

# The Holiday Herald

Donner Pass and Mount Shasta, California

21 December 2023

## Homes for the holidays I

Sierra A-frame  
*Soda Springs*



Mailbox  
Mount Shasta

# Homes for the holidays

**F**or the past 14 years — excepting 2020, a Covid year — I've headed to the mountains each December to photograph snowy landscapes for a [holiday newsletter](#). I like mountains, snow, winter, photography, writing, graphic design, Microsoft Word and holidays. And I go because I can.

I'm not going this December, however because the snow cover is still thin in the Sierra and southern Cascades, and there's no forecast of snow before Christmas (for the [2013 newsletter](#), I went to southern Oregon to find snow). My sister Julie is coming for a visit in January. I'll get my snow fix then.

For this holiday newsletter, I decided to go back into my files of several thousand photos and use some I either hadn't previously published or that could be re-cropped to give them a different perspective. I discovered I had several pictures of snow-covered houses and a ready-made theme staring me in the face: "homes for the holidays."

**SIERRA A-FRAME** — Within the larger group of pictures here, there is a sub-group exemplified by this picture. They are about how color changes the visual impact of a winter image. The reddish-brown cabin in this shot makes warmth the focus of a chilly scene.

**MAILBOX** — The yellow mailbox, wearing its own cap of snow, jumps out of this image of an otherwise plain house. The mailbox is small but defiant, shouting "I'm here!" in a monochrome world.

**RED, WHITE & BLUE** — This photo was on the third page of the [2021 holiday newsletter](#) but cropped differently. This version is more about the flag, but there's no mistaking that it's also about the house and snow. I also like the snowflakes as stand-ins for the flag's stars.

**REFLECTIVE** — Blues and greens in winter landscapes most often mean sunny, forested mountains. Here they (falsely) imply bitter cold from an icy reflection. This was a comfortably cool early morning before the breeze disturbed Donner Lake's still water. The sun's rays were evaporating fog from the surface. I used a different cropping of this same picture in [last year's newsletter](#) on Page 2. The 2022 version didn't make the cover because I didn't want words competing with the visual patterns of trees and their reflections.

**COZY** — The spot of color that animates this shot comes from the interior lights seen through the windows. They imply life and warmth inside on an otherwise stormy day.

**CONDO COUNTRY** — I like how the lights illuminate this view of the Soda Springs Station condominium building by the tracks of the first transcontinental railroad. But what I really like is the sky — not black but a more interesting blue that is even deeper and speaks to the intense character of winter nights.

**TREE HOUSE** — Imagine, even with the tree and balcony lights, what would be lost from this picture if it were a sunny day or at night. The many shades of gray here are just as important as the color in this shot. Another re-use, but cropped the same way as in the [2019 newsletter](#).

**COOL AS IT LOOKS** — This was a cloudless, sub-freezing day, a feeling enhanced by the lack of color in the house cooled further by the forest shadows.

**... ON THE RANGE** — "Homes" implies structures, but that's not always true. These horses are at home, too, although my use of the word "range" stretches things to make a point. The fences mean the horses are really in pastures; range land is the wide-open expanse of the American West.



Red, white & blue  
*Mount Shasta*



Reflective  
*Donner Lake*



Cozy  
Soda Springs



Condo country  
Soda Springs



Tree house  
*Royal Gorge*





Cool as it looks

*Royal Gorge*



... on the range  
*City of Weed*