

on this road, known as the Humboldt Road. It became a public road in 1898 and \$4,000 was spent to put it in better shape.

Today's Highway 32 parallels much of this old road, vestiges of which can still be seen. This is the country once roamed by the fierce Yahi Indians, against whom the settlers waged a ruthless war of extermination.

As late as 1908, motorists were driving through the area unaware that an armed band of four surviving

Yahi were watching them. The last of these, Ishi, was discovered outside Oroville in 1911. At first thought to be a "wild man," he was befriended by a University of California anthropologist who could speak a word or so of Ishi's dialect and slowly got the story of how he had survived. During his remaining years, Ishi was honored instead of hunted. He died in 1916, part of the story of a highway that featured the noblest and the worst in man.



Yuba Pass

NEAR THE headwaters of the fabled North Fork of the Yuba River, up past the spires of Sierra Buttes, is Yuba Pass. It stands in mountainous country of such improbable grandeur that almost anything seems possible. Even a tall story about a nearby lake with nuggets of gold floating in it like corks.

After all, long before James Marshall discovered gold in their drinking water, the Coloma Indians had a legend of a high mountain lake with a bottom and sides of pure gold. And the miners who first probed the deep canyons leading to Yuba Pass found increasing riches the further up they went.

The story of Gold Lake—and eventually of Yuba Pass—begins with "Captain" Thomas R. Stoddard. Separated from Peter Lassen's emigrant party in the fall of '49, Stoddard stumbled across Big Meadows (now Lake Almanor) and in the wilderness to the south found a lake which, he said, had shores of gold and nuggets glittering on the bottom. Half-starved and pursued by Indians, he wandered into a camp on the North Yuba where miners cared for him through the winter.

In the spring, Stoddard told his story in San Francisco, in Marysville and in Nevada City. To skeptics he showed a handful of round gold nuggets he had picked up. He soon had a party of miners formed to find the fabled lake—and in addition had several thousand others following their trail.

The Gold Lake fever swept the mining camps like wildfire, fanned by newspaper accounts of gold floating on the lost lake's surface. Men abandoned claims paying \$100 a day to join the search.

For weeks Stoddard and his party roamed aimlessly through the mountains—followed by a horde of other prospectors. Finally the unhappy leader, confused and incoherent, admitted he had no idea where he was—for there certainly was no gold on the shores of the lake that he led them to. Stoddard slipped away in the night to escape being hanged—and the disillusioned miners straggled back to civilization.

But on their way, some miners made rich strikes on the headwaters of the Feather River; others, who had seen the great high Sierra Valley that lay beyond Yuba Pass vowed to return there—and did. As a result of the influx of Gold Lakers, a whole rich new area of California was opened to exploration and settlement.

BUT STODDARD himself was receiving no thanks at this time. He took refuge with William Downie, a Scottish seaman who was mining on the North Yuba with a company of seven Negro sailors, a young Irish boy, a Hawaiian and an Indian. Unlike Stoddard, Downie had been famously lucky at finding gold ever since he'd closed his store downriver to go into partnership with the Negro prospectors.

So rich was the area around Downieville, as their camp became known, that one of the Negro miners, Albert Callis, once found gold merely by kicking the dirt with his foot. It was a Sunday when this occurred and Callis, a religious man, covered the gold over to wait until Monday when he could work the strike in good conscience.

With claims yielding thousands of dollars a day, the North Yuba boomed in the early 1850's. Prospectors were drawn there from Marysville and Nevada City or they scrambled over the precipitous Yuba Pass from the east. As early as 1850, Sam Langton started an express and passenger line up the North Fork from Marysville to Downieville and delivered letters to thousands of miners at \$1 a letter.

Downieville had the unhappy distinction of being the site where Juanita, a beautiful Mexican woman, was lynched in 1851 for slaying a man she claimed insulted her. In a more gallant mood, the miners there named Mt. Lola for Lola Montez who did her exotic spider dance for them in 1856.

DESPITE all their wealth, the mining towns on the North Fork remained virtually isolated at the end of a long and winding road until 1870. In that year Sierra

County supervisors voted \$20,000 for a wagon road from Downieville and Sierra City through Yuba Pass eastward into Sierra Valley. This road permitted an easier and cheaper access to the farms in Sierra Valley where a number of humbugged miners from the Gold Lake trek had settled.

Today Yuba Pass is a spectacular end (or beginning, depending on your direction) of Highway 49, the route

that winds leisurely through the Mother Lode country. And Gold Lake is a PG&E reservoir in the picturesque Lakes Basin Recreation area.

The story of "Crazy Stoddard," as the miners called him, may not yet be finished, however. Recently a group of businessmen formed a syndicate to prospect the bottom of Gold Lake—for perhaps Stoddard's amazing story might just have been true after all.

Townes Pass



A GATEWAY not only to California but also to life itself was Townes Pass. Through this notch in the bleak and towering Panamint Range, several small bands of '49ers escaped from Death Valley. They were some of the widely-scattered survivors of a big party that left Salt Lake City in October, 1849, bound for the San Joaquin Valley by way of Los Angeles.

The wagon train of about 200 people, 110 wagons and 500 head of stock was led by Capt. Jefferson Hunt, a former officer in the Mormon Battalion who had taken the first wagons through Cajon Pass. Again following the Old Spanish Trail across the desert to Cajon, Hunt guided most of the emigrants there without incident.

Unfortunately, about one-third of them elected to leave the trail and head west for Walker Pass and the gold fields, despite Hunt's urgent warnings. A Capt. O. K. Smith had a map and, attempting to follow it, most of the desert-worn emigrants crossed the Funeral Mountains and stumbled into the awful trap of Death Valley.

TWENTY-SEVEN WAGONS entered, but only one left. It belonged to Harry Wade and his family, who found the valley's logical outlet by following the Amargoso ("bitter") River which winds along the valley floor and intersects the Old Spanish Trail.

Another group, the Manly-Bennett-Arcane party, camped in the valley—unable to go any further—while young William Manly and John Rogers set out for aid. The two hiked 250 miles over the desert and mountains to a ranch near the San Fernando Valley, where they bought two horses, a mule and provisions. The two horses died on the way, but Manly and Rogers made it back after 26 days to guide the half-starved families to safety—an incredible journey.

Of the five other parties, all burned or abandoned their wagons—some before and some after entering Death Valley. All crossed the Panamints through or near Townes Pass. Most turned south down Panamint Valley and eventually staggered in to a rancho near

the present town of Castaic. A few others crossed the Sierra Nevada through Walker Pass.

Despite sketchy records it seems certain that only one person perished in Death Valley. Five to eleven others died before reaching civilization, perhaps more. An Indian who had watched the progress of a group struggling through Townes Pass, later told historian Carl Wheat that he had seen one man fall and break a leg. Too weak to carry him, his companions shot him as an act of mercy.

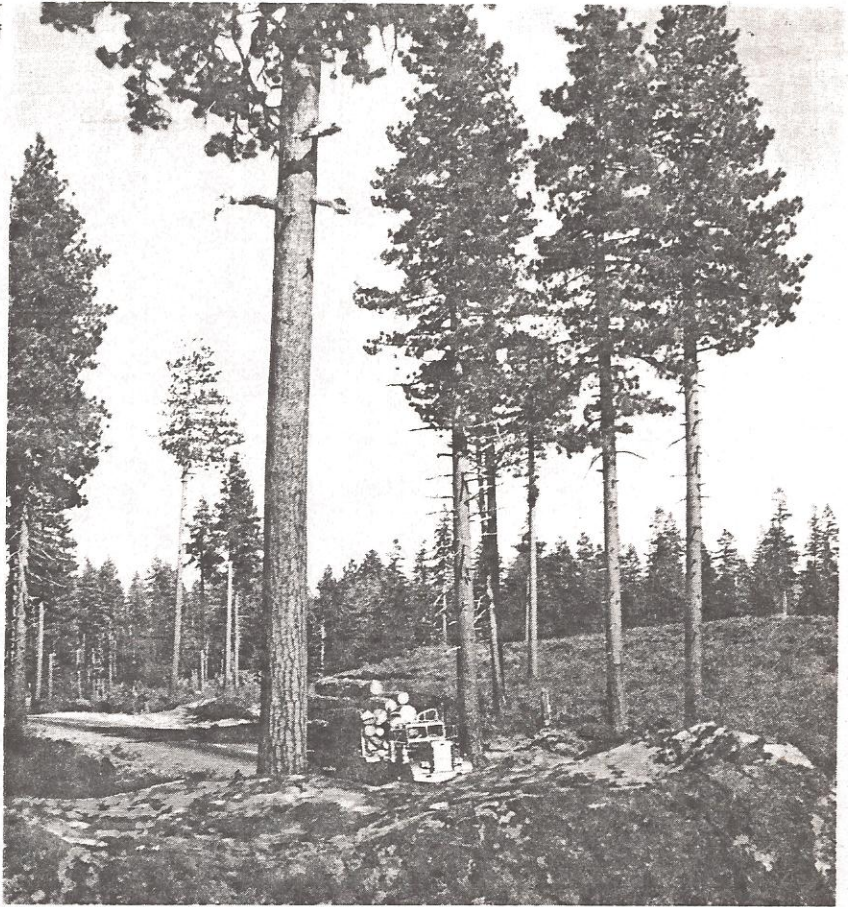
ONE OF THE SURVIVORS, so the story goes, picked up a chunk of ore and later asked a gunsmith to make a sight for his gun from it. The ore turned out to be pure silver and the story spread like wildfire. For fifty years or more, prospectors sought but never found the "Lost Gunsight" mine. But they found an immense wealth of gold, silver and borax. They turned the desert into a legendary land that produced characters such as Seldom Seen Slim and Death Valley Scotty and hell-roaring towns like Panamint City, where bullion was cast into 500-pound balls so the highwaymen who infested the area couldn't carry them off.

Townes Pass was the entryway for the vanguard of these explorers and prospectors. It was named by Dr. Darwin French who, exploring Death Valley in 1860, determined the pass was the route taken by "Capt. Townes, who saved the emigrants." French and his party camped at Bennett's Well, where they found the wagons and personal belongings and even footprints left by the '49ers.

THE PRESENT road through Townes Pass was built in 1926 by H. W. Eichbaum to serve his Stovepipe Wells Hotel. It crosses the Panamints at 4,967 feet elevation and drops to below sea level at Stovepipe Wells.

Today Death Valley is a spectacular tourist attraction, untamed as ever in the summer, but a mecca for thousands in the cooler months.

Highway 44 crosses shoulder
of Mt. Lassen near the site of
the old Noble Pass.



Echo Summit highway, behind
rocks on right, looks across
Lake Valley to Luther Pass road.



Noble Pass



ROUGH ELLIOTT was a good man to have on your side in a fight, so naturally the settlers who were holed up in the fort elected him captain. Then they trained their guns on the barn down the street.

There, Sheriff E. H. Pierce and his posse from Quincy were boarding up that flimsy structure. One deputy ventured outside for a plank; Rough Elliott gave the word to fire and the posse man was dropped in his tracks. The "Sagebrush War" was on.

The battleground was Susanville, on the Noble Pass Road. It was a cold February morning in 1863; the fight, a boundary dispute between California and Nevada. The log "fort" and the loyalty of the men inside belonged to Isaac Roop, first governor of Nevada and founder of Susanville. Sheriff Pierce of Plumas County was there to enforce California court orders in a Nevada judicial district. He had 100 men with him and a cannon on its way.

The battle went on for four hours and blood flowed on both sides. Finally a truce was declared and the next day Governor Roop's men handed back a Plumas deputy sheriff they had arrested. In return, Sheriff Pierce agreed to withdraw and submit the dispute to higher authorities.

TODAY SUSANVILLE is firmly in California, the seat of Lassen County. Roop's Fort is a museum, and much of Noble's Road is part of the California and Nevada highway systems. Noble Pass itself is just north of the road through Lassen National Park.

The route through the Cascade Mountains was discovered by William H. Noble of Shasta City, who led a big prospecting party over it in 1851. He told Shasta merchants that he had found a direct link to the emigrant trail in Nevada, and they paid him \$2,000 the next year to survey a road. The businessmen were well satisfied with their deal. For Noble's Road cut straight across the great northward loop

made by the Lassen Trail and put Shasta within three weeks' travel of the mainstream of emigrants.

Noble was threatened with physical violence when he tried to persuade emigrants to turn off on his trail, for it began as part of the notorious Lassen Trail. However, he finally succeeded in getting a small train to use his route and they reached the Sacramento Valley easily. The next year, 1853, the road was improved and soon the greater part of the emigration to Northern California was by way of Noble Pass.

The road was heavily traveled by pioneers for the next 20 years. In 1857 Congress appropriated \$300,000 for a wagon road from Fort Kearny and the Salt Lake Valley to Honey Lake on the California border. It was known as the Ft. Kearny, South Pass and Honey Lake Wagon Road. From Honey Lake and Susanville, the road swung north around Butte Lake and Mt. Lassen much as does Highway 44 today. It ended at the old mining town of Shasta just west of present-day Redding. A branch of the Noble Road also skirted Mt. Lassen on the south and went to Red Bluff along the route of today's Highway 36.

NOBLE PASS was surveyed in 1854 as a possible transcontinental railroad route, but nothing ever came of it. However, the Noble Road became increasingly important. Susanville became a staging center that bade fair to compete with San Francisco in importance until the opening of the railroad over Donner Pass in 1867 diverted large amounts of traffic from all other gateways to California.

The Noble Pass Road was recommended for inclusion in a state highway system in 1896 and was improved over the years. Portions of the old emigrant trail are still visible from the road and Hat Creek, which Highway 44 crosses, commemorates the loss of a hat by one D. D. Harril, a member of Noble's 1852 expedition eastward to Nevada.

Echo Summit



ONLY A FEW MILES from the gold discovery site of Coloma, Placerville was a golden magnet for the '49ers. Teams of incoming pioneers and freight wagons lined the Emigrant Ravine Road into "Hangtown" day and night.

Newcomers found miners working claims in the narrow streets and using Long Toms to wash away

hillsides and the shanties that stood thereon. The road's only paving consisted of discarded clothing, empty tins and bottles, old boots and broken picks and shovels.

But this was "El Dorado"—the gilded place—and the quickest way to get there, via Carson Pass, was far too slow for impatient emigrants arriving over-

land. Yet when a more direct and better route was finally discovered in 1852, official obstacles to its development were piled higher than the Sierra summits it crossed.

This new route was called "Johnson's Cutoff." Pioneered by Col. J. B. Johnson, it cut west across the Carson Range, skirted Lake Tahoe, climbed the Sierra to Echo Summit and wound down to Placerville much the way the present Highway 50 does today. It was 2,000 feet lower than Carson Pass (from which it diverted much traffic), didn't have the terrible snows of Donner Pass and was far more direct than Lassen's Road.

However, when a railroad to the Pacific was proposed in Congress, none of the five routes surveyed in 1853 included Johnson's Pass (nor Donner or Beckwourth Passes through which rails eventually crossed the Sierra). The proposed railroad died in controversy. So, too, did a State Wagon Road which was recommended to cross the Sierra via Johnson's Pass in 1855. Promoters of rival routes got the Wagon Road Act declared unconstitutional.

CITIZENS of the central mining areas next pinned their hopes on a military wagon road authorized by Congress in 1857. Then they learned that it would terminate far to the north at Honey Lake. The central Sierra, it was said, was too tough to tackle.

When Col. Jared B. Crandall, operator of the Pioneer Stage Line (Folsom to Hangtown), heard this, he swore and took direct action. Crandall loaded a six-horse Concord coach with commissioners of the still unbuild Wagon Road and set out up the mountain trail from Placerville on June 11, 1857.

History doesn't record the condition of the dignitaries when they arrived at the eastern end of Johnson's Cutoff. But they must have been in repairable shape, at least, for Crandall promptly announced that this was the start of a weekly run to Genoa. In 1858 this was changed to a semi-weekly express from Sacramento to Salt Lake City. The fare was \$125 and much of the Placerville "road" was still a spine-cracking trail.

There were improvements, however. Crandall's stages crossed the Carson Range via Luther's Pass (part of Highway 89 today), an easier road than that which went around Lake Tahoe. In 1858 the now-vanished Hawley Grade was built by El Dorado County down from Echo Summit to intercept the Luther Pass road.

STAGECOACH DRIVER Hank Monk took Horace Greeley over this route on such a wild ride that it entered the folklore of the West. Having promised the editor to deliver him in Hangtown in time for a speaking engagement, Monk whipped the horses to full speed. He answered all of Greeley's cries to slow down or let him out with a calm: "Keep your shirt on, Mr. Greeley, I will get you there on time." He did, but it was a while before Greeley was in any condition to speak.

So famous did this story become that Mark Twain declared that he once stopped a fellow stagecoach passenger from repeating it and soon "the poor fellow expired in our arms" from trying to suppress the yarn.

THE COURSE of empire rolled over the Placerville Road and no mere man could stay it.

Competing interests promoted other routes over the Sierra, politicians diverted mail contracts, road contractors went broke. But in the end, the Placerville Road became the greatest of them all.

From 1859 to 1866, this route was the scene of one of the greatest processions of horse-drawn vehicles known to man. Wagons so jammed the road that if a driver dropped out of the traffic he had to wait until dark to get back in. Passenger and mail stages ran at night. Wrote one historian:

"By day, two continuous streams of one- to eight-span teams moved in both directions. Mule trains filling the canyons with their bells; cumbersome freight schooners, rumbling over the none-too-smooth roads; aristocratic Concord coaches rattling at break-neck speed over that narrow, tortuous thread of road; brave Pony Express riders—all passed over this great thoroughfare."

AFTER THEY HAD FAILED to get state and federal money for a wagon road east from Placerville, residents of El Dorado, Sacramento and Yolo counties raised \$50,000 to build a road in 1857. Little progress was made. Contractors went broke, angry workers blasted their tools into the river and money ran out before the road was half finished.

Nevertheless, by 1859 stage coaches were rolling over this road—Crandall's Pioneer Stages and George Chorpenning's Central Overland Mail. Then came the great silver strikes in Nevada—and a great wave of traffic. Franchises were awarded and various private operators completed the road as a tollway. In 1860 and '61, Pony Express riders galloped over the route, and the change stations for stagecoaches and express riders are marked along Highway 50 today. A telegraph line also followed this great artery.

But in the winter, snows often closed all this travel down, except for the legendary John A. "Snowshoe" Thompson. He carried the mail every winter from 1856 to 1876. When the government reneged on paying him because he had no official contract, Thompson skied over the Sierra to catch a train for Washington to press his case in person. The train became snow-bound outside of Laramie, so Thompson walked 75 miles through a blizzard to Cheyenne where he caught another train. In Washington, he was hailed as a hero, but his claim was never honored.

The Placerville road gradually declined in importance with the opening of the Central Pacific Railroad through Donner Pass in 1867.

A NEW ERA opened on the eve of the automobile. In 1895 a State Bureau of Highways was created and a "Lake Tahoe State Wagon Road" was authorized. The existing toll roads from Placerville to the Nevada

border were purchased and the road—now Highway 50—became the forerunner of today's state highway system. A big stone arch bridge was built across the South Fork of the American River at Riverton in 1901, but the first major paving of the road was not done until 1923.

Today, Highway 50 is a broad, all-year road, four-lane for much of the way over the Sierra. Motorists can see evidences of the earlier roads and can read bronze tablets marking gun battles between lawmen and bandits or deeds of valor by early stagecoach operators.

Beckwourth Pass



JIM BECKWOURTH, in 1852, was seated on a keg of whiskey outside his cabin which still stands on a hill beside Sierra Valley. From the direction of the pass he had discovered the year before (now crossed by Highway 40A), wagon trains were rolling in. To a reporter, Beckwourth described the Argonauts:

"Weary, way-worn travellers, their wagons holding together by a miracle, the oxen held up by the tail in order to keep them on their feet. The poor girls have suffered the most and the elegant young men of gold (whom they had envisioned marrying as soon as they stepped into California) are now too often found to be worthless."

It was fancy talk for an old trapper, Indian chief, army scout and horse thief. But if James Pierson Beckwourth spoke like a gentleman, it was because his father was a Virginia plantation owner. His mother was a Negro slave.

APPRENTICED to a blacksmith in St. Louis, Beckwourth had run away in 1823 to join the fur traders led by William Ashley. His skill and courage earned him the respect of such men as Jedediah Smith and Jim Bridger. The Snake Indians called him "Bloody Arm" for his prowess in battle. When the fur trade waned, he had taken an Indian wife and lived among the Crow as a respected chief and warrior for more than six years.

Returning to civilization, Beckwourth moved from one adventure to another. He had entered the Santa Fe trade, was with the rebels at Cahuenga Pass in their successful fight against Governor Micheltorena and John Sutter and had stolen horses from the *Californios* as the United States and Mexico moved toward war. Then he had served the army as a courier, guide and Indian fighter. Gold was discovered in California and Jim Beckwourth tried his hand briefly as a storekeeper in Sonora.

In 1851 he had wandered through the Pit River country where he saw a gap in the mountains far to the east. Investigating, he found himself near the headwaters of the Feather River where close by lay a low pass through the eastern wall of the Sierra.

THE COMMERCIAL value of a low level road leading to their city was not lost on the officials of Marysville whom Beckwourth told of his discovery. They helped finance the starting of the road and agreed to reimburse Jim for the rest of the road-building expense.

When Beckwourth guided the first wagons through the pass and down a ridge to Marysville, the citizenry celebrated so wildly that part of the town burned down—and the mayor said he had no funds with which to repay Beckwourth.

So it was that in 1852 Beckwourth was settled in lush Sierra Valley at the upper end of the Feather River canyon. His rheumatism was convincing him that, having dictated his memoirs, he should be content with his life as a store- and hotel-keeper. But squatters infringed his claim. In the Sacramento Valley, ranchers grew edgy over raids by horse thieves. Remembering old Jim's background, they talked of direct action.

BECKWOURTH knew better than to try to convince an armed posse of his innocence. He moved on to Denver, married again and fought the Cheyenne. At the age of 68 he rode out in winter to convince his old friends the Crow to remain peaceable. There, among his adopted people, he sickened and died.

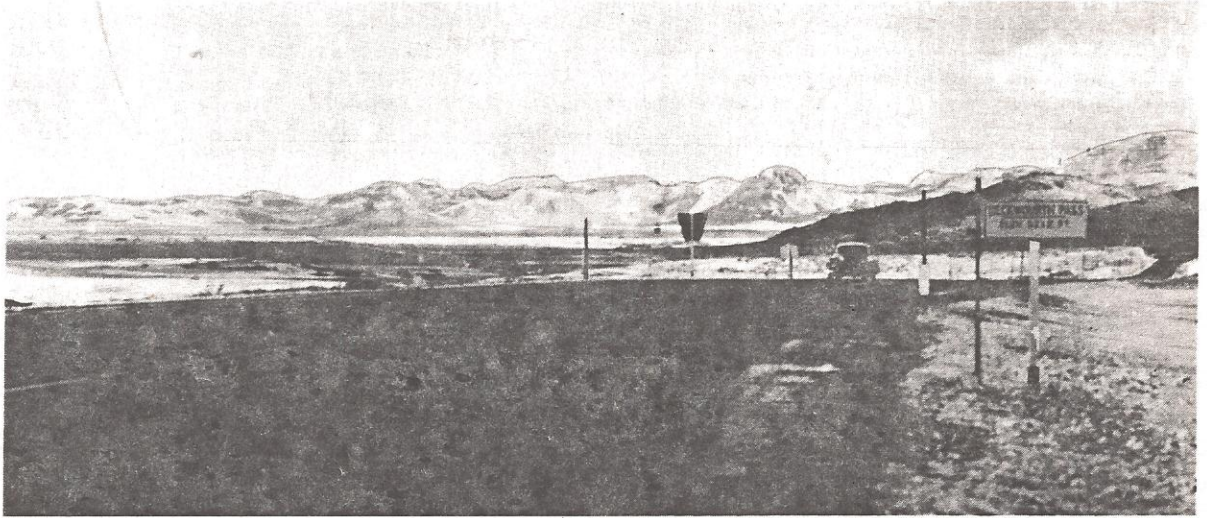
Today the motorist driving west from Reno on Alternate 40 follows Beckwourth's road through the 5,221 foot pass—lowest in the Sierra—and passes through Sierra Valley and the town of Beckwourth. Where the Middle Fork of the Feather begins to cut down through the mountains still stands Beckwourth's old cabin.

At Mohawk the old road branched off down a ridge to Marysville via Johnsville and La Porte. Another route went through Quincy and past Bucks Lake, now a PG&E power reservoir. This road avoided the spectacular but then-impassable Feather River canyon.

Jim Beckwourth brought more to California than another gateway. The first white girl through the pass rode on the saddle in front of him. She was Ina Coolbrith, later to become the respected poet laureate of California.

Beckwourth Pass.

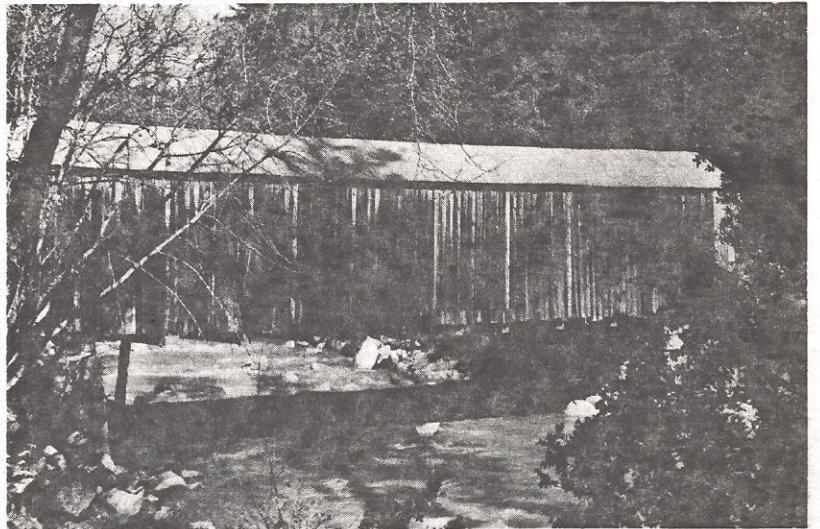
Plumas County Chamber of Commerce.



Mary Hill photo, California Division of Mines & Geology.



Ebbetts Pass.



Covered bridge on Hennes Pass road.



Ebbetts Pass



A FAULTY boiler on an early steam ferry on San Francisco Bay almost made Ebbetts Pass a forgotten mountain trail. As it was, only a silver strike on the Nevada side of the Sierra rescued the pass from virtual oblivion.

The boiler was on the steamer "Secretary," and when it blew up on August 15, 1854, it killed, among other passengers, "Major" John Ebbetts. It was Ebbetts who was credited with discovering the pass (now crossed by State Highway 4 out of Angels Camp). In April of 1850 the 33-year-old mountain man led a party of gold-seekers from New York through the pass.

And it was Ebbetts who, only a few months before the ship disaster, had led a survey party into the mountains and had pointed out his pass as the best route for a transcontinental railroad.

But with Ebbetts' death, further exploration was delayed, the survey party's report was never published and by 1863 the name Ebbetts Pass was unknown to residents of the area, though it still appeared on early maps.

THOUGH THE PASS had a noble history (it was in that region in 1827 that Jedediah Smith became the first white man to cross the Sierra), no emigrant wagons ever rolled over Ebbetts. Instead, the emigrant road branched off the more northerly Carson Pass route, at Hope Valley, climbed the steep east side of the Sierra through Faith and Charity valleys—so named by members of the Mormon Battalion who pioneered that route when returning to Utah in 1848 after fighting the Mexicans in California. It went through Border Ruffian Pass and struck the present Ebbetts Pass route just west of the divide. From there it went down the ridge dividing the Stanislaus and Mokelumne watersheds, through the Calaveras Big Trees and into the gold rush towns of Murphys and Angels Camp.

It was seldom more than a trail for pack trains and the few emigrants who took wagons over it suffered, according to one laconic account, "the greatest incon-

venience." Once they reached the Big Trees, the spectacular grove of giant sequoias discovered in 1852 by A. T. Dowd, the road improved greatly, for the grove was a summer resort area with a hotel and stage line as early as 1854.

It was over this emigrant route, called the Big Trees Road, that John A. "Snowshoe" Thompson frequently carried the U. S. mails during bitter Sierra winters. From 1856 to 1876, Thompson and his skis linked Nevada and the East with the Mother Lode country. For this, the government gave him a letter of thanks but never paid him the \$6,000 he asked for his years of heroic service.

THE SILVER STRIKE that opened Ebbetts Pass to general travel was at Silver Mountain, a few relics of which still stand on the eastern slope of the Sierra. The silver mines there and in the Comstock Lode flourished in the late '50s and early '60s and the Ebbetts Pass trail became a major supply route.

In 1862 a group of Murphys businessmen was given a franchise to build a toll road from Big Trees to Nevada over Ebbetts Pass. The Big Trees and Carson Valley Turnpike Company's road followed the old one rather closely, but crossed the pass a little to the east of the old trail.

In 1864 the company ran into financial difficulties and gave a franchise to Harvey S. Blood and others to finish the road. In 1887 Calaveras County supervisors renewed this franchise and in 1910 Blood relinquished all rights to collect tolls. Most of the road was incorporated into the state highway system in 1911 as the Alpine Highway.

The first autos went over the pass in 1908, although the dangerous switchback grade on the east side of the summit was a constant peril. Remains of this road, part of which was realigned in 1911 and the rest of which was abandoned in 1923 when the present grade was established, are still visible today to motorists who cross the 8,731-foot-high crest of Ebbetts Pass with relative ease.

Hennes Pass



ON A SIERRA plateau high in Nevada County is a pleasant lake and meadow surrounded by tall timber and granite peaks. Here is the boom town of Meadow Lake—or all that is left of it: pockmarks of ancient diggings and a few rusty pieces of metal.

Outcroppings of gold that could be pried loose with a penknife brought thousands of miners to this spot

off the Hennes Pass road in 1865. Overnight a handsome city blossomed. By the following summer it had 5,000 people, a stock exchange, 13 hotels, palatial saloons, two-story homes, a theater and shops of all kinds. A band played nightly concerts from a barge on the lake.

Two months later, the city was almost deserted.

"I never saw the like before!" wrote Mark Twain of his visit there in October, 1866. "Here is a bright, new pretty town all melancholy and deserted, and yet showing not one sign of decay or dilapidation."

IT ALL BEGAN when Henry W. Hartley settled there in 1860 to eke out a hermit's life as a trapper. He noted the gold outcroppings and in 1863 mentioned them to two friends. For two years the trio worked the ledges. Then in 1865 news of the strike leaked out.

Miners, mostly from Virginia City, flocked through Henness Pass to found the town that was known first as Excelsior, then Summit City and finally Meadow Lake. They survived the terrible winter and built their city with a lavish hand. But the town was doomed even as it was born, and the wisest miners sold out early and slipped away.

There was gold, all right, in veins of iron ore. But except at the surface where the iron had oxidized and decomposed, the gold and iron were locked so firmly that no process known to man could have separated them. Once the surface gold had been picked, there was nothing else recoverable.

Suddenly Hartley was a hermit again. He moved into one of the best of the abandoned houses. For 25 years, while the town of Meadow Lake crumbled around him, he pored over books and took correspondence courses in metallurgy—seeking the key to the treasure that surrounded him. Then a young woman named Alice Marion had a better idea.

In 1892 she married Hartley and went to England to try to sell his claim for 100,000 pounds. While she was gone, Hartley died of poison—slipped into his coffee, rumor said, by a suitor of Alice Marion. But the Englishmen didn't buy the claim, the suitor didn't marry Hartley's widow and the gold remained as remote as ever. Today Meadow Lake is best known as one of the reservoirs that store water for PG&E's Yuba-Bear River hydroelectric system.

HENNESS PASS road was once a major highway into California. After the Donner Party disaster of 1846, emigrants avoided the rugged cliffs above Donner Lake. Instead they turned north to an easier, though longer, route down the ridges to Nevada City or Marysville. The trail was said to have been discovered by Patrick Henness (or Hanness) in 1850 or earlier, but according to one rancher in the area it was a neighbor, Joseph Zumwalt, who found the route which, he said, should be called "Zumwalt's Pass." In any event, it wasn't much of a road and most emigrants used the only other major Sierra crossing, the Placerville Road.

With the discovery of gold and silver on the eastern slopes, the need for an alternate to the Placerville route became acute. The Truckee Turnpike Co. was organized in November, 1859, to improve the emigrant road over Henness Pass to Marysville. The next month, residents of Nevada City met and formed the Henness Pass Turnpike Co. to build a toll road through the pass also. The two roads met at Jackson's Ranch and the companies united in building the road eastward. At Milton, a branch from Dutch Flat and another from Nevada City came in. In 1863 another branch, "The Pacific Turnpike," was started from Emigrant Gap on the Donner Pass Road to Bowman's Ranch (now Bowman's Lake, a PG&E reservoir).

Only for a few years was the Henness Pass Road heavily-traveled. Then the Meadow Lake bubble burst. In 1864, a competing wagon road had finally been built over nearby Donner Pass as part of the Central Pacific's plan to push a railroad over the Sierra. And as the tracks advanced up from Dutch Flat, the echoing whistles of diamond stack locomotives were heralding the end of an era. In June, 1867—a century ago—the rail line was completed over Donner Summit and Henness Pass began its long decline into obscurity.

The road is still passable today in the right time of the year, but like the ghost town of Meadow Lake, it is better known for its brief days of greatness.



Pacheco Pass

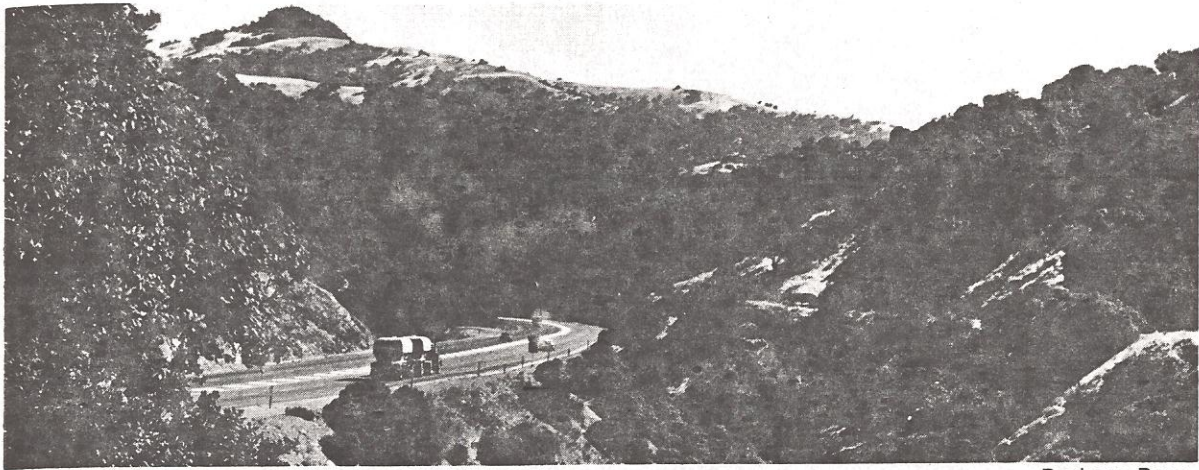
ROCKETING DOWNHILL around the curves of the steep Pacheco grade, the first westbound Overland Mail rumbled through the night. On the box, a newspaperman hung on for dear life and asked the driver why he didn't use the brake.

"You gotta keep the wheels turnin' or they'll slide," replied Tate Kinyon, shifting the tobacco in his mouth as if to counterbalance the swaying stagecoach.

Slightly more than 24 hours later, John Butterfield's Overland Mail rolled into San Francisco on October

10, 1858—just 23 days, 23½ hours from St. Louis. The newsman's account of this inaugural run made Pacheco Pass nationally known.

BUT EVEN by 1858 this gap through the mountains between the San Joaquin and Santa Clara valleys had long been important. Indians had crossed by it since prehistoric times. Spanish troops under Gabriel Moraga, on expeditions into the San Joaquin Valley in 1805 and 1806, explored the pass. It was later used by padres going into the San Joaquin—and they bathed



Pacheco Pass.



Old engraving of Cahuilla Indians and a pack train bound for San Geronio Pass.



away the alkali dust in natural baths (Los Banos) near the eastern end of the pass.

In 1845 a band of rebellious Californians had encountered in the pass some of John Sutter's men who were helping Governor Micheltorena crush the revolt. The rebels bluffed the Americans into thinking they were outnumbered and won the release of a rebel leader held by Sutter's men.

And in 1849, Pacheco Pass became a major link between the coastal towns and the diggings in the central Sierra. In 1856-57, A. D. Firebaugh built a toll road through the pass and a toll house near the summit. This operated until 1878 when Santa Clara and Merced counties built a new road, abandoned in 1923 when State Highway 152 was completed.

BANDITS, among them Tiburcio Vasquez, infested the rocks of the western side of the pass. Naturalist John Muir wrote glowingly of the wildflowers that carpet the hills in the spring. James C. "Grizzly" Adams, with one pet bear following him like a dog and another chained to the axle tree of his wagon, startled ranchers in the pass in 1855. And cattle baron Henry Miller used to drive his cattle through the pass on the way to his slaughterhouse in Butchertown in San Francisco.

Pacheco Pass was suggested as a route for a transcontinental railroad as early as 1853. Although this

and subsequent surveys never came to anything, the pass was part of one of the West's most unusual transportation systems: The Bicycle Mail.

When trainmen struck in the summer of 1894, Fresno was cut off from San Francisco. So a Fresno bicycle shop owner, Arthur Banta, set up a Pony Express—with bicycles. Using 80 cyclists and relay stations, Banta's Bicycle Express covered the 200 miles of dirt road in 18 hours by way of Pacheco Pass. From July 7 to July 18, the riders carried letters (25 cents each) and such small essentials as new false teeth. The Bicycle Mail expired when the strike ended.

THE PASS and the conical mountain that overlooks it take their name from Francisco Perez Pacheco. A holder of large land grants around Gilroy and San Juan Bautista, the Pacheco family acquired Rancho San Luis Gonzaga on the San Joaquin side of the mountains in 1843. Today much of that historic rancho is being covered by the waters of the government's half-billion-dollar San Luis Reservoir. An adobe Pacheco built in the pass lies in ruins atop the range today after an attempt to move it to higher land still owned by a descendant of Pacheco, Miss Paula Fatjo.

Skirting the rising waters of San Luis Reservoir, a freeway now ascends the rolling hills on the eastern side of Pacheco Pass, marking a new chapter in the history of this important mountain gateway.



San Gorgonio Pass

THE SAN BERNARDINO and San Jacinto mountains tower over the populous coastal basin of Southern California. These ranges do not quite meet and the broad, level gap between is San Gorgonio Pass. Through it spills some of the great Colorado Desert as well as wind, transcontinental travelers and pleasure seekers bound for desert resorts like Palm Springs.

Although long a major gateway, the pass was missed by early explorers. From Juan Bautista de Anza in 1774 to Jedediah Smith and Kit Carson more than half a century later, overland expeditions preferred the steep mountain crossings farther south or north to the low San Gorgonio Pass with its terrible desert approaches.

It was, however, an old Indian trade route and about 1820 an Arizona Indian named Captain Jose made regular messenger trips through the pass and across the desert to Colorado River settlements. In 1824, the Mexican government studied the possibility of putting a fort and trade route in the pass but the investigators lost their way and almost their lives in the desert and the plan was dropped. The first white settlement in the pass, therefore, was made later by the padres who established a rancho there.

BY 1842 the first Americans had settled there too: Daniel Sexton and mountain man Paulino Weaver. They hired the Indians to haul timber. In 1846, mountain Cahuilla Indians were induced to settle in the pass to guard the coastal areas from raids by fierce desert tribes. And in January, 1847, General Jose Maria Flores and his defeated army retreated to Sonora through San Gorgonio Pass as Mexico ceded California to the United States.

But the end of the Mexican War was not an end to turmoil. In 1851, the Cahuilla chieftain Antonio Garra organized a revolt for a familiar cause: taxation without representation. When a San Diego tax collector began seizing Indian cattle, Garra roused the Southern California tribes for an attack on San Diego. He was captured by Weaver and a friendly Cahuilla chief, Juan Antonio. Garra was executed and Juan Antonio later died an embittered man, regretting that he had not helped Garra, for he had seen his tribe's best lands appropriated by settlers and his people reduced to poverty.

San Gorgonio Pass gained more prominence when Paulino Weaver in 1862 discovered gold at Ehrenberg on the Colorado River and William Bradshaw opened

"The Bradshaw Road" through the pass and across the desert, following an old Cahuilla trade route shown him by Chief Cabezon. But though some stages followed this road (Wyatt Earp was a driver over it for a while), the long desert discouraged most operators and the Anza Trail to the south remained the most-used.

LIKE the Donner Pass, San Geronio Pass came into its own as a main travel artery when Southern Pacific Railroad built a line eastward through it. The first train through there, in 1876, went as far as Indio.

In 1883, SP inaugurated its Sunset Route from San Francisco to New Orleans via San Geronio Pass and the gateway was truly a transcontinental link.

Today, the pass is crossed by a modern freeway (Interstate 10), the railroad and a huge aqueduct carrying water to Los Angeles. Nearby is Mt. San Jacinto with its soaring aerial tramway. In contrast, each year the city of Banning puts on a Stage Coach Days parade and the old coaches and wagons that once rolled through San Geronio Pass are brought out to rattle down the city streets.

Tehachapi Pass



AT TIMES it seemed as if all the orneriness in the Old West ran down the canyon and collected at the foot of Tehachapi Pass. For there seethed the freighting and railroad town of Caliente, where happiness—for some of its less-solid citizens—was a shoot-out on payday.

Caliente sits in the Tehachapi Mountains which form an east-west link between the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Range. Stagecoaches and freight wagons shuttled between Los Angeles and Kern River gold fields by way of Tehachapi Pass and Caliente. It was a jumping-off point for the trip across the desert to Arizona and it was construction headquarters for the railroad being pushed up the hill by Southern Pacific.

Into this hive of activity strode Dick Fellows one December morning in 1875. Fresh from prison—for stage robbery—he was about to resume his career and immortalize himself as California's bumbling bandit. As a highwayman, he had only one failing: he wasn't much good at riding a horse.

Starting in pursuit of a stagecoach carrying a shipment of gold, Fellows was thrown from his rented horse. He hiked back to Caliente, rented another steed and succeeded in holding up a stage going in the other direction.

But when Fellows dismounted to pick up the strong-box, his horse ran off. Lugging the box up Tehachapi Pass, Fellows fell off an embankment and broke a leg. He hobbled to a ranch and stole another mount—picking one wearing a temporary muleshoe. The odd tracks were easily followed and Fellows was promptly captured. Twice later he was caught because of his inability to mount or stay on a horse.

TEHACHAPI'S serious history began with explorer-priest Francisco Garces who hiked westward through Oak Creek and Tehachapi passes in 1776 seeking (in vain) a shortcut from Old Mexico to Monterey. In 1827 Jedediah Smith and his band defied Mexican officials and entered the San Joaquin Valley through the pass to trap beaver. Other trappers using the route

included Ewing Young and Kit Carson in 1830: In 1844 John C. Fremont led his expedition eastward through the pass, noting that wild flowers filled the air with perfume.

Tehachapi Pass sat astride the path of empire. Army engineers surveyed it for a possible transcontinental rail route in 1853. And in the early '50s dust hung over the trail for days as cattle and sheep by the thousands were driven into California. The Kern River gold rush in 1854-55 made the pass even more important. A toll road was built to the summit by Peter D. Greene in 1873.

IT WAS the railroad, however, that brought Tehachapi its fame. In order to link San Francisco and Los Angeles by rail, Southern Pacific chose Tehachapi Pass as the best place to break through the mountains at the foot of the San Joaquin Valley. Caliente became construction headquarters and by mid-1875 some 3,000 men were digging and blasting the western slope of the "impossible" pass.

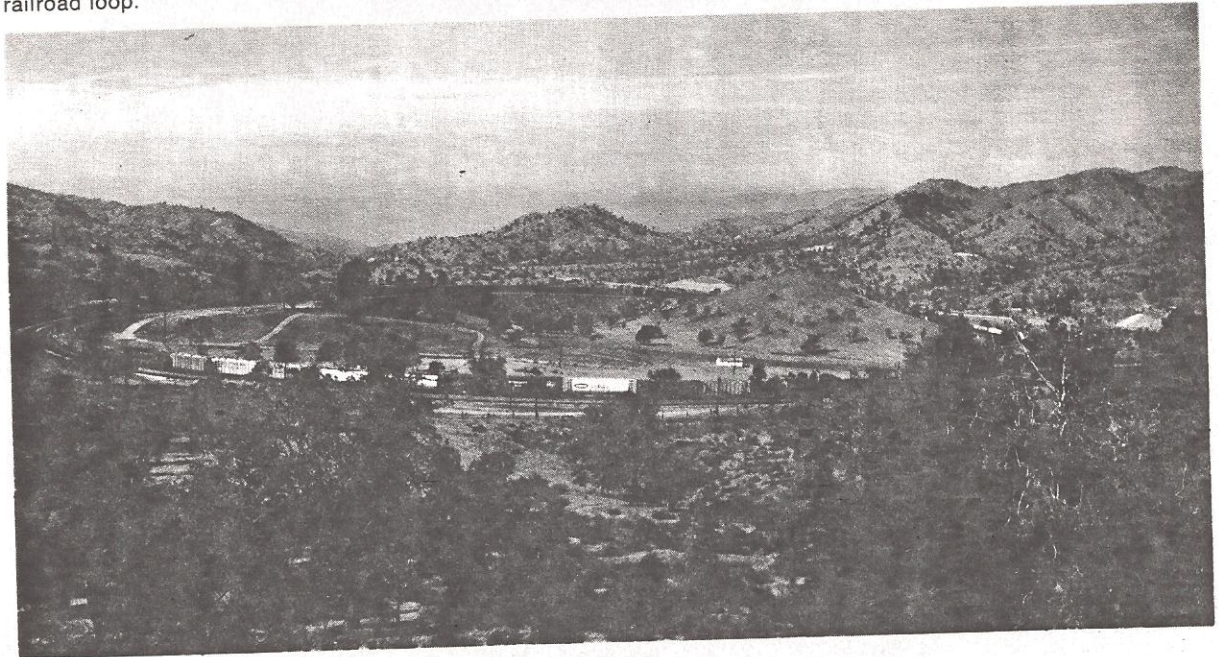
They carved out 18 tunnels and devised the world-famous Tehachapi Loop, the great circle shown in the picture on page 42 where the track doubles back on itself to gain altitude. On July 10, 1876, the 4,025-foot pass was conquered and track gangs pushed down to Mojave and Antelope Valley to meet others moving up Soledad Canyon from Los Angeles. Today the Tehachapi Pass section of track is used jointly by SP and Santa Fe and is one of the most heavily-used rail routes in the West.

COMPLETION of the railroad brought a decline in the fortunes of Caliente, though it remained a freighting center and an important rail town where engines took on water and coal and were added to trains for the steep climb up the pass. A dynamite blast and fire in 1909 and a flood in 1913 wiped out much of the community. Now by-passed by the modern freeway that sweeps up to Tehachapi summit, Caliente bears little resemblance to the boom town once the haunt of highwaymen—bungling and otherwise.

Tioga Pass road.



Tehachapi Pass and the famous
railroad loop.



Tioga Pass



HIGHEST and most spectacular of all highway crossings of the Sierra Nevada is 9,941-foot Tioga Pass. For many years it was a road so narrow and precipitous that traffic was often stalled by frightened drivers freezing at the wheel of their autos.

Tamed considerably by a recent realignment project, Highway 120 is an easy way to reach the grandeur of the High Sierra. The western approach is up the ridge between two great chasms: Yosemite Valley and the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne. The eastern access from Mono Lake basin scrambles up glacier-carved canyon walls.

The recent history of Tioga Pass, an ancient Indian trade route, starts in 1852. Two prospectors approaching Yosemite were killed by Indians who regarded the hidden valley as their sacred preserve. An Army troop under Lt. Treadwell Moore pursued Chief Tenaya and his band over nearby Mono Pass (the northernmost pass of two of that name). Though they never caught their quarry, the soldiers brought some gold-bearing quartz back to Mariposa.

PROSPECTOR Leroy Vining saw the ore and two years later, with a small party, pitched camp in a gulch east of Tioga Pass. They found enough gold to touch off a rush. Strikes at Dogtown, Monoville, Bodie and elsewhere followed. Lee Vining turned to lumbering and later died when he accidentally shot himself in a saloon. The town of Lee Vining was named for him in 1923.

Most travel across the Sierra in this area continued over the Mono Pass pack trail and down Bloody Canyon—so called because the trail was along a shelf so narrow mules rubbed themselves raw on the rocks. Then a lost gold mine was re-discovered at Tioga Pass. Prospector William Brusky in 1874 came across a mineshaft, a rusting pick and shovel and a faded notice dated 1860 locating the claim as The Sheepherder mine. What disaster, if any, befell its discoverers was never learned, but The Sheepherder claim and visions of a rich silver lode drew thousands to this High Sierra site.

The town of Bennettville, now almost vanished, was

headquarters of the Great Sierra Consolidated Silver Mining Co., which reopened the Lost Sheepherder as the Tioga Mine. In 1882, eight tons of tunnelling equipment were brought up the eastern escarpment of the Sierra by a single pair of mules and about 12 men. Using homemade sleds and block and tackle, they inched the machinery up precipices and through the snow. It took all of March and April to make the nine-mile trip.

NEEDING a better way to get equipment in and ore out, the company that same year started a toll road to connect with the Big Oak Flat Road and the San Joaquin Valley railhead at Milton. With Chinese labor, horse-drawn graders and a hundred "powder monkeys" at a time to blast granite, the Tioga Mine Road was completed in 1883 after 130 days.

It was an engineering triumph, but it never carried a single wagon load of ore. For the Tioga Mines promptly closed down. By 1890, when Yosemite became a national park, the Tioga Road was little more than a pack trail.

In the ensuing years, isolated residents of Mono County pressured the legislature for a trans-Sierra route and completion of the Tioga Road from Bennettville to Lee Vining was started in 1902. The route was finally completed in 1910 but the new wagon road got little attention until 1913 when automobiles were first permitted in Yosemite Park. In 1915, Stephen T. Mather, first director of National Parks, and a group of friends purchased that portion of the Tioga Road that was in the park and presented it to the federal government.

THE CURRENT realignments, both within and outside Yosemite National Park, provide a modern—but not all-year—highway. So difficult was some of the construction work that state highway personnel were given a course in rock climbing. Dynamite had to be unloaded from hovering helicopters. Enough rock was moved to fill a freight train 430 miles long.

So today Tioga Pass is a less awesome, but still spectacular, gateway to California.



Westside Passes

FOR ALMOST 200 years, history has rolled along on two roads that link Northern and Southern California.

One road is *El Camino Real*—The King's Highway. Pioneered by Spanish explorers and gentle padres, it became a well-used route. Colorful army couriers, *hacienda* owners on horses with silver trappings, Indi-

ans driving *carretas*, soldiers, priests and Yankee traders—all left their imprint on the busy road that lies along the western slopes of the Coast Range.

On the opposite side of the mountains, like a distorted reflection, is a parallel track: *El Camino Viejo*—The Old Road. It was mainly pioneered by fugitives, renegade Indians, bandits and occasional military