

*Gateways
to
California*



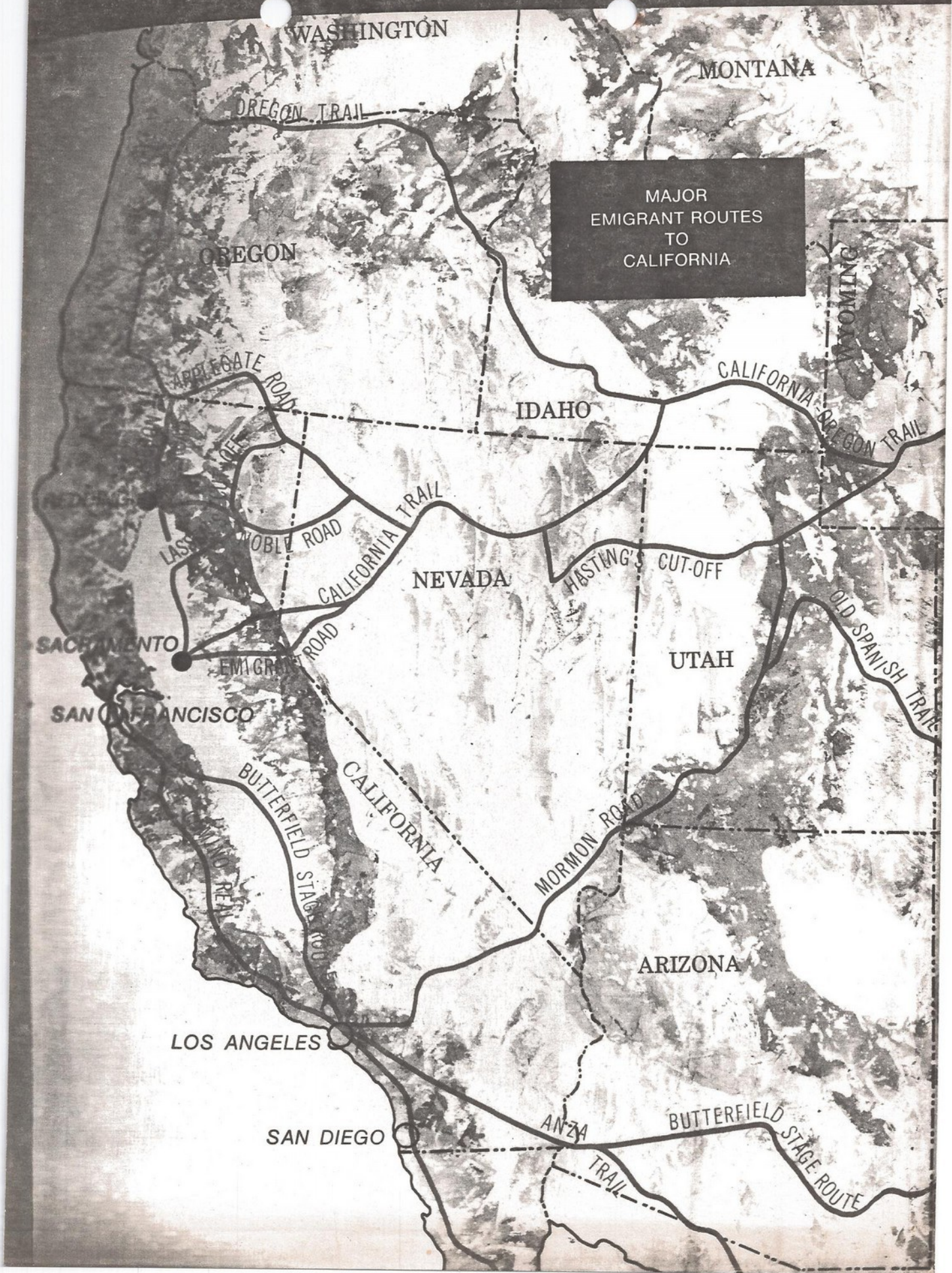
Preface

CALIFORNIA was born as a piece of fiction, a mythical island of incredible riches described by a 16th Century writer, Ordonez de Montalva. So when explorers found a land that promised to match Montalva's glowing descriptions, the name of California and the status of an island were attached to it. And for all practical purposes, California remained an island for centuries, even when men knew better.

This fabled land was guarded on the east by great deserts and the Sierra Nevada, on the south by arid wastelands and treacherous seas whipped by sudden storms and adverse winds. Although the first explorers came by ship, it was the men who blazed the overland trails who effectively opened the gateways to California. Thus the history of this state is, in a large part, the history of the mountain passes through which these dauntless pioneers found their way.

The story of the most significant of these mountain gateways was first recounted in a series of articles in *P. G. and E. Progress*. Their compilation into this book is in response to thousands of requests from readers and so "Gateways to California" is offered—like its predecessor volumes, "Rivers of California" and "California's Historical Monuments"—as another public service by Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

This book would not have been possible without the wholehearted assistance of many experts in California history. Interested readers shared family documents and diaries, historians furnished material and advice and read our manuscripts for accuracy, librarians patiently brought forth stacks of books and newspapers, employees of various public agencies offered photographs and information. To all these people, too numerous to mention individually, we are grateful.



WASHINGTON

MONTANA

OREGON TRAIL

OREGON

MAJOR
EMIGRANT ROUTES
TO
CALIFORNIA

WYOMING

APPLGATE ROAD

IDAHO

CALIFORNIA-OREGON TRAIL

LAST MOUNTAIN
CREEK

MOBLE ROAD

CALIFORNIA TRAIL

NEVADA

HASTING'S CUT-OFF

OLD SPANISH TRAIL

SACRAMENTO

EMIGRANT ROAD

UTAH

SAN FRANCISCO

BUTTERFIELD STAGE ROUTE

CALIFORNIA

MORMON ROAD

ARIZONA

LOS ANGELES

SAN DIEGO

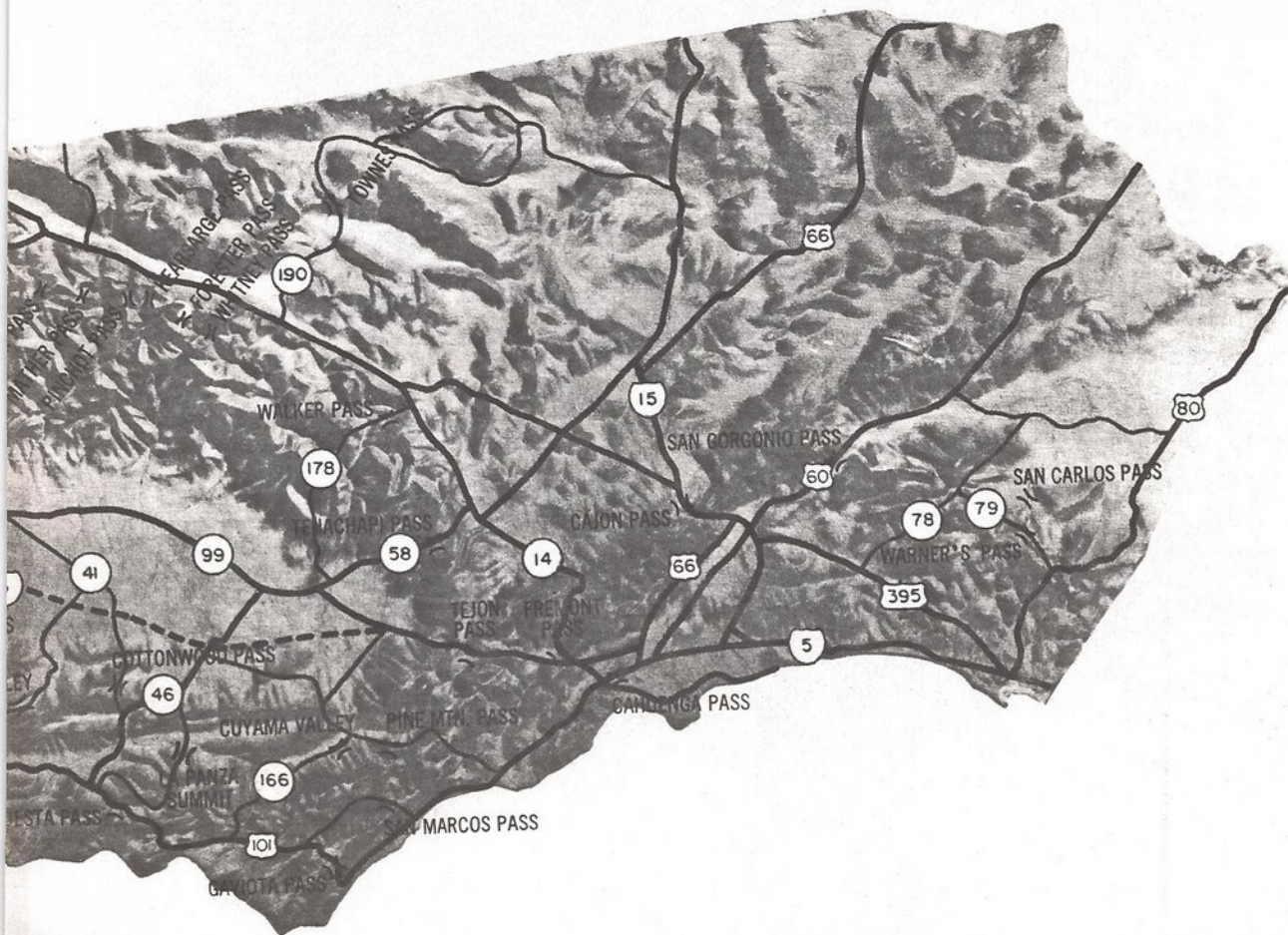
ANZA

BUTTERFIELD STAGE ROUTE

TRAIL

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The Mountain Barriers

HOSTILE Indians, a 500-mile desert, thirst, cold, heat and hunger were the lot of the pioneer seeking an overland route to California. And the man who could force his way to the edge of this golden land found in his path an awesome barrier—a great chain of mountain ranges glistening with some of the highest peaks in the country.

On the central route he faced the Sierra Nevada, a gigantic block of the earth's crust rising like a wall above him. Soaring up to 11,000 feet above the alkali wastes, the Sierra's mighty escarpment cast long shadows on the eastern desert, its glistening sawtooth profile unbroken for 430 miles by any through river canyon or low pass.

If he tried the north, he ran into the Cascade Range which merges its snowy volcanic peaks with the Sierra Nevada. In the south, he faced the Tehachapi, San Gabriel, San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountain ranges—lower in altitude but formidable in the extreme to cross, especially with the vast southern deserts guarding their approaches.

Small wonder, then, that California was first settled from the sea or from the north or coastal south. But in 1771, Father Francisco Garces, traveling and living like an Indian, broke trail across the Colorado Desert as far as the present Imperial Valley. Then in 1774 he and Juan Bautista de Anza pushed clear into Mission San Gabriel, opening a tortuous trail that became known as "the devil's highway."

TWO YEARS later another priest, Father Pedro Font, accompanying Anza's second expedition, unwittingly gave a name to the greatest of the mountain barriers: the Sierra Nevada. Standing on the hills east of San Francisco Bay, the missionary beheld in the distance "*una gran sierra nevada*"—a great snowy range. His descriptive phrase rapidly became a name.

The Sierra Nevada in unbroken length and loftiness of its peaks surpasses even the Rocky Mountains. The range was born about 130 million years ago from rocks that had been deposited in the ancient sea that

occupied this area. This accumulated debris was thrust upward, and invaded by great masses of molten rock that cooled to form granite. Gradually this ancestral Sierra Nevada was deeply eroded, exposing the granite.

Then a few million years ago, in a time of great mountain-building, these hills were heaved up as a great single block, its western face tilted rather gently, its eastern side plunging precipitously to the basins below. During the last million years, Ice Age glaciers sculptured the higher regions into spectacular pinnacles and cliffs.

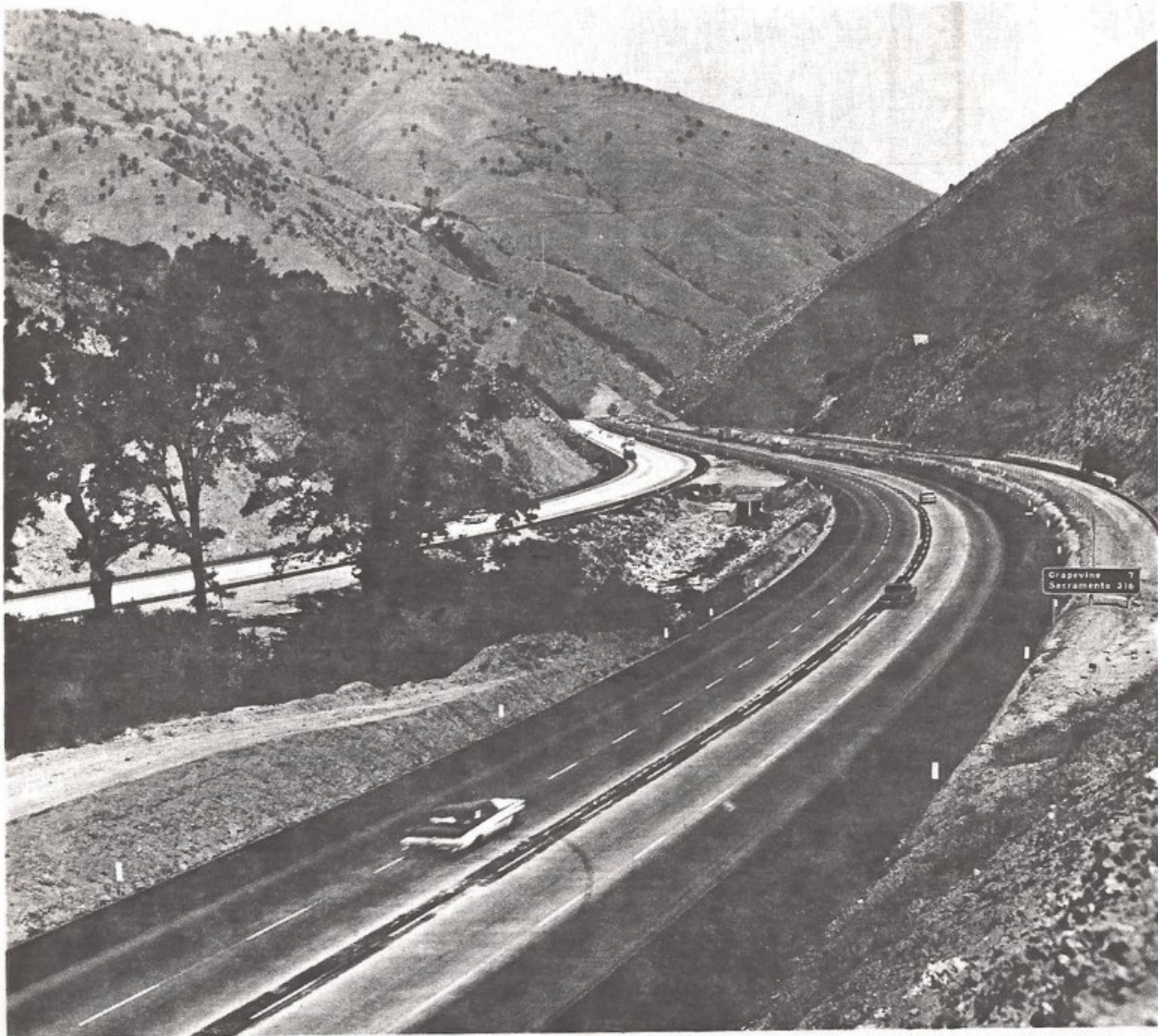
The Sierra peaks, which culminate in Mt. Whitney (14,496 feet high), capture prodigious amounts of rain and snow from moist ocean winds. Their eastern walls are cut by short, steep streams; their western slopes carry off large quantities of water in rivers that have carved magnificent canyons.

JEDEDIAH SMITH and other explorers, including John C. Fremont, probed these rivers in the hope that one of them would prove to be the "Buenaventura," a mythical watercourse which early mapmakers thought cut through the Sierra and emptied into San Francisco Bay. Had it existed, it would have opened California to American colonization years earlier.

As it was, many of the passes proved to be high and difficult to cross and the emigrants were late in coming. It took the siren cry of "gold" to get them to throw caution to the mountain winds and to battle through "passes" which were often no more than places in which to hoist wagons up sheer cliffs. But these Sierra trails proved to be more than just a means to California, they were often an end in themselves.

John Muir wrote of the High Sierra gaps:

"Fear not, therefore, to try the mountain-passes. They will kill care, save you from deadly apathy, set you free, and call forth every faculty into vigorous, enthusiastic action. Even the sick should try these so-called dangerous passes, because for every unfortunate they kill, they cure a thousand."



The Grapevine Grade, Tejon Pass.

California Division of Highways.



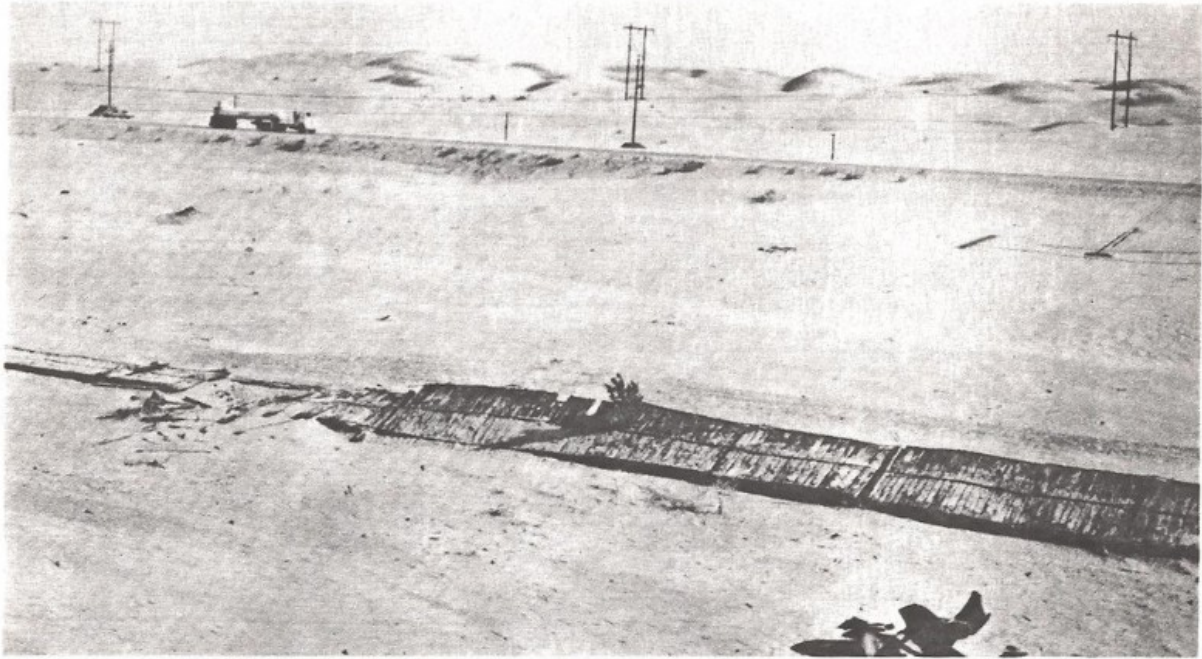
Tejon Pass

BETWEEN the Los Angeles Basin and the San Joaquin Valley the earth's crust is crumpled into a series of steep and rocky mountain ranges with such names as Santa Susana, San Gabriel, Tehachapi and La Liebre. The story of Tejon (badger) Pass is the story of man's efforts to break through this barrier.

The story began shortly after 1769, the year when a small band of soldiers and missionaries led by Don Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra pushed north from the peninsula of Baja California to reach what is now San Diego. They were under orders from King Charles III of Spain to colonize Alta California

and thus stave off the territorial claims of the Russians and the English.

By 1772 the indefatigable Father Serra had established four missions, rude settlements where life was spartan and the specter of starvation was still present. To escape this rigorous life, two soldiers deserted that year and fled through the mountains to disappear among the valley Indians. In pursuit came Don Pedro Fages, Portola's successor, who led his soldiers down Grapevine Canyon (so-named because of the wild grapevines that grow there) and first described the mysterious interior of California.

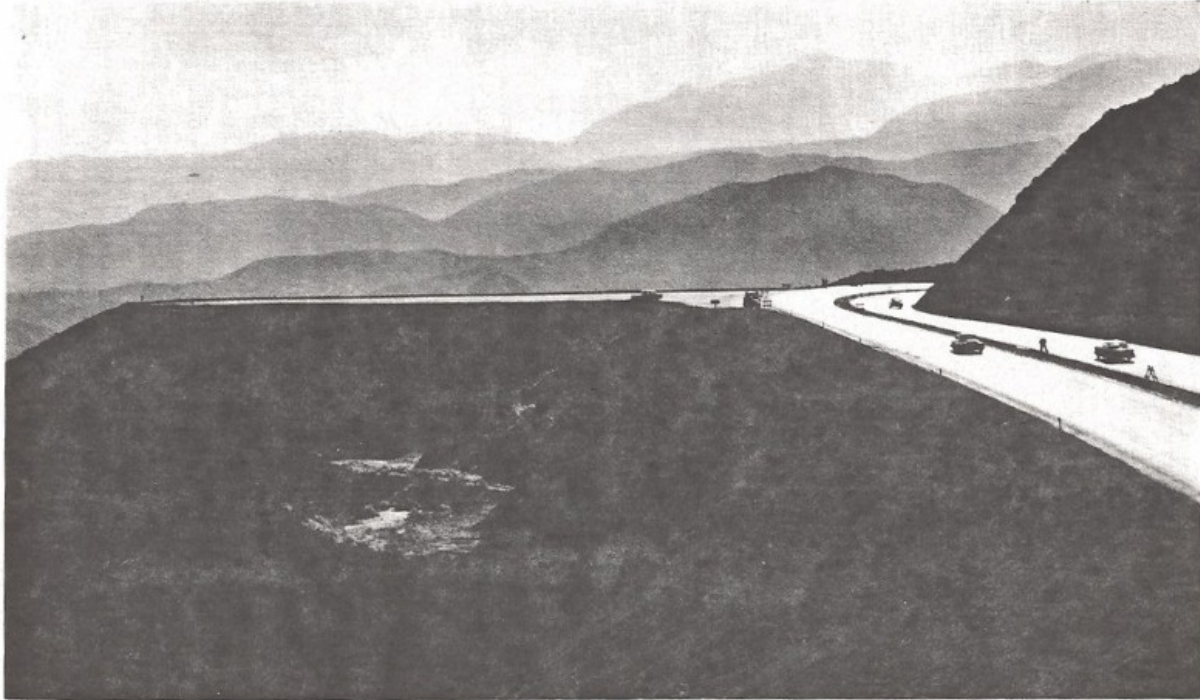


Old plank road along Anza's Trail to San Carlos Pass.



Cajon Pass.

California Division of Highways.



But Fages had found no easy path and it was four years before the valley was to be explored again. Father Francisco Garces, hunting a shortcut to Monterey, entered through Tehachapi Pass. He returned up Tejon Creek, a few miles northeast of Grapevine Canyon. Gradually Tejon Pass and Grapevine, separately and in combination, became established trails as other explorers, trappers, traders, settlers, bandits and horse thieves struggled over the many-ridged mountains.

Among the first Americans to use Tejon Pass was Ewing Young, who in 1830 went into the San Joaquin Valley to trap beaver with Kit Carson and David Jackson, a partner of Jed Smith. In 1848 James W. Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's mill and gold-seekers rushed northward over the pass. They came in even greater numbers after a naval lieutenant, Edward F. Beale, raced against an Army courier and became the first to bring news of the gold discovery to Washington.

In 1850, the Hudgins party, bound for Stockton from Los Angeles, rolled boulders off the old Tejon trail so they could get their wagons over it. Three years later Lieut. Robert S. Williamson surveyed this route for a railroad and noted that the wagon road was "the worst I ever saw." He liked Grapevine Canyon better, and so did Beale.

BEALE, by then an Army general and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California and Nevada, set up an Indian reservation on Tejon Creek and induced the Army to build a fort in Grapevine Canyon. Fort Tejon was commissioned in 1854, the year of the great Kern River gold rush, and residents of Los Angeles raised \$6,000 to improve the road to Fort Tejon and on to the gold fields.

The first stage reached Fort Tejon in December of 1854. From 1858 to 1861 the Butterfield Overland

Mail stopped at Fort Tejon, rattled down Grapevine Canyon and swung east to Tejon Creek on its way to San Francisco. Passengers stared in wonder at the camels at Fort Tejon, imported by the Army at the suggestion of Beale. The camels were used in crossing the desert and in surveying a wagon road from Fort Tejon to Fort Defiance, New Mexico, for which Beale had the contract.

Beale, a great roadbuilder, acquired the franchise for the Los Angeles-Fort Tejon toll road in 1862 and rebuilt much of it. The old route up Tejon Creek was gradually abandoned and the name "Tejon Pass" transferred to the route that led through San Fernando Pass and over the mountains to Grapevine Canyon.

The opening of the rail line through Tehachapi Pass to Los Angeles in 1876 reduced much of the traffic over Tejon Pass, but in 1902 the first automobile bounced over the Tejon wagon road and roadbuilders hurled themselves anew at the stubborn mountains.

THE STATE HIGHWAY commission surveyed a shorter route and in 1914 work started on this highway: the famous Ridge Route. It was 48 miles of narrow road; twisting, tortuous, unpaved and awesome. But it could be covered in less time than it took to circle the mountains by train and in 1915 pioneer stage lines opened bus service over the Ridge Route.

In 1933 work commenced on the "Ridge Route Alternate," another engineering feat that cut 10 miles and many perilous turns off the old road. From that day on, highway work on U.S. 99 over Tejon Pass has continued almost without interruption.

Motorists traveling at high speeds have to look quickly today to catch glimpses of old Fort Tejon and the winding Ridge Route, relics of one of the most rugged and colorful gateways to California.

San Carlos and Warner's Passes



SAN CARLOS PASS, the first overland gateway to California, today is but a dusty trail through a remote corner of Southern California.

Part of the great path of empire pioneered by Juan Bautista de Anza, the pass lies between "great mountains of rocks which look like the sweepings of the world," quoting Fr. Pedro Font, Anza's chaplain.

In 1774, Anza set out from Tubac, Sonora, to find a route across the desert barrier to California. He and his men almost perished in the dunes of the Imperial Desert, but on their second attempt they reached water and a gap in the mountains bordering the desert. Going through a low pass now crossed by State Highway 78, they cut north across the Anza-Borrogo des-

ert. A slight climb at the canyon's end—San Carlos Pass—put Anza and his party into the green coastal valleys.

THE NEXT YEAR Anza brought a party of 240 colonists bound for San Francisco. Late Christmas Eve, in the hills near San Carlos Pass, the wife of one of the colonists gave birth to a son. Popularly considered to be the first white child born in California, he actually was preceded by several others born to settlers already in the area.

Anza's route was modified in 1782 by Don Pedro Fages, returning from Yuma. Fages blazed a trail further west, by-passing San Carlos Pass for a route striking directly west through Oriflamme Canyon. A longer

but easier Indian trail branched off Fages' route and went through what later was called Warner's Pass, now part of a county road and Highway 79.

THERE WAS little travel over the Anza Trail until 1826 when the Mexican government reopened it as a mail route. Traders from Sonora then began to use the trail and in 1831 David E. Jackson, a partner of Jedediah Smith, led a party of Americans into California by the route. In the party was Jonathan T. Warner, whose ranch became a noted stopping place.

Kit Carson, in 1846, went eastward over this route by then known as the Sonora Road and later to be called the Southern Emigrant Road also. Bearing dispatches from Commodore Stockton concerning the Mexican War, Carson met General Kearny and his dragoons coming west over the desert. Carson returned with them and guided the ill-fated battalion to San Pasqual and a disastrous battle with the Californians.

Following Kearny's tracks came Col. St. George Cooke and his Mormon Battalion. With axes and hand tools, they built the first wagon road into California early in 1847, through San Felipe and Warner's Passes.

Within two years Cooke's wagon road was alive with gold-seekers, stumbling in from the terrible desert crossing. The trail was lined with the bleached skeletons of cattle and sheep driven westward over the "Jornada del Muerto," dead man's journey.



Cajon Pass

WINDING through the rocky San Bernardino Mountains, Cajon Pass links the Mojave Desert with the green valleys of the Los Angeles basin. Because the pass was at the western end of the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe, history has swirled through this boulder-strewn canyon like a desert dust storm.

The first trail wound back and forth across the wash of the Cajon River and climbed the steep end of the box canyon ("cajon" means box in Spanish). It was a route at first shunned by Indians and explorers who preferred a higher trail through more hospitable country several miles to the east. The aging but indomitable explorer-missionary, Father Garces, probably used this alternate footpath in 1776; so, too, did the young American, Jed Smith, when he came to prowl California for beaver and new horizons in 1826.

Even if Smith didn't use Cajon Canyon itself on his westward trip, he camped near its mouth when he re-crossed the mountains to explore northward. Again the following year he crossed and re-crossed at or close to Cajon Pass, drawing attention to this important breach in the mountain barrier. On his heels came

STAGECOACHES carried mail regularly between San Diego and San Antonio beginning in 1857 but the most famous user of the Sonora Road was John Butterfield's Overland Mail.

On September 16, 1858, the Overland Mail left St. Louis and arrived in San Francisco on October 10, 23 days, 23 hours and 30 minutes later. By using the Southern Emigrant Trail and Warner's Pass, the Overland Mail avoided the snows of the Sierra Nevada. Indian attacks and the searing desert heat couldn't stop it, but the outbreak of the Civil War ended that colorful system. For the next 40 years, short-lived attempts were made to run stagecoaches over the Butterfield route, but even the discovery of gold right on the trail at Julian failed to bring a boom in travel. Railroads and more direct routes replaced both the Warner's Pass route and the San Carlos trail.

ANZA'S old road across the desert was revived early this century with the advent of the automobile. A plank road was built across the shifting sand dunes and vestiges of it are still visible next to the modern highway which finally conquered the restless dunes.

There is another vestige:

Up Carrizo Canyon, when the wind stirs the sand and the mesquite, they say you can hear again the ghostly horn of the old Overland Mail as it rolls up the lonely desert wash headed for Warner's Pass.

the traders, soldiers and settlers who were to spell the end of Mexican rule in California.

DOWN Cajon Pass in 1830 came Antonio Armijo of New Mexico with a pack train of trading goods; Ewing Young, the Tennessean, and his band of trappers; and William Wolfskill, Kentucky trapper and "father" of the Old Spanish Trail.

The Old Spanish Trail soon rivalled the old Anza Trail farther south as a main overland route from New Mexico to California. Pack trains began to wind through Cajon Pass under heavy guard. Westward, they carried American wares from St. Louis, blankets and Mexican woolens and silver; eastward, silks and other goods from China and horses and mules for U. S. markets.

These caravans invited renegade Indian attacks. Cajon Pass, funnelling outlaws into the settlements, became a dagger as well as a lifeline. In 1843, to check the raids, Governor Echeandia granted Michael White as much land as he wanted at the mouth of the pass. But White and his men were driven out after nine months and for about 20 more years Indians and

bandits continued to be a problem for travellers.

In 1847, the first wagons crossed by way of Cajon. Capt. Jefferson Hunt and his Mormon Battalion, going home, followed the pack train route across the summit, taking the wagons apart to hoist them over the steepest places. Four years later, Mormon leader Brigham Young wanted a garrison to guard the wagon road in the pass and got 500 volunteers—the start of an important Mormon colony in San Bernardino.

IT WAS an old mountain man named John Brown, Sr. who built the first toll road through Cajon Pass in 1861. He and his partners avoided the steepest parts of the canyon by crossing at a ridge several miles to the west. The toll road was operated on a charter from the legislature for 18 years. Brown also operated another toll link on the Spanish Trail: a ferry across the Colorado River at Yuma.

With the discovery of gold, silver and borax in the Panamint Range and elsewhere in the Mojave Desert, traffic through the pass boomed. Two hundred tons of supplies a month were hauled through Cajon Pass in 1873-74 by one freight outfit alone, using 20-mule teams.

In 1885, the Santa Fe railroad built its main line from the east through Cajon Pass. When the rails reached Los Angeles, there followed a rate war with Southern Pacific and tickets from the Mississippi to Los Angeles once sold for as little as \$1.

Today, in addition to the two rail lines, the San Bernardino-Barstow freeway cuts through Cajon Pass, the highway's summit of 4,301 feet reached in an easy grade. The broad concrete ribbons are a far cry from the rocky road of 1850 that would turn milk to butter by the jolting of the emigrant's wagon.

Sonora Pass



OLDEST of the trans-Sierra emigrant trails to California is spectacular Sonora Pass crossed by Highway 108, second highest (9,626 feet) of all highway crossings of the range. Its story begins near the banks of the Missouri in May of 1841 when an inexperienced and ill-organized band of men, women and children set out with wagons for fabled California.

The party elected John Bartleson captain and 20-year-old John Bidwell, secretary. They had no idea of how to reach their goal, but started west on the Santa Fe Trail, hoping for the best. But the emigrants met a group of missionaries headed for Fort Hall, on the Oregon Trail, and threw their lot in with them.

Following the faint wheel tracks of fur traders bound for Fort Laramie, they moved at a fast pace along the North Fork of the Platte and on July 18 rolled through South Pass, that great gap in the Rockies. Warned by trappers that wagons could never make it to California, the train split up. Men with families headed for Oregon, but the 30 single men turned their wagons for California and the terrible crossing of the desert. With them went Benjamin Kelsey and his young wife and infant daughter.

OXEN DIED of thirst and exhaustion. Two wagons were abandoned beyond the Great Salt Lake and the remaining six were left in what is now eastern Nevada. Pushing on with mules, horses and oxen, the emigrants finally hit the Humboldt River and followed it to the West Walker River which flowed eastward out of the Sierra.

On October 18 they crossed the summit of the Sierra without much trouble, probably about eight

miles south of the present Sonora Pass. Soon they were caught in the wilds of the rugged Stanislaus River canyon. After great hardship, they stumbled out into the valley and then easily reached their destination: the home of John Marsh near the base of Mt. Diablo.

Members of this pioneer emigrant party, though they left no trail for others to follow across the Sierra, left an imprint on California history. Bidwell became a wealthy rancher and political figure, running for President in 1892 on the Prohibition ticket. Charles Weber also became wealthy and founded Stockton. Joseph B. Chiles returned east to lead other expeditions to California and became a respected rancher. Benjamin and Nancy Kelsey roamed over the West and his brother Andrew settled in Lake County where he was slain by Indians working for him on his ranch. Kelseyville is named for him.

ANOTHER Bartleson-Bidwell party member was Talbot H. Green, for whom Green Street in San Francisco is named. Green was a young man who was popular with the rest of the emigrants despite his one idiosyncrasy: he insisted on lugging a large chunk of what appeared to be lead with him until he was finally forced to bury it when the wagons were abandoned. Soon after the party's safe arrival, Green returned to the desert for his cache, which events showed was not mere lead. He returned to San Francisco where he spent money freely, got married and, in 1851, ran for mayor. But he was suddenly exposed as Paul Geddes, a defaulting bank clerk who had deserted his wife and children back East ten years earlier. Geddes (or Green) sailed away "to clear his name" and never

Sonora Pass, above Kennedy Meadows.

Andre Photos, Tuolumne



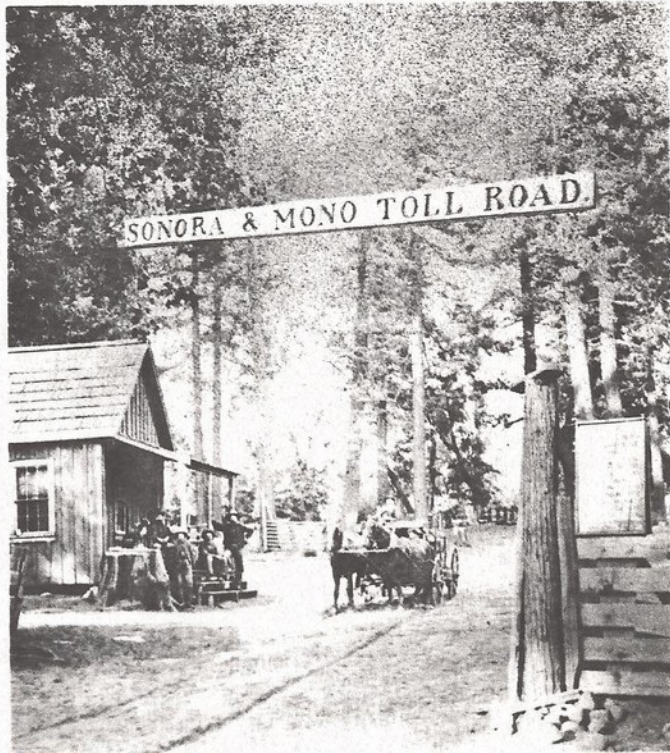
**OVERLAND MAIL ROUTE
TO CALIFORNIA.**

Through in Six Days to Sacramento!



CONNECTING WITH THE DAILY STAGES
To all the Interior Mining Towns in Northern California and Southern Oregon.
Ticketed through from PORTLAND, by the
OREGON LINE OF STAGE COACHES!
And the Rail Road from Oroville to Sacramento.

California Stage Company poster, 1860's.



Courtesy Tuolumne County Museum.



A stop on the Sonora Road.

returned, a strange footnote to the story of Sonora Pass.

THIS ROUTE over the Sierra, pioneered by the Bartleson-Bidwell party of 1841, was not attempted by wagons until 1852. That year the 75-member Clark-Skidmore party made it to Columbia. Their crossing prompted the citizens of Sonora to send Mayor George W. Patrick and a delegation to Nevada in July, 1853, to divert emigrants from the more northerly routes that led to Sacramento.

The first to be persuaded were the wagon trains of William J. Duckwall and George W. Trahern. With many wagons and 500 head of livestock, the emigrants struggled over boulders and along awesome precipices. They lost cattle and a number of wagons but reached Relief Camp (now a PG&E reservoir) more or less safely. There Sonorans had sent up provisions for sale to the many emigrant trains that soon were winding down the mountain at two miles a day.

It was not an easy crossing. Followed by two tame grizzly bears named Ben Franklin and Lady Washington, J. C. "Grizzly" Adams took the emigrant trail eastward over Sonora Pass in April, 1854, and reported:

"On all sides lay old axle trees and wheels . . . melancholy evidence of the last season's disasters. There were some complete wagons laying there abandoned. I wondered . . . what difficulties had induced the owners—on the very threshold of the promised land—to leave them to rot and ruin."

THIS WAS NOT the present route of Highway 108 but a trail about eight miles south through Emigrant Basin. "The worst route that could possibly be found," John Ebbetts said of it in 1853.

The Sonora route, also known as the Walker River Emigrant Road, was used by many pack trains during the gold rush to Dogtown and other eastern Sierra areas in 1857 and later. To woo more traffic from the Placerville Road, a three-county Sonora and Mono-Wagon Road commission was created in 1862 to sur-

vey and build a road from Sonora across the mountains to Aurora.

For 76 days Commissioners Henry B. Browne and William A. Clark of Tuolumne County explored the terrain on both sides of the old Sonora Trail, finally laying out a route up Clark Fork.

The Mono and San Joaquin commissioners, who had not shared in the hardships of the survey, disagreed with the findings. Browne and Clark wrote in their report that the two counties "had not sent men that were practical," then crossed out the words lightly, giving legible but unofficial vent to their frustrations.

San Joaquin refused to support the route and in 1863 a new commission was named with Stanislaus County added. The Clark Fork route was abandoned and the present route decided upon. When construction funds ran out, the road was completed in 1864 as a toll road.

A FINE HOTEL and toll gate were built at Sugar Pine (pictured on opposite page). A marker there today says that it took three weeks for a six-horse team to make the round trip between Sonora and Bridgeport. The marker also notes that a portion of the Sonora Road was built as early as 1852 by the Tuolumne County Water Company, a PG&E ancestor.

When Bodie was booming in 1877, the Sonora-Mono Road was alive with stage coaches and freight wagons. There were stops at Sugar Pine, Strawberry, Baker's Station, Leavitt's Station and Big Meadows.

But as the fortunes of Bodie faded, so did travel over Sonora Pass. The road was taken over by the state in 1901. A state highway engineer described it as "simply a rutted gully . . . great stretches of boulders . . . bridges rotted out."

Today the modern Sonora Pass Highway winds through some of the most historic and scenic spots in California, a safe but still-spectacular Sierra crossing.

The Oregon Road



"KILL—at your peril!"

In an icy voice, Ewing Young defied his band of mutinous frontiersmen. Although each man was slowly starving in the wilds west of Mount Shasta, Young wasn't going to permit the slaughter of any of the cattle they were trying to drive to Oregon.

For a long moment, the mountain man and his cowboys, rifles in hand, were locked in a silent war of wills. Then a bearded horseman cursed wearily, swung his steed around and the terrible trek resumed.

The year was 1837 and this was the first great cattle drive in America: from San Jose to the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Young and his men had bought 800

head of Mexican cattle at \$3 each and had lost 60 head and a month's time getting them across the San Joaquin River. Now they were picking their way slowly through the Cascade and Siskiyou mountains beyond the upper reaches of the Sacramento River.

The cattle were half wild and half starved, the men sore from months in the saddle and raw from the searing summer sun. Ahead, hills were piled upon hills. At this point Young prodded the outfit's secretary, Philip Edwards, with the challenge: "Now if you are a philosopher show yourself one!"

In October, nine months after leaving the Willamette Valley, they finally returned with 630 head of



Donner Party monument:
top of pedestal marks the
snow depth (22 feet) in
the tragic winter of 1846.

Carson Pass highway in winter.



Robber's Roost rocks mark Walker Pass area.

From "High Sierra Panorama," La Siesta Press.

cattle—the nucleus of Oregon's present beef and dairy industry. But, wrote Edwards, "most of the party cursed the day on which they were engaged and hardly would have exchanged a draft of water for their share of the profits, if any."

YOUNG and Michael LaFramboise are credited with pioneering the trail through the Sacramento and Klamath River canyons, now generally the route of Highway 99. Before 1834, when LaFramboise first travelled that route, Hudson's Bay Company trappers entered California by way of the Pit River—a route close to Highways 299 and 395 today.

This old trail to the Columbia River was pioneered by Alexander McLeod who returned that way in 1828 after retrieving goods Jedediah Smith had lost in an Indian attack. Peter Skene Ogden followed McLeod and the route became an entry for emigrants when, in 1843, Joseph B. Chiles, Pierson B. Reading and others used it while Joe Walker took the rest of the Chiles-Walker party across the Sierra far to the south.

WITH THE OPENING of the Sacramento trail, Lieut. George Emmons led a big survey party to Sutter's Fort that way in '41. In 1845 it was used by a band of adventurers that included James Marshall, who was to touch off the Gold Rush in 1848.

Two months after Marshall's discovery, Reading found gold on Clear Creek and Shasta City sprang up. In 1851 gold was discovered near what is now

Yreka and a pack trail developed between Shasta City and Yreka by way of Trinity and Scott rivers.

In 1854 stages began to run over this road, although passengers had to transfer to muleback for part of the trip. Three years later stages also used the Sacramento River route, fording streams so deep that water would flow into the coaches. In 1860 the California Stage Co. met the Oregon Stage Co. in Yreka and a Sacramento-to-Portland service was opened.

ALTHOUGH the California-Oregon Railroad (later the Southern Pacific) reached Redding as early as 1872, the line wasn't completed to Oregon until 1887. Meanwhile, passengers transferred to stagecoaches for the trip up the Oregon Road. Bandits soon became so thick that even the private coach of Ben Holladay, president of the California-Oregon Stages, was held up. But of all the highwaymen, few were as bold as the Jacksonville, Oregon, hotelkeeper who, when President Hayes alighted from a stagecoach in 1880, charged him \$100 for a \$2 room.

The completion of the railroad reduced the stage and wagon traffic over the Oregon Road, but it was still heavy enough that in 1896 the newly-formed Bureau of Highways included the Oregon Road as one of 28 to be in California's emerging highway system. From 1910, when the first significant amounts of highway money became available, until the present day, the history of Highway 99 has been one of continuous expansion.

Walker Pass



A LEGEND in his own time was Joseph Reddeford Walker. Trapper, explorer, frontier sheriff, Indian fighter: this was the discoverer of Walker Pass, today a modern highway route east of Bakersfield.

Joe Walker found the southern Sierra Nevada pass in 1834 while returning from a trapping venture into California. He and his band had struggled across the mountains late in 1833, the second group of white men to conquer the Sierra barrier. (Jedediah Smith and two companions had crossed in 1827, also going eastward.) Walker and his men apparently were the first, other than Indians, to see Yosemite, Hetch Hetchy and the Big Trees.

Setting out for home in January, Walker had intended to skirt the southern end of the formidable range, but Indians offered to show him a shorter route over the Greenhorn Mountains to the Kern River and South Fork canyons. They reached the summit on April 1 and looked down on the awesome Mojave Desert. The crossing had been easy compared to the agony of the desert trek that lay ahead.

FOR ALMOST eight years, this first practical breach of the Sierra remained unused and the mountains uncrossed. Meanwhile Oregon was drawing growing numbers of settlers because it was easier to reach. Then in 1841 the Bartleson-Bidwell Party, by abandoning their wagons, succeeded in crossing the central Sierra. A member of the pioneer emigrant train, Joseph B. Chiles, returned to Missouri to lead another party westward in 1843. By a Fort Laramie campfire they met Walker, who told them of the pass he had found years earlier and said they need not go around the southern tip of the Sierra as planned.

Chiles hired Walker to lead the wagons through the pass while he, Chiles, and a lightly-mounted group would enter California from the north, get supplies at Sutter's Fort and rejoin the train. It was a good plan, but the rendezvous was missed and the cumbersome wagons had to be left in the sands of Owens Valley. Nevertheless, the whole party got through Walker Pass safely, on foot and horseback, a major feat.

News of the existence of Walker Pass swung many emigrants off the Oregon Trail and sent them angling down the long desert corridors directly to California. This led to the discoveries of other and shorter routes across the mountain barrier, because many tired of the trek and tackled the peaks before reaching Walker Pass.

IN 1845, WALKER guided the bulk of John C. Fremont's third expedition through Walker Pass. But the mountain man soon broke bitterly with the Pathfinder. He was angered over Fremont's refusal to do battle when Mexican troops mobilized to drive the American explorers out of Salinas Valley.

Walker Pass, though never a prominent emigrant route, was always colorful. Walker led an expedition eastward through it in 1850 to explore the Southwest.

There he stumbled upon the Zuni Indian villages that Coronado, thinking them to be the golden "Seven Cities of Cibola," had hunted 300 years earlier.

The pass was surveyed as a route for a transcontinental railroad in 1853 and termed "the worst of all known passes" for rail purposes. But, in 1853 and after, wagon roads were pushed through as gold was found in the Kern River canyon and silver in the Coso and Panamint ranges.

On the eastern side of Walker Pass today is an outcropping of rock called Robber's Roost. From it bandit Tiburcio Vasquez used to watch for prey: bullion freighters crossing the desert below. Today he would look up on X-15 rocket ship flights and missile testing. Neither he nor Joe Walker, whose grave is on the rolling hills above Suisun Bay, would ever know the place.



Kit Carson Pass

FLOUNDERING through snow so deep his starving horses would drop exhausted every few hundred yards, Capt. John C. Fremont drove his small troop up the eastern flanks of the Sierra Nevada in a gamble born of desperation. Caught by winter and with provisions almost gone, Fremont had chosen at Pyramid Lake to strike west for Sutter's Fort.

Now, in February of 1844, they were finding the "rock upon rock, snow upon snow" that the Indians had warned would make the pass ahead impassable.

But fortune had not yet deserted The Pathfinder, though it would later. On February 21, Fremont and Kit Carson stood on a granite summit and gazed on a panorama of snowy peaks, deep canyons and, shining in the distance, the waters of the Sacramento River and San Francisco Bay. Descending to the pass that now bears his name, Kit carved his initials on a tree and pushed ahead.

Carson and Fremont contributed not much more than a name to the pass. Much of the road itself was pioneered by 37 members of the disbanded Mormon Battalion, returning to Salt Lake City in 1848 with 16 wagons. At a place still called Tragedy Springs, they found the bodies of three men who had set off earlier and who had been slain by Indians—or perhaps by bandits, for it was known the trio had been panning gold.

THAT SAME YEAR Pierre B. Cornwall, later to become president of the pioneer California Electric Light Company, a PG&E predecessor, took the first

emigrant wagon train over Carson Pass following the Mormons' route. On his heels came Joseph B. Chiles, who had come to California in 1841 with the Bartleson-Bidwell Party, the first emigrant party to cross the Sierra. Colonel Chiles had returned east and led the Chiles-Walker Party of 1843 and was to cross the mountain barriers seven times in all, one of the West's most amazing pioneers. On this, his third trip west, Chiles and his party of 48 wagons shortened the Mormon route by 25 miles, by striking out directly for the Carson River, leaving a trail that thousands soon were to follow.

The discovery of gold on the American River in January, 1848, writes Francis P. Farquhar in his "History of the Sierra Nevada," brought "the conclusive breaching of the mountain barrier by sheer force of numbers." Nowhere was this more true than on the Kit Carson Emigrant Road, also called the Mormon Route.

AS A ROAD, it was awesome. But the emigrants of '49 and '50 had little choice. They could swing away north and take the Lassen Trail, or could follow the Truckee River and tackle Donner Pass whose very name bespoke tragedy. There were other routes, but in those days these three were the most-used.

Up the west fork of the Carson River, the road went over boulders three and four feet high. The steepest part was known as the Devil's Ladder, an almost perpendicular cliff where windlasses were used to haul up the wagons and everything that could be spared was thrown away to lighten the load.

The old emigrant road followed Fremont's general path from the pass as far as Silver Lake. From there, a trail branched off to the South Fork of the American River and down the Georgetown Divide, much as Fremont had done, toward Hangtown (Placerville) and Coloma. Other trails continued down the ridge to Jackson. Improvements to the road came early—the first official mail between Sacramento and Salt Lake City went over Carson Pass in 1851.

OPENING of the easier Placerville Road over Echo Summit diverted much of the heavy travel off the Carson Pass road. In an effort to win it back, the

Amador and Nevada Wagon Road was authorized as a toll road by the voters in 1862. Present State Highway 88 follows this wagon route closely. This route departed from the old emigrant road over Carson Spur between Twin Lakes and Silver Lake and instead went around the rocky point of the spur at a lower elevation.

With the coming of the state highway system, the old toll roads were taken over. The Kit Carson Pass highway, still closed by heavy snows in winter, is nevertheless a gateway as important and colorful as the fabled mountain man for whom it was named.

Donner Pass



SCRATCHING diagrams on the ground and changing the path of American history, an elderly Indian named Truckee and an even older mountain man named Caleb Greenwood squatted in the dust of Humboldt Sink. Around them on that October day in 1844 were the eleven wagons of the Elisha Stevens party, bound for California.

Two earlier emigrant trains had made it on foot and horseback over the Sierra Nevada, but had failed to get their wagons across. Now Stevens was following the southbound tracks of the most recent group. But after meeting Truckee, Stevens turned due west, whipped his wagons across a 40-mile desert and found the river the old Indian had told them of. They named the river Truckee and—racing winter—followed it and a tributary to the granite wall of the Sierra.

There the party split up. Six, on horseback, circled over the mountains for help. The others got five wagons up the cliff, oxen hauling from above and men pushing from beneath. In groups, they straggled into Sutter's Fort. The California Trail had been opened.

DURING the next two years, 1845 and '46, hundreds of covered wagons rolled over the long trail to California. The Truckee River route was shifted some; new trails were blazed up the pass as emigrants lined up their wagons beside the lake waiting their turn to tackle the great cliffs ahead. The westward tide went smoothly except for the Donner Party tragedy in '46.

Misguided onto a "shortcut" that cost them weeks of time; with tempers frayed and oxen worn; with death and violence already dogging them, members of the Donner Party were caught by winter. Their story of heroism and suffering is history. Of 87 in the party, five died on the trail and 35 in the terrible snows. They gave the pass a name—and a reputation.

Feared and neglected, the route was all but impassable by the mid-1850's. It might have vanished entirely had it not been for Theodore D. Judah.

First called crazy and later a genius, Judah was a man obsessed with the idea of building a transcontinental railroad. Rebuffed on all sides, Judah persisted. In 1860, in a Dutch Flat drugstore, he and Dr. D. W. Strong drafted the "articles of association" of the Central Pacific Railroad. They secured \$45,000 in local pledges and raised another \$70,000 from some Sacramento businessmen, including Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, C. P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins.

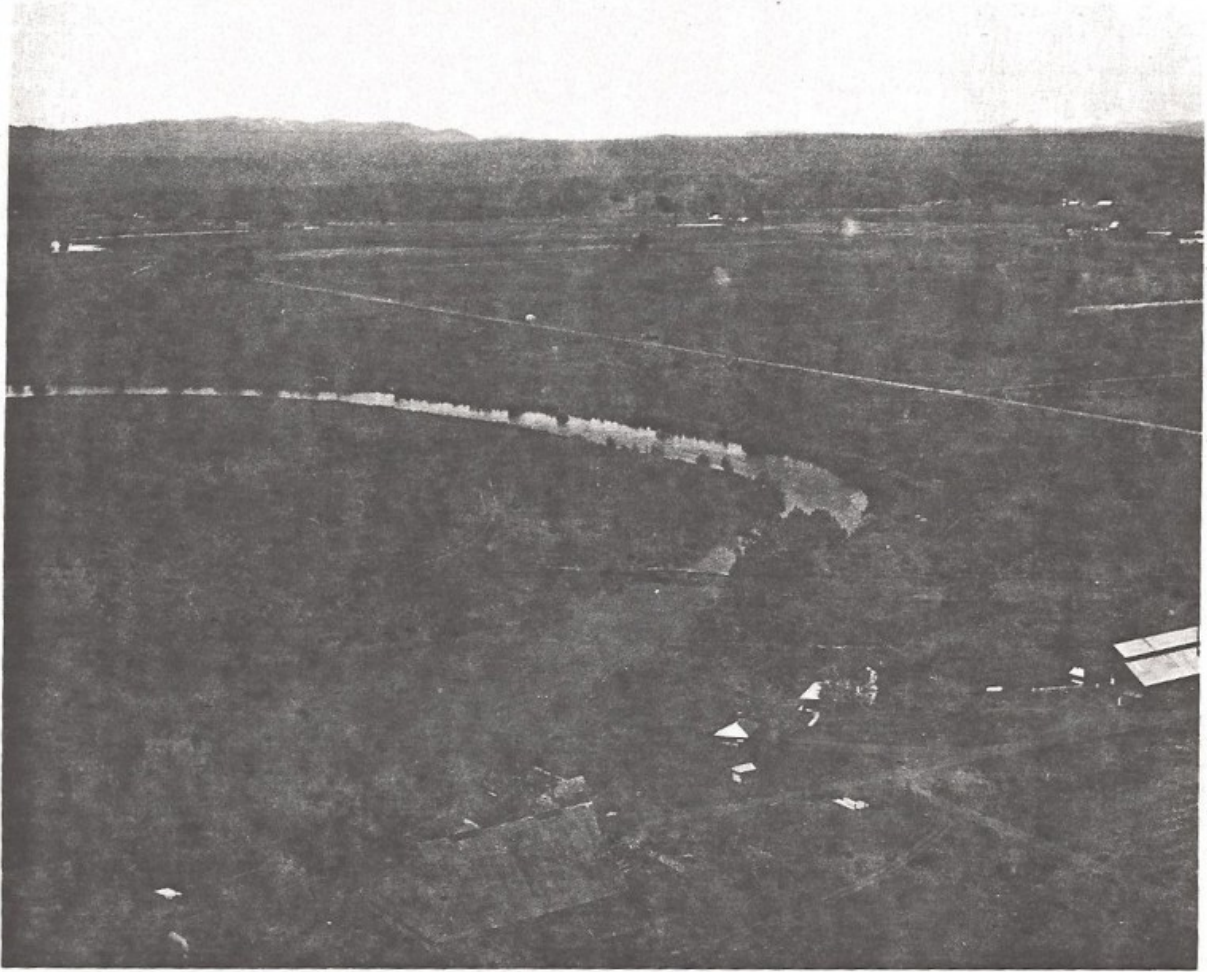
Their company started on two projects: a Dutch Flat to Donner Lake toll road and the railroad. Both would follow the route Judah had surveyed: along the old emigrant trail over Donner Pass.

By 1866, there were about 15,000 men, mostly Chinese, building the railroad over the granite summit. Ordinary blasting powder wasn't powerful enough and Crocker imported a technician to make nitroglycerin. Finally, in June 1867, the railroad was completed over the pass that Elisha Stevens had discovered.

WITH a transcontinental railroad paralleling it, the old wagon road again fell into disuse. It was rescued from oblivion by the automobile when, in 1909, the state approved building a highway from Emigrant Gap to Donner Lake. The engineer making the highway survey found the old road almost non-existent.

Improvements began then and have been continued through the years. On November 1, 1964, a four- and five-lane freeway—Interstate 80—was opened over Donner Summit at an elevation of 7,240 feet, close to where emigrants struggled to get their wagons up those incredible rock walls.

Fall River Valley, where Pit River Road and road from Oregon met.



Gaviota Pass.

California Division of Highways.

Pit River Route



"KEEP YOUR GUNS in order and sleep on your trail ropes, for the arrows of death are pointed at you from every gulch."

Thus was the peril of Indian attack described by J. M. Shively in his 1846 guidebook for emigrants to California. Nowhere was this warning more appropriate than in Modoc and adjoining counties, for 25 years "the dark and bloody ground" of the Pacific Coast.

There the Indians fiercely resisted the incursions of the white man. They prevented the Pit River route from ever becoming a major road and probably turned back a transcontinental railroad with their arrows.

Oldest of many trails through the Cascade Mountains was the Walla Walla Trail to Oregon. It left the Sacramento Valley by way of Cow Creek and Hatchet Mountain Pass, following the Pit River to Adin Pass and Goose Lake and beyond. The route, generally that taken by Highway 299 today, reportedly was used as early as 1820 by Hudson's Bay Company trapper Louis Pichette. It became an important route for fur trappers after 1830 and in 1843 Joseph B. Chiles safely brought in a small band of emigrants by this trail.

Not so fortunate was Captain John C. Fremont. He took a branch of this trail to Klamath Lake in 1846 after being ordered out of California by the Mexican government. Ambushed by Indians, he lost three of his men and narrowly escaped death himself. And the arrow that may have turned aside the Pacific railroad was the one that killed Capt. William H. Warner in 1849 as he was surveying the Pit River route for a possible rail link with the East. Although his successors both reported favorably on the route, Warner's fate was a reminder of the troubles railroad builders would face. Congress looked elsewhere for a railroad gateway to California.

Despite frequent punitive expeditions, neither the regular soldiers nor local "militia" succeeded in doing much more than stirring up more trouble. In 1850, at a site near Tulelake close to the Oregon border, Modoc Indians attacked a big wagon train and killed 90 emigrants. Only one man escaped to tell of this disaster.

GOLD was discovered near Yreka in 1851 and the legislature granted a franchise that year to Col. James L. Freaner to build a road to there from the Sacramento Valley via the Pit River. Freaner, too, was killed by Indians and the road project lapsed. Then in 1855 a Yreka saloonkeeper, Samuel Lockhart, piloted a Mormon train of 35 wagons from Yreka by way of Sheep Rock (a lava formation visible from today's U.S. 97 highway out of Weed) to the Pit River and Red Bluff.

The California Stage Company briefly used the Lockhart Road and Lockhart's ferry across the Fall and Pit rivers in 1856. Late in August Indians attacked a stage and the stage company abandoned the route.

That winter, Indians massacred the 10 to 20 men living in Fall River Valley, including Henry Lockhart, Sam's twin brother. When Sam learned of the disaster—he had been away at the time—he devoted his energies to avenging his brother's death. At times he became a one-man army dedicated to the extinction of the Indians.

TROOPS CAME into the valley, Lockhart reopened his ferry and freight traffic over the road to Yreka resumed in May, 1856. But this route through Military Pass on the eastern slopes of Mt. Shasta featured both hostile Indians and hostile weather; today it is a little used Forest Service road.

In 1859 the California State Militia mounted an assault against the Indians along the Pit River road.

Known as the Tehama County War, it ended with the surviving Indians being rounded up and taken to San Francisco. There they were placed on a ship, taken up the coast, and resettled in Round Valley in Mendocino County. But within a few years most of them had found their way back home and the Indian troubles were not finally settled until the Modoc War of 1873 when Capt. Jack, their chief, was defeated and executed.

IN THE BITTER STRUGGLE for the land, roads into the region were necessarily delayed. Sometime prior to 1871 a man named James Ballard built a toll road down the Pit River canyon from what is now Fall River Mills and this road was purchased by Capt. William H. Winter. Winter improved the road, which soon had a competing road, built by H. H. Baker from Burney Valley to Fall River Valley.

In 1875 another railroad survey was made along the Pit River, and this too ended in disaster. A civil engineer named J. R. Scupham traveled down the Pit, looking for a route for the Central Pacific Railroad's line to Oregon. Scupham's boat was smashed in the rapids and a companion was drowned. An easier route west of Mt. Shasta was chosen by the railroad, but Scupham's account of his explorations helped draw attention to the vast hydroelectric potential of the region.

The once "dark and bloody ground" today is known for its scenic beauty and its attractions for fishermen and tourists, who can easily understand why the Indians defended their homeland so fiercely.



Cuesta Pass.



Cahuenga Pass, 1890's.



Security First National Bank.

Gaviota and San Marcos Passes



OF ALL the mountain gateways, perhaps the oldest in historical significance is Gaviota Pass. Today it is a broad gap in the coastal mountains through which Highway 101 sweeps inland north of Santa Barbara. It was once a narrow defile around which destiny swirled like the ocean winds.

Juan Cabrillo first sighted the pass in the fall of 1542. The Spanish explorer, venturing into unknown waters, anchored his two ships just off the mouth of the pass, where the Santa Ynez Mountains border the sea. He and his men took on wood and water there before attempting to round Point Conception in the teeth of a gale.

IT WAS MORE than 225 years later before the sheer walls of the narrow pass echoed again to the tread of white men. Don Gaspar de Portola camped there on a mission to re-discover Monterey Bay, found by Vizcaino in 1602. Some of Portola's men, in August 1769, ventured up the canyon and shot a seagull ("gaviota") there, thus giving their campsite a name.

As the chain of missions developed along El Camino Real, the "Royal Road" followed Portola's route along the coast, avoiding the mountain passes. But after the inland Santa Inez Mission was founded in 1804, both Gaviota and San Marcos Pass, further south, came into regular use.

When the Argentine pirate, Hippolyte de Bouchard, was pillaging the California coast in 1818, a troop of soldiers levelled a surprise attack on his camp at Refugio Beach. The Californians crossed the mountains by San Marcos Pass east of Santa Barbara and returned to the coast by way of Gaviota Pass to get behind Bouchard. In 1846 Lt. Col. John C. Fremont used a variation of this maneuver against this same garrison, according to an oft-repeated story.

FREMONT was marching south with his 500-man California Battalion. His object: to join Commodore Stockton's forces near Los Angeles in an attack on the remaining Mexican troops in the field. Knowing he would have to go through Gaviota Pass, the Californians were said to have posted every able-bodied man atop the cliffs. When the Americans entered the narrow gap, they would be annihilated by tons of rock

which the ambushers would blast loose.

Fremont and his men paused just north of Gaviota Pass on the rancho of Benjamin Foxen, an English-born Mexican citizen. The Americans enjoyed Foxen's hospitality while their host wrestled with the problem of whether to tell Fremont of the ambush.

He finally did. Fremont was appalled. If he was cut off from meeting Stockton, the decisive battle might not be staged and the whole course of the war could change. Was there any other route?

Only San Marcos Pass, Foxen replied, a narrow horse trail over which Fremont could never get his wagons and artillery. Fremont elected to try it.

GUIDED BY Foxen and his son, the battalion struggled up the rugged trail during a driving rainstorm. They had to swing cannon across chasms on ropes and hack a semblance of a road with axes and crowbars. Men died from exposure and three hundred horses were lost. So were some of his cannon, which were found in later years.

On Christmas Day, 1846, they reached the summit. Foxen turned back to face the wrath of his neighbors, while Fremont went on to capture Santa Barbara without bloodshed—its entire garrison was atop Gaviota Pass waiting for the *gringos*.

Or so the story goes. Fremont himself wrote only that he feared the possibility of an ambush and that is why he avoided Gaviota Pass. And the commander of the Mexican forces in the area makes no mention of the ambush in his memoirs. Yet the incident is well-enough known to indicate that perhaps it has foundation in fact.

Gaviota Pass was little used until the early 1860's when big ranches were developed inland. In 1875 a pier was built into the ocean at Gaviota so ships could load the products brought down to them in freight wagons. In 1861, the first stagecoach rattled through Gaviota Pass, soon a main route until a toll road was built over San Marcos Pass in 1869. The stagecoaches lasted until 1901, when they were replaced by trains.

From time to time, men hacked away at the rock walls of Gaviota Pass, but it wasn't until 1936 that a modern highway replaced the narrow, winding road.



Cuesta Pass

AMID TORRENTIAL rain and darkness, a motley band of heavily-armed horsemen huddled in Cuesta Pass. There were frontiersmen in buckskin, Walla Walla Indians in rainstreaked warpaint and half-naked warriors from Cosumnes River tribes. Three hundred

in all, they were poised to attack the village of San Luis Obispo. The year was 1846. The war with Mexico had been declared on May 13 and seven months later the American conquest of California was nearly complete.

Suddenly the few faint lights in the town below went out. Col. John C. Fremont feared this meant an ambush. He ordered his bugler to sound the charge and his horsemen raced down the canyon and into town.

But once in the silent streets of San Luis, Fremont found that the town's darkness meant nothing more than that everyone had gone to bed. As torches flared and householders ran into the streets tucking night-shirts into trousers, they learned that on this memorable night of December 14, 1846, their town had fallen before the brave charge of the mud-spattered *gringos*.

The *Californios* went back to bed and their soggy conquerors were left to pitch their tents in the rain. After a day or so the soldiers were so soaked that they were allowed to use the mission for their quarters. After drying out, Fremont and his men continued southward toward Los Angeles. There, after rarely firing a shot in anger, they accepted the surrender of the Mexican army.

THE OLD TRAIL which Fremont's battalion followed down Cuesta Pass is still visible—the center road in the photo on page 20. It was pioneered by the padres after Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa was founded September 1, 1772. Grain and other produce from an auxiliary rancho or *asistencia* were carried over this trail.

The route was also used by Juan Bautista de Anza, blazing an overland trail from Sonora, Mexico to Monterey in 1774. Portola, in 1769 and 1770, had struggled across the Santa Lucia Mountains at a point farther up the coast when bound for Monterey. But Anza used the padres' trail up San Luis Obispo Creek and over Cuesta (Spanish for "grade") Pass. Anza's opening a trail from Sonora, Mexico, to Monterey made the colonizing of California practical. When Anza traversed Cuesta Pass two years later, he was leading a party of settlers bound for Monterey and San Francisco.

AS THE CHAIN of missions and settlements grew, farm workers in oxcarts, soldiers on horseback and



Cahuenga Pass

ADVENTURE and momentous events have long been centered around Cahuenga Pass. Today they are produced on celluloid in the cinema cities of Hollywood and North Hollywood; yesterday they were real life dramas important in California history.

The gap through the Santa Monica Mountains was used by Don Gaspar de Portola, returning to San Diego in 1769 from an unsuccessful search for Monterey Bay. Portola found Monterey the following year,

padres on foot developed the trail called El Camino Real—"the Royal Road." This is the route followed today by Highway 101 and now, as then, Cuesta Pass is the major passage through the Santa Lucias.

As military governor of California, General Kearny started a fortnightly mounted mail service in March, 1847, between San Francisco and San Diego by way of Cuesta Pass. In 1855 a two-horse stage wagon struggled through the pass on its weekly run between San Luis Obispo and Monterey. The road was only a trail; passengers were expected to push when necessary.

In 1861 a tri-weekly stage and mail line between San Francisco and Los Angeles was inaugurated and the next year the stages ran daily through the pass. The trip between the two cities took 3½ days, but this time was slowly trimmed as stages connected with the Southern Pacific Railroad being built southward.

In 1876, the county sold \$20,000 in road bonds to improve the wagon road up the canyon. A new alignment along the steep westerly side of the pass was used and this winding, unsurfaced road (at left in photo on page 20) is still passable today. It was a thrilling experience to drive up it in early-day automobiles and the graveled Coast Highway built up the east side of the canyon (right in picture) was a big improvement when completed in 1915. Later surfaced with concrete and lined with curbs, this two-lane main highway was realigned and widened in 1936. Its 71 curves were reduced to about eight. Further realignments were started early in 1967.

CUESTA PASS posed the biggest challenge to railroad builders, however. The railroad reached the foot of the pass in 1889, but it wasn't until 1894 that it was completed over the mountains and into San Luis Obispo. Eight tunnels had to be carved with hand tools and dynamite (one later caved in and was converted into an open cut). Some 2,000 Chinese laborers worked on the project which cost \$1,774,000 and was an engineering marvel of its time. On March 31, 1901, the line between San Francisco and Los Angeles was completed and Cuesta Pass became even more important.

a chain of missions developed along El Camino Real and Cahuenga Pass became a well-traveled route. At its more southerly end, near what is now the intersection of Hollywood and Vine, the first Battle of Cahuenga Pass took place on December 5, 1831.

Ten years earlier Mexico had won its independence from Spain and a procession of governors ruled California. In 1831, the governor was Manuel Victoria—harsh, autocratic and unpopular. Faced with rebellion,

he led his small army through Cahuenga Pass from the north to crush the uprising.

There on the Hollywood plain, the opposing forces met and each side fired a volley over the other's heads. Captain Romualdo Pacheco rode forward and was met by rebel leader Jose Maria Avila. While the soldiers watched, Avila and Pacheco charged at each other with lance and sword like knights of old. They made a pass or two at each other, then, according to many accounts, Avila drew a pistol and shot Pacheco dead. Avila in turn was knocked from his horse and slain, either by Victoria or by some of his men who rode into the fray. Victoria, in his turn, was gravely wounded by a rebel—and that ended the battle in which most soldiers were merely spectators.

The rebels retreated to Los Angeles and Victoria was carried to Mission San Gabriel where he abdicated in favor of Governor Echiandia—his predecessor and the man whom the insurgents wanted to restore to office.

THE SECOND BATTLE of Cahuenga Pass occurred on February 20 and 21, 1845. Again southern rebels were challenging a governor: this time Manuel Micheltorena. This battle was largely an artillery duel and both sides prudently remained out of range. Total casualties when all the ammunition was expended after two days: two horses and a mule. Micheltorena, who lost the mule, agreed to the rebel demands that he send his personal army—a horde of ex-convicts—back to Mexico. Then, having second thoughts, Micheltorena left with them when they sailed a few weeks later.

The biggest loser of the mock war could have been John A. Sutter, who had unwisely backed the governor. Sutter had raised a small troop of Americans and had ridden at their head to Cahuenga. But at the height of the battle, Sutter found them holding an election to see which side they would fight for. Wandering off in despair, Sutter was captured by the rebels. Although threatened with loss of his large land holdings and maybe even of his life, Sutter was handsomely treated and even allowed to return home with his troops and with a judicial post under the new government.

There were more affairs of state to be settled in Cahuenga Pass. In 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico. Commodore Robert F. Stockton and Major John C. Fremont captured San Diego and Los Angeles and left Marine Captain Archibald Gillespie with a force of 50 men to hold Los Angeles. They returned to Monterey to announce that California had fallen—a premature announcement, as it turned out.

THE CALIFORNIANS raised an insurgent army, retook San Diego and surrounded Gillespie and his men in Los Angeles. Gillespie ordered John Brown, called Juan Flaco or "Lean John," to slip through the lines at night and ride to Monterey to alert Commodore Stockton. Brown headed for Cahuenga Pass, hotly pursued by 15 Californians. At a wide arroyo he spurred his horse into a mighty leap, leaving his pursuers to ride upstream in search of a crossing.

Juan Flaco's horse, wounded in the chase, dropped dead, but the messenger slipped through Cahuenga Pass on foot. Then, using a relay of horses, he rode almost continuously until he reached Monterey—only to learn that Stockton was in San Francisco. After three hours' sleep, he pushed on. Juan Flaco had covered about 500 miles in five days and had warned Stockton in time for him to take action to prevent the Californians from consolidating their victories.

Stockton, arriving too late to prevent Gillespie's surrender, retook San Diego. Then, joining forces with General Stephen Kearny and Gillespie's paroled troops, he marched for Los Angeles. At the same time, Fremont and his men moved down from the north. The Californians, caught in a pincers, surrendered to Fremont on January 13, 1847, at an old ranch house at the north end of Cahuenga Pass.

MUDWAGONS and Concord coaches soon replaced the ox carts that had rolled through Cahuenga Pass as California's history unfolded. A railroad was completed beside the winding dirt road in 1911. The highway itself was almost continuously improved until today it is a major expressway, flanked by conventional highways and hillsides lined with expensive homes.

Cahuenga Pass, as ever, is still a focal point in California.

Fremont Pass

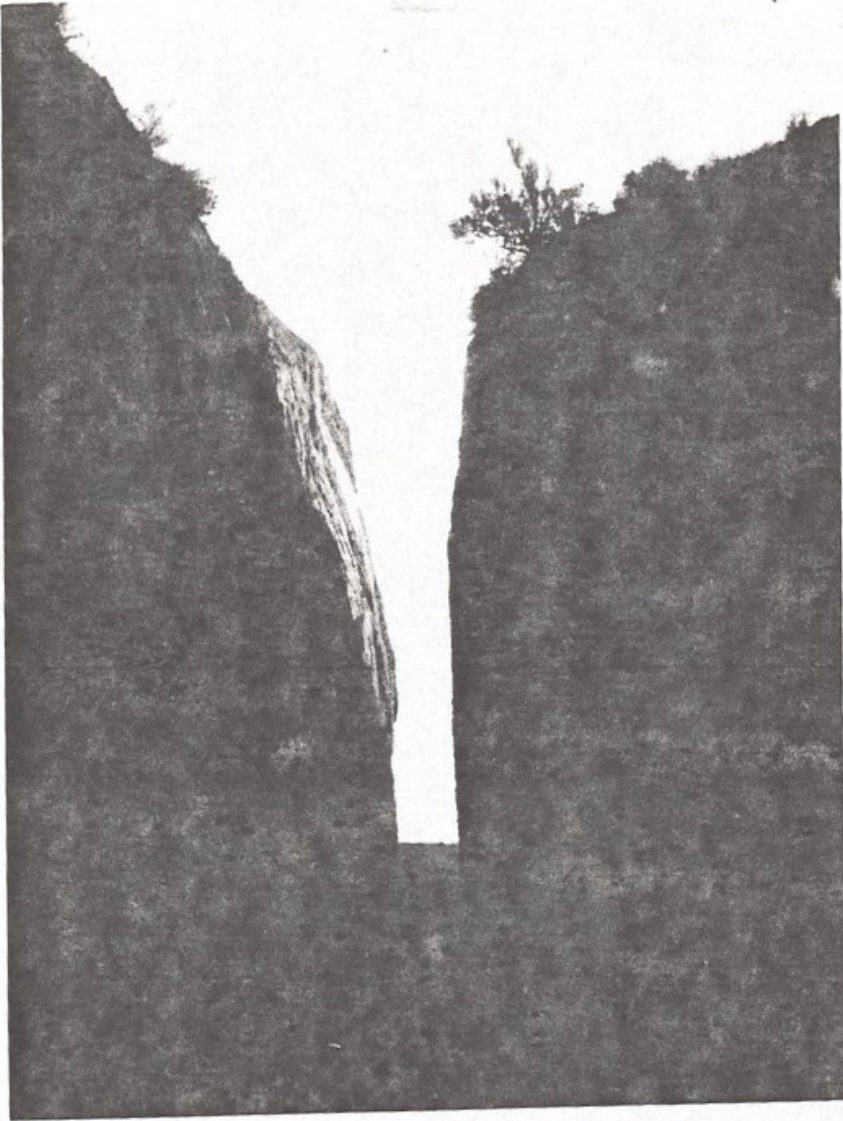


STAGECOACHES still clatter through Fremont Pass in the Santa Susana Mountains, a deep and narrow cut hewed by hand more than a century ago. But the old Concords roll only for an occasional Western movie. Mostly the pass is deserted, its towering sandstone walls blocking out the noise of heavy traffic only a stone's throw away.

More accurately called San Fernando Pass, this ancient route northward from Southern California was first used by Don Gaspar de Portola in 1769. Once through the mountains, he turned west down the Santa Clara River valley to the coast and thence northward in his search for Monterey Bay.

With the founding of the mission and presidio at

Fremont, or
San Fernando, Pass.



Eastman's Studio.



Cedar Pass.

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.

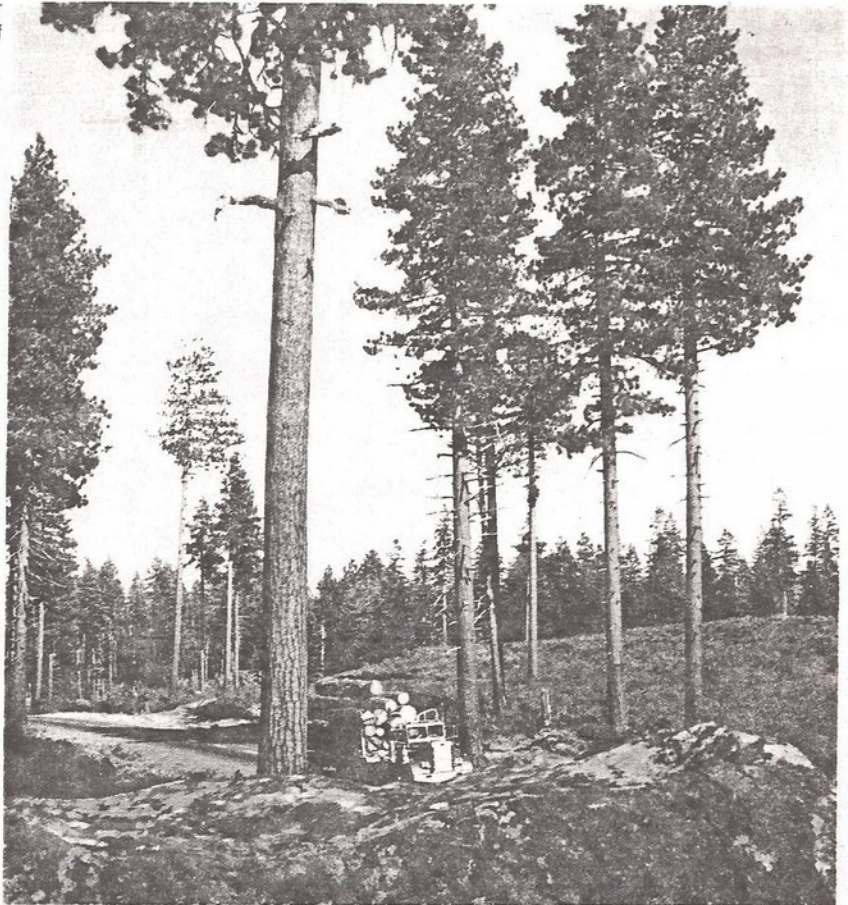
ONE OF THE SURVIVORS, so the story goes, picked up a chunk of ore and later asked a gunsmith to make a sight for his gun from it. The ore turned out to be pure silver and the story spread like wildfire. For fifty years or more, prospectors sought but never found the "Lost Gunsight" mine. But they found 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.

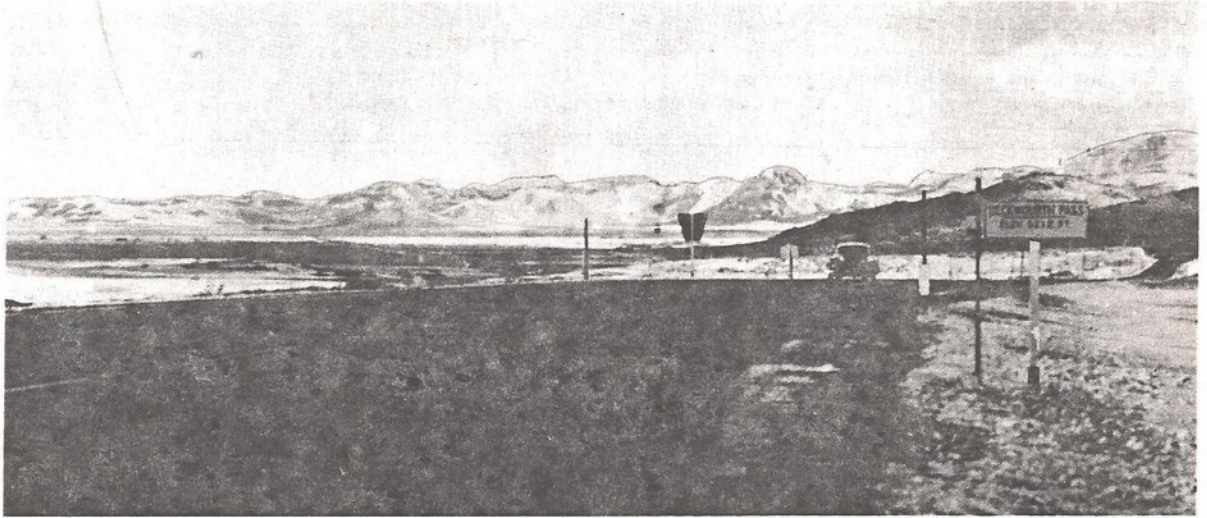
Today the motorist driving west from Reno on Alternate 40 follows Beckwourth's road through the 5,221 foot pass—lowest in the Sierra—and passes through Sierra Valley and the town of Beckwourth. Where the Middle Fork of the Feather begins to cut down through the mountains still stands Beckwourth's old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

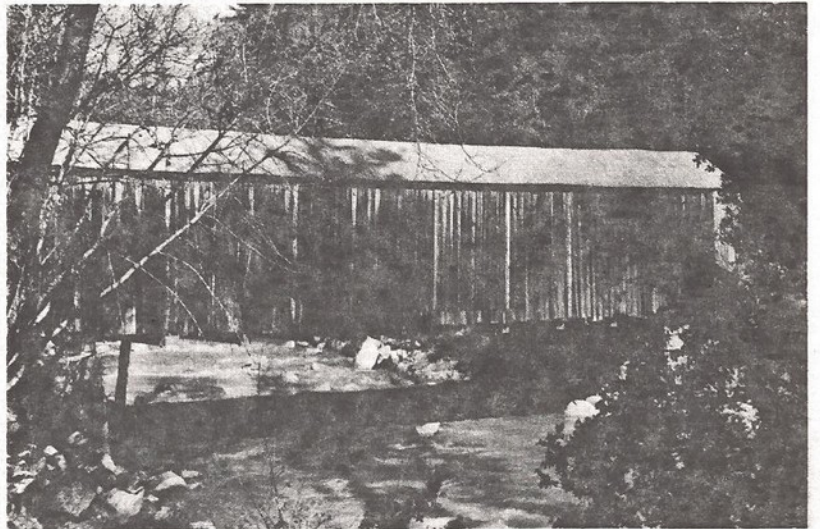
Plumas County Chamber of Commerce.



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.



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

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.

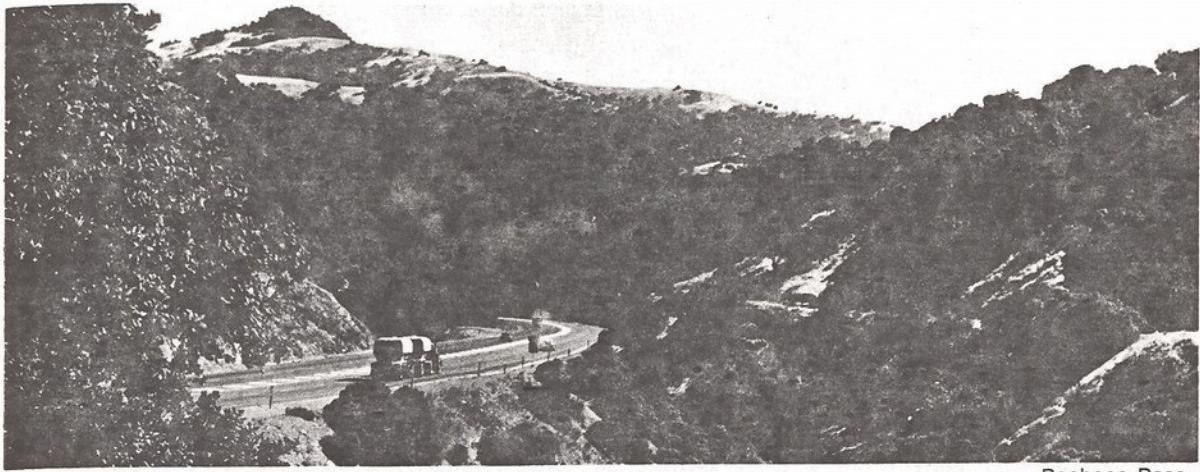
With the discovery of gold and silver on the eastern slopes, the need for an alternate to the Placerville route became acute. The Truckee Turnpike Co. was organized in November, 1859, to improve the emigrant road over Henness Pass to Marysville. The next month, residents of Nevada City met and formed 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.

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 Micheltona 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 Jediah 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.

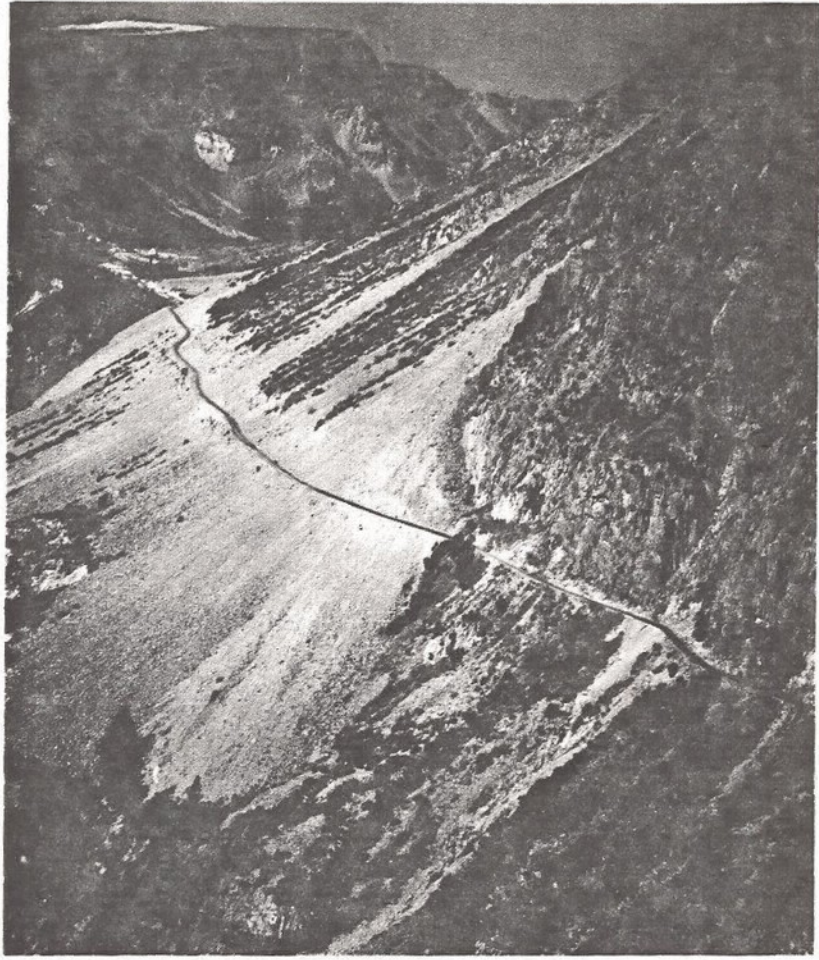
Tehachapi Pass sat astride the path of empire. Army engineers surveyed it for a possible transcontinental rail route in 1853. And in the early '50s dust hung over the trail for days as cattle and sheep by the thousands were driven into California. The Kern River gold rush in 1854-55 made the pass even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

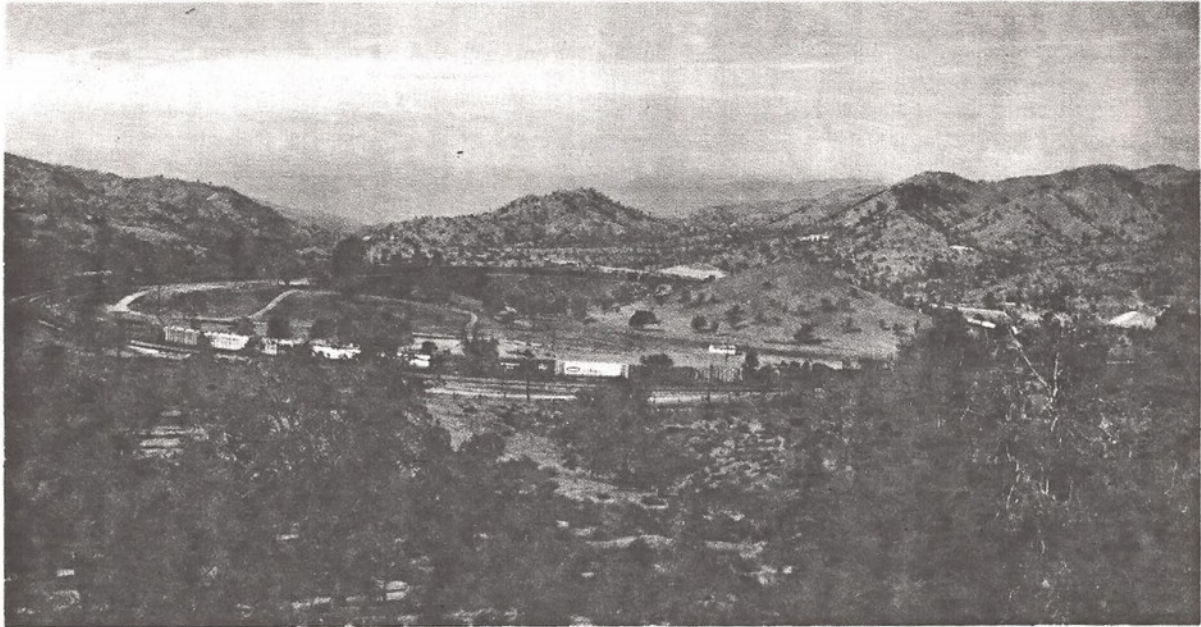
They carved out 18 tunnels and devised the world-famous Tehachapi Loop, the great circle shown in the picture on page 42 where the track doubles back on itself to gain altitude. On July 10, 1876, the 4,025-foot pass was conquered and track gangs pushed down to Mojave and Antelope Valley to meet others 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

patrols venturing in the hostile valley of the San Joaquin. Linking these two highways like the rungs of a ladder are regularly spaced roads that snake through the gaps in the Coast Range.

Pedro Fages, pursuing army deserters, was the first white man into the San Joaquin. In 1772 he entered by way of Tejon Pass and crossed the mountains to San Luis Obispo, probably by way of La Panza ("the paunch") Pass. Fages had also ventured into the valley at its northern end two years earlier when exploring eastward from San Francisco Bay.

In 1776, Juan Bautista de Anza—after laying out the site for a mission and presidio in San Francisco—explored eastward but was turned back by the tule marshes near Tracy, as Fages had been. Anza entered the Livermore Hills by way of Patterson Pass, eventually to be part of *El Camino Viejo*.

AS THE MISSION TRAIL grew in the west, The Old Road developed on the east, extending from San Pedro to what is now East Oakland. Originally an old Indian trail, sections of it were traversed by padres and soldiers seeking to establish missions in the valley. In 1804 Father Juan Martin sought a site for a mission in the tulares, crossing the mountains from Mission San Miguel probably by Cottonwood Pass. In 1805 and 1806 Gabriel Moraga used Pacheco Pass to hunt mission sites.

Other expeditions developed more routes into the valley, but gradually these forays became military and punitive ventures, aimed at recapturing runaways from the coastal missions, subduing warlike *tulare* Indians or bringing back stolen horses and cattle. In 1824, a force of valley Indians and runaway neophytes, advised by a Russian officer, fought a three-hour battle with the Spanish at Buena Vista Lake. A general Indian uprising was averted later that year when Capt. Portilla persuaded these fugitives to return to the coast, bringing them out through the Cuyama Valley.

The Gold Rush brought a new role for the Westside passes. They became haunts of bandits such as the fabled Joaquin Murieta and Tiburcio Vasquez. Of

these two men, Murieta was the earlier and more active—mainly because at one time there were at least five "Joaquins" operating in California and their depredations were all blamed on Murieta.

Murieta had a hideout in Cantua Canyon overlooking *El Camino Viejo* about midway between Panoche ("sugarloaf") Pass and the Priest Valley route. He was surprised and slain there by Captain Harry Love and his Rangers in July, 1853. His head and the hand of "Three-Fingered Jack" were brought back by Love as evidence with which to claim a \$5,000 reward.

THOUGH Vasquez was only one man, he was almost as active as Murieta. He, too, holed up in Cantua Canyon, from which he would descend to raid entire towns. With a handful of men, he once sacked the old town of Kingston (near Kingsburg) and escaped in a hail of bullets. Again the legislature posted a reward: \$5,000 dead or \$8,000 alive. Vasquez was captured by a sheriff's posse near Los Angeles and hanged in San Jose on March 18, 1875.

In 1859, Butterfield's Overland Mail stages linked the East and West by way of Pacheco Pass. And Southern Pacific Railroad planned a transcontinental rail line from San Francisco eastward via Panoche Pass, but got only as far as Tres Pinos before its financing failed. The railroad company was acquired by Central Pacific, which then adopted the SP name.

The growth of the great land and cattle companies in the San Joaquin Valley, the discovery of oil and the extension of irrigated lands all combined to make the area traversed by *El Camino Viejo* a rich and settled region. Today a long ribbon of concrete is being laid along this route, and paralleling it is a great concrete ditch. The highway is the Westside Freeway, due for completion in 1972, and the ditch is the California Aqueduct, the big man-made river to Southern California.

Along this route, too, are the towers of the Extra High Voltage transmission system now being completed by PG&E as part of a 500,000-volt system linking the electric resources of the Pacific Northwest with those of the Pacific Southwest.

High Sierra Passes



AT 2:20 A.M. on March 26, 1872, Californians on both sides of the Sierra Nevada were jolted violently from their beds. A great tremor shook the frozen High Sierra region and sent avalanches crashing into canyons. Subterranean booms echoed hollowly and both the Kern and Owens rivers were tilted so that their waters momentarily ran backwards. The town of Lone Pine was a shambles and dozens of persons were killed.

The tremor was an echo of all the cataclysmic forces that had slowly thrust the Sierra peaks skyward

a million or so years ago. Ancient volcanoes had also raised peaks and glaciers had carved canyons. The result is a jumble of mountains of improbable grandeur, their eastern wall towering like a great stone wave threatening to engulf the valleys thousands of feet below.

The most spectacular part of the Sierra Nevada lies between Tioga Pass on the north and Walker Pass on the south. Between these two highway crossings are some 50 High Sierra passes over 10,000 feet in height,

but no through roads intrude into this unspoiled area. At one time, the Madera and Mammoth Trail was used by trans-Sierra travelers, but only vestiges of this old road remain. It was known as "French Trail" after its promoter—John French—and about 1880 bi-weekly trips by stage and pack train were started between Oakhurst and French's mines in the Mammoth Pass area. Valley communities have been seeking the opening of a highway along this general route.

THE STORY of the High Sierra passes was written not so much by emigrants and gold-seekers as by mountain climbers and sportsmen, by naturalists, geologists and hardy outdoorsmen—by men like John Muir who fitted all these categories.

Muir, born in Scotland, came to the United States with his parents in 1849 and spent his first summer in the Sierra in 1869 as a shepherd. For years thereafter he tirelessly explored the Sierra regions and, finding himself a natural and prolific writer, he chronicled the delights of the mountains. He bested Professor Whitney in a hot controversy over the origins of Yosemite Valley, claiming with considerable correctness that the valley is mainly the product of glacial action rather than a "dropped block" as Whitney contended.

Muir was a founder and first president of the Sierra Club, formed in 1892 to protect the great natural wonders of the mountains from commercial exploitation. Named for him is the John Muir Trail, started in 1915, which today traverses the crest of the High Sierra from Yosemite to Mount Whitney. Some 225 miles long, it crosses ten passes and in only two places (Tuolumne Meadows and Red's Meadow west of Mammoth Pass) does it touch on roads.

Some of these passes were used by Indians and later by shepherders. Others were discovered by that splendid band of mountaineers organized by Professor

Josiah Whitney who, in 1860, was named State Geologist by the legislature and directed to make a complete geological survey of the state.

PASSES like Whitney, Forester, Kearsarge and Mono are rich in adventure stories, but mostly these are stories of individuals conquering the peaks and pinnacles and rock faces of the High Sierra. Stories like how Clarence King described his "harrowing" climb to the cloud-capped summit of Mt. Whitney in 1871 and of how two years later two men rode their mules to the top of nearby Sheep Rock (now called Mt. Langley) and there found King's marker. Learning in New York that he had climbed the wrong peak, King hurried back to be the first to conquer the true Mt. Whitney, only to discover when he arrived at the summit that at least two other parties had preceded him only a month earlier.

The colorful accounts of Gold Rush activity include little of the High Sierra country, where the rewards were scenic and not mineral. In fact, scenery impressed the Argonauts so little that when one '49er, William Penn Abrams, came across by chance the great valley of Yosemite, his rather matter-of-fact account of the area stirred little interest. It wasn't until two years later that the valley was re-discovered, named and brought to the world's attention.

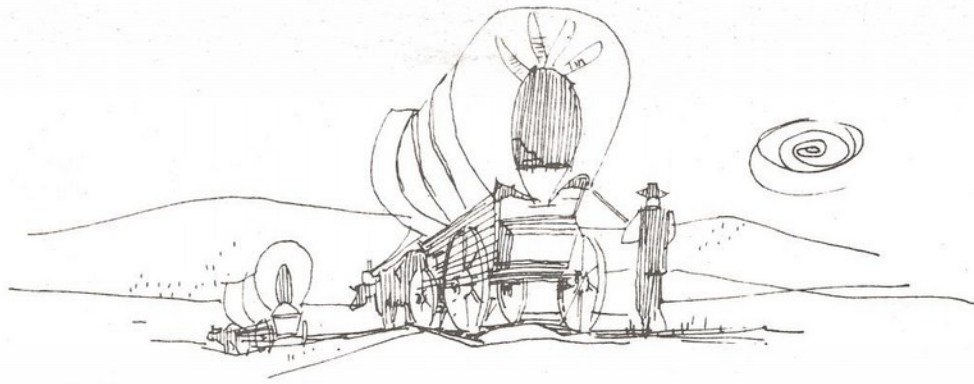
Today roads lead into such major attractions of the Sierra Nevada as Yosemite, Kings River Canyon, Sequoia National Park and Devil's Postpile National Monument. But to cross the High Sierra or to enjoy the unrivalled views from the soaring peaks, one has to travel the trails by foot or horseback. To do so is to step into another world, so that the High Sierra passes become gateways to high adventure and to a land of awesome splendor.



The Sierra's great eastern wall soars above Mono Lake, as viewed from Conway Summit on Highway 395.



California Division of Highways.



Conclusion

"OH, if these mountains could only talk, they would tell you tales and ghostlike stories that would haunt you to the grave!"

Emigrant John Wood penned these words in his diary as he rested on the Carson Pass trail in 1850. And although the mountains remained mute, there were many literate adventurers to capture the stories that gathered like clouds over the passes and pathways to California.

To recount the colorful history of the three dozen or so most significant passes has been the purpose of this series. However, without much difficulty a person can compile a list of at least 150 additional passes or summits within California that are also crossed by roads, rails or trails. And each of these has, somewhere, its own catalogue of romantic tales.

TO MAKE the long journey westward was, in the vernacular of the day "to see the elephant." For many the trail was so hard that they could say, as did one '49er, "We have not only seen the elephant but we have been dangled, as it were, on the tusks of the huge animal."

The boulder-strewn wagon trails over mountain passes, the long and waterless desert approaches, the

perilous ocean voyages—all screened the Argonauts like holes in a sieve. The weak and purposeless fell by the wayside; the strong and determined were more apt to make it to California. They founded a society so dynamic and set a tradition of accomplishment so strong that those who observe life in California today often feel as if they are looking through a window on the future.

For many—perhaps for most—of the emigrants, gold was but an excuse to follow the westward urge. Having sold their farms and pulled up stakes in Kansas and Missouri and Illinois, the newcomers often found little to show for the frequently terrible toil of working a gold claim. They turned to farming, to merchandising, to manufacturing and inventing. And they built a Golden State.

Only a small fraction ever found the El Dorado which they were seeking. But in their old age, as they sat on countless rockers on front porches everywhere and gazed on what they had achieved, perhaps they felt as did John Wood, who ended his diary with this observation:

"What a blessing to the world if mankind only knew their wants and seek for contentment in honest and moderate gain, for true and lasting happiness can come from no other source."