



# Lumber Baron of the Comstock Lode

*Jack Harpster*

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## **Lumber Baron of the Comstock Lode** Jack Harpster

Was Duane L. Bliss a business genius or a despoiler of natural resources? This is one of the major themes in this first-ever biography of one of the Pacific West's great entrepreneurial geniuses.

During the glory days of Nevada's Comstock era, from 1859 into the early 1890s, Duane L. Bliss's Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company was the largest supplier of timber and lumber to the booming mining business. The company's products provided the framework for the Comstock's 135+ underground mines and supplied the lumber to help build the towns of Virginia City and Gold Hill. It also sold the firewood that stoked the steam engines of the equipment that performed the mines' and mills' heavy lifting and warmed the homes on the Virginia Range. On the flip side, however, Bliss's firm leveled more of the old-growth forest in the Tahoe Basin than any of its competitors.

When the Comstock's mines eventually shut down in the 1890s, Bliss began a second career, turning Lake Tahoe into a national and international summer tourist mecca. Now the living trees mattered, and Bliss changed his outlook, becoming, while not an ardent conservationist, at least a concerned one. In the process he earned the sobriquet "The Grand Old Man of Lake Tahoe," and his influence is still felt in the area today.

Much more than a biography of a professional lumberman and founder of modern Lake Tahoe, this book also describes the intricacies of business and daily life during an important era of American history, and the commitment of the men and women who were caught up in the excitement of the era.

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