

Saugus to the Sea and other shortcuts that never were....

Chatsworth Historical Society Article September 2020 - By Ray Vincent

This article will look back on three proposed road projects to connect the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys to the beach, **Saugus to the Sea**, **Reseda to the Sea**, and **Knudsen Parkway**. They were described as “scenic highways”, but for various reason never came to pass.

Saugus to the Sea

On January 3rd 1926, Chambers of Commerce of Santa Monica-Ocean Park and 18 Chambers from the San Fernando Valley met with County officials to improve Topanga Canyon Blvd from the ocean to the Ventura Blvd. They also endorsed the extension of Topanga Canyon through Owensmouth, Chatsworth, and Saugus.

As we know, the route from the beach to Chatsworth has been completed, but what happened to the extension through the Santa Susana Mountains?

On March 30th 1926, the article to the far right described 30 engineers and prominent valley residents travelling up Brown’s canyon to the top of the Santa Susana Range. They left Chatsworth School in automobiles and enjoyed a dinner of barbecued steaks at the summit.

On September 7th 1926, the article directly to the right describes what is called the third link, connecting Topanga between Roscoe and Chatsworth, a distance of three miles.

Historic Note 1: This link was completed in 1931. A December 1931 Van Nuys News article, with a picture of Topanga Canyon Blvd at Nordoff, announced the connection of Santa Susana Pass with Ventura Blvd.

A March 23rd 1927 article (not shown here) stated that “the preliminary view of the situation is that one of the two routes through the Johnson ranch will be selected.”

PLAN THIRD LINK IN SAUGUS-TO-SEA COUNTY HIGHWAY

The third link in the building of the highway from Saugus-to-the-sea through Chatsworth, Owensmouth and Girard, is being planned by a committee of property owners under the leadership of G. W. Granger, who seek to have Topanga avenue extended in the section between Roscoe boulevard and the town of Chatsworth, a distance of approximately three miles.

Granger and a party in which was included Councilman Charles H. Randall went over the proposed route and determined that a cut through three small hills would keep the straight alignment of the avenue and save a half-mile of additional paving, which would be necessary if the road went around the bases of the hills.

The property owners are signing up for the putting through of the road and when a majority of the footage is signed Councilman Randall is reported to have promised action. The work probably will be started under provisions of the Mattoon act.

INSPECT PROPOSED NEW SCENIC DRIVE

A party of about thirty engineers and prominent valley residents Saturday took a trip up Brown’s canyon to the highest point on the Santa Susana range to determine the practicability of building a scenic highway to this point. The building of such a highway in the mountains for the northwest of the valley was declared practical, and although no survey of the country has been made it is stated that the grade would not be more than six per cent.

The highway would leave the Santa Susana Pass road somewhere west of Brown’s canyon and wind its way to the summit, where it is planned to build the drive along the top of the range. The highest point attained by the highway would be the ranger station on top of the ridge, an elevation of 3,755 feet. An approach to the drive up the northside has been planned through Towsley canyon. The grade and route which would have to be taken by this road has not been determined, however. When finished this would be a short route from Saugus and Newhall to points in the upper San Fernando valley.

The party left Chatsworth school in automobiles provided by the promoters of the project at 8:30 a. m. and proceeded to the summit where a dinner of barbecued steaks was served. At the summit a meeting was held at which plans were gone over and contour maps of the region studied.

On May 26th 1927, (article far right) "Saugus to the Sea" proponents were to meet at a banquet at the Chatsworth Women's clubhouse, with President N.A. Gray and Secretary Ernest L. Johnson of the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce presiding.

Historic Note 2: The Chatsworth Women's club was a brick building built in 1924 and known as the Lombardi building. It was on the southwest corner of Devonshire and Owensmouth. It is no longer there, and has been replaced by a strip mall.

On June 16th 1927, the article to the immediate right described the distance through the mountains to Saugus as 17 ½ miles.

Several routes would be suggested based on the shortest route, the one of easiest construction, and the one with the slightest grade.

The Chatsworth Road

N. A. Gray, chairman of the general committee that was recently named to push the project of the construction of the Saugus-to-the-Sea Highway, via Girard and Topanga Canyon, is today with plans for holding a general meeting of the committee. This will be done in compliance with the desires of the property owners, who have been assured by County supervisor, H. W. Wright that the county would make a preliminary survey from here through the mountains to Saugus. The estimated distance is 17½ miles. As a result of the preliminary survey it is said the definite route to be traveled will be established. Several different ways of ascending the mountain have been suggested and the survey is expected to show the shortest route, the one of easiest construction, and the one that will negotiate the ascent on the slightest grade and with the smallest number of sharp curves. Councilman Randal promises that the city's portion of the boulevard from here to Girard will be paved before the winter rains begins.—Examiner.

SAUGUS-SEA ROAD PLAN PROMOTED

*Property Owners to Talk
Over Project for Highway
to Chatsworth*

Property owners and others interested in the complete construction of Topanga Highway from "Saugus to the Sea" are to meet on the evening of the 26th inst., at a banquet in the Women's clubhouse at Chatsworth to promote a highway over the mountains between Chatsworth and Saugus.

President N. A. Gray and Secretary Ernest L. Johnson of the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce are anxious to get the survey made and work started with the help of the County Supervisors and the City Council and have called the meeting.

The improvement of Topanga Canyon Drive between Girard and the sea is progressing so rapidly, with surveyors at work south of the pass, that those interested in the highway farther north wish to get an early start so as to tie in the various sectors of improvement.

President W. H. Prier of the Topanga Canyon Development Association is to attend with some of his members; a committee headed by Fred L. Noble is to represent the Girard Chamber of Commerce, and Nat E. Heacock of Owensmouth and property owners along Topanga avenue in the valleys are to be present.

Representatives from Newhall and Saugus are invited. Officials of the city and county whose duties include projects in this district are requested to be present.

A July 17th 1927 article (not shown here) mentions in part that Supervisor Henry Wright has promised that the Chatsworth-Saugus survey will be made without delay.

A January 20th 1928 article (not shown here) mentions that surveyors are working on the roadway from Chatsworth to Castaic/Saugus.

Historic Note 3: The Great Depression began after the stock market crash of October 1929, and lasted until 1939.

The February 23rd 1931 article to the right reported the cost of the project at \$555,000, and stated that State aid will be suggested to help fund the project.

An April 16th 1931 article (not shown here) states that “deeds for the entire 13 miles of right-of-way necessary for the road have been prepared by the County Surveyor and are now in the hands of the Associated Chambers, who plan to interview the property owners.”

No mention of the project is reported again until October 16th 1955, when the article to the right breathes new life into the project.

This article is followed by a June 21st 1956 article (not shown here), stating that

“procurement of right-of-way will be difficult and will take an estimated minimum of two years....Detention camp personnel will be utilized for the construction of the road, thereby holding the total cost of the project to a minimum. Minimum construction time for the completed road is estimated to be 10 years.”

Saugus to Sea Road Planned

A new road that would link Saugus to the sea has been authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

The road will be included in the county's 10-year detention camp construction program.

While a definite route has not been selected, tentative plans call for routing the road from Chatsworth through the Santa Susana Mountains to connect with Lyons Ave. in Newhall.

The road would take the place of the previously planned divided highway through Soledad Canyon. This would be done because that state is planning to widen Mint Canyon Road which parallels the Soledad route.

The new road will provide a shorter route from the Newhall-Saugus area to the San Fernando Valley and ultimately to the beach.

SAUGUS-TO-SEA COST COMPUTED

Expense of Highway Figured at \$555,000

Wright Makes Estimate for Valley Chamber

Making Effort to Get State Aid Suggested

The estimated cost of building the proposed Saugus-to-the-Sea highway, traversing the mountains from the Weldon Canyon Road to a point near Chatsworth, is approximately \$555,000, according to figures compiled by Chairman Wright of the Board of Supervisors for the Associated Chambers of Commerce of West San Fernando Valley.

Excavation and drainage on the new highway, to be thirteen miles in length, will cost about \$455,000 of the total amount and the additional \$100,000 would be expended for rock and oil surface.

The road as laid out by the County Surveyor is on a standard grade with no curves less than 250 feet.

The next step in the plans for the improvement will be to obtain deeds for the right of way, Chairman Wright told members of the chamber. He also said it will not be practical to place a construction camp in the district to care for laborers who would be working on the road, therefore the improvement will not be of any appreciable assistance in the unemployment situation in that area even if the work could be started at once.

The Supervisor also expressed some doubt as to whether the county could stand the entire cost of the proposed improvement and suggested that an attempt be made to obtain State aid for it.

And that is the last mention of the Saugus to the Sea Road. For a more in-depth look at Saugus to the Sea, please visit the website <https://www.elsmerecanyon.com/saugustosea/saugustosea.htm>

Reseda to the Sea

A Dec 12th 1938 article (not shown here), reported that eight businessmen from Tarzana attended a joint Tarzana, Northridge and Reseda Chambers of Commerce meeting and proposed to further the project of "Reseda Boulevard to the Sea"

On January 26th 1939, the article (seen at right) discussed early plans for the roadway.

The August 29th, 1940 article (partially seen at right) heralded that Prisoners were to Build the Scenic Highway, that was to traverse ten miles of beautiful virgin territory from Ventura Blvd to Rustic Canyon, offering a better highway than Topanga and a more direct route than Sepulveda Blvd.

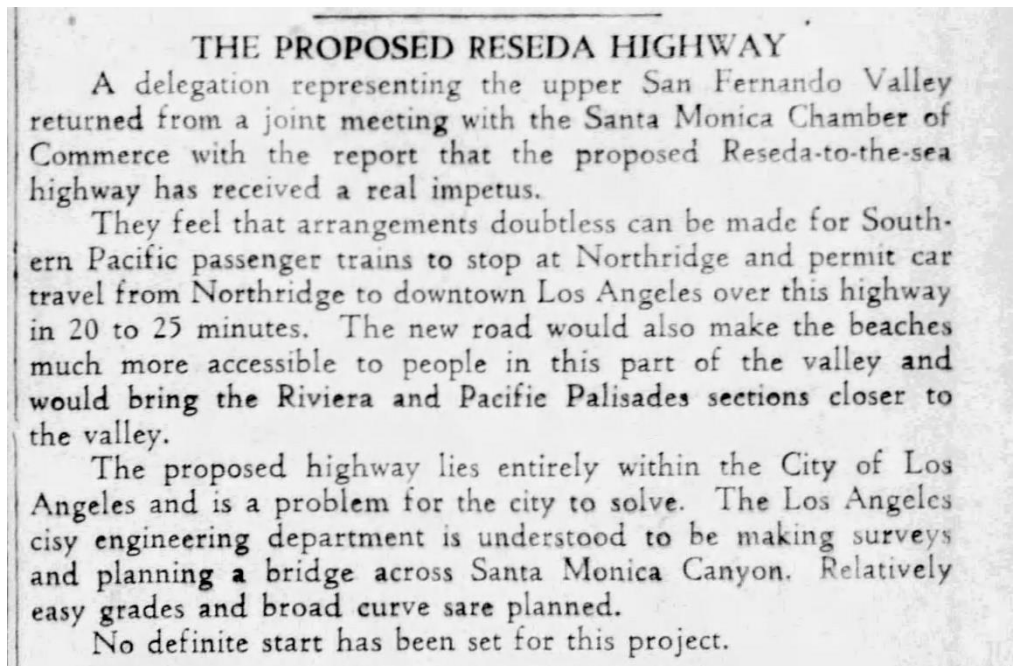
The project was not reported on again until November 11th 1950, when a State Senate committee met to discuss a plea for state aid in constructing a six lane, high speed boulevard on a right of way acquired by the city. During the meeting, Pacific Palisades residents were dissatisfied with the plan to join Reseda Blvd with Sunset Blvd at Will Rogers Park.

A March 10th, 1957 article discussed the debate on a proposal to route the Reseda to the Sea Freeway down Temescal Canyon, which conflicted with plans to build the Pacific Palisades High School at that location.

A Dec 12th, 1957 article Proposed a Reseda to the Sea Toll Road. It discussed the difficulty of terminating the freeway before Pacific Coast Highway, as surface streets in the area could not handle the volume of traffic. And discussed that previous plans to use Rustic Canyon would require the taking of very expensive property, and right-of-way costs would be unusually high. And the Temescal Canyon route interfered with the Palisades High School.

An April 6th, 1958 article reported that the Toll Road concept was doubtful.

An October 8th, 1961 article headlined "Reseda-to-Sea Freeway Stays on Low Priority". Occasional rumors that studies of the route would be resumed provoked a storm of protests by Palisades community leaders.



SHOPPERS EDITION

PEOPLE READ THIS PAPER - Jerry Grin, manager of the Goodrich Silverstown store at 200 East San Fernando Boulevard, Burbank, phoned his Val Naps store manager, declaring: "I'm telling you, people really read this Valley Times—it's the best paper in the valley!"

San Fernando Valley Times

COVERS THE VALLEY OF PLENTY LIKE THE SUNSHINE

AND HERALD OF ROSSGEE

Vol. 4 No. 69 32 PAGES North Hollywood, Calif. Thursday, August 29, 1940 THE VALLEY-WIDE NEWSPAPER—\$5.00 a Year, By Mail

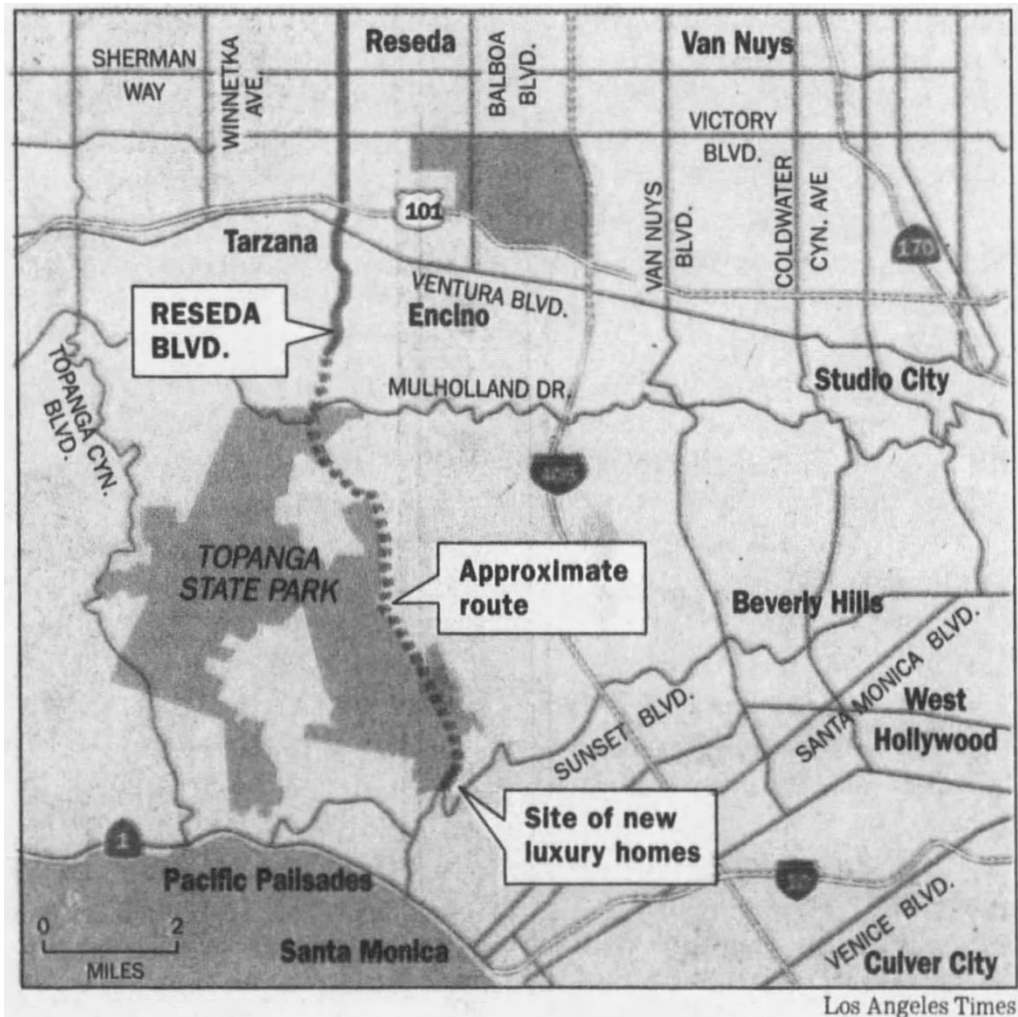
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FOR
WANT AD RATES

Prisoners To Build Scenic Highway

Reseda To The Sea Project

Will Traverse Ten Miles of Beautiful Virgin Territory

A Mar 20th, 1998 Los Angeles Times article on the various Reseda-to-the-Sea proposals states that the roadway idea was scrapped in 1977. In that article, the map to the right shows the approximate planned route of Reseda-to-the-Sea.



Knudsen Parkway

A March 3rd 1967 article (seen at right) named a proposed 15-mile strip of scenic highway from Devonshire to the 126 fwy near Castaic.

A December 6th 1973 article (partially shown to the right), explains that the Knudsen Parkway would require the widening of Winnetka north of Devonshire to four lanes, and “would literally ruin” a

Chatsworth-Porter Plan Finally Near Decision

Winnetka Widening, Horse Area Zoning Major Trouble Spots

BY IRV BURLEIGH
Times Staff Writer

Future widening of Winnetka Ave. between Devonshire St. and the Simi-San Fernando Valley Freeway route is the major trouble spot as the controversial Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Plan heads for a City Council decision after four years of bickering.

Other City Council Planning Committee changes favored a status quo instead of widening Valley Circle Drive. The committee also recommends deletion of the Knudsen



nearly square mile of large estates. And it was further discussed by councilmembers that “the proposed parkway goes through one of the most beautiful areas in all of the city, and to put a parkway through the middle of that area would be a travesty”.

Mrs. Valley Knudsen Feted at Civic Dinner

Mrs. Valley M. Knudsen, founder-president of Los Angeles Beautiful, was honored at a civic testimonial dinner Thursday night for her 18 years service with the organization.

The 1,000 persons who attended the affair at the Palladium heard tributes by numerous dignitaries, including Lt. Gov. Robert H. Finch, Mayor Sam Yorty and Supervisor Warren M. Dorn.

“We’re changing the

thinking of businessmen now that beauty is good business,” Mrs. Knudsen said. “At the beginning, they thought we were just do-gooders.”

Earlier in the day, a 15-mile strip of scenic county highway was named the Knudsen Parkway in Mrs. Knudsen’s honor. The Board of Supervisors gave the name to the extension of Devonshire St. from Chatsworth to the proposed route of Freeway 126 near Castaic.