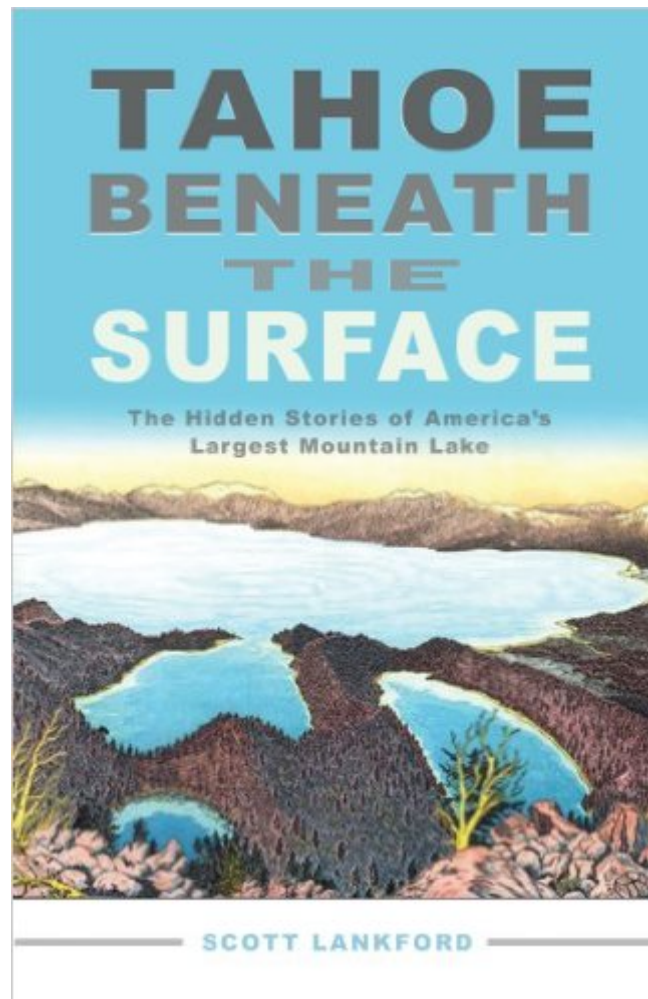


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# Tahoe Beneath The Surface: The Hidden Stories Of America's Largest Mountain Lake



## Synopsis

Lake Tahoe transformed America, and not just once but many times over--from the earliest Ice Age civilizations to the mysterious death of Marilyn Monroe. It even played a hidden role in the American conquest of California, the launch of the Republican Party, and the birth of John Steinbeck's first novel. Along the way, Lake Tahoe found the time to invent the ski industry, spark the sexual revolution, and win countless Academy Awards. *Tahoe beneath the Surface* brings this hidden history of America's largest mountain lake to life through the stories of its most celebrated residents and visitors over the last ten thousand years. It mixes local Washoe Indian legends with tales of murderous Mafia dons, and Rat Pack tunes with Steinbeck novels. It establishes Tahoe as one of America's literary hot spots by tracing the steps of more than a dozen authors including Bertrand Russell, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Michael Ondaatje. *Tahoe beneath the Surface* reveals how the lake transformed the lives of conservationists like John Muir, humorists like Mark Twain, and Hollywood icons like Frank Sinatra. It even touches upon some of the darker aspects of American history, including anti-Chinese racism and the Kennedy assassination. Despite the impact Lake Tahoe has had on America, environmental threats loom large, and Tahoe Blue--a term that Lankford uses to encompass the whole range of life, beauty, and meaning the lake represents--grows increasingly vulnerable. In *Tahoe beneath the Surface*, human history and natural history combine in a most engaging way, one that will both inform and inspire all who would keep Tahoe blue. Winner of a 2010 ForeWord Book of the Year Award

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is an eye-opener in regard to the early contacts of pioneers and Native Americans in California, the baneful influence of the Gold Rush on their relations, the context of the Donner Party tragedy, and other stories from iconic Western history. Add to this the contemporary lore about celebrities and their Lake Tahoe visits, from Bertrand Russell wintering there to Frank Sinatra to JFK and Marilyn Monroe. The style is intelligent but brisk, incorporating lots of historical insight and information into vivid anecdotes and summaries of the chapter topics. This book should be read in ALL California History classes in public schools, to balance the prevailing views of Manifest Destiny and the 49'ers (in my opinion)--and it would be a good book for tourists and first time visitors to Northern California, particularly foreigners, to read also.

Would I recommend this book? With qualifications. The author sets out to tell little known tales of Tahoe and the surrounding region, especially focusing on some of its literary residents and visitors. It is the author's belief that this mountain lake had significant impact on America a number of times. Pros. It's interesting. It's not necessary to read the chapters in order and I suspect that a person might choose to dip back into it numerous times. The strongest chapter concerns John Muir and his failed effort, working with other people, to establish a national park in the basin. This was part of the author's doctoral dissertation, so he had plenty of material to work with. Another interesting chapter concerned Mark Twain, who spent three years in the West as he avoided the Civil War. The author provides quotations about Tahoe from Twain's *Roughing It*, which most of us are familiar with, but also includes a couple of evocative passages from *Innocents Abroad*, where the author is comparing it to the Sea of Galilee, to the Sea's considerable disadvantage. Cons. My most serious criticism of the book is that it has neither end notes nor a bibliography nor even an index. The author is very opinionated, and makes numerous assertions which, due to this deficiency, it is impossible to check. His very liberal perspective may be a problem for some readers and refreshing for others. I consider myself fairly liberal but compared to him I look like a John Bircher. I found his focus on minority groups who were persecuted to be overblown. For example, he goes into considerable detail about the forced labor, which he labels as slavery, of the Native Californian in the Central Valley. His story is that this is necessary background to the particular tale he is telling -- for me it was a distraction. In summary, I think this is an important book about Tahoe for residents and those interested in its history. I checked it out of the library and will probably buy it.

If you want a book about how the white man mistreated the Native Americans, Chinese, and Mexicans (which is all probably accurate) then this book is for you. But if you want a book about the

natural history and little known facts (secrets as the title suggests) related to Tahoe then I would suggest you look somewhere else. This book was not at all what I was looking for and I would not recommend it to others.

This was an interesting read, as I learned a lot of new things about a place I know fairly well. The quality of the writing was a bit uneven, with most chapters presented in easy narrative, while one in particular was rather dry and kind of odd. The author inserts himself into many of these stories, mostly in ways that enhance them, but the second-to-last chapter was long on philosophy, a bit disjointed, and probably superfluous. Maybe it belonged in a different book. As I say, though, most of the book was well worth reading. Without being too depressing, Lankford explores the darker side of Tahoe's history, especially the mistreatment of the native population and the Chinese immigrants, the details of which were left out of the California history I studied in public school during the 60s and 70s. It was enlightening. It's important to have the whole picture.

I saw this in a boutique bookstore in Truckee. Having scuba dived there as a young man it caught my attention. I picked it up and read the first couple of paragraphs. They were about Jacques Cousteau exploring the depths of Tahoe. Well, my childhood hero on the first page, had to have it. Turns out in the next paragraph that was just a rumor that Cousteau had dived Tahoe; and that was the very last about "Beneath the Surface". The book is really about the history of the Native Americans that settled the area surrounding the Tahoe Basin. Although this is a subject I am also interested in - and the content is a very interesting history; it is not at all what the title implies. I felt a little deceived - but never the less enjoyed the book. DE

I now think of Tahoe from an entirely new and fascinated perspective because of this author. Once you get into this book of his, you will understand what fascinations about this particular north west marvel caught his attention and motivated his decision to share such with us readers in a book. Well done, Scott Lankford.

Ordered to give as a special gift but could not due to the condition. The cover was very dusty however fixable with a dust rag. It was also tattered and badly worn. I've seen better at a garage sale! I donated it to a local thrift store.

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