

Personal Recollections of The Ground Cow

The Ground Cow was one of those places like the But Tree—it was a landmark, a famous stop over point in Northern California...and, like the Nut Tree, it's history now.

Located on Interstate 80, between Roseville and Auburn, on the way to Reno, it was just a restaurant, as opposed to something like the Nut Tree, which was an entire complex of activities surrounding a restaurant. Nope! This was just a restaurant. It wasn't a plush restaurant; it wasn't an expensive restaurant; it wasn't even a scenic restaurant...unless you like watching cars go by on the freeway. It was just a plain old restaurant!

Still, everyone knew it. People referred to it. All a person had to say was "Ground Cow", and you knew exactly the area they were referring to. So, why was it so famous. My answer—I haven't a clue! I have hunch that it all started from the fact that it was a nice stopping point for people driving up to the mountains or to Reno, especially if they were driving from the Bay Area. That would put the Ground Cow some two hours from San Francisco and about an hour and half from Reno, making it something of a mid-way point to stop and stretch your legs, eat, and take care of 'other business'.

I don't know when the Ground Cow opened, but, judging from this cover, it was in operation at least as early as the early 1960s, perhaps the late 1950s. I moved to the Auburn area shortly after I was discharged from the army in 1973 and quickly became familiar with it. I passed it each time I went to Sacramento. And, it was certainly open in late 1973!...I know that for certain because it's indelibly written in my memory. I had just picked up my fiance from the San Francisco Airport; she had just flown in from Liverpool, England. So, on the way to 'our' new home in Auburn, we stopped at the Ground Cow *[if I had had any inkling of how the marriage was going to turn out, I would have left her there...but that's beside the point]*.

If I recall correctly, the Ground Cow went out of business sometime around the early 1990s. Don't know why. Didn't see any warnings about it either. Here today—gone tomorrow! It was immediately replaced by another restaurant, so it doesn't seem as if lack of business would have been the reason. Still, in any event, it's gone.

I think this must be one of the signs of aging. As you get older, the familiar landmarks of your life inevitably peel away from you, one by one, but sometimes with frightening rapidity. Don't you ever get that feeling of "Who am I? Where am I"??

I can't attest that there are any more Ground Cow covers than this one. There are probably a few more, given how long it was in business, but this is the only one I came across. I don't collect Restaurants; this one was in my "Famous Places" collection. Every time I see it, it evokes memories...some fond...some not!

