

Jacob Hoehn and California's Summit Mineral Water

By Eric McGuire

Just as the bottled spring water business has boomed in the last 30 years, during the 19th Century most of the western world, including California, witnessed a proliferation of bottled natural and flavored waters from springs that were also exploited in the form of sanitariums, hotels and resorts. Perhaps no other state in the union provided so many bottled spring waters during the last half of the 19th century except for New York. Hot spots along the contact zone of the earth's North American and Pacific tectonic plates have created a myriad variety of mineral laden waters that were once thought to cure nearly all of mankind's ailments. Whenever a new spring was discovered a sample of the water was quickly whisked away to a prominent chemist who would perform a mineral analysis which was proudly advertised along with its curative properties. Generally accompanied with firsthand testimonials of its power, some waters gained a sort of mystical fame for their seemingly magical cures, with a far greater veracity than concocted medical remedies.

Summit Mineral Water is just one example of California's liquid mineral commodities although not nearly as famous as others such as Napa Soda, Pacific Congress, Aetna, Tolenas, Witter, Bartlett and so many others. Difficult to access, the site of the springs was locked in the Sierra Nevada deep freeze for half the year. It never accommodated a large number of vacationers and for some reason lapsed into disfavor and didn't recover from a fire at the end of the 19th century. Currently it could be considered a "ghost resort", still difficult to access and located on posted private property. Only a part of the original cabin structure still exists. The Old Soda Springs Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as No. 1978000734. Known as Soda Springs during its heyday, its waters were bottled for only a few years during the early 1870s. This paper explores its early beginnings and the history of the man responsible for marketing Summit Mineral Water.

Jacob Hoehn was born in the Kingdom of Prussia on October 19, 1832 (1). He would have been 18 years old in 1850, certainly old enough for a young adventurer to sail to California on the eve of the Gold Rush. A record of his arrival has yet to be determined but Jacob must have arrived during the decade of the 1850s.

The first documented evidence of Jacob Hoehn in California is in 1861 when the Sacramento Directory listed him as operating his Plaza Saloon at 286 J Street. From the late 1860s William Hoehn was working for Jacob as a bar keeper and was likely related and probably a brother, born in 1842 in Prussia. He may have been the same William Hoehn who was operating a restaurant in Virginia City, Nevada, as early as 1864. William died relatively young and unmarried in Sacramento in 1873. (2)

Jacob Hoehn was well connected to the Sacramento

business community. Operating a popular saloon and active in the Sacramento Masonic Hall Association, he could feel the economic pulse of the community, and in the mid 1860s it was no secret that the western end of the transcontinental railway was well under construction and opening up a number of opportunities for shrewd business men. Lumber was already a booming business and the new railroad would vastly increase the market area of this commodity.

Beginning in the 1850s the Sitka Ice Company held a virtual monopoly on the ice trade in California. Its primary source was the North Pacific Coast and the only mode of transportation was by ship to various port cities. Inland deliveries were more problematic and the cost per pound rose considerably based on transportation issues. While some Sierra Nevada communities used local ice it could not be traded long distances due to the lack of efficient transportation systems. The anticipation of using the newly constructed Central Pacific Railroad (C.P.R.R.) to harvest ice and store it at the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, then deliver it on demand via the railroad, was given serious consideration by a number of entrepreneurs.

Benjamin Bernard Redding was the land agent for the Central Pacific Railroad. (3) The C.P.R.R. was the recipient of vast amounts of government land as part of the deal for constructing the western part of the transcontinental railroad. The Pacific Railway Act of 1862 granted ten square miles of public land - every other section - on each side of the new rail tracks, for every mile of track laid. (4)



Prior to the construction of the railroad the wagon road over the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains was difficult to traverse. Nearly all traffic between California and Central Nevada had to use this route. (5)

This land was given to the company to use as it wished, with the presumption that its sale would help finance the railroad and also foster settlement and commerce. As the person charged with its disposition B.B. Redding was on the “inside” when it came to assessing its potential and the development of an ice business at the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in close proximity to the railroad tracks was an easy option to pursue. Redding assumed a personal interest in the possibilities.

B.B. Redding and Jacob Hoehn were obviously friends, and probably met through the social milieu of the Plaza Saloon. Pure speculation but the idea of the Summit Ice Company could easily have been discussed at the saloon with the details ever evolving over rounds of libations. However it happened, a small circle of acquaintances soon coalesced into business partners in a venture that was to change the life direction of the subject of this discussion.

Jacob Hoehn conveyed the operation of the Plaza Saloon to his brother and Jacob became a partner in the Summit Ice Company. Certainly the Plaza Saloon would have benefited from Jacob’s access to large amounts of ice during the oppressively hot Sacramento summers. How quickly we forget that there was no air conditioning at that time – not even a reliable ceiling fan. The thought of copious amounts of ice in a glass of refreshing liquid must have been an enticing thought, and a huge marketing advantage for the saloon. William Hoehn continued with operating the Plaza Saloon but his death on August 28, 1873, caused Jacob Hoehn to resume control until he could liquidate the business. He was well entrenched in the ice business by then and preferred to focus on that venture.



The newly constructed Summit Station with the Summit House on the left. Massive snow sheds were necessary to keep from paralyzing the movement of trains during the winter months. Construction of the C.P.R.R. to this point allowed for the cost effective harvesting of ice. This photo was probably taken no later than 1870 since the denuded landscape shows no sign of revegetation. (6)

On September 7, 1868, The Summit Ice Company was incorporated under the laws of the State of California. The trustees in charge were Fitz William Redding (Sr.) (the father of B.B. Redding), Samuel D. Smith and Jacob Hoehn. The other stock holders were B.B. Redding, and W.E. Brown. The business was to be conducted not more than a mile from Summit Station at what is now known as Serene Lakes (they are also known as Ice Lakes), on a 160-acre tract of land that was originally homesteaded by Fitz William Redding(Jr.) in 1866, presumably in anticipation of developing the Serene Lakes as a ice harvesting location. (7) The lakes appeared to be ideal for ice harvesting since they regularly froze in the winter and were less than a mile from the new railroad line.



Passengers disembarking at Summit Station were presented with a forest of posts that supported the huge roof of the snow shed. From this point the Summit Soda Springs were another 15 miles by horse. (8)

What the Summit Ice Company had not anticipated was the huge volume of snow that fell at the lakes during the winter which had to be removed from the surface prior to ice harvesting. They endured several winters but gave up the site after fighting a losing battle with the snow. They soon learned that just a few miles farther east, on the other side of the summit, it was at least as cold but there was a “rain shadow” phenomenon since most of the precipitation had been wrenched from the clouds on the western side of the divide. At great expense the Summit Ice Company moved its operations to Prosser Creek, near the C.P.R.R.’s Prosser Creek Station, about seven miles east on the other side of the divide. The Truckee Republican summed it up best:

“About a mile and a half from Summit Valley there are . . . beautiful little lakes, with some ice houses broken down by last winter’s snow, and abandoned by the company who have moved to Prosser Creek where they have as much cold weather but not so much snow.” (10)

Hotels and Summer Resorts.

THE SUMMIT HOTEL, CENTRAL PACIFIC RAILROAD LINE,

IS NOW OPEN, AND IS ONE OF THE most attractive, beautiful and healthy summer resorts in the State. Wagons and saddle horses connecting with Lakes Donner and Tahoe, with the lofty Castle Peak and the wonderful Summit Soda Springs. The hotel is one of the best furnished and largest in the State, and the table second to none. Pure air; pure, soft, ice-cold streams; lofty peaks, and pine forests surrounding the house. The fare from San Francisco is \$10 75, and only \$3 75 back—\$14 50 in all. A good livery stable is attached to the house. Parties wishing to camp at the Springs can get all necessary provisions and bedding at my Hotel.
JEL3-3m **JAMES CARDWELL, Proprietor.**

This advertisement appeared in July 1871, at about the same time the above photos of the hotel were taken. Understandably, it was not long before the proprietor realized that the nearby Summit Soda Springs was a bigger attraction than Summit Station. At best Summit Station would have been just a necessary one night stop to a more picturesque location. (9)

The Summit Ice Company remained at its Prosser Station location until it ceased to exist in 1882. Jacob Hoehn was its primary managing operative during its entire existence.

JACOB HOEHN,
Dealer in
ICE, COAL AND MINERAL WATER,
OFFICE, 149 I STREET,
Between Fifth and Sixth streets, Sacramento
AGENT FOR
SUMMIT ICE COMPANY,
Summit Mineral Water, and
ROCKY MOUNTAIN COAL COMPANY.

Jacob Hoehn's 1872 Sacramento Directory advertisement. (11)

Ice companies proliferated at the summit to the extent that they were all pricing themselves out of the market. By April of 1873 the Summit Ice Company, Nevada Ice Company and Boca Mill and Ice Company, three of the larger companies in the region, decided to coalesce under one name – the Pacific Ice Company – in order to gain more market share. (12) The three companies also retained their separate identities as well, but enjoyed a better profit margin due to their price fixing umbrella monopoly. With this formation Jacob Hoehn was made superintendent of Union Ice, but still managed the Summit Ice Co.

In 1882 B.B. Reading died and yet another conglomerate of companies joined forces under one name. This time a total of six separate competitors became the Union Ice Company and the umbrella known as the Pacific Ice Company fell by the wayside. Again, Jacob Hoehn was the superintendent, but this time the Summit Ice Company was dissolved. Lloyd

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT.

XV

PACIFIC ICE DEPOT



JACOB HOEHN, AG'T,

Wholesale and Retail Dealer in

Ice, Coal, Cement, Hair, Fire Clay, etc.

Agency for Pacific Ice Company.

Agency for Rocky Mountain Coal Co.

Agency for Summit Mineral Water.

Agency Armstrong & Small's Pat. Fire Kindler.

143 and 145 I Street,

(Brick Building),

SACRAMENTO.

Jacob Hoehn's 1874 Advertisement in the Sacramento Directory in which he proudly notes his new brick building. The importance of the Pacific Ice Co., and diminishment of the Summit Ice Co. is also evident. This is the last year that Summit Mineral Water is mentioned. (13)

Tevis became president of the Union Ice Company. (14)

Jacob Hoehn moved to San Francisco that same year and took a more distant role in management. He continued with the Union Ice Company until 1890 but also participated in the incorporation of the Sierra Lakes Ice Company on January 6, 1888. Along with Hoehn the directors of Sierra Lakes included Moses Hopkins (brother of the deceased Mark Hopkins, who died 29 March 1878, and was the primary recipient of Mark Hopkins' vast estate), Edward Whitney Hopkins, Charles A. Grow and Russel J. Wilson. Jacob Hoehn was selected superintendent. The force that was Jacob Hoehn would soon come to an end in San Francisco when he died there on May 17, 1890.

When the Summit Ice Company vacated the geographical place that was to become known as Summit, and moved to Prosser Creek, the partners continued on at Summit Soda Springs located about ten miles to the south of Ice Lakes – but with a different venture. Begun by at least 1871 the Summit Soda Springs offered naturally effervescent mineral water that bubbled from deep within the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The soda springs, located at 6,000 feet in elevation, in a grand canyon at the headwaters of the American River, had been known to the native population for millennia, as testified by the petroglyphs on the natural canvas provided by the massive Pleistocene glaciers that scraped the granite landscape smooth near the springs. First discovered by gold seekers, the springs remained so remote that only the most adventuresome were to visit until the C.P.R.R. established Summit Station. It became a relatively easy 15 mile buggy ride from there. Mark Hopkins was the first to exploit the virtues of the springs by constructing a small but well built log cabin there. Undoubtedly nurtured by the presence of the well known and well heeled Mark Hopkins the springs soon

became a favored location for California's wealthy elite to experience nature at its wildest, within the broad definition of the limits to which such elite would subject themselves. The cold effervescent water of the springs were laden with minerals and its tonic effect, along with the solace of the location, became a place to rejuvenate and recuperate from the rigors of the hectic life of the urban West. Within a few years a small hotel was also constructed there by the proprietors of the Summit Station Hotel.

Benjamin Parke Avery wrote of a trip to the Summit Valley and the Summit Soda Springs in the mid 1870s:

"Arrived at the summit of the Sierra Nevada, on the line of the railroad, there are many delightful pedestrian and horseback excursions to be made in various directions. At Summit Valley (which is associated with the relief of the tragically fated Donner emigrants, and is only three miles from Donner Pass) there is an odious saw-mill, which has thinned out the forests; an ugly group of whitewashed houses; a ruined creek, whose waters are like a tan-vat; a big sandy dam across the valley, reared in a vain attempt to make an ice pond; a multitude of dead, blanched trees; a great, staring, repellent blank; and yet this valley is not unlovely."

"Near the junction of granite and volcanic rocks, numerous soda springs boil up through seams in the ledges, often in the very bed of the stream. The water of these springs is highly charged with carbonic acid, is delightfully cool and pungent, and contains enough iron to make it a good tonic, while it has other saline constituents of much sanitary value. Where the fountains bubble up they have formed mounds of ferruginous earth and soda crust, and their water stains the river banks and currents at intervals. One of the largest and finest springs has been utilized, forming one of the most picturesque resorts in California." (15)

The only located description of the bottling operations appeared in the San Francisco Bulletin in 1871:

"Persons coming here will find no hotel, but either Mr. Tucker or Mr. Cardwell will supply them with necessary food and bedding to stay as long as they please. There is a log cabin and cooking utensils here, and an employee of the Summit Springs Soda Water Company (whose headquarters are at Sacramento) lives here and bottles thirty dozen bottles of the water daily, which is sold in Sacramento, Marysville and Stockton." (17)



BY VISITING THESE SPRINGS YOU WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION
pay a visit to this House. Jy 17 2m

SUMMIT SODA SPRINGS,

IN THE HEART OF THE SIERRA NEVADA, nine miles from Central Pacific line. The Falls of the American river adjoin the Springs. The water is a most effectual tonic for debility, dyspepsia, etc. The air is balmy, the scenery magnificent. Comfortable rooms and good board, \$12 per week. Passengers get off at Summit Valley Station; branch house of the Springs there; stage leaves next morning; fare, \$1.50. Excursion return railroad tickets issued to the Springs at \$20 from San Francisco; \$15 from Sacramento. Good saddle-horses and fishing excursions to Donner Lake etc. Jy 17 2m

WM. JONES, Proprietor.

NEW ROUTE TO LAKE TAHOE

By July of 1873 the Summit Soda Springs had upstaged Summit Station as a Sierran destination, as this advertisement attests. (16)

This is the earliest, and only, reference found regarding the bottling of Summit Springs water. A similar descriptive article about Summit Soda Springs was printed just two years later but there was no mention of water being bottled at that time. (18)



The Summit Soda Springs' first cultural improvement was the Mark Hopkins log cabin (center), which was built about 1870. It was followed by the Summit Soda Springs Hotel (right) which was constructed about 1873. A number of smaller cabins were also eventually located on the property. The actual spring is located on the far right and can be identified by the small light spot below the lowest window on the hotel. The light spot is a roof covering the spring. (19)

A bottling operation that produces only 360 bottles a day is a remarkably small venture, especially considering the springs were usually not accessible, and could not be functioning for half the year due to the heavy snow and ice conditions. The access road would not be available for the transport of bottles. Perhaps production increased over time, however, with the little recognition it received in the literature it probably never became a success. Also, with the market area being focused in Sacramento, Marysville and Stockton, the problematic loss and retrieval of bottles must have been a major problem. From the information located it is determined that it is unlikely the bottling of Summit Mineral Water witnessed the end of 1873.



By the mid 1870's Summit Spring had been improved with a rustic structure befitting of its sylvan surroundings. (20)

The popularity of the Summit Soda Springs came to an abrupt end on September 2, 1898, when it was destroyed by fire. The San Francisco Call newspaper described the devastation that effectively ended its life as a recreational destination. The hotel was never rebuilt. (21)



Jacob Hoehn married Catherine Boss about 1863, probably in Sacramento. Born in Ohio in March 1847, she was the step-daughter of Anthony Hess, a farmer who had settled in the Runyon area of Franklin Township about 1858, located just south of Sacramento City. Catherine died in Sacramento on May 3, 1910.

Jacob and Catherine had ten children, all born in Sacramento;

William Jacob Hoehn, born September 21, 1864, died May 19, 1889

Elizabeth Hoehn, born September 2, 1866, died October 27, 1891. (She married Charles E. Kleinseorge and had William, but he died young on June 29, 1891 at 6 months 27 days old from cholera.)

Emma Hoehn, born abt 1868, died before 1900. (She married John W. Geeslin and had Florence Emma Geeslin, born October 4, 1891, died May 26, 1981 in Shasta County, CA. Florence married a Gaines, probably later in her life, and no children have been found).

John Hoehn, born abt 1871. He appeared in the 1880 U.S. census but apparently died young.

George C. Hoehn, born 1873, died June 12, 1875

Tillie Hoehn, born February 16, 1875, died May 22, 1890

Minnie Hoehn, born September 2, 1878, died April 9, 1944

Katherine Florence Hoehn, born December 27, 1880, died February 26, 1964

Howard Thomas Hoehn, born May 17, 1884, died May 12, 1922

Ethyl May Hoehn, born February 1889, died April 7, 1963



Jacob Hoehn's final resting place is in the Old Sacramento City Cemetery. He is buried with his wife and a number of his children, which is marked by a large granite stone.



Of all their children none produced heirs that are living today. In fact, they had only one grandchild who lived a natural life and she had no children. Of all Jacob and Catherine's children only two were married – unusual for any family.

The bottles produced for the sale Summit Soda Springs mineral water appear to have been blown in a single mold and all have visual characteristics of being produced at the Pacific Glass Works in San Francisco. Its only competitor, the San Francisco Glass Works, was not functional between 1868 and 1872 due to a devastating fire. It is unknown if more than one order of bottles were blown but they are not particularly common artifacts. All are made in shades of aquamarine with a capacity of one pint, with a typical blob top of the period. The embossing, all on one face, reads; **SUMMIT / MINERAL WATER/ J.H.** The initials can be for none other than Jacob Hoehn.

End Notes:

1. His birthdate is calculated from his age on his tombstone.
2. Sacramento Daily Union, January 1, 1874
3. B.B. Redding arrived in California penniless but became the California Secretary of State; State Representative; first State Printer; Mayor of Sacramento, CA; U.S. Government Land Agent, State Fisheries Commissioner; State Prison Commissioner; Regent of the University of California; President of the Calif. Academy of Sciences; newspaper publisher and a number of lesser titles. He also lent his name to the City of Redding, CA, county seat of Shasta County.
4. see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Railway_Acts

5. Photo from an old stereoview card, circa 1868
6. From E. & H.T. Anthony & Co., New York, Stereoview Card No. 7119
7. Originally three adjacent lakes, Serena, Dulzura and Sybil, a dam in the 1940's created only two lakes and the name Serene Lakes became dominant. The Ice Lakes name was created during the short period when they were used for ice harvesting and has never completely disappeared. A subdivision of recreational cabins currently surrounds the lakes. Sugar Bowl Ski Resort is also located nearby.
8. Photo from an old stereoview card.
9. San Francisco Bulletin, July 14, 1871
10. Truckee Republican, August 26, 1872
11. Sacramento Directory for the Year Commencing January 1, 1872. H.S. Crocker, Publisher. Sacramento, Cal.
12. San Francisco Bulletin, April 25, 1873
13. Sacramento Directory for the Year Commencing January 1, 1874. H.S. Crocker, Publisher. Sacramento, Cal.
14. Tevis was a mega-rich capitalist of his day, and is perhaps best known for being the president of Well-Fargo Bank for 21 years.
15. Avery, Benjamin Park. Californian Pictures in Prose and Verse. New York, Hurd and Houghton; Cambridge, The Riverside press, 1878. pps. 97 & 98
16. San Francisco Bulletin, July 22, 1873
17. San Francisco Bulletin, June 12, 1871
18. San Francisco Bulletin, June 27, 1873
19. Photo from an old stereoview card
20. From Carleton E. Watkins New Series Stereoview No. 4214
21. San Francisco Call, September 3, 1898

BREAKING! 2009 NEWS!

"THE BOTTLE BIBLE"

All Color - 600 Stunning Photographs

Bottles:

Identification and Price Guide

6th EDITION

By: Michael Polak

Comprehensive Price Guide

52 Updated Chapters

3 New Chapters

Ginger Bottles

Portable Soda Pop Dispensers

National Bottle Museum-Ballston Spa, NY

Comprehensive Research Guide

History and Origin, Age Identification

Digging Methods, Determining Bottle

Values, Trademark Identification, Club

Guide, Glossary, Auction Houses

Contact Information:

Mike Polak

P.O. Box 30328

Long Beach, CA 90853

Web Site: www.bottlebible.com

E-mail: bottleking@earthlink.net

Phone/Fax (562) 438-9209

Retail Price \$21.99

\$ 3.01 Ship/Handling

\$25.00

