



O U R H I S T O R Y

The early settlers of the Huntington Lake Basin were the Western Mono Native Americans. They came out of Jose Basin to the Shaver Lake area by way of Stevenson Creek up through what is now Big Creek, to cross over the crest of the Sierra to Bishop to trade with the Eastern Mono. An old trade route came through the former canyon where Huntington Lake now lies. A trip was made by either Mono or Mammoth Passes, with visits to Mono Hot Springs and the Devil's Post Pile on their "crossings". When settlers started coming to the area in the 1860's, many married Indian women. The settlers mined, grazed sheep and then cattle. Lumber became a commodity, with much of the timber being used in the nearby growing Fresno County. In 1902, John S. Eastwood, engineer for the Pacific Light and Power Company, selected Big Creek as the site for new hydroelectric developments: and nine years later work got underway on one of the greatest water power development in the world, the Big Creek-San Joaquin Project. In its' day, only the construction of the Panama Canal was a greater engineering achievement. By 1929 the development had grown to a composite of three major artificial lakes created by six dams, eight tunnels, a series of five power houses 248 miles of steel tower highvoltage transmission lines. Huntington Lake, Florence Lake and Shaver Lake were the front runners of man's vision, determination and intelligence. A railroad, the San Joaquin & Eastern was pushed through to carry supplies from the Southern Pacific Friant branch to Big Creek. Fifty-six miles of track were installed in 157 days, all the work done by team and the Fresno Scraper, wheelbarrows and hand drills, the men earning 27 cents an hour. The result was a twisty, uneven road bed, but it offered faster service for both passengers and freight than team and wagon. The road from Big Creek to the Basin was built in 1910 by ten men, one team, a plow and a Fresno Scraper. That road was 6 miles long. The first person to drive the first car over the road was Harry M. Allen, the owner of Allen's Lumberyard located above the Home Creek Trading Post, at Home Creek Bay-Huntington Lake. The surrounding area today known as Huntington Lake was simply called "Basin", the name taken from Basin Creek, originally a grain and cattle raising area, at the bottom of today's lake. A post office was established there in 1913, with the community of

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BILLY CREEK GUARD STATION MUSEUM

In 1905, with the transfer of the Forest Reserve from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service was established. Offices on the forest were typically rented rooms and portable dwellings like tents. In 1920, the Forest Service felt a need for more permanent structures. The costlimitation for Forest Service buildings was \$650 and construction required Washington Office approval. The Billy Creek Guard Station residence was constructed in 1929 with a warehouse being completed in 1930. Orland Bartholomew, who completed the trans-Sierra winter trip in 1928-29, lived here from 1932 to 1952. Huntington Lake Association (HLA) is an organization of owners of resorts, camps and recreation residences located in the Sierra Forest. It was established in 1923 and incorporated in 1952. In 1989, the board of HLA asked the Forest Service to preserve the Billy Creek Station structures. HLA helped establish the Huntington Lake/Big Creek Historical Conservancy to complete the partnership with the Forest Service.

Today the structures will be maintained to exhibit a "portrait in time". Photos, artifacts and narrative will tell the story of the Basin, as it was called in the early 1900's and onward.



HUNTINGTON LAKE
BIG CREEK
HISTORICAL CONSERVANCY

INTERPRETIVE CENTER

