

The expedition that forever affected Tahoe resources

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

Ever wonder why Lake Tahoe is split down the middle, with one half in California and the other half in Nevada? Are the two states just that good at sharing? The history of the split dates back to the 1840s and the early explorers of the American West, when mapmakers were beginning to chart the unknown territory, and California joined the Union as a state.

Lt. John C. Fremont, an American military officer and later a candidate for the U.S. presidency, was tasked with the first of three government surveying expeditions in 1843, according to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society. His team spent nine months charting the Northwest before finally heading south and coming upon the friendly Paiute tribe that camped on the land by Pyramid Lake, the geographical sink of the Truckee River Basin that sits 71 miles northeast of Lake Tahoe.

Sarah Winnemucca, granddaughter of the chief of the Paiute tribe at the time, writes of the meeting in "Life of Among the Piutes," "My grandfather met [Fremont], and they were soon friends ... Capt. Fremont gave my grandfather the name Capt. Truckee, and he also called the river after him. Truckee is an Indian word, it means all right or very well."

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