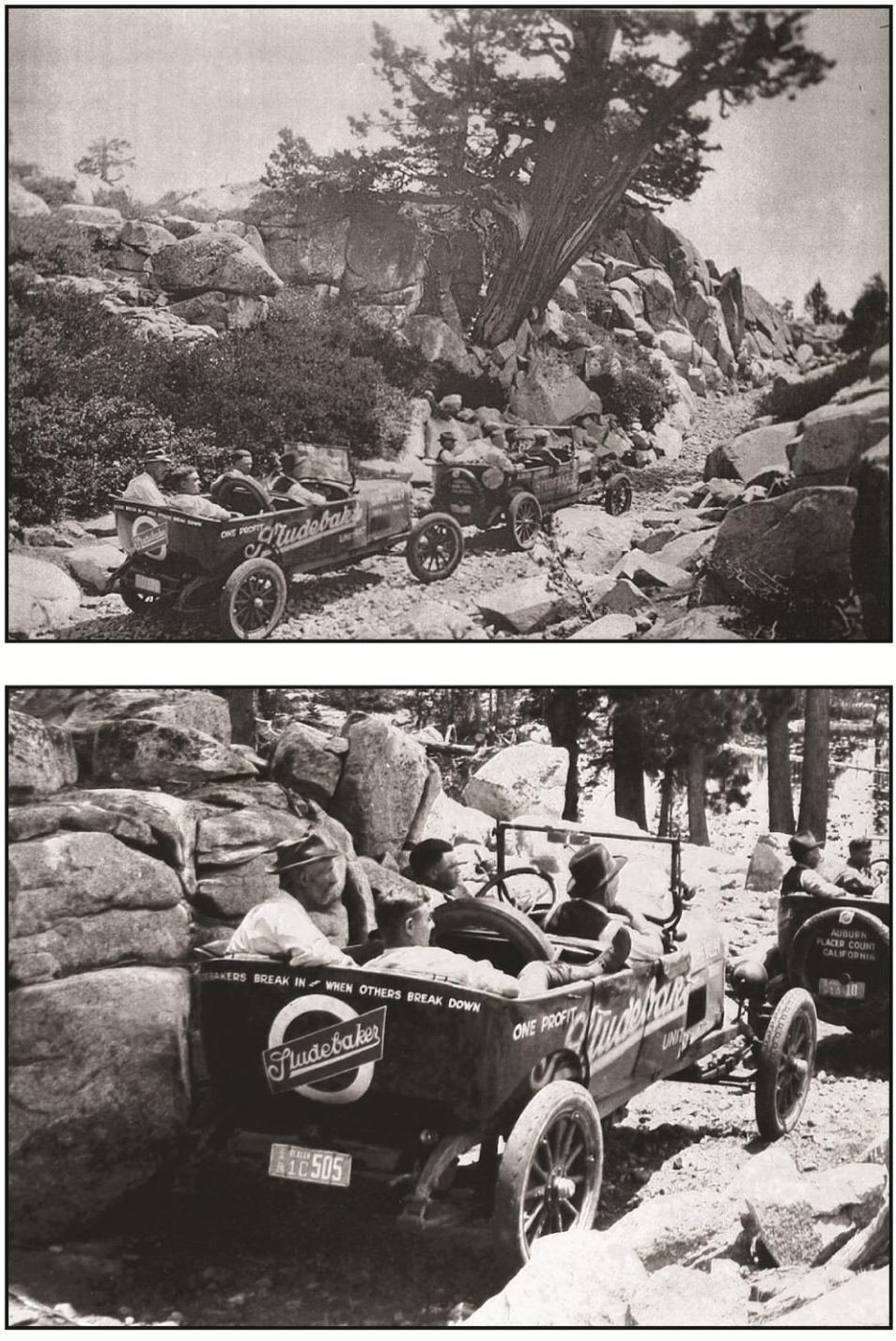

Figure 23. Historic Studebaker Promotional from 1926 (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).
Top: Approaching Little Sluice (Note: This iconic juniper tree fell in 2012)
Bottom: Detail of sign on rear of car reading, "Studebakers break in - when others break down."

The second promotional tour was also organized by an auto dealer, this time J. W. Mitchell, a Ford dealer in Placerville, and, again, Clarence Collins from Georgetown. With them was a writer for the *Mountain Democrat* and one other brave soul. They seem to have made record time. Leaving Georgetown at 7 am, they reached Rubicon Springs at 1:30 pm, ate dinner and relaxed before their return trip. Their photos showed their little car passing through the "Big Sluice Box" and over the granite slabs that distinguish the trail itself. In the article describing their trip, they described the grade down the Rubicon River as quite steep, but noted that a better grade was being surveyed that would eliminate the worst part through the "Big Sluice Box." Heading over the last summit before going down the road along Miller Creek to McKinney's, they noted a sign (see Figure 18) that read, "STOP. 35 PERCENT GRADE. SPECIAL GEARED CAR NECESSARY. TOW $50. THIS SIGN IS NO JOKE" (Morris 2011:152-153).

Clarence Collins may or may not have succeeded in raising funds to repair the road, but he did have another perhaps more long lasting effect. His son, Ken Collins, would later own the Buick agency in Placerville and become the Jeep dealer for El Dorado County. Perhaps inspired by his father's exploits and historic photographs, Ken became one of the original founders of the Jeepers Jamboree that got rolling 27 years later (Morris 2011:156).

After Rubicon Springs closed in 1926, through traffic on the route east of Wentworth's nearly stopped, other than random hikers, hunters and a few intrepid explorers. There was limited work on the road as a whole. For instance, a new bridge was constructed over Gerle Creek at Jacobsen's by the government, but by and large, the road quickly fell into disrepair. From Wentworth Springs eastward, the road became little more than a trail (Figure 24) (*Mountain Democrat* September 29, 1927; Scott 2012). The crossing for the Rubicon River was also in complete disrepair and consisted largely of haphazardly placed logs creating a ramp to help a vehicle climb up the opposite embankment.

Although the Rubicon Springs hotel was closed, other stops still remained open on the west side. Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Wentworth Springs resort still were going strong. Uncle Tom's was the only place to get a cool drink and talk to someone for many miles. Wentworth Springs was a destination in itself. Between 1932 and 1940, 4,402 people signed the hotel's register. Amazingly nearly half came from as far as the San Francisco Bay area, with the rest coming from Sacramento County. Others came from 13 different states and even Ireland (Presba and Presba 1983:114).

The Forest Service built a ranger's station just east of Wentworth Springs during this period (sometime before 1920). This little station was a small cabin, with room for a wood stove and bed. It was the eastern terminus of the Forest Service telephone line and was manned when a ranger from Georgetown would venture up to check on the area. It was also as far as most cars could go east on the road, so its placement put the ranger as far into the forest as possible for public service.

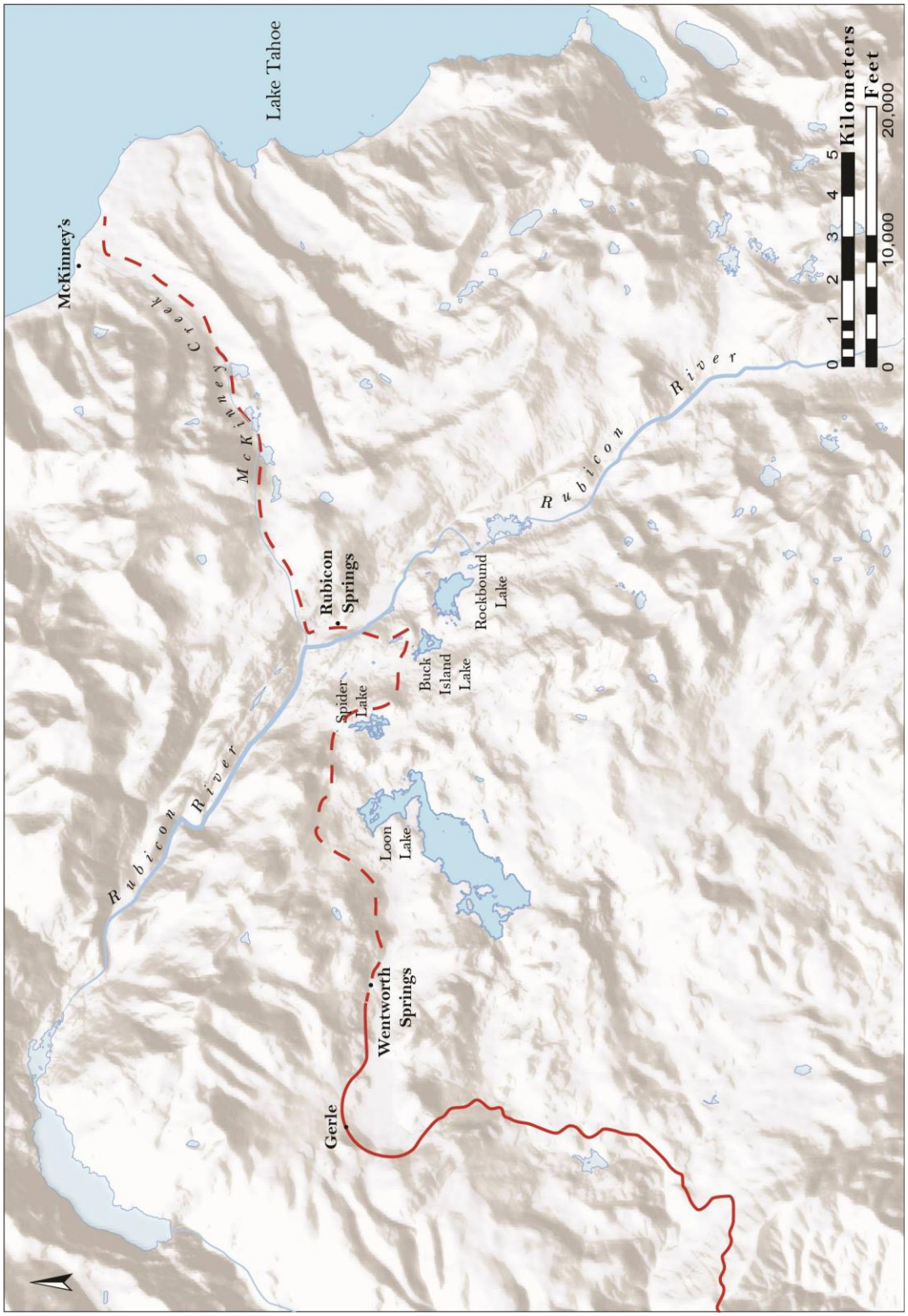

Figure 24. The GLTR Conditions by 1926. After the Rubicon Hotel closed in 1926, the road going east from Wentworth Springs reverted to trail, indicated by dashed line.

The Forest Service had the responsibility of creating a presence on the land under their stewardship. Private and public uses in the ENF included water developments, camping, grazing, hunting, firewood collection and, in some areas, a summer home program. Rangers tended to public needs, including ensuring telephone lines were intact (primarily for quickly reporting fire), dealing with public contacts, managing grazing land and campgrounds and reporting fire (Joslin 1995:2).

Most early ranger sites consisted of a single cabin and maybe a barn and a few outbuildings. The majority of stations were built during the 1920s and 1930s before improved roads allowed guards and rangers to live in larger towns nearby (Joslin 1995:5). The station near Wentworth Springs served the local area during the summer season, when ranchers and campers were present in the area. The phone at the station provided one of the few communication links in this remote part of the forest.

In 1931, the U.S. Army Air Corps built Camp Gerle, a rest and recreation camp, at an open meadow at a natural ford of Gerle Creek. This camp, with wonderful natural swimming holes, has been known over the years by various names, including Airport Camp and Gerle Creek Rest Camp. The 20th Pursuit Group stationed at Mather Field in Sacramento County used it in 1931 and 1932. Their camp included two barracks buildings, a large water tank, a garage and tent platforms. By the mid-1930s, the camp was occupied by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as well. It was still used as a government camp as late as 1940, with what was known as a CCC Side Camp. After World War II, the camp was transferred to the Forest Service and used as the Airport Flats Ranger Station and later a campground (Brattland 1996; *Nevada State Journal* May 7, 1940).

By 1931, surveyors' field notes for the area described the GLTR as "Old Georgetown & Lake Tahoe Road, unused" (USDI 1931). The ENF map that year shows a good road to Wentworth Springs and the Forest Service Station located there. From the station, a trail continues east to Lake Tahoe in the current alignment considered to be the Rubicon Trail today (ENF 1931). That year the *Sacramento Bee* provided a good, if blunt, summary of road conditions. They said the road from Georgetown to Wentworth Springs was in good shape. From Wentworth Springs to Spider Lake the road was bad. From Spider Lake to McKinney's, it was very bad (*Sacramento Bee* June 3, 1931).

Trail and Bridge Work

As mentioned previously, road work has ranged from regraveling road beds to pulverizing boulders with dynamite and blasting powder. Other work focused on replacing and repairing the bridges over the Rubicon River and Gerle Creek. Other than the bridge on the Rubicon built by the Hunsuckers and later by Vade, water crossings were done by fording the river or creeks at shallow spots. There were three crossings of Gerle Creek and another unimproved ford at Ellis Creek. Ellis Creek flows from Bugle Creek into Pleasant Creek (today

directly to Loon Lake). This crossing was hardest during spring run-off, but was not noted in any historic accounts and likely posed only a minor challenge.

As early as 1914, the county was working on the Gerle Creek area. The creek meandered through a meadow, with fords (but no bridges) crossing at three locations (south to north at Francis Cow Camp near Airport Flat, at Rocky Basin and at Gerle's place). The *Georgetown Gazette* reported, "El Dorado County Supervisor Morgan had the boulders in the second crossing of Gerle Creek blasted out to make the creek passable for autos or light teams going to Wentworth Springs. Some improvements have been made on the road in that vicinity" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 8, 1915).

The local paper stated, "Supervisor P. F. Morgan spent several days of last week at Gerle Creek laying out a new piece of road so as to eliminate the dangerous crossings of the creek at Francis Ranch. When the piece of road is complete it will enable automobiles to go to Lake Tahoe via Georgetown, Wentworth and Rubicon Springs without difficulty. At this season of the year, the water is high in Gerle Creek and automobiles are unable to ford the stream" (*Georgetown Gazette* July 8, 1915). This area around the creek had long been a trouble spot. Ranchers needed to access the area in spring, leading them to often reroute the road to get in (Brattland 1996:13).

In 1927, El Dorado County constructed a bridge with concrete foundations and a log deck over Gerle Creek (Figure 25). This bridge stood about 20 feet from the current bridge site. In 1937 they built a concrete bridge (Figure 26) crossing Rocky Basin Creek southeast of Francis Cow Camp. This eliminated the ford at Gerle Creek at Francis Cow Camp, as well as a section of the original GLTR along the western edge of Gerle Creek between Airport Flat and Francis Cow Camp. In 1952, the 1927 bridge was damaged by weather, collapsing the log bridge. Between 1952 and 1963, vehicles heading to Wentworth Springs, the nearby diversion dam or local ranches reverted to the natural ford of the creek about 100 feet south of the bridge. Finally in 1963, the County replaced the old wooden bridge with a new concrete bridge. This allowed for the early entry for cattlemen into the high country, as well as hunters and campers (Brattland 1996).

This may have also affected forest development. In 1953, the Forest Service established a summer home tract in the area known as the Gerle Creek Summer Home Tract (GCSHT). It took four years until the first five families opted to lease lots in the remote site, accessible by rough road and no functioning bridge over Gerle Creek. After completion of the bridge in 1963, access was much easier. Gradually those that did lease organized the Gerle Creek Summer Home Tract Association, a group still active today (Brattland 1996).

The Hunsucker brothers are reported to have been the first to build a simple log bridge over the Rubicon River. Vade Clark maintained and improved that bridge during her tenure, although some stage drivers described floating the stages across the river at a ford. The bridge was finally carried away by flood after the resort closed in 1926. Increasingly heavy automobiles made a bridge across the Rubicon more important for access. El Dorado County

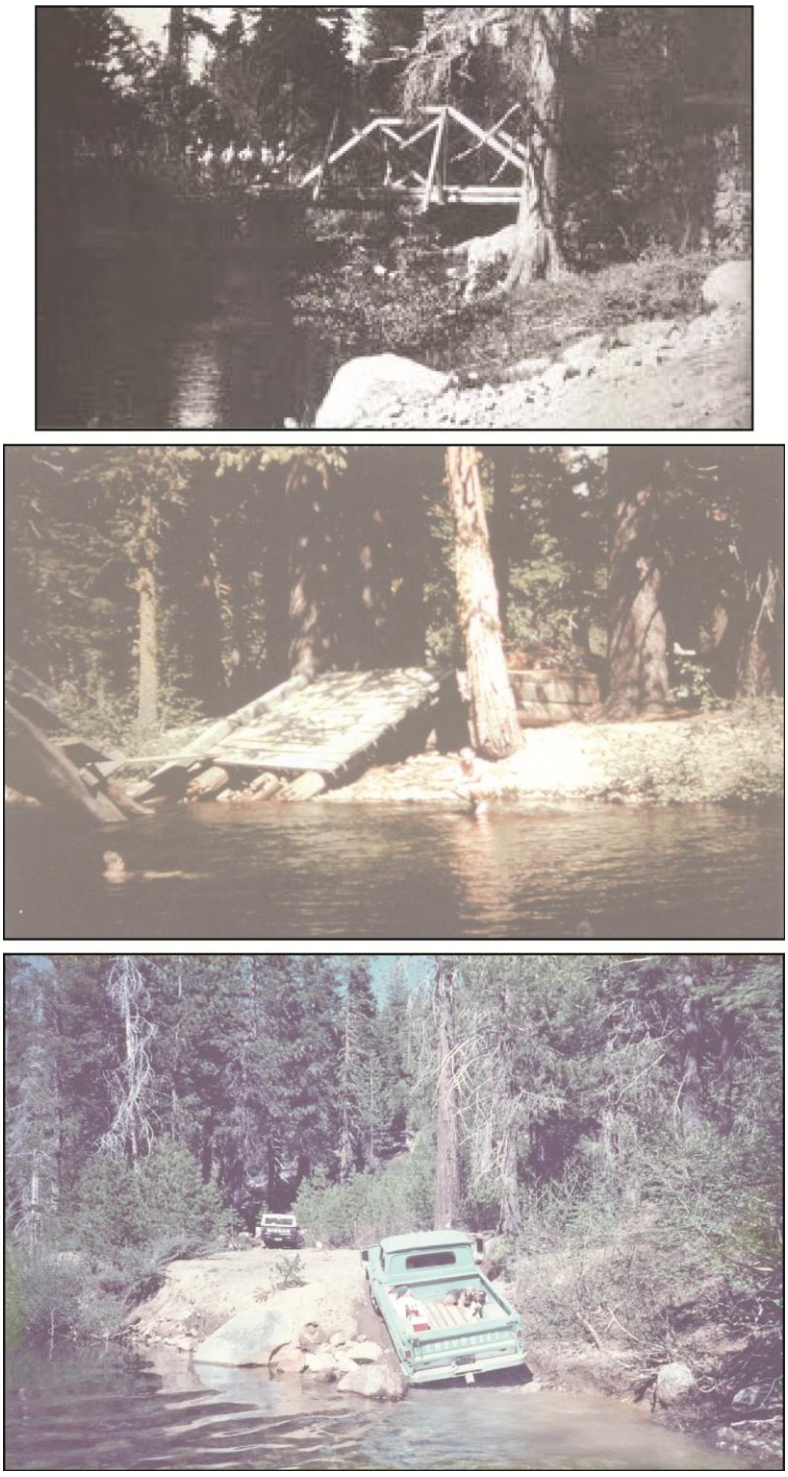

Figure 25. Gerle Creek Crossings at Jacobsen's. At top is a log bridge constructed by El Dorado County in 1927. The bridge collapsed in 1952 (middle). For the next 11 years, vehicles had to ford the creek downstream, including these southbound vehicles (bottom) (Courtesy of Brattland 1996).

Figure 26. Breedlove Bridge over Rocky Basin Creek. This concrete bridge was, according to the plaque, constructed in 1937 by El Dorado County through the efforts of County Supervisor William Breedlove. It remains today (Courtesy of Brattland 1996)**.**

built another wood bridge in 1939 (Figure 27) as part of the joint-county work. In 1947, the county again replaced the bridge, this time with a steel structure (Figure 28). In 1982, a group of four-wheel drive enthusiasts came together to restore the bridge, hauling in 100,000 pounds of building materials and placing it back into good condition (S. Morris 2012; Presba and Presba 1983:202; Sweeney 2012). The last work occurred in 1996 and 1997 after a group of contributors donated funds for new repairs (Pietschmann 2012).

In 1939, El Dorado and Placer counties worked jointly to improve their individual sections of the trail. Placer County worked the section from Lake Tahoe up McKinney Creek to the county line. In many sections, they slightly altered the route to avoid obstacles. In others, they shot granite outcrops and removed boulders (Placer County 1939). Placer County road work maps show numerous places where they blasted out boulders or rock faces in 1939 as they did work on the segment between McKinney's up to the county line (Placer County 1939). This work was done after a particularly destructive storm in December 1937. The state of California gave $5,000 to Placer County and $2,500 to El Dorado County to repair their sections of the road. Newspaper accounts indicate that El Dorado County got the five miles from Wentworth Springs to Spider Lake in good shape, making it passable in 15 minutes, where it had taken well over an hour before. They also smoothed the route. The paper stated, "only high built cars could formerly make it over this tough granite country," but after their work a regular car could pass (*Georgetown Gazette* September 6, 1939; Scott 2012).

Rubicon Trail and Jeeps: 1946 to Present

In 1946, the Liddicoat family from Placerville appears to be the first to take a Jeep over the Rubicon, marking a new era in Rubicon history. They even took photographs to capture the event (Brattland 1996:3). The Jeep, a burro of an off-road vehicle developed by the U. S. Army in World War II, was becoming a favorite of returning veterans. Their optimism in post-war California, combined with this new intrepid vehicle, was the perfect combination for a new exploration of the high Sierra and especially on what would finally become known as the Rubicon Trail.

That first post-war summer, Harold Liddicoat of Placerville and a friend piled their families into Jeeps and headed out for the high mountain lakes and springs on the road. They stopped at and photographed numerous places along the route, including the old Wentworth Springs Hotel, with its gas pump still in place, at little and big sluice boxes (see Figures 27, 29 and 30) and at the summit west of the Rubicon Springs. They returned later with their kids and enjoyed the entire trail with no one but a few other campers. By 1951, their parties grew as they convinced others to join them to the solitude of the old historic resorts and lakes (Liddicoat 2008).

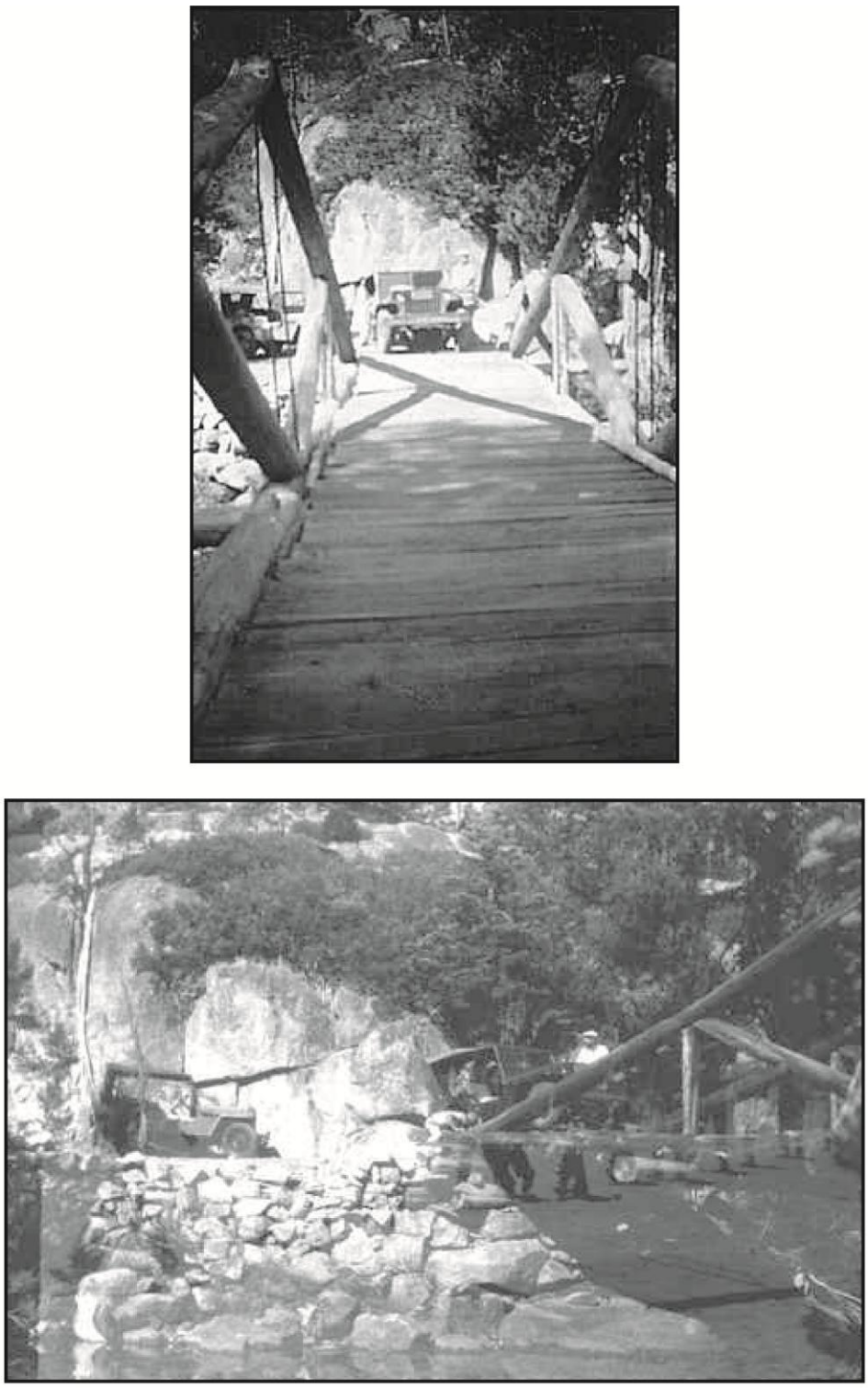

Figure 27. Bridge Over the Rubicon River, 1946. This wooden bridge was constructed by El Dorado County in 1939, replacing a ford slightly further upstream. When finished, the County rerouted the original trail to reach the new river crossing. The county later replaced this with the existing steel bridge (courtesy of Liddicoat Family Website).

Figure 28. Existing Bridge Over Rubicon River. This steel bridge was constructed by El Dorado County in 1947 and remains today (Pirate 4x4 2012).

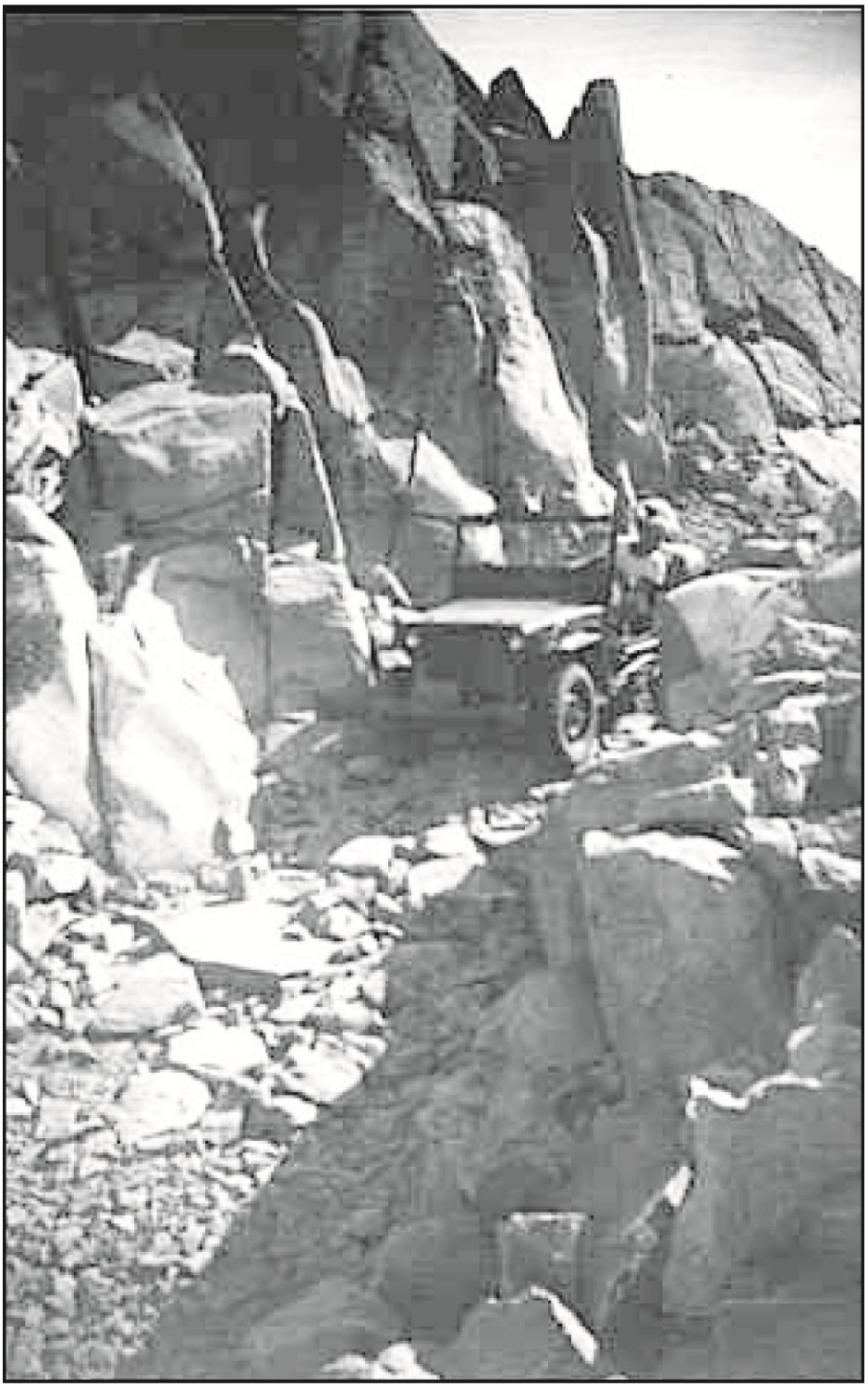

Figure 29. Harold Liddicoat navigates Little Sluice in 1946, becoming one of the first Jeeps to run the Rubicon Trail (Courtesy of Liddicoat Family Website).

Figure 30. How Cadillac Hill got its name. Here the Liddicoat Family checks out the Cadillac that failed to make it up the grade to Miller's Lake (Courtesy of the Liddicoat Family Website).

They weren't alone in their exploration by Jeep. One summer day in 1948 as Vic Wikander entertained a friend at Buck Island Lake, the mountain silence was lifted by the sound of a Jeep struggling over the granite. Wikander embraced the new way of reaching the area and actually laid out a path on the granite to bypass (Figure 31) Big Sluice (aka Old Sluice, True Sluice) from the west down to Buck Island Lake (Brattland 1996:3).

The Jeepers Jamboree

While the first few Jeeps made their way as far as Buck Island Lake in the 1940s, not many ventured by vehicle over the whole route. And then a group of businessmen in Georgetown came up with a promotional plan that would change the trail forever. The Rubicon Trail was about to become the setting for the nation's first organized four-wheel-drive event.

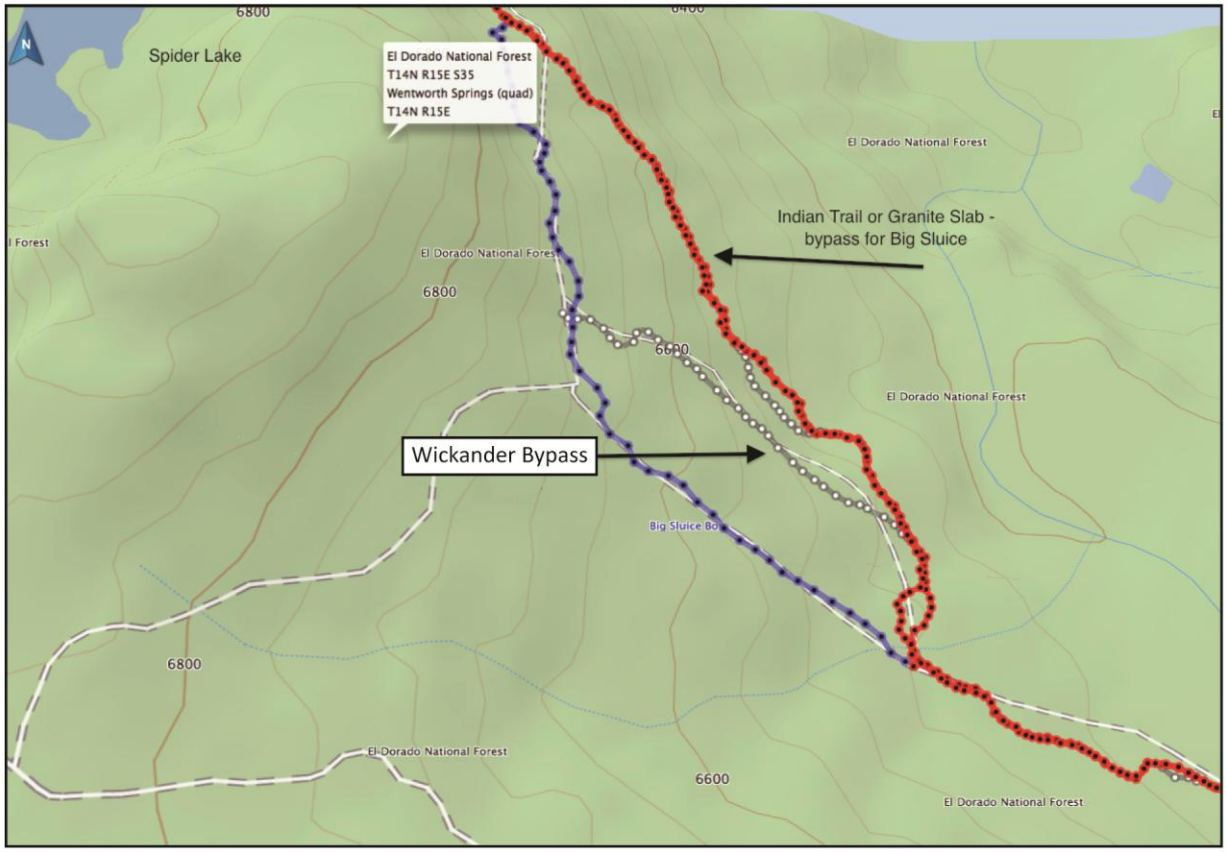

Figure 31. Wikander's Bypass (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

By the 1950s, Georgetown's economy had struggled through decades of slow decline, interspersed with brief periods of mining activity and occasional fires. In that era of post-war optimism, the local Rotary Club, founded in 1949, became very active in town, converting an old high school building into a community center and erecting historic markers. Their next goal was to bring business to their town. Reaching back to the rich history of the resorts and the promotional tours in the 1920s, these men devised a plan to lead Jeeps on a caravan excursion from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe over the road. This would bring money into town by selling gas, supplies and filling rooms in hotels. It would also end up putting Georgetown back on the map (Davis and Rambeau 1987:92; Scott 2012).

The first plans were laid out in 1952 at the home of Rotarian Mark Smith. Smith had moved to Georgetown in 1951 and explored the Rubicon in a surplus Jeep he bought that year. It was Mark's experience on the trail and his vision that created the Jamboree. Others at the meeting included Ken Collins, Jack Warner, Walt Drysdale, Jim Sweeney, Bill Hardie, Harold Krabbenhoft, and Gene Chappie. Receiving sponsorship from the Georgetown Rifle and Pistol Club and the Georgetown Divide Rotary Club, their plans were in motion. Krabbenhoft dubbed it the Jeepers Jamboree and planned their first event for August the next year. Next they set out to visit the road. Their exploratory trip included four Jeeps and 12 friends. Scouting the Rubicon, they settled on the Rubicon Valley near the site of the old Rubicon Hotel as the camping site for the Jamboree that would follow (Presba and Presba 1983:22, 385).

Knowing where to camp and approximately how long the trip would take, they were ready to start promoting and selling tickets. From the beginning, they used colorful Gold Rush vocabulary to tie in with their town's rich history. Their advertising used words like, "burro," "49ers," "pioneer adventure" and "lost pioneer road" to describe the trek (Presba and Presba 1983:37).

The next year they prepared the road and group campsite at Rubicon Springs. The camp committee built a 16- by 32-foot dance floor constructed of wood and covered with linoleum. Entertainment was important to their efforts and they also brought a generator and public address system for the musicians and singers they would provide. A cast-iron cook stove was brought in to feed the group the first "Mountain Man Feast" and a pancake breakfast the following morning (Presba and Presba 1983:37).

Tickets for the first trip were slow to sell. The 1953 ticket price was $9 and included five meals, dancing and entertainment and the trip itself. Among the guests on that first run were State Senator Swift Bery, Dan Bassi (a former stage driver between Georgetown and Lake Tahoe), and 70-year-old Beatrice Luce of Georgetown. Finally 55 Jeeps and 154 passengers set out for an historic ride. The Jamboree began with a breakfast. Robert Kerwin described the scene in the 1950s, writing, "at 5:30 am, the ladies of Georgetown, wearing print dresses and aprons, their hair in buns, were serving up the feed. It was like a turn-of-the-century, country-meeting breakfast: Straight chairs, Spartan floors, bare bulbs, oil-clothed tables. Juice, flapjacks, eggs, bacon, toast, coffee, and the soft morning talk" (Presba and Presba 1983:3, 42, 46).

After breakfast, the Jeeps took off in groups of ten, likely to reduce dust and congestion on the road. Among them were five brightly painted Fallon Nevada Civil Air Patrol Jeeps, bringing a little color to the group (Presba and Presba 1983 :38).

Along the route, they stopped, as nearly everyone for the 80 years before them had done, at Uncle Tom's Cabin, 27 miles from Georgetown. Here, everyone piled out of their Jeeps, purchased beers or sodas and stretched their legs before heading on for another stretch (Figure 32) at Wentworth Springs (Presba and Presba 1983:108-109, 114-115). At Wentworth's the real fun began, as Jeeps slowed, downshifted and set off slowly over the rocky trail (Figure 33), the heart of the GLRT that had just become known as the Rubicon Trail.

Once in camp at the old Rubicon Springs, the pioneers of the Rubicon were treated to singing and guitar playing and an amusing can-can performed by six members of the organizers, followed by a four-piece orchestra for the dancers. Afterward, everyone retired to their sleeping bags and rested for the drive out the next day (Presba and Presba 1983:41). Entertainment remained a big part of the event. Highlights in the following years included the full Sacramento Bag Pipe Band in dress costume, an 18-member group of singing nuns and a concert including a grand piano. All of these, including the piano, had to be flown into the campsite at the springs by helicopter (M. Smith 2012).

The publicity from the first Jamboree only added to its popularity (Figure 34). Some magazines described the difficult terrain. Others described the adventurous spirit of the participants. *Fortnight* magazine wrote, "Jeep owners in El Dorado County of which the Georgetown Divide is a considerable part use these cars ordinarily to reach their mines and timber or to gain the remote and rugged highlands to hunt and fish. Their recent Jeep Jamboree, however, had nothing more important to accomplish than a late seasonal view in the wilderness. A challenge to driving skill and a test for their rugged little machine – all of these rewards were amply provided" (Presba and Presba 1983:39).

As the years passed the Jamboree grew and each phase of the weekend became a tradition. The Jeeps lined up in one wall-to-wall mass straddling the 100-foot-wide main street of Georgetown (Figure 35). *Argosy* magazine described the prelude to the trip as, "The motorized deluge starts tricking into the hospitable hamlet early Friday afternoon and reaches flood stage later that night. The town square looks like a giant used-car lot as Jeepers leave their vehicles anywhere and head in a hurry for the nearest pub and renew auld acquaintance and revive parched tonsils" (Presba and Presba 1983:5).

Figure 32. Jeepers on the way to Wentworth Springs. This section is now the only paved section within the project area (Courtesy of Placer County Archives).

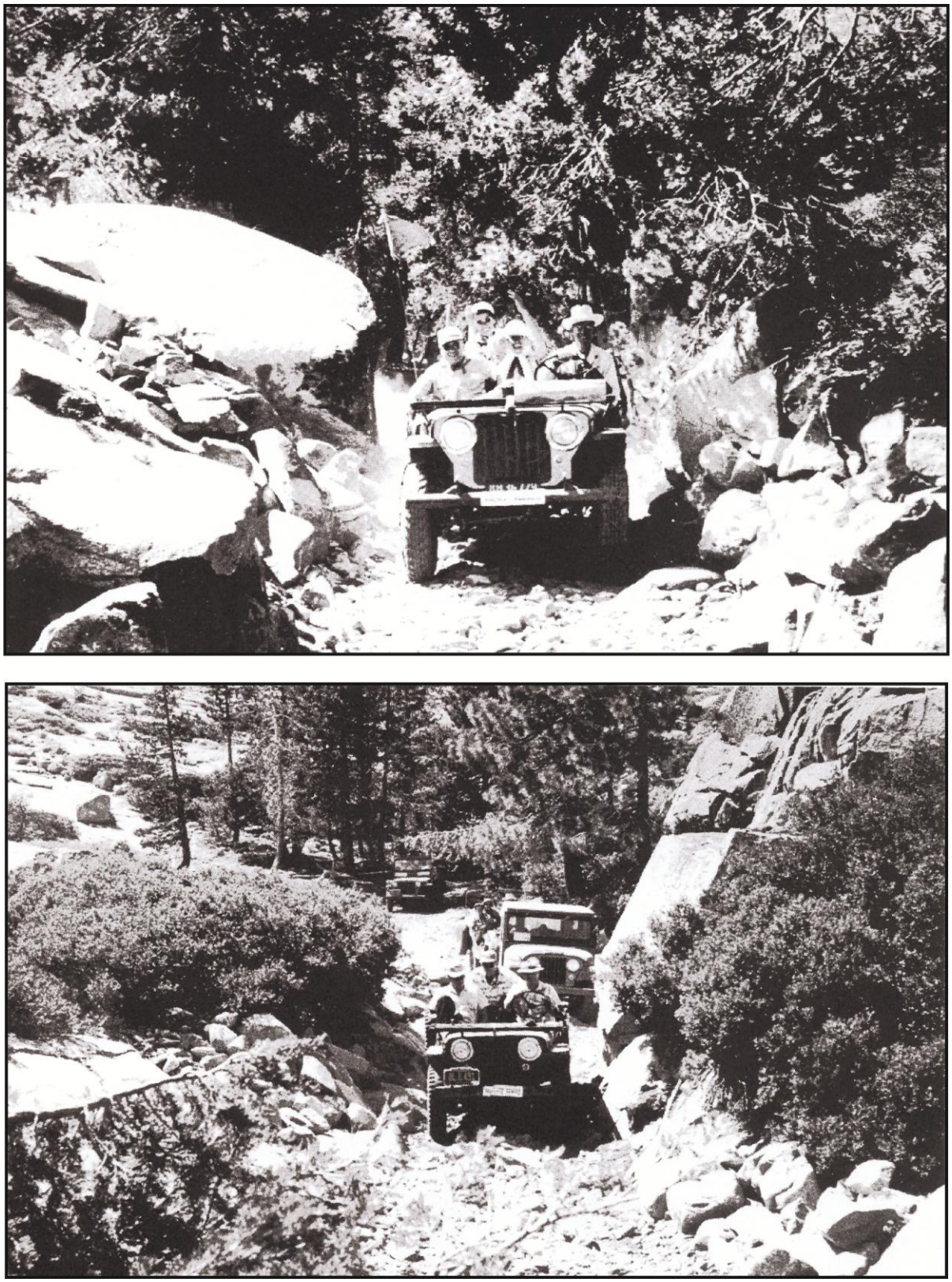

Figure 33. The 4-Wheel Drive Road Segment Begins (from Presba and Presba 1982).

Figure 34. Promotional Poster for the 1955 Jamboree (from Presba and Presba 1982).

Figure 35. All of the Jeeps lined up on Main Street (from Presba and Presba 1982).

The next morning, they were off. One Jamboree participant, Walt Drysdale, wrote,

> Our Jeepers Jamboree takes off from Main Street, Georgetown (Old Growlersburg of the Gold Rush Days), on a 41-mile, high-gear jaunt to Wentworth Springs. Then for the next 21 miles to Lake Tahoe, travel is in low gear, four-wheel drive. Average speed, five miles per hour. Threading its way among the house-sized boulders our caravan resembles a giant dragon of a Chinese New Year. Passing such colorful spots as the Devil's Postpile, Loon, Pleasant, Bisbee, Buck Island, Spider and Rockbound Lakes, our mechanical burros clamber over immense sheaths of granite on which the footprints of retreating glaciers can still be seen [Presba and Presba 1983:2].

While that speed seemed slow at the time, it is actually five times faster than the average one-mile-per hour of trail riders today. Mark Smith, one of the original founders of the Jeepers Jamboree, made an effort to bring along reporters, photographers and politicians who would be most likely to spread the word. He did so with great success. Walt Drysdale was also a big promoter, bringing a special advertising flare (Pietschmann 2012; Scott 2012; M. Smith 2012).

The Jamboree organized work parties before each trek. By the fourth year, they had to make several detours from the original trail. They posted signs at the detours for those that wanted to avoid difficulties. However, the tongue-in-cheek signs read, "Pantywaists this way" and "nuts and not quite bright people the other way." One participant described the detour at the Little Sluice, writing, "the sluice is divided into two routes that may be taken – the high road and the low road. Most of the drivers take one look at the low road and quickly opt for the high road. The high road is no freeway, but compared with the low road it at least looks passable. Winching and jacking are foregone conclusions for anyone attempting the difficult way" (Presba and Presba 1983:54, 139).

The work crews also renovated the Rubicon Springs campsite area, removed fallen trees, dynamited obstacles, cleaned the springs of debris and, in later years, brought in portable latrines. Officials on the trip wore green scarves and helped participants do everything from surmount boulders to set up camp. Every effort was made to make sure they left the area as they found it, a practice still carefully carried on today (S. Morris 2012; Presba and Presba 1983:228).

By 1956, the Jeepers Jamboree was a hugely successful operation with half of their ticket-buyers coming from the Bay area and even some from abroad. With their growing success after only three years, the organizers formed a separate non-profit organization. Today the group is a private corporation that works in cooperation with the Georgetown Divide Rotary, the Placerville American Legion and the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce (Presba and Presba 1983:54).

Each year the Jeepers Jamboree grew, so that by 1963 it included 430 vehicles and over 1,200 participants. That was the last year the Rotary Club was involved. In 1975, the Jamboree had become so popular, the Jamboree organizers had to use a lottery system to avoid angering disappointed applicants. By that time the event was estimated to be bringing in nearly an additional $200,000 to El Dorado County's economy, as each participant on average spent $125 on food, gas and hotels (Davis and Rambeau 1987:92). In the late 1970s, the Jamboree moved the head of the trail from Airport Flat to the dam at Loon Lake. In the early 2000s, they moved the start of the Jamboree from Georgetown to Loon Lake Dam (R. Morris 2012, Pietschmann 2012).

As time went on, the size of off-road vehicles began to change. The Rubicon was intended originally for Jeeps only. The Jamboree application form actually stated, "Sorry, no pickups, station wagons, Blazers, Scouts, Ramchargers, Jeepsters or Broncos" (Presba and Presba 1983:120). This rule was not arbitrary. The top of the Big Sluice was so narrow that vehicles larger and wider than a standard Jeep could not make it through. Steve Morris, a Jamboree veteran, recalls one year when the Jamboree relented and allowed a man to come through with a new full-size Chevy Blazer. He was warned repeatedly that his car was too wide to get through, so he would have to come at the end of the line and he wouldn't get any help if he got stuck. He insisted he would be fine. As the day unfolded, he leap-frogged ahead of some other vehicles and, sure enough, got stuck at the top of Big Sluice. Unable to back down, he silently accepted his fate as the Jamboree crews bashed in the sides of his vehicle with granite boulders to make it narrow enough to pass (S. Morris 2012).

The Jeepers Jamboree grew beyond its original founders' greatest expectations. In 1993, one of those founders, Mark Smith, split off to create a private corporation, Jeep Jamboree USA, that operates similar jamborees at 30 locations across the country. Working under an agreement with the federal government, they have used the Jeepers Jamboree as a model to bring the same kind of economic boost to depressed areas near good OHV resources nationwide. In 1985, Smith and a group of investors bought the Rubicon Springs property, where it continues to be used as a campground for numerous organized trips that pass through each year (Scott 2012; M. Smith 2012). Today it is a primitive campsite with a caretaker's cabin, and several semi-permanent buildings used for cooking, feeding and watering the crowds that come to enjoy the full Rubicon Trail experience (Scott 2012).

A World-Class Off Highway Vehicle Road

While local people have always used the Rubicon for recreation, the great success of the Jamboree attracted others from afar to take their vehicles on the trail independently of the event (Figure 36). The traffic included weekend adventurers, as well as off-road outfitters, advertising events, vehicle testing projects and even military training.

In 1954, Jeep engineers began working with Mark Smith to test their new models against the rigors of the Rubicon, a true four-wheel driving challenge (Scott 2012; M. Smith 2012). Over the years, Jeep, Hummer and Toyota all used the trail for performance testing.

Figure 36. Driving the Rubicon Trail Today. This jeep is driving around the edge of Buck Island Lake on a road built post-1960 by SMUD after they raised the lake level (Courtesy of Pirate 4 X 4).

Sunset magazine wrote, "Manufacturers who want to try out parts and equipment have a ready-made test run . . . The Jeepers Jamboree is the Indy 500 of the off-road vehicle test" (Presba and Presba 1983:120).

Because of the Rubicon experience, Smith became an off-road training specialist as well. He worked with Jeep to actually recreate the most challenging sections of the Rubicon Trail in Chelsea, Michigan, including buying granite boulders and shipping them in. If a model could pass that test, then it was flown out to try the Rubicon in person. Over 150 similar courses have been created nationwide (M. Smith 2012).

Training has also been part of the trail's legacy. Smith himself has trained military and law enforcement personnel both on and off the Rubicon. The Rubicon presents a series of obstacles best tried in a safe setting, before lives are at stake (M. Smith 2012).

Smith recognized that the Rubicon Trail experience could also be replicated across the country for the benefit of other depressed areas, just as Georgetown had benefited. He started Jeep Jamboree USA to organize these tours, a company that continues to thrive providing off-road experiences nationwide. In 1993, the Forest Service recognized the benefits of these activities and issued a Master Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Agriculture and Jeep Jamboree USA. The MOU established a framework for "mutually beneficial programs, work projects and jamboree activities" working cooperatively on a national, regional and local level. The MOU stated that such activities complement the Forest Service mission and are in the best interest of the public. Brent Botts of the FS and Mark Smith signed the MOU in a special ceremony at Rubicon Springs, reinforcing the importance of the trail as the core of these off-road excursions (M. Smith 2012).

The increased use by recreational visitors, however, has had a tremendous impact on the road. By 1983, it took six to eight hours to cover the last six miles from Wentworth Springs to Rubicon Springs (Presba and Presba 1983:1580). In the late 1980s, a new extreme form of four-wheel driving called rock-crawling came into popularity. Vehicles with special modifications and fabrication began appearing on the scene as soon as the snow melted in greater frequency independent of any organized outing. These new vehicles had greater tolerances and could climb up large boulders. To enhance the experience, some individuals rolled boulders off the nearby ledges into some portions of the trail, for instance in the sluice sections, to make the going more challenging. Little Sluice, for example, was fairly easy to travel, until off-roaders changed it to make it more difficult. This alteration of the trail slowed traffic and limited access to only the most extremely modified vehicles (Pietschmann 2012). Mark Smith has said that the biggest change he has seen in his decades of running the trail was caused through the "Deliberate trail destruction by renegade hard-core wheelers who want the trail only for themselves and others like them" (*Four Wheel Drive* January 2005).

El Dorado County Supervisor Jack Sweeney, who had first traveled the trail in 1958 driving a standard small wheel Jeep, said that it was much harder to get through 30 years later when he returned in 1988. Supervisor Jack Sweeney noted that in 1990, 500 vehicles could

cross in a weekend, today only 250 inexperienced off-roaders can make it through (Scott 2012; Sweeney 2012). Mark Smith believes that number is closer to 350 to 400, usually with the benefit of an experienced guide (M. Smith 2012).

The Rubicon Trail Today

The Rubicon Trail is widely recognized as the finest off-highway vehicle (OHV) route in the United States. Drivers with both street legal and off-road motor vehicles come each year to challenge themselves on the trail. Some include all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles. The trail is also near Desolation Wilderness, one of the finest high elevation recreational areas in the state. As a result, hikers, backpackers, bicyclists and fishermen also use the trail (Deal 2012).

In the 1960s, the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD) built a dam at Buck Island Lake. In doing so, part of the original trail was inundated. SMUD built a new trail as a replacement. While sections of the old 1887 road are still visible next to the lake, these are no longer used (Pietschmann 2012). Another old segment abandoned in 1937 by El Dorado County is still present today (Figure 37). This old road led to a ford of Gerle Creek near Francis Cow Camp. The original road, depicted on 1916 Forest Service maps, was used until the new 1937 bridge was installed. The old alignment was adopted during the 1960s by the Gerle Creek Summer Home Tract Association to reach their water pumps. In 1961, SMUD completed the Gerle Creek Reservoir Dam on the east side of Butler Meadows. This also affected the road, as Gerle Creek no longer flooded to the same extent in spring (Brattland 1996).

Harald Pietschmann has closely traced the trail and documented many alignments along the length of the Rubicon Trail. His mapping shows not only the variations around Gerle Creek crossing, but elsewhere on the trail (Figure 38). These different routes likely resulted from changing weather and road conditions. All of them, including those outside the project area, are considered part of the trail itself.

The trail still winds through both private and public lands. El Dorado County passed a resolution in 1989 reaffirming its status as a public road. Numerous government agencies manage portions of the trail, while many private organizations maintain groups that police and protect the trail itself from abuse by users (El Dorado County 1989; Scott 2012; M. Smith 2012).

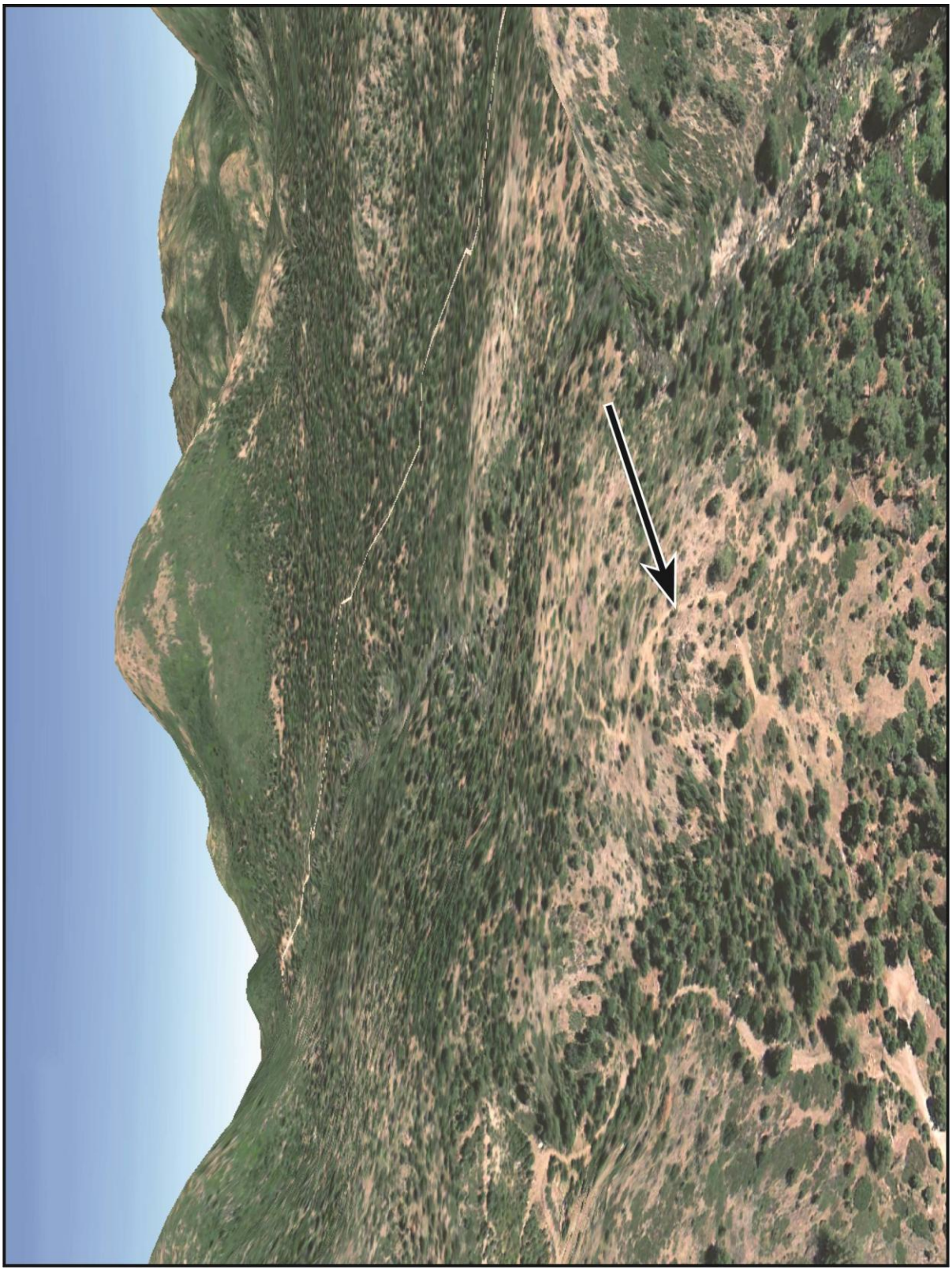

Figure 37. Abandoned Stretch of Segment B North of Airport Flat Identified using Google Earth (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

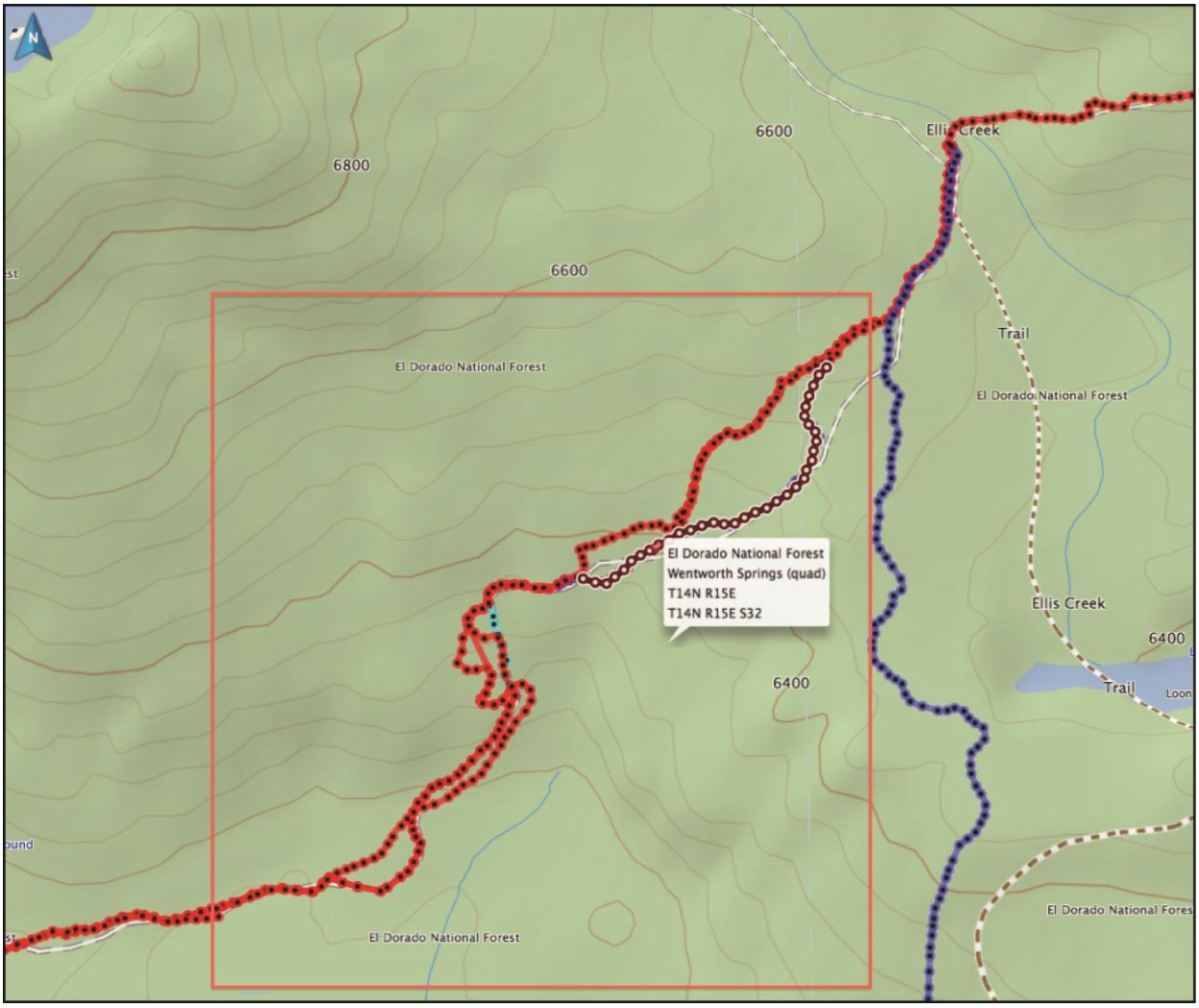

Figure 38. Trail Variations Mapped by Harald Pietschmann. Depending on road conditions, a number of different alignments have been carved that now create a network of routes and variations along the trail.

The Rubicon Trail of today is a modern name for an old portion of the GLTR. This road has evolved over the past 150 years, with changing property owners, builders and destinations along its path (Figure 39). Some sections were built by resort owners, notably the Hunsucker brothers and Nathan Wentworth. Other sections were built by the counties the trail crosses. Since the 1950s, the Jeepers Jamboree, the Friends of the Rubicon Trail and other trail advocates have also continued to maintain the road. All of their contributions have made it what it is today.

While the current Rubicon Trail follows the same route between Wentworth Springs and the Rubicon Springs put in place by the County in 1887, it changes a little each year due to erosion and vehicle traffic. Vehicles go slightly off-road to pass other vehicles or avoid obstacles.

Challenging sections of the trail today include the Big Sluice, Lost Sluice, Little Sluice and Walker Hill. Most of these features are modifications of the 1887 wagon road. For instance, what today is called Little Sluice is most likely the first and original Sluice Box referred to in the 1880s. This section today is the most vandalized section of the trail, as rock crawlers have shoved boulders into it to make it more challenging for their vehicles, but impassable to the Jeeps that made the trail famous (S. Morris 2012).

Today the Rubicon Trail has international fame. Thousands are estimated to run the trail each year either as individuals or in organized trips, including the Jeepers Jamboree. During the 20-week summer season, an average of 250 vehicles pass each weekend, with perhaps another 10 to 15 running the trail between weekends. Dan Mainwaring, president of the Jeepers Jamboree in 2002 stated, “this is the oldest and hardest continuous four-wheel-drive trail in the world. Most people feel that if you haven’t done the Rubicon, you haven’t four-wheeled” (Tempest 2002). Apparently many other people feel the same way.

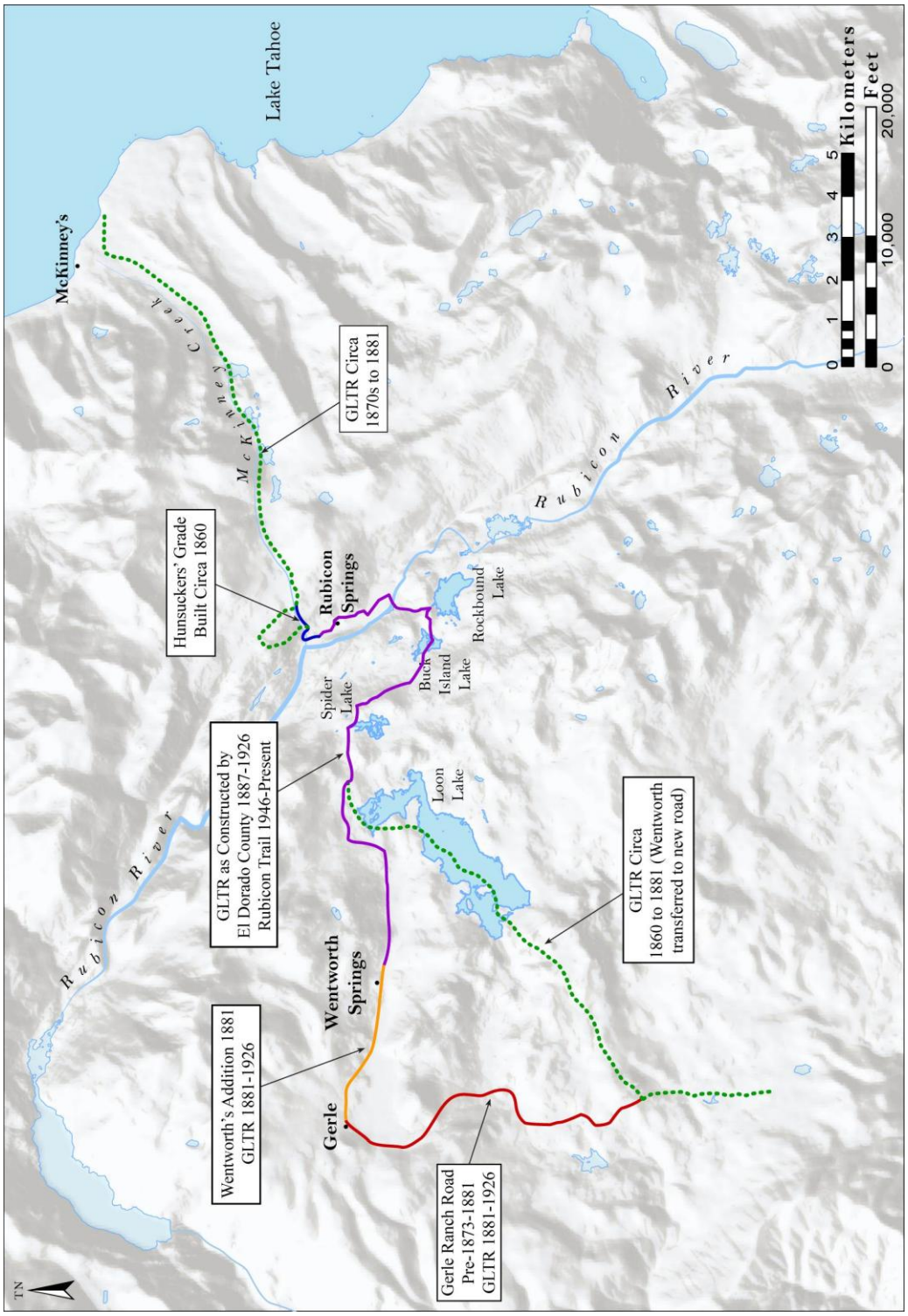

Figure 39. Evolution of the Rubicon Trail. This figure shows the gradual alteration of the GLTR into the Rubicon Trail today.

EVALUATION

Framework for Analysis

Cultural resource significance is evaluated in terms of a resource's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) (36 CFR 60.4 [48 R 46306]) as outlined below.

> The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of state and local importance that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and;
>
> > (a) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history; or
> >
> > (b) That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
> >
> > (c) That embody the distinct characteristics of a type, period, method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
> >
> > (d) That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Sites younger than 50 years, unless of exceptional importance, are not eligible for the National Register.

An integral part of assessing cultural resource significance, aside from applying the above criteria, is the physical integrity of the resource. Prior to assessing a resource's potential for listing on the National Register, it is important to understand the subtleties of the seven kinds of integrity mentioned above. To summarize a National Park Service (NPS) bulletin entitled *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (USDI 2002:44-48), the types of integrity are defined as:

> **Location** is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred;
>
> **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property;

Setting is the physical environment of historic property;

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property;

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory;

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time; and

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Integrity is based on significance: why, where and when a property is important. Only after significance is fully established is the issue of integrity addressed. Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant. A resource must have at least two types of integrity and meet one of the four criteria listed above in order to qualify for the National Register.

Evaluating Roads

Historic preservation, in general, is concerned with the preservation of historical resources that represent unique attributes of the American experience or are valued elements of a community. Those resources increasingly are recognized to include roads and trails. Roads can be evaluated based on their defining features (Marriott 2010). There are seven features that are distinctive of, and define, the Rubicon Trail. These features are exhibited through its design, materials, location, workmanship and setting and are described more fully below.

Historic roads routes represent cultural routes that evolved through necessity or tradition. While some cultural routes may have clear destinations, they lack the design and construction techniques of an aesthetic (for example a parkway) or engineered (such as a highway) route. Roads through mountain passes or water gaps, paralleling the foot of mountains, or following a line of stable soils or river courses are all considered to be cultural routes (Marriott 2010:n.p.). The Rubicon Trail would be considered a cultural route in this context.

Understanding the nature of historic roads is more complex than working with historic buildings. Physical features, including the alignment and construction elements, define the road. Other intangible features, such the road's history or the use of it as an artery, can be significant. The elements of a road that might be significant in terms of landscape architecture can include the overall layout of the road, evidence that topography dictated the design, the

use of cut-and-fill and clearing operations, the landscape along the road and the effect of all of these on the experience of driving the road (USDI 2010).

After consideration of all of the above factors, the integrity of the significant features needs to be evaluated. Changes that have occurred over time and the effects those may have had on the original design intent need to be carefully assessed. For instance, some roads have been widened and grades lessened, changing the manner in which the driver experiences the road. Because of this, it is important to compare the original construction and design intent with extant features (USDI 2010).

Cultural routes often have multiple periods of significance as changes in transportation or use affected the evolution of the historic road. Researchers of the National Road in Pennsylvania, for example, identified four primary periods of significance—Early Trails and Military Roads (1750-1810), Construction of the National Road (1806-1834), Toll Road Era (1830-1900), and The Automobile Era (1890s to present). Each of these periods represents a particularly intensive time of activity, use and change (Marriott 2010:n.p.).

Cultural Landscapes

A Cultural Landscape is defined by the National Park Service as a "geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values" (USDI 2012). The Rubicon Trail is an excellent example of an historic recreational use area associated with the early tourism on the Georgetown Divide, as well as the site of the historic Jeepers Jamboree and on-going internationally recognized off-road excursions. It is nearly unchanged in its appearance and use and is prized for its historical importance to the Georgetown Divide, and to a large and diverse population of four-wheel drive enthusiasts. As a result, the Rubicon Trail should be considered a historic Cultural Landscape.

Significant Attributes of the Rubicon Trail

The integrity of the trail as an historic resource is dependent on the attributes associated with significant periods. These features remaining visible on the landscape. The Rubicon Trail is distinctive from other roads and trails and can often be identified simply through photographs. The seven attributes of the Rubicon Trail that identify it include:

Lane Width

The Rubicon Trail is a one-lane road or trail and was never intended for two-way traffic. Vehicles have always moved slowly over the route, so if opposing vehicles met, they simply let the other pass. Today the historic width (Figure 40) is evident at numerous locations and

Figure 40. Two Sections of the Original Road Showing Original Width (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann). The top section is along the shore of Buck Island Lake and is no longer part of the Rubicon Trail OHV route. The bottom photo was taken east of Lost Sluice.

characterizes a very narrow pathway by modern standards, barely more than the width of a Jeep or car. This path is often evident by the lack of vegetation and by the road bed materials.

Steep Grades

There are extremely steep (up to 35 percent) grades (Figure 41) on the Rubicon Trail. These grades historically have provided a challenge to wagons and, later, cars and even 4-wheel drive vehicles. The Rubicon Trail has long been avoided (in some cases), rerouted, and sometimes selected specifically for the difficulties associated with traveling on these steep inclines.

Road Materials

The natural road bed has never been greatly altered or paved. Locally quarried (Figure 42) materials were used historically to fill and stabilize the road bed. This material has been identified by Harald Pietschmann as a round cobblestone quarried from at least two locations just north of Wentworth Springs. More recently County Department of Transportation crews have added imported road base for the same purpose, which is considered ongoing maintenance. Pietschmann has successfully used the presence of the cobblestone to identify short sections of the historic road that have been bypassed by modern users (Figures 43 and 44). These bypassed sections with intact cobble fill provide an excellent idea of original conditions.

Blast Sites

There are numerous blast sites (Figure 45) along the route that identify its location, construction and maintenance over time. Pietschmann has mapped nearly 1,000 blast sites and indicated whether they date from the 1880s or the twentieth century by determining the drill method used to bore into the granite and place the charge. These blasts are a unique and visible testament to the road's design and workmanship over time.

Tree Blazes and Signage

There are few directional elements on the trail. The exceptions are tree blazes (Figure 46) and the remnants of historic signs (see Figure 19). Both of these features provide evidence of the historic age of the trail and its past maintenance and design.

Landmarks

There are certain nearly iconic landmarks along the trail, especially near Little Sluice, and some other overlooks that have become stopping points and are seen repeatedly in both historic and modern photographs (Figures 47, 48, 49, 50 and 51). They convey the natural setting and have become well-loved and named locations along the trail. Those familiar with the Rubicon Trail can immediately identify these locations in photographs, as well as the trail itself in general.

Figure 41. Hunsucker Grade, one of the steepest grades on the trail, in an unused section outside the current project area (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

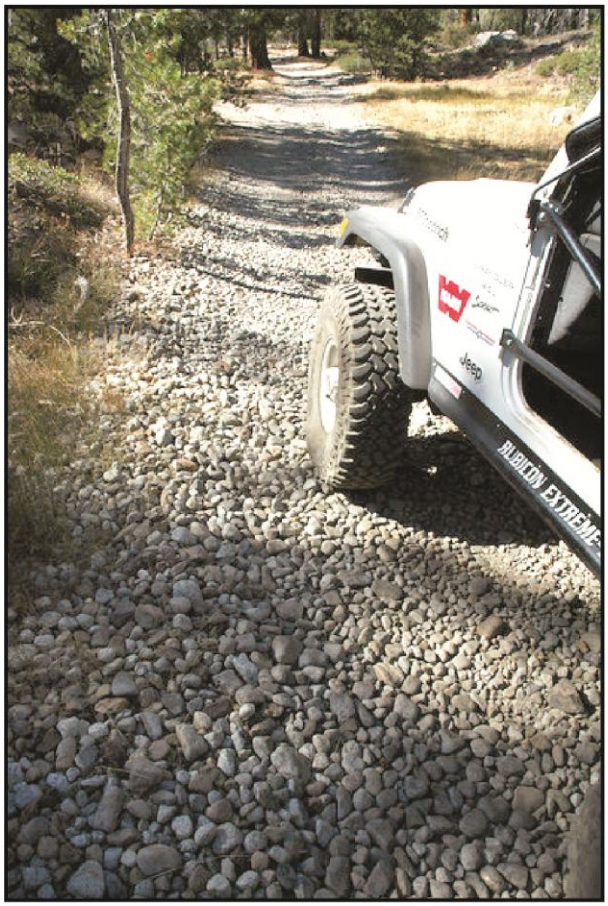

Figure 42. These two photographs show original materials. Left is the cobble from a quarry near Wentworth Springs. On the right is water-worn granite rubble at the bottom of Lost Sluice, possibly from Gerle Creek (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

Figure 43. Historic and Current Road Alignments (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).
Top: Historic route is on left above Postpile between Wentworth Springs and the Tie-In.
Bottom: Historic section near Soup Bowl next to trail used today, looking north.

Figure 44. Historic and Current Alignments (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).
Top: Historic route is left of tree group in this location near the Wentworth Springs Campground. The rounded gravel indicates historic road work.
Bottom: Historic trail is on far right in this location west of Little Sluice.

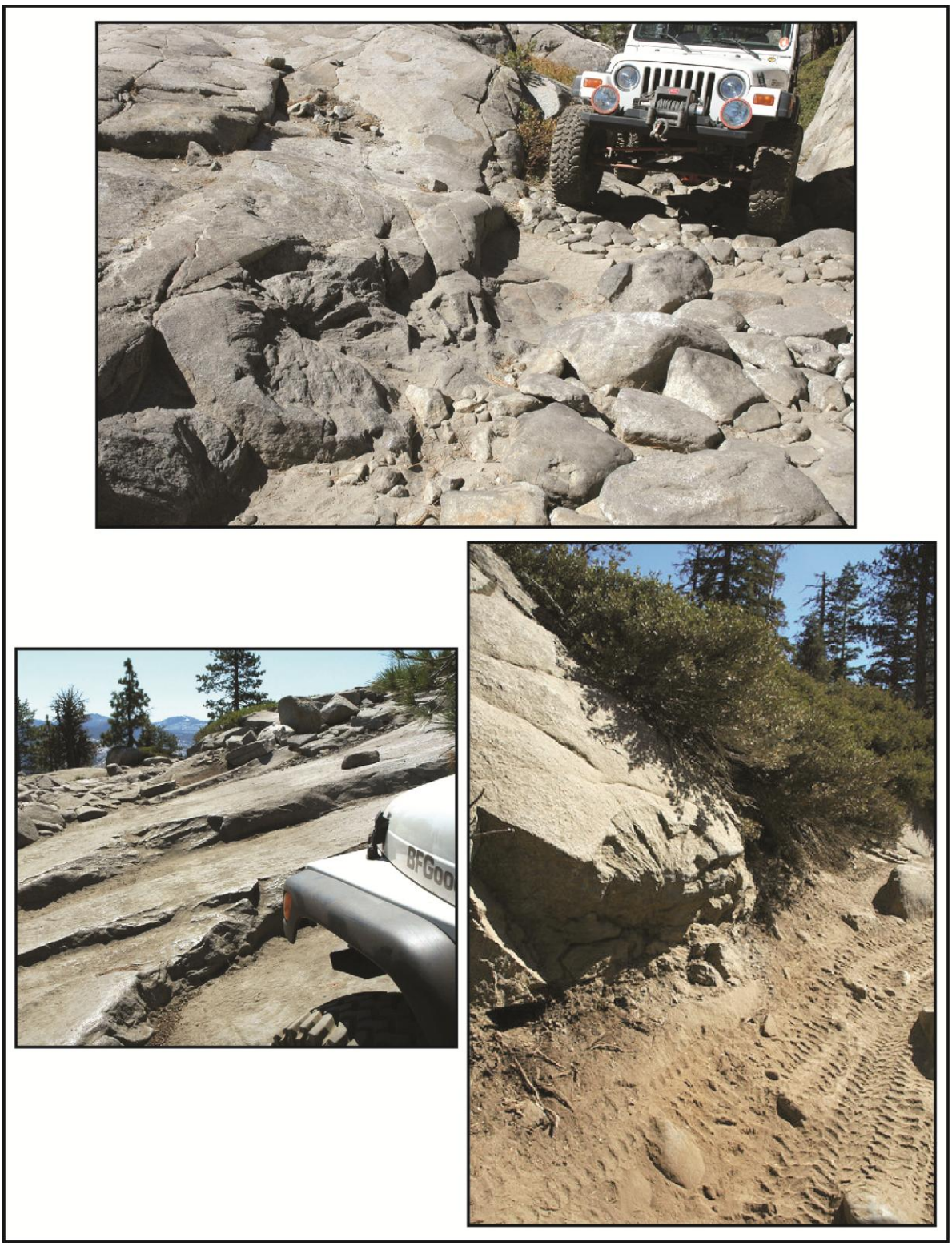

Figure 45. Blast sites along the trail (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann). These blast sites are everywhere on the trail and date from the 1880s to nearly the present day. The top photograph is at the top of Little Sluice. The bottom right is on Pardi Rock.

Figure 46. Trees with Blaze. Blazes were used to mark the route over open land (All Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

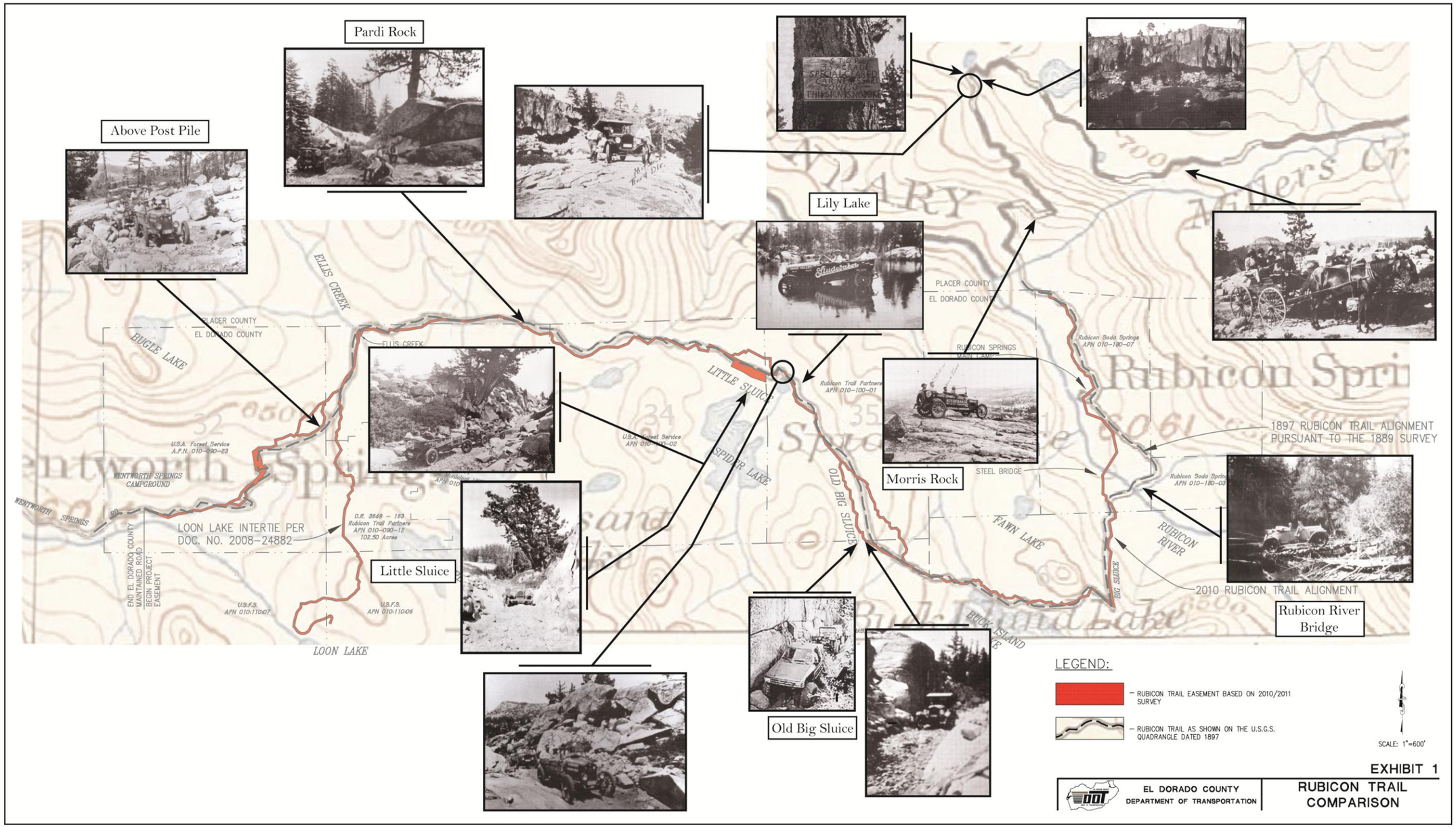

Figure 47. Landmarks on the Rubicon Trail. Here historic photos are located along the route. These spots are among the most recognizable on the Rubicon and have been photographed over the decades. Background image is a map created by the El Dorado County to compare 1887 road with its current alignment. The most pronounced alignment modification is near the crossing of the Rubicon River south of Rubicon Springs. This likely occurred when the County built a new wooden bridge at this location in 1939 to replace a haphazard crossing upstream.

Figure 48. Historic and Current Photos of Landmark Locations (here at Morris Rock) (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

Figure 49. Historic Photo compared with Modern Photograph indicates Landmark Granite Outcroppings. These two photographs were taken above Post Pile (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

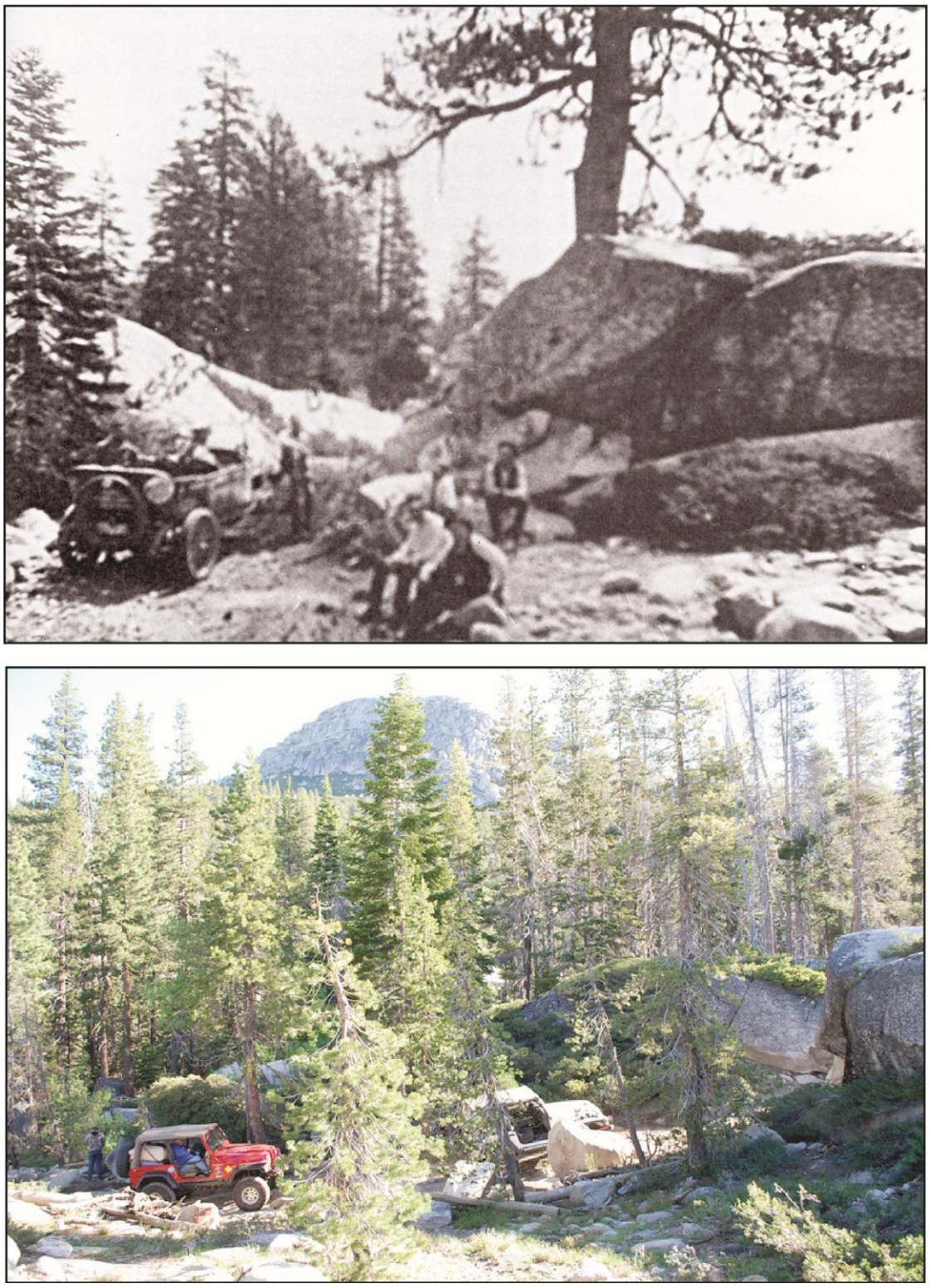

Figure 50. Current and Historic Photos of Landmark Locations (including these granite outcrops known today as Pardi Rock) provide evidence of strong integrity of Setting, Location, Materials, Design and Workmanship on the Trail (Courtesy of Harald Pietchsmann).

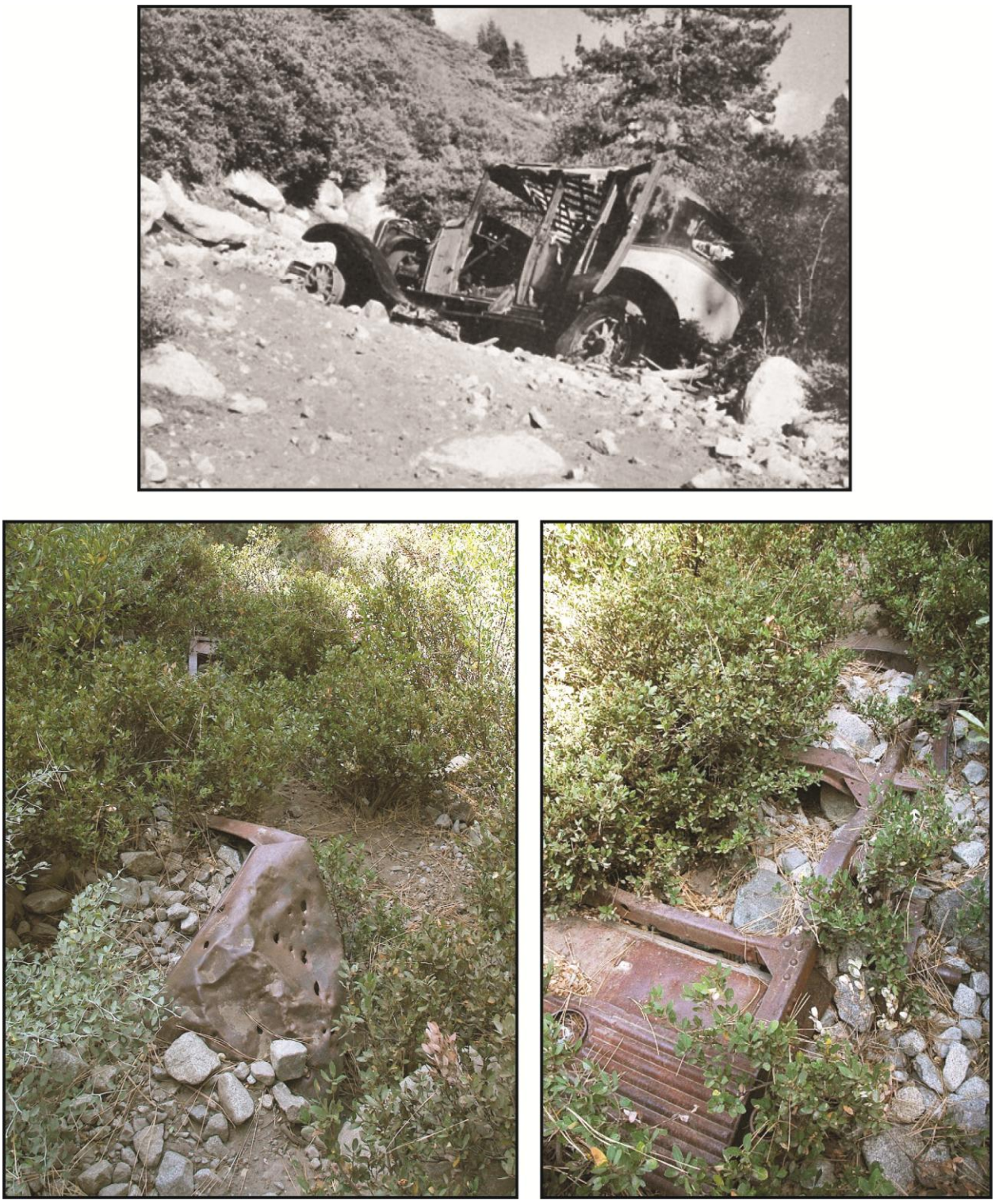

Figure 51. Cadillac Hill. Top: 1927 Cadillac not long after failing to make it out. **Bottom:** Parts of the Cadillac remain on the trail today, obscured by brush (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

National Register Assessment

The project area consists of a 12-mile-long section of the Rubicon Trail running from Airport Flat to the El Dorado/Placer County line. For the purposes of evaluation it is useful to separate these two segments into Segment A and Segment B respectively (Figure 52). Both sections are evaluated for their significance and integrity in the discussion below.

Because of its importance as a recreational road, the Rubicon Trail must be evaluated not only by all four criteria, but also under separate and distinct periods of significance. The following discussion provides assessments of both Segments A and B of the Rubicon Trail under criteria A, B, and C. Roads are linear resources and may have archaeological elements associated with their historic period use. Therefore, they are also evaluated under Criterion D for its scientific value.

The Rubicon Trail is emblematic of historic roads. Its origins as a Native American trail adapted by gold miners and early pioneers led to successive periods of improvement, maintenance and modifications performed by individuals, counties, the Forest Service and OHV enthusiasts over a period spanning decades. It is associated not only with the very early development of the recreational use of the Georgetown Divide, but also with the internationally famous Jeepers Jamboree off-road vehicle event. This event has been central to the identity of the town of Georgetown today dating to the establishment of the Jamboree in 1953.

Segment A, the segment from the Wentworth Springs Campground to the county line, is the roughest section of the road. It crosses large exposures of granite that have made travel by vehicles challenging, whether they be horse-drawn wagons or off-road vehicles. This segment is older than Segment B and overlaps with the historic pack trail through this area.

Segment B, the segment from Airport Flat to Wentworth Springs Campground, was originally a dead-end road that cut off of the GLTR and extended north to the Gerles' ranch. It was in place as early as the 1860s and used by those bringing livestock into the mountain pasturages in that area. Wentworth apparently connected the road from Gerles' to his resort, Wentworth Springs, around 1881. This created the easiest way to bring those travelers coming from the west to his hotel and camping area. This, in turn, led to the road being laid out between Wentworth's and the existing GLTR to the east, ultimately creating the current configuration of the project area.

Criterion A

Early Pack Trail Period (circa 1855 to 1887)

Short sections of Segment A include portions of the Georgetown to Lake Tahoe Road established sometime during the 1850s and developed more fully in the 1860s after the

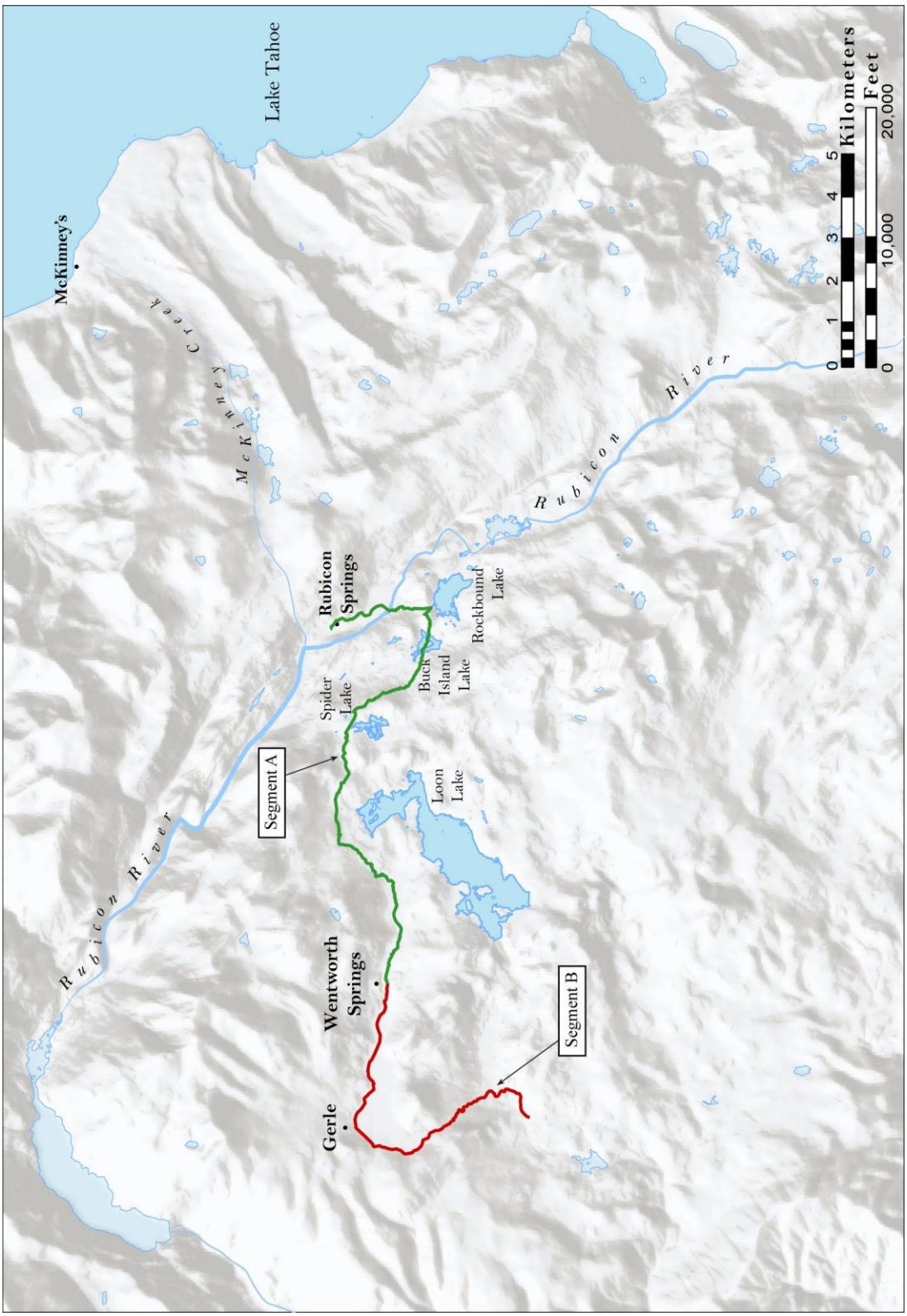

Figure 52. Segments A and B of the Rubicon Trail.

emergence of the Comstock silver rush in Nevada. The route was little more than a pack trail during this period, which ran along the western shore of a much smaller (pre-dam) Loon Lake, crossed the current Rubicon Trail, and continued north northeast, crossing the Rubicon River and then heading east to connect to the Rubicon Trail's current alignment to terminate at McKinney's on Lake Tahoe (see Figure 4). It is one of the least defined early Sierran trails, used ultimately by hunters, an occasional prospector and hay farmers. While there are other trails from this period that predate the gold rush, including sections of the Emigrant Trail near Highway 80 and the Mormon Emigrant Trail parallel and south of Highway 50, this trail represents the efforts of residents of Georgetown to establish their own direct connection to Lake Tahoe and the mining activity in Nevada. As such, Segment A of the Rubicon Trail is significant under Criterion A for this period.

Segment B was a dead-end road leading to the Gerles summer ranch area and was not part of a pack trail or any early trans-Sierran path. As such, Segment B lacks significance under Criterion A for this period.

Integrity

The integrity of materials, location, setting, feeling, association and design for Segment A from this period is sufficiently intact to reach the level of eligibility for the NRHP today. Segment A's location is visible to experienced trail personnel. Limited material evidence from this early period has been found, although that which has been found is unique. It is very likely that metal detection and more concrete survey work will provide more concrete evidence of the original location and use.

Evaluation

As a result of its significance as a very early rural pack trail, Segment A appears eligible under Criterion A on a local level for this period of significance.

Recreational Transportation Period (1887 to 1926)

The second period of significance reflects the Rubicon's use as a transportation route connecting Georgetown to the resorts along the trail and ultimately to Lake Tahoe, and extends from its establishment as a public highway by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in 1887 to 1926, when the Rubicon Springs Hotel closed. After that time the road fell into disrepair and the traveling public could no longer easily drive the route east of Wentworth Springs. The Rubicon and Wentworth resorts were part of the Progressive Era's health consciousness movement, when the healthy benefits of mineral waters were highly touted for their curative powers. This led to the widespread development of springs that lasted until the Great Depression. This road was traveled year after year by tourists from throughout the region, including the San Francisco Bay area and from as far away as Ireland. This period can be considered its "Recreational Transportation" period. Both segments represent the efforts during this period of the Georgetown Divide residents to develop its transportation network to

incorporate Lake Tahoe and mountain resorts based around mineral springs into its economy. Therefore they are significant under Criterion A for the trail's role in the economic growth and development of recreational use in the region.

Integrity

Very few changes have been made to Segment A and Segment B since 1926. On-going maintenance is not considered a change, but rather integral to its continued use. The Rubicon Trail is set in a stunning, rugged and pristine high Sierran environment that has remained essentially unchanged. The multitude of water resources, granite outcrops and scenic overviews distinguish the trail from many historic trails and have actually altered the location of the road over time. The lack of modern structures and development is a distinctive characteristic of the road and enhances the trail's sense of historic time and place. As a whole, Segments A and B retain integrity of materials, workmanship, design, location, association, setting and feeling related to its historic appearance.

Evaluation

Segments A and B represent the efforts of the Georgetown Divide residents to develop its transportation network to incorporate Lake Tahoe and mountain resorts based around mineral springs into its economy during the late nineteenth century. As a result of its importance as an early recreational tourism road and its high degree of integrity, Segments A and B appear eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A on a local level.

Jeep and Off-Road Vehicle Recreational Destination Period (1946 to present)

The third period of significance (Recreation Destination) dates to the project area's use specifically as an off-road vehicle excursion road, starting in 1946 when Jeeps first began appearing on the route, to the present, since this use continues today. It came to popular attention after the beginning of the Jeepers Jamboree event in 1952 (the first organized Jeep excursion in the United States) and has continued for 60 years. This one event is probably the most recognized historic aspect of the town of Georgetown and has been a source of great community pride. Today the Rubicon Trail is internationally recognized as one of the premier off-road routes in the United States. Thousands of people have come to the Rubicon Trail for recreation and off-road training, traveling from far distant corners of the world for the experience. In recognition of this benefit, the Forest Service signed an MOU with excursion organizers at Rubicon Springs to establish a framework to promote similar projects and activities nationwide. As a result, both segments are significant under this period.

Integrity

The trail segments are largely unchanged from this period of significance, which, in fact, extends to the present. Historic landmarks, road width, road base, and other elements remain intact. The trail runs right through the historic Jeepers Jamboree campgrounds, which remains

open to the public in its original intended use. There has been minor modification at Little Sluice by individuals who have moved boulders in some areas; however, these modifications constitute only a very short segment of the trail. They are also reversible and do not affect integrity. As a whole, both segments of the trail retain integrity of materials, workmanship, design, location, association, setting and feeling related to its historic appearance.

Evaluation

Both Segment A and Segment B are significant during this period as part of the Rubicon Trail and its role in the economic development of the region and for its contribution to the expansion of recreational uses on public lands across the country. It was the setting of the first organized off-road vehicle event in the United States and is an internationally famous OHV road. As a result of its importance (as an early recreational destination road) and its strong integrity, the Rubicon Trail (both Segments A and B) appears eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A on a local, state and national level.

Criterion B

Early Pack Trail Period (circa 1855 to 1887)

There are no individuals noted in state or local history associated with the early historic development or use of either Segment A or Segment B. As a result, it is not a significant period under Criterion B.

Evaluation

Due to lack of significance, neither segment of the trail is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B.

Recreational Destination Transportation Period (1887 to 1926)

Numerous individuals have been credited with either maintaining, constructing or improving sections of Segment A of the Rubicon Trail during the historic resort era. This includes the Hunsucker brothers, who are credited with improving the grade and road between McKinney's (or at least Miller Lake) and the Rubicon Springs; Sierra Nevada Clark, who maintained and likely improved the same section; and Nathan Wentworth, who definitely constructed the segment between Gerle's ranch and Wentworth Springs (leading to the west terminus of the Rubicon Trail). While these names are notable in local history, each one maintained or constructed only a short section of road or adjacent road. Additionally, it is impossible to credit any of these individuals with specific features or use of the road.

Evaluation

As a result of lack of significance, neither Segment A nor Segment B is eligible as a National Register property during this period under Criterion B.

Jeep and Off-Road Vehicle Recreational Period (1946 to present)

One individual stands out in the development of off-road vehicle use of the Rubicon Trail, including segments A and B; Mark A. Smith. Smith is often referred to as the father of the off-road movement in the United States and his core of operations has always been the Rubicon Trail. His involvement stretches over 61 years, from 1951 (when he first ran the trail) to 2012 (as he continues to run organized groups on the trail). Smith was the first to suggest the idea of the Jeepers Jamboree after running the route himself in 1951. He is one of the founding members of the nationally famous event.

Smith took the experience to another level, working with the Jeep Corporation to use the trail as an engineering test course. He carried its fame to the east coast, actually recreating the toughest sections of the Rubicon in Chelsea, Michigan, as well as at American military bases. Smith's activities over 60 years have brought tens of thousands to the trail for personal enjoyment, as parts of organized excursions, and as off-road drivers' training for law enforcement groups, military training forces, the Forest Service and individuals. It is reasonable to assume that without more than half a century of Mark Smith's work, the Rubicon Trail would not be nearly as famous as it is today.

Smith's experiences on the Rubicon led him to develop similar excursions throughout the United States. In 1993, the Forest Service actually issued a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for his organization establishing a relationship between the Forest Service and Smith's company, Jeep Jamboree USA. The MOU acknowledged the benefits of his work and created an agreement for the company to conduct workshops and similar excursions on FS land throughout the United States.

Smith also led the 1978-79 *Expedicion de las Americas* — a 20,000-mile odyssey from the bottom of South America to the top of North America, crossing the infamous Darien Gap that pushed the previous boundaries for off-road travel — and headed the 1987 Camel Trophy expedition in Madagascar, the world's premier off-road competition. Smith has been inducted into the Off-Road Hall of Fame and is a certified member of the internationally recognized Explorers Club headquartered in New York City, a prestigious group that can only be joined by invitation. He has also been named "Four-Wheeler of the Decade" by the United Four Wheel Drive Association. He has clearly earned the title of legend in the off-roading community.

Criterion B applies to properties associated with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented. Persons "significant in our past" refers to individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, State, or national historic context. Smith has become nationally (and even internationally) known for his

association and work on the trail and throughout the United States as an off-road specialist and trainer. The criterion is generally restricted to those properties that illustrate (rather than commemorate) a person's important achievements. The off-road section of the Rubicon Trail is the perfect illustration of his achievement and represents the core of his activities throughout the last 60 years.

While it is unusual for a living person to be considered significant during their lifetime, there are exceptions. The NRHP bulletin indicates that properties associated with living persons usually are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register because often there has not been sufficient time elapsed to assess both the person's field of endeavor and his/her contribution to that field. Also, the person's active participation in the endeavor sometimes needs to be finished for this historic perspective to emerge. However, Mark Smith's legacy and importance to off-road driving is firmly established. For over 60 years, he has developed the emerging sport of 4-wheel drive excursions and spread its safe and environmentally friendly practice throughout the United States. As a result, his qualifications as a historically significant person seem well established.

Integrity

Both segments A and B of the Rubicon Trail today have strong integrity of materials, workmanship, design, setting, association and location from the period during which Mark Smith has been involved with, promoted, and worked on the trail.

Evaluation

Segments A and B of the Rubicon Trail appear eligible on a local level under Criterion B for the association with Mark A. Smith, the legendary and internationally recognized originator of the Jeepers Jamboree and the foremost promoter of the sport of off-road driving skills and of the Rubicon Trail itself.

Criterion C

Early Pack Trail Period (circa 1855 to 1887)

As mentioned previously, portions of Segment A overlap the route of the early GLTR. This early period on the GLTR is difficult to pinpoint precisely. The sections of the project area that may have been used during this early period likely comprised at least 30 percent of Segment A. As a result, this period does rise to the level that makes Segment A eligible under Criterion C for listing on the NRHP. Segment B, however, consists of the dead-end road to Gerle's and of roadway established after 1886 and, as a result, would most likely not have been used for the pack trail use.

Integrity

Integrity of this earliest use is visible on the trail in scattered locations. Numerous historians and archaeologists have walked the former route of the pack trail, searching for evidence of its location. In recent months, much has been discovered, although the exact locations remains confidential to protect important historical resources. More field survey and research will strengthen the visual evidence in the field to constitute strong integrity of the road. It is likely that future metal detection by qualified personnel will locate further evidence of the trail's location by finding horse-shoes, wagon bolts and other debris associated with nineteenth-century trail use. Other examples of road construction may also be present, but currently unobserved. Given what is currently known, Segment A has sufficient integrity of workmanship, design, and location.

Evaluation

Given its significance and integrity, Segment A is eligible under Criterion C for this period of use at a local level of significance. Segment B was not part of the pack trail and is not eligible under Criterion C for this period.

Recreational Destination Transportation Period (1887 to 1926)

Criterion C relates to properties that embody the distinct characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represent a significant and distinguishable entity. The remote mountain road was constructed during the period when small crews were limited to the use of hand-tools, small-scale blasting and the use of locally quarried materials. The trail exhibits rustic road construction technology no longer practiced in California. This includes one-lane width, cobbled road beds and blasting scars indicative of nineteenth-century drilling practices.

Integrity

Segment A has remained largely unchanged since the 1887 to 1926 period, with the exception of the addition of a bridge over the Rubicon River south of Rubicon Springs in the 1940s. It retains its original design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling and association. It also contains some of the features that distinguish it from modern road ways, including one-lane road width, extremely steep grades, cobble road base, tree blazes, and blasting scars.

Segment B is largely unchanged as well. The biggest changes were made by El Dorado County when the original fords of Gerle Creek were replaced with bridges in 1927, 1937 and again in 1963. This also resulted in realignment of some portions of the road that has led to original sections being abandoned. However, Segment B (Figure 53) still has integrity of design, workmanship, materials, setting, association, location and feeling associated with the 1880s to 1926 period.

Evaluation

Segment A exhibits rustic road construction technology no longer practiced in California, including one-lane width, minimal adaptation of the roadway to existing topography, small-scale blasting of granite outcroppings, tree blazes and other rudimentary directional elements, and short steep grades. The bridges and creek crossings are not historically significant aspects of the Rubicon Trail and are less significant to its overall integrity and eligibility as a National Register property. As a result of its importance as a strong representative example of a rural historic road and its strong integrity, Segment A of the Rubicon Trail appears eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion C on a local level.

Segment B does exhibit early road construction efforts, despite the original fords on Gerle Creek being replaced with concrete bridges in 1937 and 1963, outside the period of significance. While this has diminished its integrity, Segment B does appear eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion C on a local level of significance.

Jeep and Off-Road Vehicle Recreational Period (1946 to present)

The Rubicon Trail, including both Segments A and B, is significant as the setting of the Jeepers Jamboree, the first organized off-road vehicle event in the United States, and as an internationally famous OHV road. The Rubicon Trail has been in continuous seasonal use for the past 65 years by off-road vehicles. It has features and landmarks that are unique to the trail and sought specifically for use by excursionists. Today these locations (including those more than 50 years old) are named $1000 Hill, Arnold's Rock, Big Sluice, Cadillac Hill, Chappie Rock. Devil's Postpile, Dollar Hole, Egg Rock, Gas Can Hill, Gatekeeper, Granite Bowl, Granite Slab, Indian Trail, Kaufmann's Corner, Little Sluice, Log Bridge, Lost Sluice, Martini Tree, Micro Sluice, Morris' Rock, Nobi's Rock, Observation Point, Old Sluice, Pardi's Rock, Rock Garden, Sawtooth, Scout Hole, Slab, Soup Bowl, Syd's Grave, V-Rock, Walker Hill, Walker Rock, and Winter Camp. These unique features have also been important for training purposes for law enforcement, military personnel and individuals who either need or desire to master vehicular travel over unengineered and rugged terrain.

Figure 53. Segment B, Showing Integrity of Original Trail Width and Materials (Courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

The Rubicon Trail is recognized internationally as the site of the first organized off-road vehicle event in the United States. It is considered the premier off-road course and elements of the road have even been reconstructed in distant locations to try to replicate the challenge.

Integrity

There have been minor alterations to Segment A during this period. For the most part, drivers follow the same route, especially through the landmark challenges. These include Micro Sluice, Little Sluice, Big Sluice, Lost Sluice and one site with three names: Old Sluice, True Sluice and Sluice Box. There has been some vandalism in these sections, where rock-crawlers have pushed boulders into tight spots. These alterations, however, are reversible and do not constitute a permanent loss of integrity. Additionally, erosion from spinning tires has removed some original road materials and caused the trail to deepen (Figure 54). The Rubicon Trail retains its original design, materials, workmanship, location, setting and association. It contains elements that distinguish it as an off-road vehicle route, including its original narrow width, challenging landmarks (such as the sluices), rough road base, and boulder obstacles.

Evaluation

Both Segments A and B are important parts of the Rubicon Trail, the epitome of a historic off-road trail, and appear eligible on a local, state and national level under Criterion C as historic properties modified and designed as a recreational off-road trail.

Criterion D

Early Pack Trail Period (circa 1855 to 1887)

Segment B was not part of the original trail route, although it did include portions of Segment A. Some distinct sections of road related to the early pack trail period have been identified through extensive survey. It is highly likely that additional research and on-site inspection will reveal more of the original trail metal detection of the trail will likely expose associated artifacts, such as horseshoes and wagon parts that can be used to interpret this early period use. Metal detection of the trail will likely expose associated artifacts, such as horseshoes and wagon parts that can be used to interpret this early period of use. Therefore, Segment A is significant under Criterion D for its research value associated with the early pack trail use.

Integrity

There is evidence that some features and artifacts related to this early use of the trail have been identified. At present, Segment A retains integrity of setting, association, location, design, materials and feeling to this period of significance.

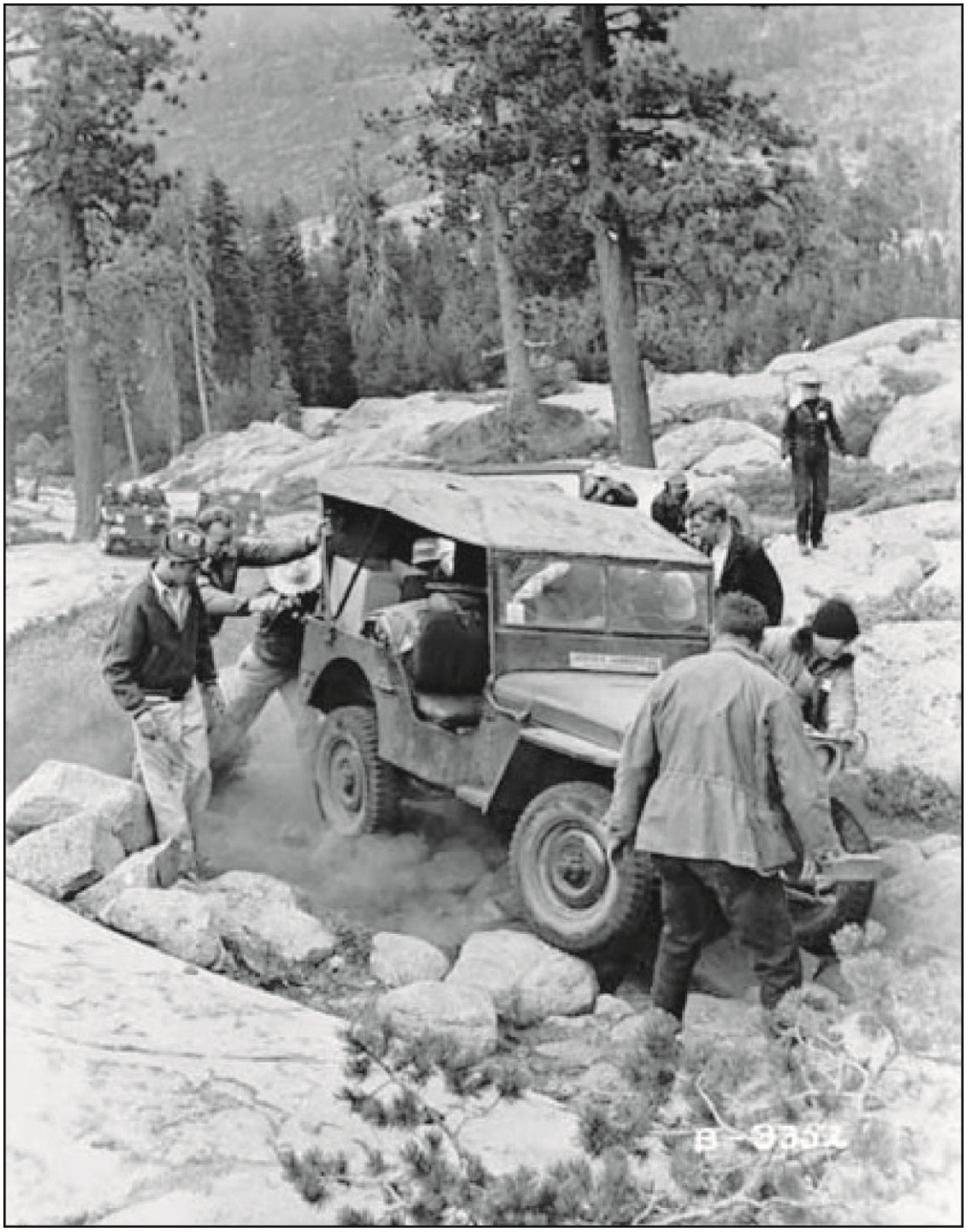

Figure 54. Road traffic has led to erosion on some parts of the trail. Here spinning tires are disturbing the soil surface and raising dust. (from the Eastman's Originals Collection, Department of Special Collections, General Library, University of California, Davis, courtesy of Harald Pietschmann).

Evaluation

Segment A of the Rubicon Trail appears to meet Criterion D during this period of significance at a local level. Further study of the area may indicate additional locations of the historic route.

Recreational Destination Transportation Period (1887 to 1926)

Intensive surveys by the ENF in 2011 identified a minimum of 15 abandoned sections of Segment A of the Rubicon Trail between Wentworth Springs and Government Meadows, located just south of Rubicon Springs. Character-defining elements that were used to identify these segments include blasting scars, blazed trees, narrow width and compacted cobble or granite road bed. Other possible abandoned segments were also identified based on historic map reviews and swales across open ground. These abandoned sections likely were constructed during this period of significance and have the potential to contribute to the understanding in the evolution of the Rubicon Trail through time. Therefore, they appear to qualify for the National Register under Criterion D.

Integrity

The identified abandoned segments appear to retain integrity of material, design, location, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. The narrow one-lane width, blasting scars, some blazed trees and cobble road bed are defining characteristics of these abandoned sections.

Evaluation

Abandoned segments of the Rubicon Trail in Segments A and B reflect the Recreational Destination Transportation Period and represent the original design of the route as a county road. Their research value lies in the interpretation of changes in the route through time and alterations that may have occurred to accommodate the automobile travel. Therefore, the abandoned segments appear to meet Criterion D at a local level of significance.

Jeep and Off-Road Vehicle Recreational Period (1946 to present)

Post-World War II use of the trail has been primarily by either small groups or organized excursions. The Jeepers Jamboree or subsequent organizations have long established strict codes of ethics for packing out both trash and human waste. While individuals may have left behind trash scatters or deposits, as well as parts of their vehicles, any material or artifacts left behind would be common materials and not historically significant or likely to add to our understanding of the use of the trail, the people who used it during this period or of scientific value.

Integrity

There are no directly-associated artifacts affiliated with the Rubicon Trail during this period of use. The abandoned routes have no defining characteristics and do not have integrity.

Evaluation

Neither Segment A nor B of the Rubicon Trail qualifies for Criterion D under this period of significance because of a lack of research value and potential to yield additional information that is important to understanding the period associated with the Jeepers.

Traditional Cultural Properties

The 1992 amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) established "Properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization" (Section 101(d)(6) of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1992). The amendment established that properties affiliated with traditional religious and cultural importance to a distinct cultural group, such as a Native American or Native Hawaiian group were eligible for the National Register as a new property type designation, recognized as a traditional cultural property or TCP. TCPs include built or natural locations (such as Spirit Mountain in Nevada), areas, or features considered sacred or culturally significant by a group or people. While TCPs are closely associated with Native American Cultures, a site need not be associated with a Native American cultural group to qualify as a TCP for the purposes of the NRHP. However, they have been primarily identified as those associated with an ethnic or religious group with a shared traditional culture.

The Rubicon Trail is not associated with any religious, Native American, Native Hawaiian, cultural heritage, or ethnic group with a shared cultural tradition. It is associated with the sport of off-road driving, but that affiliation does not meet the criteria set forth in Section 101(d)(6). As a result, the Rubicon Trail is not considered to be a Traditional Cultural Property.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The portion of the Rubicon Trail studied in this report is located about 40 miles east of Georgetown in El Dorado County, California. Eldorado National Forest hired PAR Environmental Services, Inc. (PAR) to assess the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of the trail. While there are numerous historic sites and branch trails associated with the trail, they were not included in this effort, which focused specifically on the Rubicon Trail itself. This work was completed in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations found in 36 CFR 800. The scope of work entailed archival research, interviewing knowledgeable persons, coordination with Forest Service employees, and report preparation.

Table 1. National Register Evaluations for Segment A (Wentworth Springs to County Line)

Criterion	Significance	Period of significance	Eligible	Not Eligible	Level of significance
A	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1880*	*X*		*Local*
	Recreational Transportation	*1887-1926*	*X*		*Local*
	Recreational Off-Road Destination	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local, State and National*
B	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*		*X*	
	Recreational Transportation	*1887-1926*		*X*	
	Mark Smith Off-Road Excursion Development	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local*
C	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*	*X*		*Local*
	Early Rural Road Construction	*1887-1926*	*X*		*Local*
	Off-Road Vehicle Route	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local, State and National*
D	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*	*X*		*Local*
	Early Rural Road	*1887-1926*	*X*		*Local*
	Off-Road Era	*1946-present*		*X*	

Table 2. National Register Evaluations for Segment B (Airport Flat to Wentworth Springs)

Criterion	Significance	Period of significance	Eligible	Not Eligible	Level of significance
A	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*		*X*	
	Recreational Transportation	*1887-1926*	*X*		*Local*
	Recreational Off-Road Destination	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local, State and National*
B	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*		*X*	
	Recreational Transportation	*1887-1926*		*X*	
	Mark Smith Off-Road Excursion Development	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local*
C	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*		*X*	
	Early Rural Road Construction	*1887-1926*		*X*	
	Off-Road Vehicle Route	*1946-present*	*X*		*Local, State and National*
D	*Pack Trail*	*Circa 1855-1887*		*X*	
	Early Rural Road	*1887-1926*	*X*		*Local*
	Off-Road Era	*1946-present*		*X*	

Portions of the Rubicon Trail appear eligible for the National Register under different criteria, within separate periods of significance, and on either a local, state or national level. These determinations are presented in the table above.

The Rubicon Trail (Segments A and B) represents the efforts of the residents of the Georgetown Divide to develop its transportation network to incorporate Lake Tahoe and mountain resorts based around mineral springs into its economy during the late nineteenth century. It also is significant as the first organized off-road vehicle event in the United States and as an internationally famous OHV road.

The Rubicon Trail has three periods of significance. The first period extends from its use as a transportation route connecting Georgetown and Lake Tahoe, dating from earliest use beginning around 1855 to 1887, when the owners of mountain resorts began altering the road. The second period is related to its use for tourism, carrying travelers to the resorts that

developed along the trail beginning around 1887 to 1926 when the Rubicon Springs Hotel closed. After that year, the road fell into disrepair and the traveling public could no longer easily drive the route. Its third period of significance dates to its use specifically as an off-road vehicle excursion road, starting in 1946 when Jeeps first began appearing on the route, and continues to the present, as it remains among the premiere OHV recreational trails in the United States.

Integrity for the first period of significance is hard to determine. The early pack trail and wagon road overlapped with Segment A. It had few improvements that would indicate today where it was located. Despite these challenges, evidence does exist on the ground of the historic location, although more information is needed to bring these to light. Because of this, Segment A retains sufficient integrity to be considered eligible under the first period of significance (1855 to 1880) under criteria A, C and D. Segment B was not part of the trail.

The second period of significance (1887 to 1926) relates to its use as a destination-oriented road carrying tourists to the resorts along the trail and at Lake Tahoe. The trail's integrity for the second period of significance (tourism destination travel) of location, association, setting, materials, workmanship and design is strong. As a result, both Segments A and B appear eligible under criteria A, C and D for listing in the NRHP for this period of significance at a local level.

The third period of significance extends from 1946 to the present and relates to its use as a recreational off-road vehicle excursion destination. The Rubicon Trail retains a high degree of integrity from this period of use. As a result, both Segments A and B of the internationally famous Rubicon Trail appear eligible under Criteria A, B (association with Mark Smith) and C for listing in the NRHP for this period of significance at a local level.

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