

# THE SIERRAN

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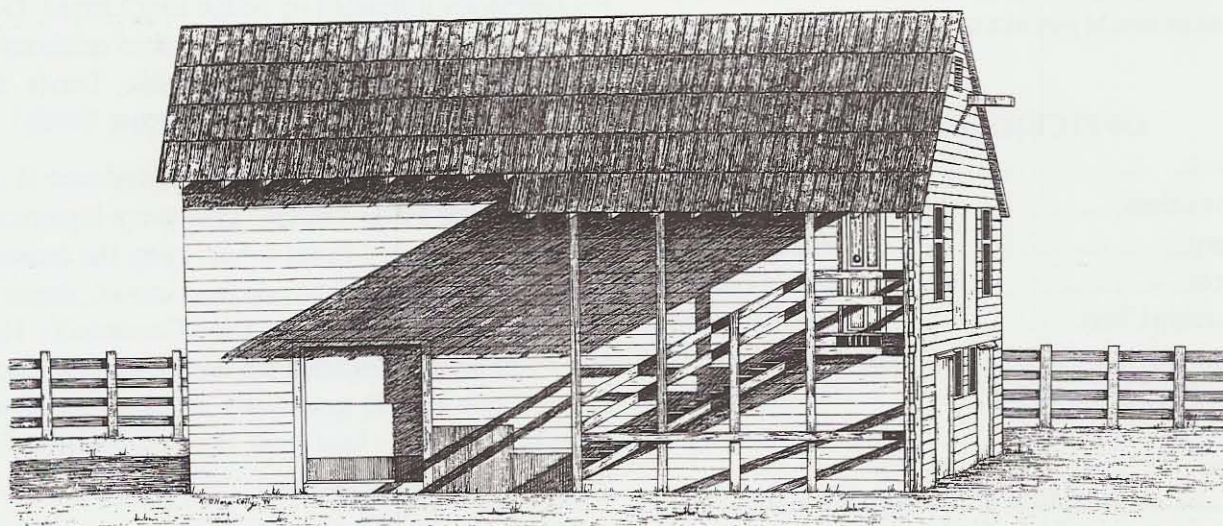


Illustration by Katie O'Hara-Kelly

*Artist's conception of the Hotel at More's Station, Kyburz Flat*

## **Kyburz Flat Heritage Resources Interpretive Project**

*by Michael Baldrice*

*Tahoe National Forest Sierraville Ranger District—Heritage Resource Management*

*Illustrations by Katie O'Hara-Kelly and John Betts*

Kyburz Flat is a small Sierra valley situated at an elevation of 6,400 feet above sea level. It is located twelve air miles north of the town of Truckee, and eleven miles south of Sierraville, California.

The interpretive objective of this project is to present the cultural history of Kyburz Flat to the forest visitor. Interpretive efforts will focus on the Washoe Tribe, emigrants and miners using the Henness Pass Road and Basque sheep herders who used Kyburz Flat.

The area was first used by the prehistoric ancestors of the Washoe people possibly as early as 2,000 years ago, until contact with American settlers and miners moving west into California and Nevada. A rock art boulder on the west side of the flat is one of the remains of this early occupation. It has been listed on the National Register of Historic Properties.

The Henness Pass Road was established as a toll road to connect Marysville and Nevada City to the Comstock at Virginia City, Nevada. It was completed in 1860 and was used by freight wagons and stage lines until 1868. An historic site on the west side of Kyburz Flat is a stage stop established to serve travelers and freight wagon drivers using the Henness Pass Road.

Kyburz Flat was used to graze domestic animals since More's station was active in the 1860's. The first U. S Service sheep grazing permit managing the use the Kyburz range allotment was issued in 1926. The historic Wheeler's Sheep Camp is located on the north side of the flat and has the remains of a brick bread oven.



## SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a Museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds quarterly meetings, publishes a semi-annual newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive *The Sierran* and are admitted free of charge to the museum and stamp mill tour.

If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join!

### OFFICERS and STAFF

President.....	Speranza Avram
Vice President.....	Rita Bradley
Secretary.....	William Copren
Treasurer.....	Arnold Gutman
Membership Chair.....	Maren Scholberg
Museum Curator.....	Karen Donaldson
<i>Sierran</i> Production Staff.....	Dave Bloch
	.....Karen Donaldson

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

INDIVIDUAL	\$10.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$15.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$25.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$250.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair::

Mrs. Maren Scholberg  
P.O. Box 141  
Sierraville, CA 96126

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Speranza Avram

Is everybody as tired of this rain and cold weather as I am? The wet weather impacted a number of spring events, not the least of which was Curator Karen Donaldson's wedding party. On April 29, Karen married Grant Cunningham, formerly of Reno. Due to the inclement weather, the wedding was held indoors at the Sierra City Community Hall. Joined by Grant's two children, 14-year old Travis and 8-year old Heather, the couple sealed their vows in a touching ceremony officiated by Judge Reg Littrell. Over 100 people enjoyed a festive potluck in celebration. Please join me in welcoming Grant, Travis and Heather to the Kentucky Mine Museum family!

The weather also reduced the attendance at our annual Spring Fever Dance. This event historically raises much needed funds which keep the museum operating. Because of the rain (and snow!), the event was moved into the Sierra City Community Hall. Over 120 people attended the dance, and 86 shared in the Cajun B-B-Q graciously prepared by Al and Brenda Mitchell. Last year, by comparison, 300 people attended the dance.

This year, the Spring Fever Dance was part of a larger project called the Sierra Nevada ArtsLoop. Coordinated by the Sierra County Arts Council as part of the California Countryside Festival, the ArtsLoop encouraged visitors to travel around the 150-mile Yuba-Donner Scenic Byway. Around the Loop, art displays, historical exhibits, theatrical performance, and musical entertainment were presented by local and visiting talent. The Museum was open on Sunday, thanks to volunteer Maren Scholberg, and we received quite a few visitors in spite of the rain.

As we prepare for the opening of the Museum on May 27, now is the time to schedule your volunteer hours at the museum. We depend on volunteers to staff the Museum while Karen leads the very popular tours of the museum and stamp mill. As Karen mentions in her article, Fran Burgard is unable to continue as Volunteer Coordinator this year, so this



vital position is available. If four people volunteered, then each would have to do it for only one month! Please remember that this organization relies on its volunteers to sustain and nurture our valuable historical resource.

Our next membership meeting is scheduled for June 11 at Kyburz Flat, the area featured in this issue of *The Sierran*. Snow melt permitting, we will be led on a tour of the area by Michael Baldrice, Sierraville District Archeologist and the author of our feature article. Please see the flyer enclosed with this mailing for more information about this very exciting meeting!

Finally, Membership Coordinator Maren Scholberg, who does an excellent job maintaining our membership files, has asked me to mention that some of you have not yet renewed your membership in the Historical Society for 1995. If you see a blue dot by your name on the label of your envelope, *This Means You!* Please send in your annual dues to Maren at the address listed on page 2 under "Membership Information." We appreciate your support of the Society and its activities and want you to stay involved.

Here's wishing for a sunny, warm, and successful summer! Won't you join us in our many activities?

## CURATOR'S REPORT

by Karen Donaldson

Due to this winter being one of the longest, wettest ones in many years, this article will be correspondingly brief.

The Concert Series is booked for the 1995 season. Programs have been sent out to the many names on our mailing list. We are looking forward to ten very entertaining shows for the whole family.

Special thanks are extended to Dave Bloch, Speranza Avram, Chuck and Myra Hardesty, Francie Brett, Reg and Donna Littrell, and Grant and Travis Cunningham who responded to our pleas for help on April 22 and 23 for spring cleanup projects. The

amphitheatre was thoroughly cleaned, the picnic area and grounds raked and really looking great! The stamp mill, miner's cabin and portal building were also swept out. The heavy snows tore out the steps and railing behind the miner's cabin and we could use some help putting this all back together as well as with a few other projects if anyone would like to donate some time and energy.

On April 27, forty students, teachers and parents from Glorietta Elementary School in Orinda visited the Museum for a tour of the stamp mill and afterwards enjoyed a picnic lunch (in the school bus due to the rainy weather). This trip has become a tradition the last several years and everyone enjoyed it.

The Memorial Fund received a donation from the George Fournier estate in memory of the Fournier family who settled near Loganville. A special bronze plaque will be installed by opening day, Saturday, May 27.

Fran Burgard did a wonderful job of coordinating volunteers last year for us and due to business constraints will not be able to continue this year. So, in addition to really needing volunteer help as usual, we now also really need a coordinator. Please help us out in this way if you can. This is more important than mere words can express.

Finally, our annual Spring Fever Dance and Cajun Barbeque was held this year on Saturday, May 13 and featured the very upbeat and danceable music of Mumbo Gumbo. We were fortunate to have this Sacramento Area Music Award winning group here again as the main draw for our fundraiser. Although we expected a large audience this year because of our tie-in with the Sierra County Arts Council's "Sierra Nevada ArtsLoop," event, the terrible weather held attendance down to about half of last year's.

This Spring is no indication, but Summer is really on the way and another season upon us. Don't forget that volunteers are the staff of life for us. We could not do what we do without your help. Please call the Museum at (916) 862-1310 to see how you might be appreciated most!

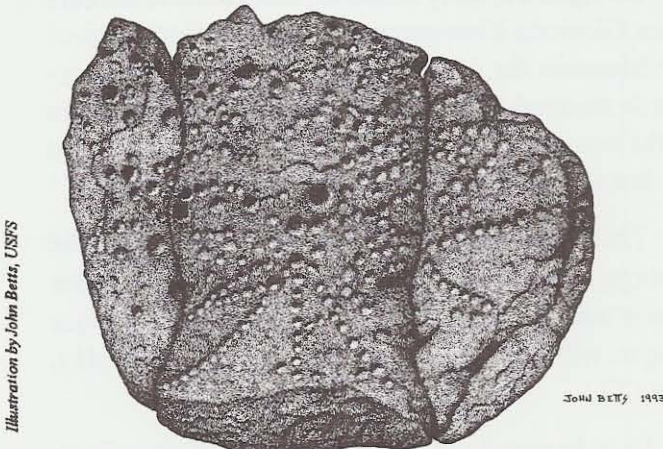


*Continued from page 1*

The Hobart Estate Company logged the ridges around Kyburz Flat at various times between 1915 and 1935. According to Forest Service archival records the majority of the area around Kyburz Flat was logged in 1925 and 1926 (USDA Forest Service 1951).

## KYBURZ PETROGLYPH

Scattered throughout the northern Sierra Nevada Mountains are many ancient symbols carved into the



rocks. These images are called *petroglyphs*. This rock contains a type of petroglyph known as *cupules*. These are small round pits that have been ground into the rock surface. Cupule petroglyphs are found all over the world and are particularly common in certain parts of California.

On most cupule rocks the pits appear to be distributed at random over the surfaces on which they occur. This rock is very unusual because the cupules are arranged in lines or rows and form a pattern.

Cupules have been linked with various ceremonial activities performed by Native Americans such as fertility rituals, weather control, and as a place to leave spiritual offerings. The cupules were created as a symbolic act and may not have been intended to actually represent a form. In the case of this particular rock the pattern of the cupules was becoming a symbolic form.

The rock has been broken into three sections since the cupules were created. The cupules can be difficult to see and are best viewed with low angle light in the late afternoon.

Some researchers believe that the petroglyphs in this area were made by people known by archaeologists as the

Martis Complex. Martis era people lived in this area as early as 2,000 years ago and may be the ancestors of the Washoe. At the time that emigrants began to flow through the Kyburz area in the 1850's, the Washoe Tribe occupied an area from Coleville north to Honey Lake and from Lake Tahoe east to Reno.

## STAGE STOP

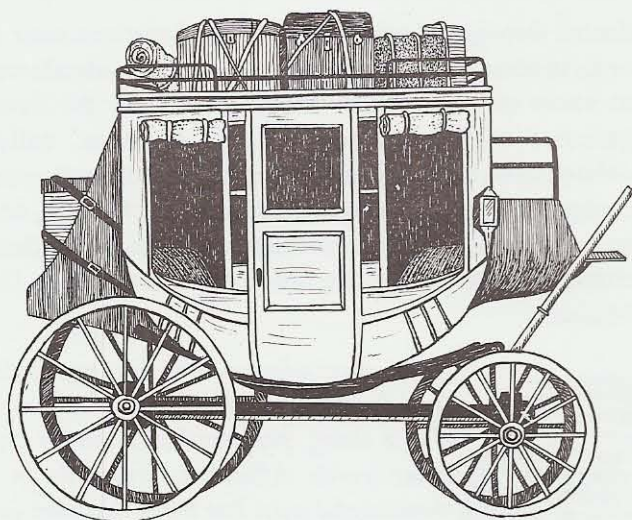
The historic Henness Pass Road extends across the middle of Kyburz Flat. This was one of the routes used by overland emigrants in the 1850's to travel to the mining camps along the north and middle forks of the Yuba River. After the Comstock silver strike in 1859 the road was improved to facilitate freight and passenger traffic between Virginia City and the California towns of Marysville, Nevada City, Downieville and Sacramento. After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1868 the traffic dropped off considerably. Parts of the Henness Pass Road continued to be used as a regional feeder line for Sierra Valley towns and the railroad terminus of Truckee, Verdi and Reno (Byrd 1992:12-15; Mackey, Bischoff, and Hardesty 1993:1-2).

The 1866 General Land Office Plat for this area shows several fences next to the Henness Pass Road, on the western side of Kyburz Flat. An archeological site with artifacts dating to the 1860's and 1870's was located in the same area and was thought to be a stage stop. A participating agreement with the Anthropology Department of the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the Tahoe National Forest was signed in 1992 to complete an archaeological investigation of the site. The work was completed under the direction of Dr. Donald Hardesty, Professor of Anthropology, and Barbara Mackey, a graduate student in Anthropology at UNR. Historic research was conducted at the same time as the excavation by Matthew Bischoff a graduate student in history at UNR, under the supervision of Dr. Hardesty and Dr. William Rowley.

The site appears to have been a way station, or a ranch that also served as a way station, on the Henness Pass Road. Sierra County Tax Assessor records of 1865 list the way stations on the Henness Pass Road in geographical order. Interpretation of this list implies that this site is More's Station, run by Lysander More. It is described as a 320-acre ranch with a hotel, barn, stables, horses and oxen (Mackey et al. 1993).



Illustration by Katie O'Hara-Kelly



The excavation revealed a rock foundation for a building 100 feet by 50 feet that would have been the main residence, the remains of the stable floor, a dry laid stone cold storage or root cellar, the outline of a corral and a well. The Henness Pass Road runs through the middle of the site. Gender-specific artifacts indicated that among the residents there were one woman, one girl and one boy. These probably are Lysander More's wife and children (Mackey et al. 1993).

## WHEELER SHEEP CAMP

Sheep grazing has been one of many economic activities pursued in the North Central Sierra Nevada since the 1850's. Basque men were recruited by large sheep companies to perform many of the sheepherding and camptender duties. Base camps were often constructed in the summer grazing ranges. At the Truckee and Sierraville Ranger Districts, stabilization and reconstruction of structures at two summer base camps are ongoing. Additionally, the day-to-day lives of the sheepherder can be found throughout many parts of the western United States in the form of arborglyphs (tree carvings). Several opportunities for the interpretation of Basque sheepherding sites have been identified.

Basque immigrants (from the Basque country in the Pyrenees Mountains located between Spain and France) became involved in the sheep industry of the American west during the California Gold Rush. Many of the first to arrive in California came directly from South America where they were previously involved in the livestock industry. By the 1860's Basque were leaving the gold

fields and entering the sheep and cattle industries. They had an established reputation as the finest sheepmen in the west by the 1880's although a Department of Agriculture Report dated 1884 gives them little mention and less regard (Carman, Heath and Minto 1892). Additionally, by the turn of the century many Basques had become hotel owners which catered to, and became a magnet for, Basque men working in the sheep industry.

Wheeler Sheep Camp was one of the main sheep camps of the Wheeler Sheep Company. Sheep camps like this one were the summer bases of operation for sheep grazing in high Sierran meadows. This camp was built and managed by John Martin Gallues.

John Martin Gallues left his home in Ibar, in the province of Navarre, Spain in 1907. He eventually arrived in Nevada after spending time in the cane fields of Cuba and the mines in California. In 1913 or 14 Martin became a limited partner in the Wheeler Sheep Company, then run by Sam Wheeler. Martin and his brother Felix built the structures at the Wheeler Sheep Camp some time before 1921.

Reginald Meaker purchased the Wheeler Sheep Company in 1937. This included 5,000 head of sheep, miscellaneous equipment, and Wheeler Sheep Camp. Meaker retained Martin as sheep manager (Meaker 1981:117).

Typically, in June a herd of up to 5,000 head of sheep would be herded from Reno to the Wheeler Sheep Camp and subsequently divided into five bands (a band equals 1,000 sheep) with a herder assigned to each band. These bands would spread out into the ranges until August. In the middle of August all five bands were brought back to the main camp where the lambs were sold. The remaining sheep were trailed back down to the Truckee Meadows to leased pastures (Meaker 1981:117).

Wheeler Sheep Camp consisted of a two-room cabin, an outdoor brick oven, a chicken coop, a horse barn and corral, five tent platforms, and sheep corrals. Two herders split the cedar posts for the various corrals during wood-splitting competitions.

Today the only remaining feature of the Wheeler Sheep Camp is the brick oven that was built around 1927 and was used to bake bread and stews. Fresh bread was supplied to the herders every five days and considered one of the two important items delivered by the camptender



each week. (The other essential item was red wine.)

The entire Gallues family (Martin, his wife Margarita, daughter Irene, and sons Albert and Henry) spent the summers at Wheeler Sheep Camp. Additionally, a camptender stayed at the camp while the herders would periodically visit.

Martin Gallues worked for the Wheeler Sheep Company until 1955, when he retired. Wheeler Sheep Camp was no longer used after 1960 and completely torn down except for the brick oven and corrals by 1968.

The oven lasted until the early 1980's when the shed and oven collapsed. During the summer of 1992, Dr. Jose Mallea of the Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno volunteered his time to coordinate the reconstruction of the oven. Funding for this project was obtained through the "America's Great Outdoors" program. Dr. Mallea enlisted the help of people from the Basque Studies Program and members of the Reno Basque community. Henry (Hank) Gallues, Martin's son, stopped by to give technical assistance and to provide comic relief. The shed which stood over the oven to protect it from snow was rebuilt by Tahoe National Forest recreation personnel.

The life of a sheepherder while out on the range is one of extreme physical and social isolation as the herder was completely alone with his band of sheep. Often this isolation lasted up to five months. Once a week the camptender would arrive with supplies, but these visits were often as short as one hour.

There are early newspaper accounts of Basque sheepherders who had gone crazy or had committed suicide. This led in 1907 to the formation of a mutual aid society by the Basques of Boise, Idaho to return those who developed mental problems to their families in Spain or France (Douglass 1973:37). As one author has stated:

*The herder, as the official chaperon for fifteen hundred strong minded, but misguided, females, has a perfectly valid excuse (if he wishes) for going crazy at any moment he may elect (Gilfillan as quoted in Wentworth 1948:403).*

The most common activity the sheepherders con-

ducted throughout many parts of the American west in order to occupy their time and cope with their solitude was to carve on aspen trees. Many groves are the living galleries of this art form. These carvings, called *arborglyphs*, can be classified according to the following categories: dates and names; human figures; females, sex, and courtship; interpersonal relationship among herders; ethnic pride and linguistic divisions. According to Dr. Mallea:

*The vocabulary of the carvings is derived from several languages and much of it is slang, peppered with curses and other words difficult to translate in a meaningful way. But there are also poetry, humor, and pure art. The messages are stark, laconic, and sometimes raw. Their historical value as a record of the experience of immigration and the sheep industry is significant (1992:21).*

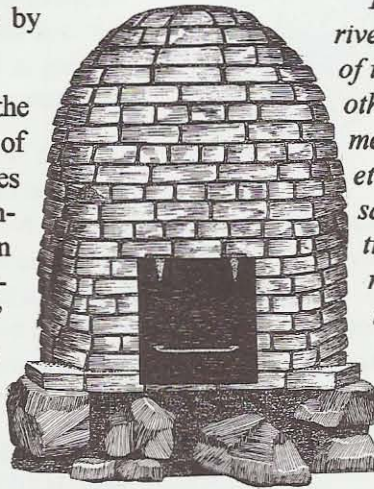


Illustration by Katie O'Hara-Kelly

## INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS

These three archaeological sites in Kyburz Flat provide an outstanding opportunity for the Tahoe National Forest to interpret various aspects of Washoe, western frontier, and Basque heritage to the public. As part of all planned interpretive efforts the primary theme to be conveyed will be that the people who lived and passed through here made significant contributions to the history of the American west.

As part of our interpretive efforts, the Tahoe National Forest has identified some preliminary learning, behavioral and emotional objectives we hope to accomplish. A few of the learning objectives will be these:

1: The majority of the visitors will obtain an understanding and appreciation for the unwritten history of the Basque people in the American West, their heritage, and their critical role in the sheep industry.

2: Some of the myths and misconceptions about the Washoe Tribe, and the Basque sheepherders, will be dispelled.

One of the behavioral objects will be that the majority of the visitors will appreciate the tangible remains of history and heritage and will not vandalize these remains.



Our emotional objective is that the majority of Forest visitors will feel that vandalism takes away from their enjoyment, and their children's enjoyment, of cultural resources and that vandalism is a disgusting act.

An interpretive sign is being placed at the rock art site which describes what the rock originally looked like when it was whole and a brief explanation about rock art in the Sierra Nevada. Signs at the stage stop site identify where the main building, stable, well, corrals, and root cellar were located and the history of the site. There are plans to construct a wheelchair-access trail loop at the stage stop site. Anyone wishing to help can call Herta McClenahan or Michael Baldrice at the Sierraville Ranger Station, (916) 994-3401. At the Wheeler Sheep Camp, an interpretive sign is being placed by the brick oven which will describe what the camp looked like, who lived at the camp, and the role of the camp in the summer sheep grazing activities.

An unexpected aspect of the oven reconstruction has been that people have expressed an interest in using it. The oven was successfully test-fired in the fall of 1992. Forty people showed up to bake bread, biscuits, pizza and other food items. Attendants included Irene Giossi and Albert Gallues (both children of Martin Gallues). Their recollections, photographs, and oral histories obtained during this time provided an idea of what life was like at the camp.



*Members of the Gallues Family*

*The building in the background is most likely the chicken house in its earliest position.*

Additionally, Dr. Mallea held his wedding reception at the camp in October of 1992. At least fifty people attended and more expressed a desire to use the oven. Eventually the Wheeler Sheep Camp will be developed into a picnic area with the brick oven as a central feature. An oven user's guide will be developed to explain proper use of the oven and to explain cooking techniques.

Future plans also include interpretation of arboglyphs at some selected groves. Other interpretive projects on the Truckee Ranger District include a wheelchair-accessible interpretive trail at the townsite of Boca, and new signs at the Donner picnic area and at the Five Lakes trailhead for the Whiskey Creek Sheep Camp.

*An informative brochure on the Kyburz Flat Interpretive Area produced by the Sierra County Arts Council is available from the Tahoe National Forest District Ranger Stations in Truckee and Sierraville.*

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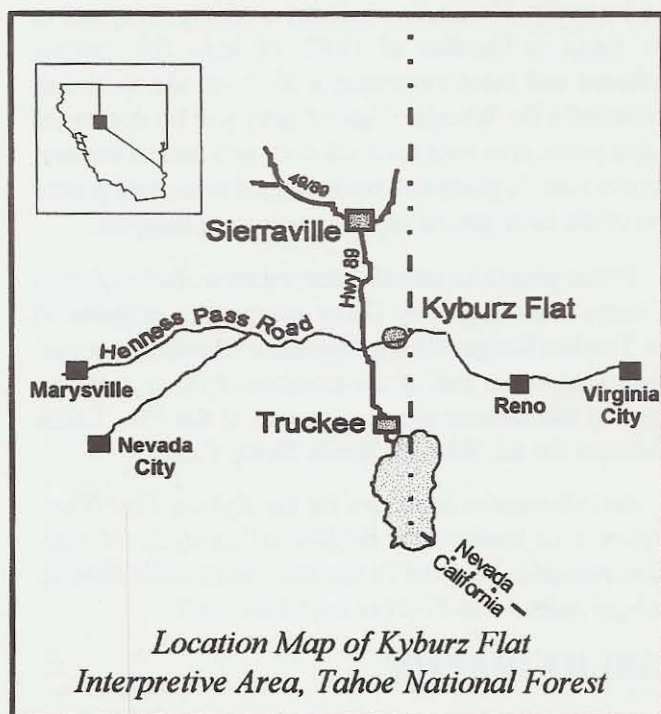
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### FEATURED ARTISTS IN THE 1995 KENTUCKY MINE SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

June 30: The Catsnjammer Jazz Band

July 7: Nine Days Old

July 14: The String Beings

July 21: David Maloney

July 28: Swing Fever

August 4: Sourdough Slim & The Saddle Pals

August 11: Sukay

August 18: Donnie MacDonald & Kay Hansen

August 25: Ancient Future

Sept. 1: Bobbie Webb & The Smooth Blues Band

All performances begin at 8:00 PM.

Tickets \$8 advance/\$10 door; reduced prices for children.

**Ticket Information: (916) 862-1310**