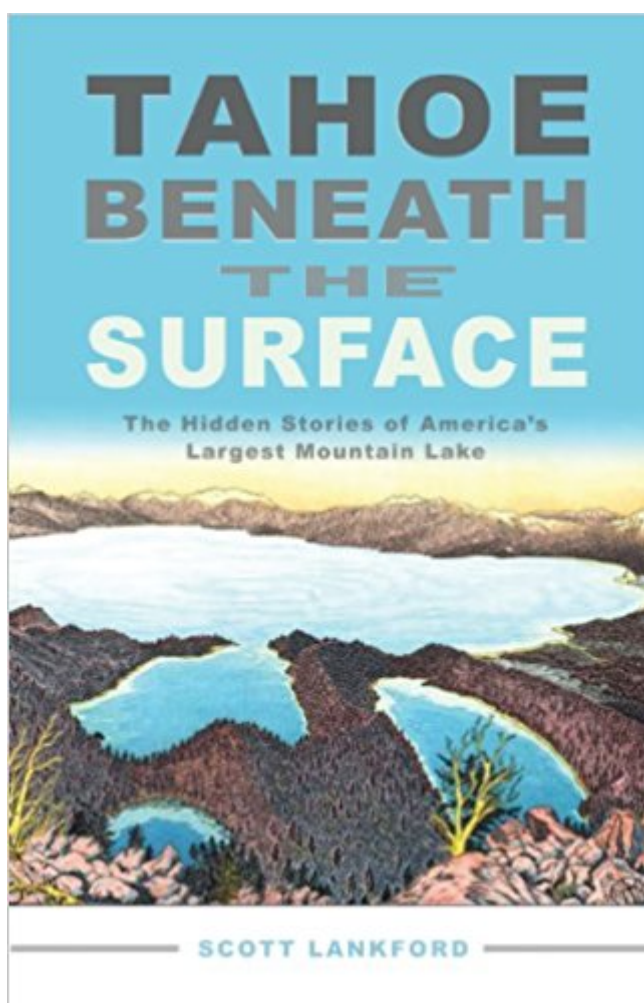


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# Tahoe Beneath The Surface: The Hidden Stories Of America's Largest Mountain Lake



## 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

"I urge readers to dive into this book headfirst and to allow its currents to carry them along. Bravo, Lankford, bravo! This book will take me back to Tahoe and enable me to see it as though for the first time."--Jonah Raskin, author of *Natives, Newcomers, Exiles, Fugitives: Northern California Writers and their Work*, and a professor of communication studies at Sonoma State University "This book is pure pleasure. Equally at home in nature and culture, the past and the present, Scott Lankford reflects on Tahoe from the deep geological past to contemporary ecological threats, writing about all of it with a lover's fervor and respect, a keen eye, and sparkling wit....I learned something new on every page."--Tom Lutz, author of *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America*; editor of the *Los Angeles Review of Books* "Sparkling like the lake itself, this is a revealing depiction of the characters and forces that have shaped one of our national treasures. A compelling read to keep Tahoe Blue."--Dr. Leo E. Chavez, superintendent and president, Sierra College "A must read for anyone interested in Lake Tahoe, and, for that matter, for anyone interested in a good story of a particular landscape, in this case the largest mountain lake in America." --Greg Sarris, chairman, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria; author of *Grand Avenue* and *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*

Raised in Colorado, Scott Lankford got lost en route to Stanford University and spent much of the next ten years as a maintenance man, musician, and mountaineering guide at Lake Tahoe. After joining the 1985 American Everest West Ridge Expedition, he completed a Ph.D. in modern thought and literature with a dissertation on John Muir. Currently a professor of English at Foothill College, in California's Silicon Valley, he has also served as Foothill's dean of Language Arts and codirector of the Foothill College Center for a Sustainable Future.

Beneath the surface of the cover of this book, lies a message that will astonish audiences about Lake Tahoe and what is happening to it. Scott Lankford, a former professor and a current mentor of mine, has successfully convinced me to pay more attention to issues such as global warming, climate change, and environmental degradation. Anyone who is interested in this book should be convinced to read it. When I first began reading this book, I was intrigued about what my former professor did before coming to California to teach English composition and writing. Diving into the first few pages, I was surprised to learn that my former professor had spent nearly 10 years working part-time around the lake. What seemed like a small detour became an entirely different expedition for him to have experienced. Hearing his experience has ensured me that my life after college will be full of adventures to unknown territories. As a college student studying in the sciences, I am

greatly concerned about the well-being of planet Earth and its inhabitants. I see parks and landscapes become demolished; I see animals of all kinds of species become extinct before my very eyes. In addition, I have concerns of how others currently perceive the situation. I see friends from my previous high school travel to Lake Tahoe every year. None of them have a clue about what is going on and what is happening to it. No matter how hard I try to convince them to pay attention about the current issues, I am always given a silent response. This book helped me break through their silence. This book, while not solely based on environmental degradation, talks about the history of Lake Tahoe and its impact on American society. In the book, Scott Lankford illustrates how Lake Tahoe has been shared by a variety of people. The book has ancient stories over the past many years. Its aesthetics has impacted the lives of famous individuals, such as Mark Twain, and its presence continues to influence the lives of many people today. I managed to share content about the book with other people while successfully pulling their attention away from a variety of distractions. Furthermore, the author creatively illustrates readers the importance of losing Lake Tahoe. Environmental changes are becoming more noticeable and current scientific research points that the lake is dying. We need more people to understand the issue going on and we need more people to help resolve the problem. I am grateful for having time to have read this book. It has given me the opportunity to realize the importance of Lake Tahoe and its history. More importantly, I am more grateful for having Scott Lankford as teacher. He has given me the opportunity to perceive the world differently. He has expanded my vision about what I want to do in the future. We can all continue to question about our future and stress about our lives. We can all go back to our smart phones; we can become excited about how the new iPhone doesn't have headphone jack. We can all sit and watch our home turn into dust and ruins. But come hell or high water, we'll need these ancient stories to survive.

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.

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.

This is a wonderful book with true stories about the Tahoe history. You will not regret getting it.

Interesting but not what I expected.

As a reader who knows the Tahoe Basin over a lifetime of visits and living, this was a unique take and well done.

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.

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