



NHL Executive Summary



Photograph by R. Scott Baxter, September 2021

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| Name of Property: | Summit Camp |
| City, State: | Tahoe National Forest, Placer and Nevada Counties, California |
| Period of Significance: | 1865-1869, 1966-1969 |
| NHL Criteria: | 1, 6 |
| NHL Theme: | I. Peopling Places: 3. Migration from outside and within V. Developing the American Economy: 3. Transportation and communication 4. Workers and work culture VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community: 4. Immigration and emigration policies. |
| Previous Recognition: | n/a |
| National Historic Context: | <i>Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study</i> (Odo 2017); <i>Labor Archeology of the Industrial Era National Historic Landmarks Theme Study</i> (Fracchia and Roller 2014); <i>Labor History in the United States: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study</i> (Donaldson 2022). |



NHL Significance:

- Summit Camp is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 (events and broad patterns) for the critical role of Chinese workers in the completion of the transcontinental railroad across the United States. The proposed NHL includes the archaeological remains of the largest and longest occupied railroad construction camp for Chinese laborers on the transcontinental railroad, inhabited from 1865-1869 for construction of a series of Central Pacific Railroad (CPR) tunnels through Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
- This archaeological district is additionally significant under Criterion 1 for its status as a “type site” influencing the emergence of Chinese diaspora studies in the field of historical archaeology in the 1960s.
- Summit Camp is also nationally significant under NHL Criterion 6 for yielding, and potential to yield new information about the lifeways of Chinese immigrant laborers in the nineteenth century. The archaeological features and artifacts at the Summit Camp district, coupled with previously collected artifacts, characterize the work, daily life, and hardships these men endured while overcoming the most challenging geographical obstacles the railroad faced. Summit Camp provides one of the most comprehensive data sets for the archaeological study of Chinese railroad workers, a group about which little definitive historical information is known.
- The proposed period of significance for Summit Camp NHL is 1865-1869, 1966-1969. These two date ranges encompass the years the camp was occupied during construction of the railroad, and also key years in the 1960s for the influence of the archaeological investigations at Summit Camp on development of the field of historical archaeology.

Integrity:

- As a whole Summit Camp retains a high degree of integrity. The area around Summit Camp is little changed from when the camp was occupied. Due to this lack of development, the archaeological remains at the site have been subject to only limited human impacts. Artifacts and features remain and viewshed around the camp looks much as it did 150 years ago.
- The unparalleled density and duration of occupation by railroad workers across an extended period, coupled with high archeological integrity, is reflected in a site with unparalleled potential to answer research questions affecting theories, concepts, and ideas regarding the material lives of the Chinese diaspora.

Owner of Property: Tahoe National Forest (US Forest Service)

Acreage of Property: 26.55 acres

Origins of Nomination: Summit Camp was identified in *Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Island Theme Study* (Odo 2017) as a potential NHL recognizing the early history of Chinese immigrants to the United States. The nomination was sponsored by the National Park Service (NHL Program WASO) and prepared in cooperation with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) through a contract with Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: Positive public response is expected, particularly from groups interested preserving the history of Summit Camp, and in generally promoting recognition of AAPI history, such as the 1882 Foundation.



Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: N/A

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 12/2/24):

- Matthew Jedra, Acting Forest Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest, Forest Service, USDA
- William Morey, Arvada, CO
- Sharon Zhuang, San Rafael, CA
- Sue Fawn Chung, PhD, Professor Emerita, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Advisor Emerita, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Co-founder, Preserve Nevada, and author, Kam Wah Chung National Historic Landmark
- Mayor Beverly Cho, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Selma, CA
- Karen Murray
- Camilla Ng
- Alan M. Solomon, J.D.
- Shoshi Parks, Ph.D.
- Rusty Chan, President, Chinese American Citizens Alliance
- Walter and Shirley Woo
- Brenda Pau, Committee Member, Chinese American Museum Project/Central Valley Coordinator, Chinese American WWII Veterans Recognition Project
- Calvin Moy, former Vice-President, Moy Family Association, Washington, DC
- Valerie Cochran
- Nicole Huang
- Veronica Li
- Andrea Yee
- Chin-Siu Lee Choi
- Huy Pham, Executive Director APIAHiP: Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
- Frances C. Li
- Krystyn R. Moon, University of Mary Washington, Department of History and American Studies
- Petition supporting NHL designation for Summit Camp – 38 signatures
- Phil Sexton, Interpretive Program Manager (retired), Tahoe National Forest, Auburn, CA
- Brenda Hee Wong and Teddy Sue, leads of Sierra Summit Tunnels Site writing campaign, Chinese Historical and Cultural Project of Santa Clara County, CA
- Form letters supporting NHL designation for Summit Camp – 197 signatures

Landmarks Committee Comments:

- Suggested minor revisions to clarify Criterion 6 discussion regarding role of Summit Camp excavations in founding of historical archeology.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior designation of Summit Camp in Tahoe National Forest, California, as a National Historic Landmark with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.



Advisory Board Recommendation: The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the designation of Summit Camp in Tahoe National Forest, California, as a National Historic Landmark.