# History: Snowshoe Thompson created a legacy with his Sierra treks

**Publisher's note:** ***This is reprinted from the January-February 1989 Lake Tahoe Historical Society Newsletter.***

From the beginning, John A. Thompson was the stuff of which legends are made. Tall, rangy and taciturn, he had come to America from Norway as a boy. When the mountain passes of the Sierra were closed by snow, both California and the Carson Valley were cut off from the rest of the country, isolated from news, supplies and mail. Thompson, to whom snow was a playground not an obstacle, made a pair of Norwegian snowshoes from a downed oak tree on his farm. His "snowshoes" were 10 foot long flat boards, 4 inches wide, weighing 25 pounds. He could travel faster than anyone on conventional snowshoes.

In 1857, he began carrying mail and supplies from Placerville to the Carson Valley. It took 3 days on the eastward trip and took 2 days coming back. He carried no blankets or pistols because of their weight but he found ways to keep warm, to protect himself and sleep a little on each trek. It was the birth of a legend as well as the ski industry. Snowshoe would be amazed.

With two teams of horses and two sleighs, he also met loaded freight wagons at the snow line and took their goods across the mountains on his sleighs.

By the time he returned from his first trip, he was not only in business he was on the way to becoming a living symbol of the hardy, strong individual admired by American. In February of 1857, Hutchings' California Magazine carried his story and the most famous and often reprinted sketch of him. His name

and exploits became known throughout the country and gave an added dimension to the character of the west.

He continued his winter crossing of the Sierra for twenty years but, in spite of weeks spent in Washington D.C. in 1874, Congress never paid him more than a pittance for carrying the U.S. mail for 20 years!

At the age of 49, John Thompson died in 1876. He remains a symbol of the Sierra, of rugged westerners and of many tales illustrating it.

---

# Help available for people with gambling problem

The Alcohol and Drug Programs of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency is reminding residents that help is available for people who may be struggling with gambling issues.

March 4–10 is National Problem Gambling Awareness Week.

“Gamblers often don’t realize they have a problem, Christy White, supervising health education coordinator with ADP, said in a press release. “What starts out as an occasional, fun activity can slowly become a compulsive addiction … one that drains the person of their time, resources and relationships and can lead to other problems such as substance abuse and depression. Getting help is the key to breaking the cycle.”

**Warning signs of problem gambling include:**

Losing time from work due to gambling;

Repeatedly promising to stop gambling, yet returning to it again and again;

Borrowing money to gamble or to pay gambling debts;

Lying to cover up gambling activity;

Suffering from feelings of remorse or depression due to gambling;

Gambling until the last dollar is gone.

The California Office of Problem Gambling Helpline offers free, confidential help over the phone at 800.426.2537. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays.

Callers to the helpline can receive over-the-phone counseling, referral to a treatment therapist, and information about resources such as Gamblers Anonymous, and other help.

---

# Opinion: A big thanks to Harrah’s Heros

**To the community,**

Bread & Broth would like to thank the Harrah’s Heros for once again contributing to our cause. Harrah’s Heros continues to give service to our community. Throughout the year they have helped financially and with staff. Volunteers from Harrah’s Heros spent the day helping Bread & Broth volunteers serve

those in need a hot meal on a cold night, and were happy to do so.

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe in large part because of the generosity of the local community.

A $250 sponsorship covers the cost of food and beverages for the approximately 100 people who visit each Monday evening. To find out how your family or business can Adopt A Day of Nourishment, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

**Bread & Broth**

---

# Biathlon event for rookies on the West Shore

Strap on your cross country skis and get ready to live the thrill of Olympic competition.

The West Shore Business Association and Turning Point Tahoe are sponsoring a Citizens Against the Clock event which puts skiers of all ages and abilities on a short cross country ski course followed by an electronic rifle shooting range. The idea is to provide a safe and family friendly way to experience this Olympic sport.

State Park volunteers will be on hand for March 11 10am-1pm event at Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore.

Turning Point Tahoe will be providing adaptive skiing options.

Each skier will be electronically timed and the results posted. The event is free. There is an $8 per vehicle parking fee.

For more information, call (530) 583.3074.

---

# NLTRA puts up money to help acquire Tahoe City golf course

Funding for Tahoe City Public Utility District to buy the golf course on the north side of the downtown business corridor is coming together.

North Lake Tahoe Resort Association plans for contribute up to $2.6 million toward the acquisition.

Placer County officials will work with NLTRA on financing options to ensure the golf course contribution does not affect funding for other North Lake Tahoe projects, including the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project.

TCPUD has an agreement to purchase the golf course for $5 million and is negotiating a final sales price with the family that currently owns the course.

The resort association’s investment would come from transient occupancy tax revenue Placer County collects in North Lake Tahoe and distributes to the association for transportation and infrastructure projects, tourism marketing and visitor information services. Under the association’s TOT agreement with the county, infrastructure expenditures must be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The golf course site includes five parcels that cover approximately 45 acres, making it the largest land holding in Tahoe City.

A community visioning and planning process will be used to help determine the property's long-term use.

Tahoe City PUD has lined up several potential partners to help finance the golf course acquisition. Placer County is expected to consider a direct contribution of $100,000 in park dedication fees and $200,000 from its open space fund at a future board meeting.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

---

# From record hot in Lake Tahoe back to winter white and cold

**By Kathryn Reed**

TWIN BRIDGES – Sierra-at-Tahoe could have been called Bare-at-Tahoe this weekend based on the amount of skin that was showing. After all, South Lake Tahoe broke a record March 4 with a high of 59. The previous record of 58 was set in 1986.

Truckee at 61 degrees was three degrees shy of tying the record high set in 1914. Minden was 73 on Sunday, tying the record high set in 1925.



The weather station at the top of Grandview at Sierra-at-Tahoe is expected get some action March 6. Photos/Kathryn Reed

But today will be the complete opposite – or at least more normal for early March. The high is expected to be 31 degrees in South Lake Tahoe – three degrees warmer than the forecasted overnight low. And tonight the mercury is expected to drop to 10 degrees in South Tahoe.

“Wind is going to be the main problem,” Brian O’Hara, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said of the cold front that moved into the area last night.

Ski resorts are hoping the on-again, off-again winter the Lake Tahoe Basin has been experiencing is on again.

“There is a direct correlation to the snow we’re getting and the business we are seeing,” Steve Hemphill, spokesman for Sierra, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are very optimistic about March.”

The parking lot Saturday was definitely more full than the week before. Despite the added people and snow, hardly anyone

was enjoying Castle – and it was groomed to perfection.

Last week Sierra added 41 inches to its snowpack, with a couple inches forecast for Tuesday.

Most resorts in the Lake Tahoe area received more than 3 feet of snow in the last week.

Heavenly Mountain Resort opened Mott Canyon, some of its expert terrain, on March 5. But clearly it's not a normal season when in March only 3,600 of the 4,800 acres are open.

"We are still making snow whenever possible," Sally Gunter, Heavenly spokeswoman, said.

Homewood Mountain Resort on the West Shore is spinning all its chairlifts.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort is one of the few areas with all of its runs open. They are expecting to get up to 6 inches as this storm comes through.

With the announcement of Vail Resorts buying this resort near the Carson Pass, more people have been making the drive to check it out, according to spokesman Michael Dalzell.

"Kirkwood is doing very well this spring," Dalzell said.

To keep people driving to Kirkwood the resort has original events lined up like the March 16-18 Freeride Flow Festival. It combines big mountain riding, music and yoga.

Resorts are not releasing closing dates yet. Mid-April is the norm. Most areas like to get through Easter to have the spring break crowd be the last hurrah of the season. That bunny will be bouncing around April 8.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

# Prescribed fires to be set in Kingsbury Grade area

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations on Kingsbury Grade near Andria Drive on March 6.

The size of the operation will depend on the condition of the area. Crews may continue operations through the week and possibly through the weekend, weather and conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area and smoke may be visible on Kingsbury Grade. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed. To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

# Thomas the Tank party at S. Tahoe library

The South Lake Tahoe library is hosting a Thomas the Tank Engine Party on March 10 at 2pm.

Celebrate Thomas with games, crafts, stories and other fun.

The library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For more information, call (530) 573.3185.

---

# Lake Tahoe Home and Garden Show

Lake Tahoe Home and Garden Show will be April 27 and 28 in the gym at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

The Friday event is from 4-8pm and Saturday from 10am-6pm.

For more information, call JoAnn at (530) 544.7412 or email jctahoewriter@hotmail.com.

---

# Tahoe Backcountry Women

Tahoe Backcountry Women is a recently organized group of regional women who love to backcountry ski. The next gathering will be March 14 from 6:30-8:30pm at Alpenglow Sports in Tahoe City.

This event will be centered on informal avalanche beacon practice. Women of all ages and abilities are welcome to do some practice searches.

Bring a beacon, headlamp, and warm clothes.

For more information, call Alpenglow Sports at (530) 583.6917 or email whitney@alpenglowsports.com.