

"My Favorite Trail"
May 2004 - Loney Meadow
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Luckily for me, only one of these "Favorite Trail" presentations have been given, so there is no precedence set! I will give more of a history lesson than be a trail guide. My Favorite Trail is at Loney Meadow. I don't even know where to start. There is so much history all over our beautiful mountains.

To find this little paradise, head out of Nevada City on Highway 20. I think it's about 20 miles to the Bowman Road turnoff. After you drive through Bear Valley, begin watching for signs to Bowman Reservoir. The road is a left turn from Highway 20. Once on this road, it is 10 miles to the Loney turnoff. Take your time and enjoy the scenery. It is a "wind-y" road and oftentimes in the summer there are logging trucks. There is a sign where the pavement ends indicating a right turn into the staging area. After entering, I like to take the left fork and go around the back of Black's cabin and park right there. You can go on up the road and if it's not too crowded, park in the area that most people use for camping. From there, follow the signs and head for the meadow.

The first time I saw Loney Meadow was many years ago and there had not been the improvements to the area that are there now. My directions included a paper plate and "the key is in the beer can at the second post to the right of the gate." It still takes my breath away when I first enter the meadow. You can go either right or left as the trail encircles the whole meadow. At the upper end you can chose to continue the circle, or go up the hill. There is a steep stretch, but it's worth it. At the top you can turn left and go to the Rock Lakes. They are beautiful and peaceful. I have gone on from there and made a huge circle for a six hour ride past Penner Lake and around to Carr Lake and back to Loney Meadow. It's a long ride with a few steep parts. If you chose not to go to Rock Lakes, you can make a smaller circle back toward Lindsey Lake and back to the meadow. This is only about two or three hour ride at an easy walk. If you chose to take the trail that circles the meadow, there are informative signs along the trail identifying flora and fauna. I think this ride takes an hour to an hour and a half. I always feel refreshed and relaxed after a ride in this area.

I have a map from Tahoe National Forest of the Grouse Ridge Area, but I don't feel it shows all the trails that are actually there. Don't be intimidated - there are good signs on the trails. Another map I got from the Ranger Station in Nevada City is "Trails - Nevada City Ranger District." When you look at these maps and see names of lakes, meadows or mountains, realize that these are named after people who discovered these areas and worked at taking care of them. They were the first true environmentalists.

Now a little history:

I don't know the year, but Mr. Bowman owned the area we know as Bowman reservoir. He owned thousands of acres as well as the stage stop, which stood at the bottom of the present Bowman Reservoir. In 1876 a man named Black bought the grazing rights from Mr. Bowman around the area of the first Bowman reservoir. His son, William Black later bought the Bowman Ranch. It is this family for which Black's cabin is named. Bill Black carried five-gallon milk cans full of fish for the Dept. of Fish and Game. He planted them in the many lakes in and around the Black's Buttes. Another landmark named for him. Later, Bill bought range in the Jackson Meadows area. His grandson, Kent Pascoe grazed that range from about 1961 until 1971.

Southern Pacific owned every other section for 20 miles on either side of the railroad and the Forest Service owned the other sections. The Alderman family bought the area now known as Loney Meadow from SP. They ran their dairy cattle there in the summer and made butter, which they hauled by wagon to Emigrant Gap. Eventually, Chester Loney bought the meadow and surrounding range from the Alderman's. Chester's nephew, Lowell Elster ran the dairy and delivered cream to Emigrant Gap by truck. At the beginning of Bowman Road, on the way to the meadow, after you cross the river and wind your way up the hill, you can look back and down and see the gravel pit on the river. That was a meadow at one time. Chester raised hay there and cut it by hand with a scythe. He would then take that hay to feed the cattle and horses at the dairy.

Kent tells me that the old Loney cabin is falling down, but the dairy barn is still standing, or was 5 or 6 years ago. Alva and Red Farrell got the grazing rights from Chester Loney, and their daughter, Jeannie Poe, still runs cattle up there. She pays for grazing leases from the Forest Service. Jeannie has beef cattle, so there is no hassle of milking. Chester Loney's children sold the land to Yuba River Lumber, owned by the Pendola family. The land was logged and traded to the US Forest Service for other timber bearing land. The Forest Service built bridges and placed informative signs around the meadow so hikers and equestrians could enjoy this special area.

There are many trails, camping areas and lakes in this area known as the Grouse Ridge Area. You can take a short ride, or stay for a week. While I haven't given you mileage and other specifics of the trail, I hope this gives you some history of this enchanting area so you can appreciate it as I do.

