

A GUIDE TO  
The TRUCKEE TRAIL  
FROM THE HUMBOLDT DIKE TO THE  
CREST OF THE SIERRA NEVADA

BOB BLACK



AN EMIGRANT TRAILS WEST SERIES GUIDEBOOK  
BY TRAILS WEST, INC., RENO, NEVADA

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# MAP & MARKER LISTINGS TRUCKEE TRAIL

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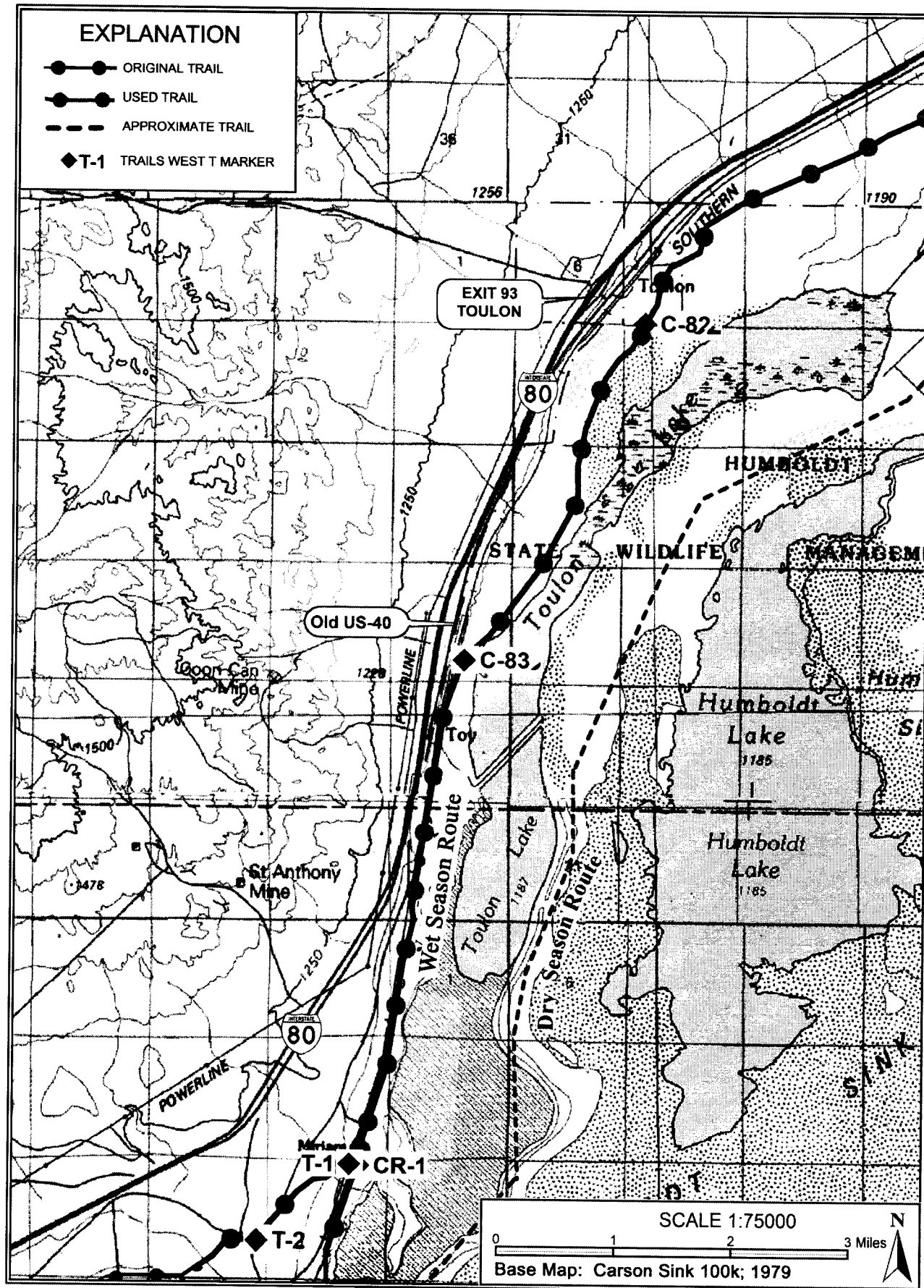


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# MAP 2



## MARKER T-1

**TRUCKEE TRAIL -FORKS OF THE TRAIL**  
**"CONTINUED ALONG A SLUE TO THE FOOT OF A SMALL HILL. HERE**  
**THE ROADS FORK, THE LEFT HAND BEING THE CARSON ROUT. THE**  
**RIGHT THE TRUCKEE... BIDDING ADIEU TO THE HUMBOLDT & SINK**  
**PASSED UP THE HILL TO THE RIGHT." - D.B. ANDREWS, AUG 4, 1852**

## TRAIL DESCRIPTION

From Marker C-83, the wet season used trail goes southwest about 4 miles on the nearly level, sandy west shore of Toulon Lake to the 1852 & later site of the trail junction for the Truckee Trail and the Carson Trail.

The dry season trail route travels generally parallel to the wet season route but is located about 1 ½ miles east in the Humboldt Sink.

This 1852 trail junction is located under the present railroad and is near the underpass. From this junction, the very faint, used trail continues southwest in the sandy soil along the west side of the present railroad to Marker T-1.

## OVERLAND NARRATIVES

Aug 4

Continued along a slue to the foot of a small hill. Here The roads fork, the left hand being the carson rout. The Right the truckee...bidding adieu to the humboldt & sink Passed up the hill to the right.

D.B. Andrews, 1852

August 10th After traveling several miles this morning we got past the great meadows we then entered upon a low plain which is surely overflowed when the water is high in the lake and places here has surely been under water but a short time since. we nooned on this deserted plain and fed out stock on some of our new made hay our water we had with us and our bread being baked we soon took dinner and were rolling on. We are now traveling along side the great basin or Humboldt lake, which receives the waters of the Humboldt river the lake is many miles long and several miles wide in the widest place and having no out let the water is salty. we traveled down to the foot of the lake and in about one mile beyond the lake over quite a bluff or ridge and encamped for the day by the side of a slew which appears to make from the sink the water is quite brackish and not fit for use except for stock they drink it the grazing here for our cattle was poor we found some grease wood which served us for fuel.

## T-1: FORKS OF THE TRAIL

See *Guide Map 2*, page 26

HOW TO FIND: Go to EXIT 93-TOULON on I-80.

Exit the freeway and go to the stop sign. Turn right. Go a short distance to old Highway 40.

Turn right. Go 3.5 miles on the gravel road to a road on the right heading toward the underpass under Highway I-80.

Continue straight ahead. Go 2.7 miles to a road on the right.

Continue straight ahead. Go 0.5 mile to a road on the left.

Turn left. Go 0.2 mile to the undercrossing of the railroad and a dirt road on the right. Do not go through the underpass.

Turn right. Go 0.2 mile southwest along the railroad to a Y road junction.

Continue straight ahead. Go 0.2 mile to a Y road junction and Marker T-1 on the left.

LAT/LONG: N 39.955967°, W 118.689517°

John Thornily, 1852

[Aug] 17. Drove to the sink or Lake twenty two miles here the road forks the left hand one leading through "Carson Valley" the right hand one is called the "Truckee[" and is the one which we traveled- we drove on three miles farther and camped on the North side of the Slough and small stream which puts into the sink from the West, Let us now return to camp on the Slough- bordering on this stream of salt water there is some grass- but we kept our cattle from it fearing its deleterious effects this grass is encrusted about the roots with a white substanc[e] part salt and part something Else which is very weakening to stock East Owen, 1852

Thursday, August 26. Rolled out of camp and in 10 miles came to the lower end of the meadows. From here down

# THE TRUCKEE & CARSON TRAIL JUNCTIONS

By Bob Black, David Fullerton & Jon Nowlin

Since emigrant trail buffs began trying to retrace the branches of the California Trail, determining the location of the junctions of the California Trail and the Truckee and Carson Trails has been difficult.

## 1844-1849 California Trail Route

The wet season trail of the westside branch of the California Trail, extending from Granite Point to Sulphur Wells at the Humboldt Dike has been marked with Trails West Markers C-81, C-82, C-83 & T-1. The dry season trail route is located farther to the east and generally follows along the west side of the Humboldt Sink. There are no markers along this trail route. The two routes come together at Sulphur Wells.

The following diaries of Edwin Bryant (1846), Helfrich Lienhard (1846) and Augustus Burbank (1849) describe these trail routes:

August 19. At the southern edge of this plain we came to some pools of standing water, as described by the Indians last night, covered with a yellowish slime, and emitting a most disagreeable fetor....I procured from one of the pools a cup of water, and found it so thoroughly saturated with alkali, that it would be dangerous for ourselves or our animals to make use of it .... A ridge of low sand-hills [the dike] runs entirely across the plain or valley immediately below these pools.

Edwin Bryant, 1846

Sept. 24. On some maps a lake is indicated at the lower end of the Humboldt River. As we approached the end of the river, we could see nothing of a lake. However, one could tell that the barren, salty, low area must be covered with water at certain seasons; then this wide basin must have the appearance of a rather large lake. ...The real sink of the Mary's River, or Humboldt River, as is now more commonly called, is a stinking pool of water between two hills .... only dire thirst and the knowledge that one would have to walk forty miles before coming to real drinking water could force anyone to take a drink of this diabolic liquid.

Helfrich Leonard, 1846

Aug. 30th. We passed down to the lake or sink

over a deep loamy soil, the road had become solid or compact from the travel, but alongside the earth was so loose that a cane could be run down to a depth of 4 feet. I was riding a little from the road when my horse sank down in the dust up to his sides & completely mired. I dismounted & reined him around & got him extracted. ... passed the sink on our left, which is ponds & sloughs of shallow depth, covered with a thick scum & skirted with bullrushes & reed grass (no grass here) ... We watered our cattle from some wells [at Marker C-83] near the edge of the marsh that had been dug by emigrants. The water here was strongly impregnated with salt & some alkalie, passing the Sink, we crossed some low Sand ridges 5 miles to the Sulphur wells and encamped about 9 P.M. Augustus Ripley Burbank, 1849

From Sulphur Wells, the trail continued south, forded the Humboldt River, passed over the Humboldt Dike [near Marker CR-2] and continued southwest.

The following diaries describe this route:

Aug. 19. We passed from the pools or "Sink" over the low ridge of sand-hills [the Dike], in a south course. Our mules waded through these hills, or heaps of dry and ashy earth, rather than walked over them, sinking in many places nearly to their bellies, and manifesting the strongest signs of exhaustion.

Edwin Bryant, 1846

Sunday, August 12th. We rolled out at daybreak. [from their camp at Sulphur Wells] The road was firm, solid, level & smooth. In four miles, we came to the forks of the road. Here we found many placards, the most of which advised their friends to take the right. The left was but little traveled in comparison to the right.

Wakeman Bryarly, 1849

Aug. 31th. We got all ready, gave our cattle water from the wells (our cattle was not well. Some of them quite unwell) Started on the desert at 2 ock P.M. We passed over a ridge [the Dike] then entered upon an elevated plain. At 3 miles distance the road forks.

Augustus Ripley Burbank, 1849

# APPENDICES

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