

Snake Lake History

Wagon Trains passed through the Snake Lake area on the Beckwourth Trail in the 1850's and there are two markers (B 26 and 27) that can be found in the Snake Lake area. According to the [Beckwourth Trail Book](#) the route leaves the American Valley via Snake Lake Ridge, the trail crosses the summit of Emigrant Hill, forded Wapaunsie Creek near the landfill and crossed the next ridge into Meadow Valley.

When David Hambly bought the valley in the 1860's from a fellow who claimed it in the 1850's, Snake Lake was a swampy valley. Hambly and his family homesteaded the area on the far eastern side of the lake. Hambly drained the water from the valley and grew hay, oats and vegetables for his family. 1870's Hambly started building a school house with help of his neighbors. Some of the Hambly's are buried at the site of the old homestead. Remaining members of the Hambly's moved on in the 1890's.

In 1892 John Marshall Stone acquired the homestead and operated a short lived cattle ranch to provide meat for the miners. But in the winter of 1892-93 the snow was so deep that the next summer he moved on to Chico area.

In 1911 the Quincy Mining and water Co, who owned nearby Gopher Hill, Bean Hill, and Mountain House mines, dammed up Snake Lake Creek to create the Lake for (hydraulic?) mining operations downstream at Gopher Hill. The company also drew up a proposal and plans to develop Snake Lake into a mountain resort but never acted on it.

The area was logged by Spanish Peak Lumber Company (1916 into the 1930's) by horse, Mule teams, and later steam engines. A few of the near by roads are old logging roads and railroad beds. Some remnants of logging can be found on the ridge above the east side of Snake Lake and on trails between the Lake and Meadow Valley. The SPLC engine #2 has been restored and is located at the fairgrounds

The area has been logged, mined and burnt. The County chose the Gopher Hill hydraulic mining remains as their landfill facility and shooting range. There is a natural "Bonsai" forest growing in the rock piles at Gopher Hill. The trees there are 80 to 100 years old. The area still shows its resiliency and ability to naturally recover. A few years ago the forest was thinned for future fire protection. More recently the area around the campground was made fire safe with the grant.....

The plant that covers the lake in the summer and fall and looks like a little lily pad with the stem attaching in the middle of the leaf is called Water-shield (*Brasenia schreberi*). These are cultivated as a vegetable in China and Japan. The other common plant floating on Snake Lake with the leaf attachment on the end of the leaf is Common Floating Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*). They are both native to Plumas County. The Lake is not safe for swimming because of these aquatic plants.

Snake Lake is a haven for aquatic and wildlife which include Beavers, eagles, white pelicans, geese, bluegill and maybe a turtle or two also deer and a few bears

High Mountain Riders applied for a RAC (Resource Advisory Committee) grant in Dec 2009 to improve Snake Lake Campground with the addition of an Equestrian section. It was approved on March 26, 2010. Grant funds were received March 17, 2011. Thinning and road work began that summer. Sierra Access Coalition helped in some of the planning. Corrals were installed with the help of the Feather River College Rodeo Team and Welding Class in May of 2012. Roads were graveled, fire rings and signs installed last fall (2012) and tables brought in this spring (2013). There is on going volunteer work to remove the stubs and spread the chips in the camp sites and corrals.

We hope Future projects will include reestablishing the trail to FRC partially obliterated in the recent logging project. Hope you enjoy camping at the new equestrian campground and riding the trails.

Please respect wildlife and other recreational users.