

Genoa Peak Road, Spur Segment 1 (TY-3583)
Toiyabe National Forest, Carson Ranger District
Spooner Summit Vicinity
Douglas County
Nevada

HAER No. NV-12-B

HAER
NEV
3-SPSU. V,
1B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California**

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Genoa Peak Road, Spur Segment 1 (TY-3583)
HAER No. NV-12-B

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3-SPSU.V,
1B

Location: Toiyabe National Forest
2 miles south/southeast of Spooner Summit on Inter-
state Highway 50
Douglas County, Nevada

U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute Glenbrook, Nevada, quadrangle,
photorevised 1992

Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates:

Zone 11, A: 251200m E, 4328340m N
B: 252100m E, 4327640m N
C: 250240m E, 4327880m N
D: 250220m E, 4328360m N

Date of Construction:
circa 1869

Engineer: Unknown

Builder: Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company
(C&TL&F Co.)

Present Owner: USDA Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Present Use: Road

Significance: The Genoa Peak Road spur segments were part of a major log transport network associated with the Comstock mining era. This secondary spur segment once interconnected with an elaborate network of primary and lesser skid roads. The network was the main arterial system for wood transport to Spooner Summit, the key lumberyard for the C&TL&F Co. The period of significance for this lumbering activity is 1873-1898. The spur road has retained its integrity and its overall character as a 19th century Comstock-era haul road.

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A. Physical History

Genoa Peak Road Spur Segment 1 was part of a complex of logging roads developed to access timber in the vicinity of South Camp Peak. This spur road links a northeast trending network of smaller skid roads.

The 10-foot wide roadway is a graded earthen surface, and measures .75 miles in length. The steeper areas contain some rock work reinforcing crossing sections. The average grade is less than six percent. It was constructed ca. 1869.

The arborglyphs represented within the project area appear to be of 20th century origin. The earliest date recorded was 1913. The carvings commonly date from June to September denoting the seasonal use of high country pasture.

Aspen carvings are made by fine knife incisions into the bark of the trees. Over time, the incision scars, turning a rich black or gray color producing a clear impression (Lindstrom and Hall 1994:99).

Typically, arborglyphs are carved on aspens in groves located in drainages and wet meadows in remote canyons above 6,000 feet in elevation. In the West, stands of quaking aspen may last for two centuries marking the effective lifespan of the aspen art (Olaetxe-Mallea 1992:21).

Carson range woodchoppers, both Asian and Euroamerican, lived in groups of five to 10 in the 1870s; in the 1880s, the average group size was 10 to 20 (ibid.).

Previous studies indicate that the Chinese sites inferred a cross-cultural status difference between woodcutters and lumbermen. "Lumbermen" were involved in the milling industry, while "woodcutters" chopped and gathered wood. Lumber production was a more skilled occupation centered at the mill site, while wood cutting was more labor intensive. Chinese immigrants tended to work in the outlying areas cutting cordwood (Hill 1987:35).

Chinese woodcutters exhibited a social pattern typical of the American West. They lived separately from their Euroamerican counterparts in groups of adult males, ranging in age from 17-42. The group was dominated by men in their twenties, group size varied (Lindstrom and Hall 1994:97).

B. Description

General Characteristics

The Genoa Peak Road Spur Segments are 10-foot wide graded earthen roadways approximately three miles in total length. The network of spur segments begins two miles south/southeast of Spooner Summit. Four associated historic features were also recorded as a part of this documentation.

The historical integrity of these log-hauling spur segments is excellent; roadways have survived essentially intact. In the 1950s, the Forest Service constructed waterbars for erosion con

trol. These features consist of channels excavated across the roadbed to furnish drainage for stream runoff. The dirt from the channels was placed along the downslope side of the channel.

C. Contextual History

The Comstock mines would not have attained historical prominence without adequate sources of wood. The majority of this timber was supplied by the Tahoe Basin and the vicinity of Genoa Peak. In order to transport the logs to the Comstock district, lumber companies developed an elaborate system of roads, railroads, and flumes.

At least 80 million board feet were consumed annually during the 1870s, the peak of the excitement of the Comstock Era. The burgeoning demand for fuel wood attracted thousands of logging contractors who supplied large lumber companies.

The mines of the Comstock Lode (Virginia City, Nevada, region) are literally the tombs of the forests of the Tahoe Basin. In 1880, it was estimated that more than 600 million board feet had been buried in the Comstock mines, enough to build a town of six-room houses for 150,000 population.

The Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company established their key shipping and receiving yard at Spooner Summit. Wood was cut on the surrounding mountains. The logs were transported short runs in large wagons along haul roads. Longer distances necessitated the dragging of logs by team animals through chutes and on skid roads.

The Glenbrook Railroad, established in 1869, delivered lumber from the Glenbrook mills in the Spooner Summit vicinity. The Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company held a virtual monopoly over the wood and water resources of the area.

D. Proposed Alterations

Within the Genoa sale area, along the main trunk of Genoa Peak Road, some construction will be necessary. This work will include curve widening, installation of culverts for drainage, ditching, grading, and rock surfacing over a small segment. No historic sites, or artifacts were identified during the surface survey of the trunk road within the project area.

Genoa Peak Road Spur Segments 1 and 2 will also require modifications, including smoothing of road surfaces, clearing of vegetation to provide a maximum road corridor of 12 feet, and dust abatement treatment.

Along Spur Segment 1, a maximum of 10 turnouts/landings, approximately 600-700 square feet in size, will be constructed largely in the southern-most portion. One of these landings will accommodate helicopters.

E. Sources

Knowles, Constance Darrow

1942 A History of Lumbering in the Truckee Basin. Ms. on file at Forestry Library, UC Berkeley. WPA Official Project No. 9512375, Forest Survey Division.

Lindstrom, Susan G.

1993 Determination of Eligibility and Effect for the Spooner Timber Sale on the Toiyabe National Forest. Biosystems Analysis, Inc., Santa Cruz.

Lindstrom, Susan G. and Jeffrey T. Hall

1994 Cultural Resources Inventory and Evaluation Report for the Proposed Spooner Summit and East Shore (Big Gulp) Timber Sales. Biosystems Analysis, Inc., Santa Cruz.

Olaetxe-Mallea, Jose

1992 History that Grows on Trees: The Aspen Carvings of Basque Shepherders. Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, 35 (1):21-39.

Wilson, Dick

1992 Sawdust Trails in the Truckee Basin: A History of Lumbering Operations. Nevada County Historical Society, Nevada City, California.

F. Project Information

This documentation has been prepared resultant from the signing of a memorandum of agreement (moa) between the Forest Service and the Nevada State Office of Historic Preservation. The moa was, in effect, the acknowledgement that the completion of Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation would constitute appropriate mitigation for construction activities associated with the Genoa Timber Salvage sale.

In July, 1995 field inspection and photo documentation of the project area was completed. Concurrent with the fieldwork, the USDA Forest Service contracted with Elliott Research Associates of Three Rivers, California to assist in preparing the written documentation and the final HAER submission.