

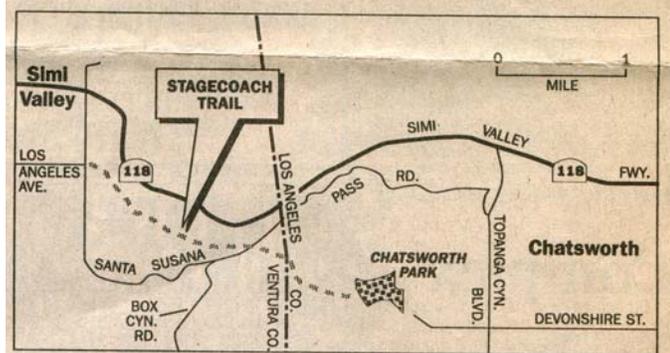
CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

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THE STAGECOACH TRAIL

When we think Santa Susana Pass, most of us locally think of the Santa Susana Pass Road that runs just south of the 118 freeway. Most only use it now when the freeway is backed up, however it is only one of a series of historic roads used over time to cross from Chatsworth to Simi Valley.



The Santa Susana Pass was first used by the Indians. During the Spanish Colonial Period, the original El Camino Real followed a coastal route from San Diego to San Francisco. The first mission was San Diego de Alcalá, founded in 1769. Upon completion of the 17th of 21 missions at San Fernando Rey de España in 1797, an inland route through the Santa Susana Pass was established. Travelers would go from the San Fernando Mission to the Simi House, built in 1793, and then on to Mission San Buenaventura, built in 1782.

In 1859 the State of California provided \$15,000 to fix up the Santa Susana Pass Wagon Road, which became the Stagecoach Trail, in use from 1861-1895. The work would be under the supervision of James Thompson, who had also been awarded a contract to use the pass to carry mail. This new road went straight up and over the mountain and became known as the

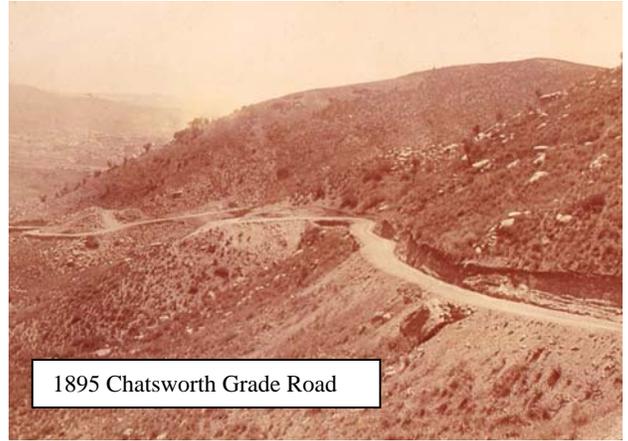


“Devil’s Slide” due to the descent and the need to lock the wagon wheels to keep the wagon from over-running the horses on the way down. Many stories have been recorded of the adventures of traveling the Stagecoach Road.

In 1875 the stagecoaches from Los Angeles to San Francisco were re-routed by a new owner to an

improved grade road south through Conejo with newer, more comfortable wagons. However, the Simi Land and Water Company continued to take passengers over the original Stagecoach Trail until 1895.

In 1895 the Chatsworth Grade Road was built...with yes, a usable grade that wound through the pass, cut into the hill sides. This made it possible for goods and produce to easily make it through the pass.



1895 Chatsworth Grade Road

The remains of this road can still be seen south of the existing Santa Susana Pass Road and is included in the Santa Susana State Historic Park property.

In 1904 the railroad’s successful completion of the Montalvo Cutoff with three tunnels through the hills of Simi and Chatsworth, connected railroad travel and transportation of goods through the pass to and from Los Angeles.

1917 brought an improved asphalt paved Santa Susana Pass Road that is still traveled today.



This photo is from movie film footage captured at the 1939 dedication ceremony

On March 17, 1939, the Native Daughters of the Golden West gathered to place a monument along the Stagecoach trail. Over 400 members of the community either walked or arrived on horseback up the steep trail to the summit where the tile plaque was unveiled. Tributes were paid to the pioneers who traveled this historic road.

In 1979 the completion of the 118 Freeway made travel through the pass a 5 minute journey now enjoyed in air-conditioned cars.

Chatsworth Historical Society