Lake Tahoe unfolds along slice of Rim Trail



Outstanding views of Lake Tahoe along the Tahoe Rim Trail near Spooner Summit. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

SPOONER SUMMIT – If you think Spooner Summit is busy now, you really would not have liked traveling this route more than a century ago.

A dirt road and a railroad line were in this area in the late 1800s. This was a critical link between Placerville and Virginia City during the Comstock era. It was all about logging and silver in those days. Much of the wood that was harvested was used to build the mines in Nevada.

Today Spooner Summit the road – or Highway 50 – is the main

path between South Shore and Carson City. But the summit itself is the gateway to some spectacular hiking.

At the trailhead on the south side of the highway are numerous signs depicting the history of the area.

“In 1860, French-Canadian entrepreneur Michele E. Spooner acquired about 640 acres of land with the idea of starting up a sawmill, a shingle mill and a hotel. He named the area Spooner Station. Ten years and several business partners later, Spooner had acquired interest in flumes, a toll road, and other businesses, and controlled a total of 1,840 acres surrounding the summit that now bears his name,” reads one of the signs.

Spooner sold his flumes and toll road in 1872 to Duane Bliss and H.M. Yeringon.

It was President William McKinley who in 1899 created the Lake Tahoe Forest Reserve. This agency predated today’s U.S. Forest Service. When that government body came into being in 1905 this land became part of the USFS.

The four-lane road was built in the 1950s.

A spectacular aspen grove marks the start of the trailhead. Yellows and oranges were shimmering in the sun last Saturday. The day use area is awash in autumn colors.

We had our choice of destinations: Genoa Peak Road 3 miles, Ridgetop Lake View 5 miles, Kingsbury Trailhead 12, Kingsbury Grade 14, or Tahoe City 102.

These are all along a section of the Tahoe Rim Trail that neither Sue nor I had been on before. One day we’ll hike all 165 miles. We might set a record for the most number of years for full-time residents to do so.

I was hoping to do an out-and-back to the Ridgetop Lake View. However, my pulled muscles from a tennis match a couple weeks

earlier said, “You have got to be kidding.” We did the 6-mile roundtrip to Genoa Peak Road.

We are thinking of finishing the other side of the trail to Kingsbury on our bikes next year.

A couple mountain bikers passed us and there was clear evidence equestrians had been out recently. Those who were hiking were bundled up to ward off the crisp chill in the air, which became more pronounced as an afternoon breeze picked up.

While the largest dose of fall colors is at the start of the hike, evidence of the changing seasons dots various spots along the way.

“It’s a collision of seasons,” is how Sue described the mountainside in the distance with the aspens and snow.

Various groves of Douglas fir made her want to pick out a Christmas tree right then and there. Many were not more than a Charlie Brown tree.

While we didn’t make it to the ridge view, there are ridges and there are views. And they are outstanding views of Lake Tahoe. And being so high, they are also vast views.

Spooner Summit is at 7,150 feet and the hike is a gradual climb, with the steepest (and it’s not really steep) section at the start.

Briefly the colorful tree-lined Spooner Lake on the other side of the highway is visible.

The single-track trail is in great shape. Splotches of snow on the ground are a clear sign winter is closer than summer. Just don’t be fooled by the first road you come to. It’s not Genoa so you have not gone 3 miles.

—-

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 east. At the top of Spooner Summit on the right before descending into the valley is a parking lot. If the lot is full, there are also spaces on the highway.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)