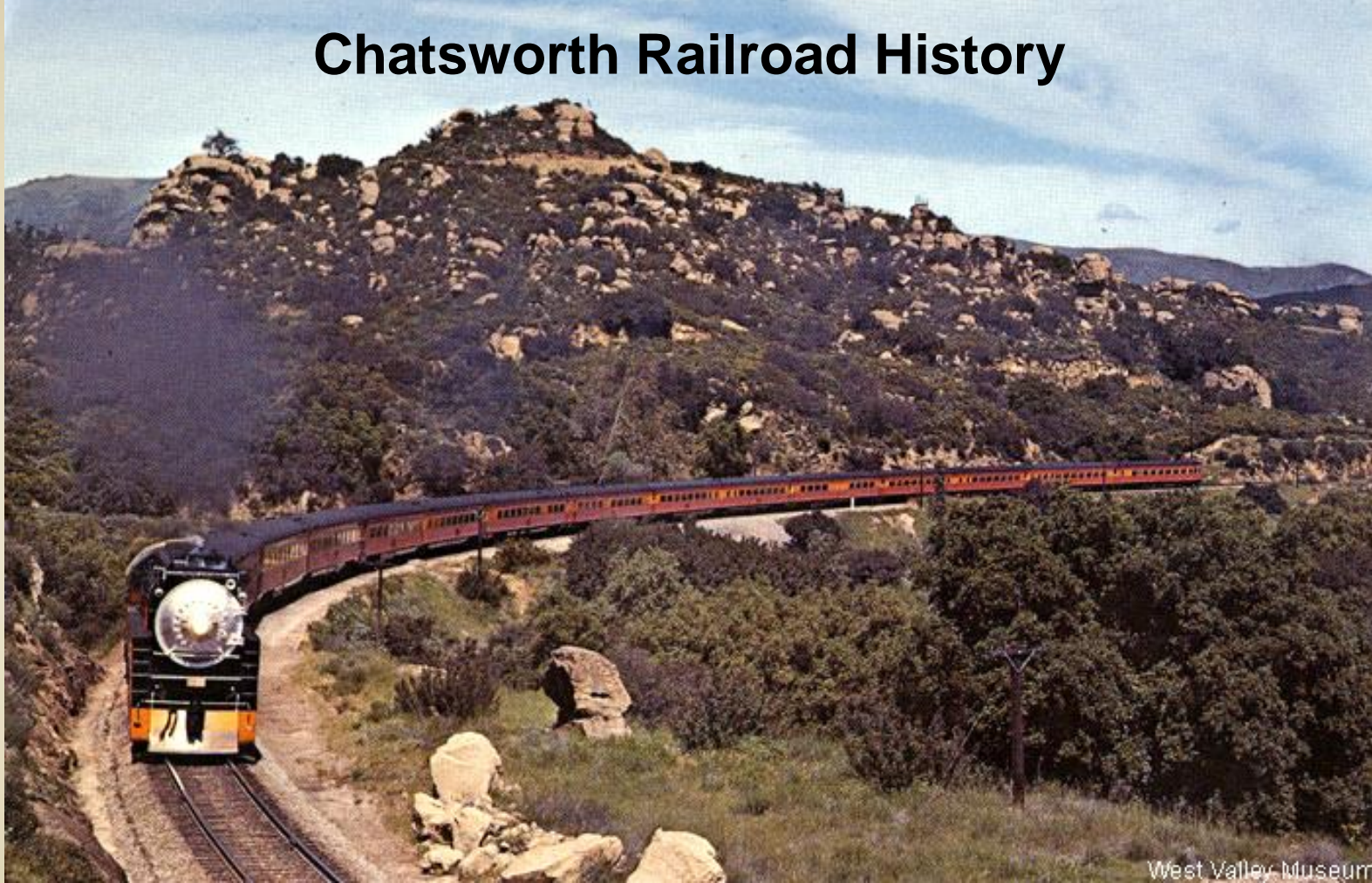


Chatsworth Railroad History



7/16/2020

Chatsworth Historical Society - Chatsworth Railroad History

Topics to be covered

- A presentation of historical transportation routes in Chatsworth, focusing on the construction of the Montalvo cutoff completed in 1904
- 1769 - El Camino Real
- 1861-1895 – Stagecoach Trail
- 1876 –San Fernando Tunnel connects Los Angeles to San Francisco and Northern California
- 1893 – Southern Pacific Railroad completes Burbank Branch to Chatsworth
- 1901 – Southern Pacific opens the Coast Line, linking Los Angeles and San Francisco via major coastal cities
- 1904 – Southern Pacific Railroad completes the Montalvo cutoff, making Chatsworth a part of the Southern Pacific Coast Line
- Video clips of Movies filmed at the Chatsworth Tunnels and Depots

Before the Railroads - the red line on this map identifies the El Camino Real, with each Mission marked with a cross.

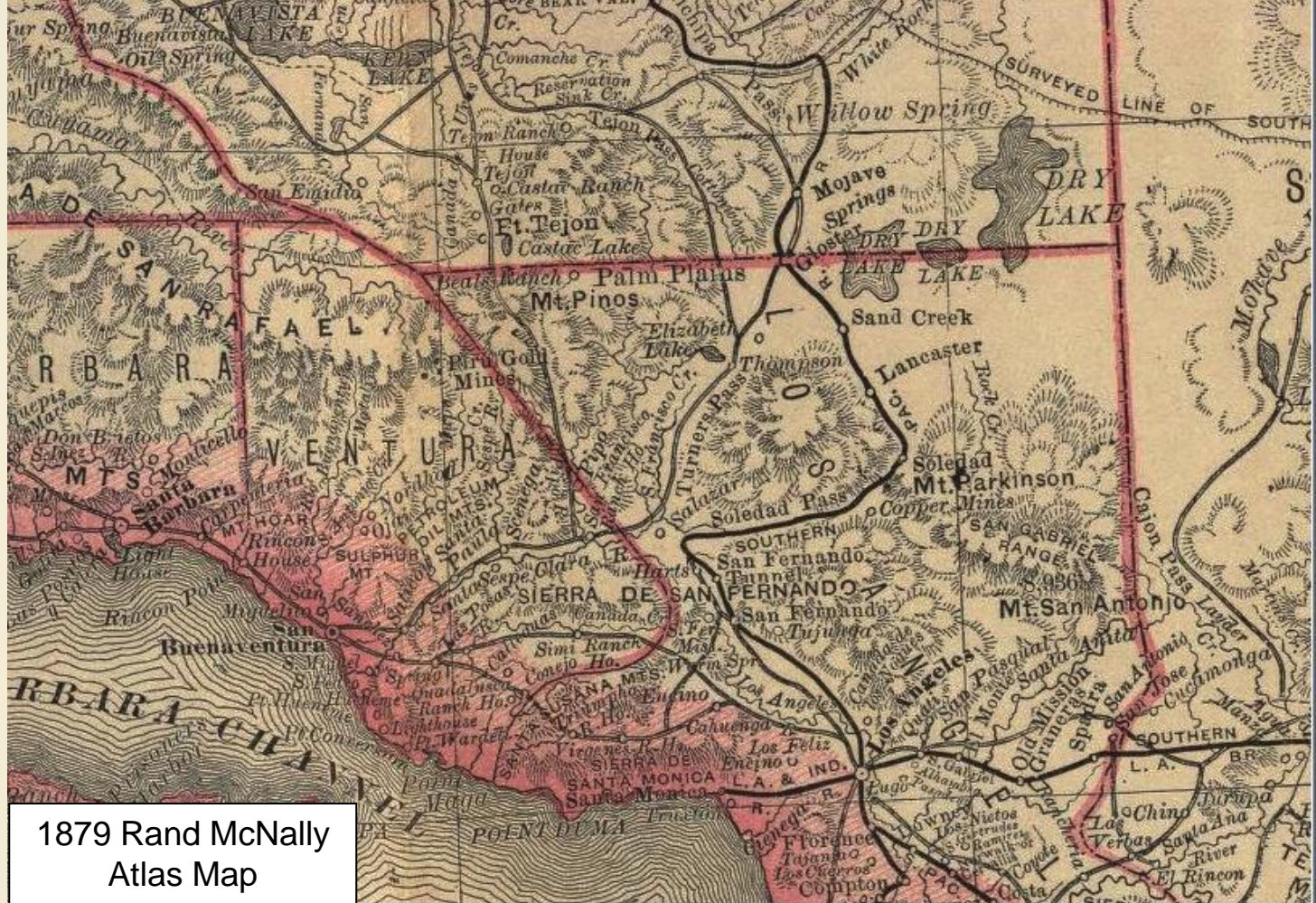
From 1769 to 1823, 21 Missions were established by the Spanish.

Rancho Simi is identified between Mission San Fernando and Mission San Buenaventura



This map shows the first railroad connection from Los Angeles to Northern California.

To accomplish this, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed the mile-long San Fernando Tunnel in 1876.



1879 Rand McNally Atlas Map

An enlargement of the previous 1879 Map.

The yellow arrow identifies the Stagecoach Trail that began operation in 1861. The route from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles passed by the Simi Ranch House, via the Santa Susana Pass.



1879 Rand McNally Atlas Map

Chatsworth Park is “on the map”, at the end of the 22 mile Burbank Branch of the Southern Pacific, completed in 1893.



1897 Rand McNally
Atlas Map

An enlargement of the previous Map.

Identifying the stops of the 1893 Burbank Branch Extension, from Chatsworth Park to Canoga, Reseda, Encino, and Burbank.



1897 Rand McNally Atlas Map

This picture is of the Southern Pacific **Santa Monica Long Warf** taken in 1892.

The previous map identified this as “**Port Los Angeles**” in the Santa Monica Bay.

In 1897 **San Pedro** was endorsed as the Los Angeles Harbor, and breakwater construction began in 1899.



Rock for the San Pedro Breakwater

This photo shows the type of equipment and rigging used to load the Chatsworth rock onto the train cars.

In 1898, Southern Pacific laid another mile of track into the quarry, in anticipation of the San Pedro Breakwater contract.



Rock for the San Pedro Breakwater

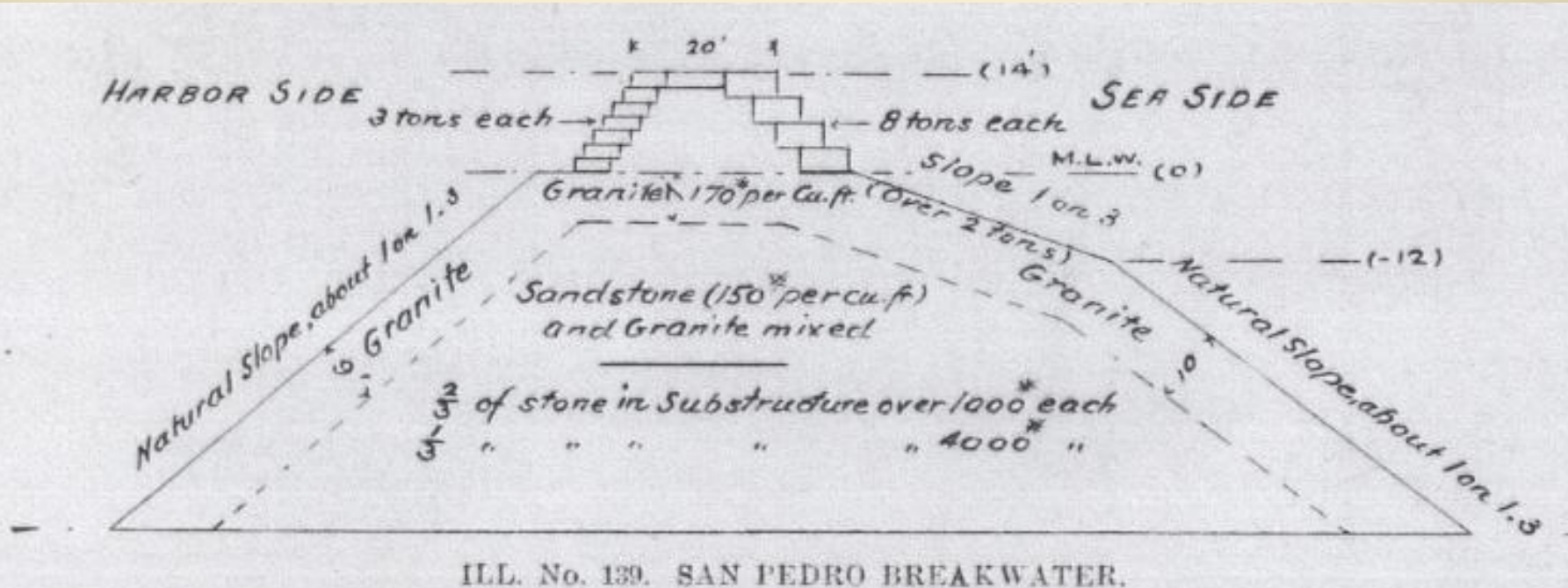
In 1901, the first carloads of Chatsworth Park rock are added to the breakwater.

Continuing through 1905, more than 50 men load up to 50 cars daily of sandstone riprap to form the substructure of the San Pedro Breakwater.



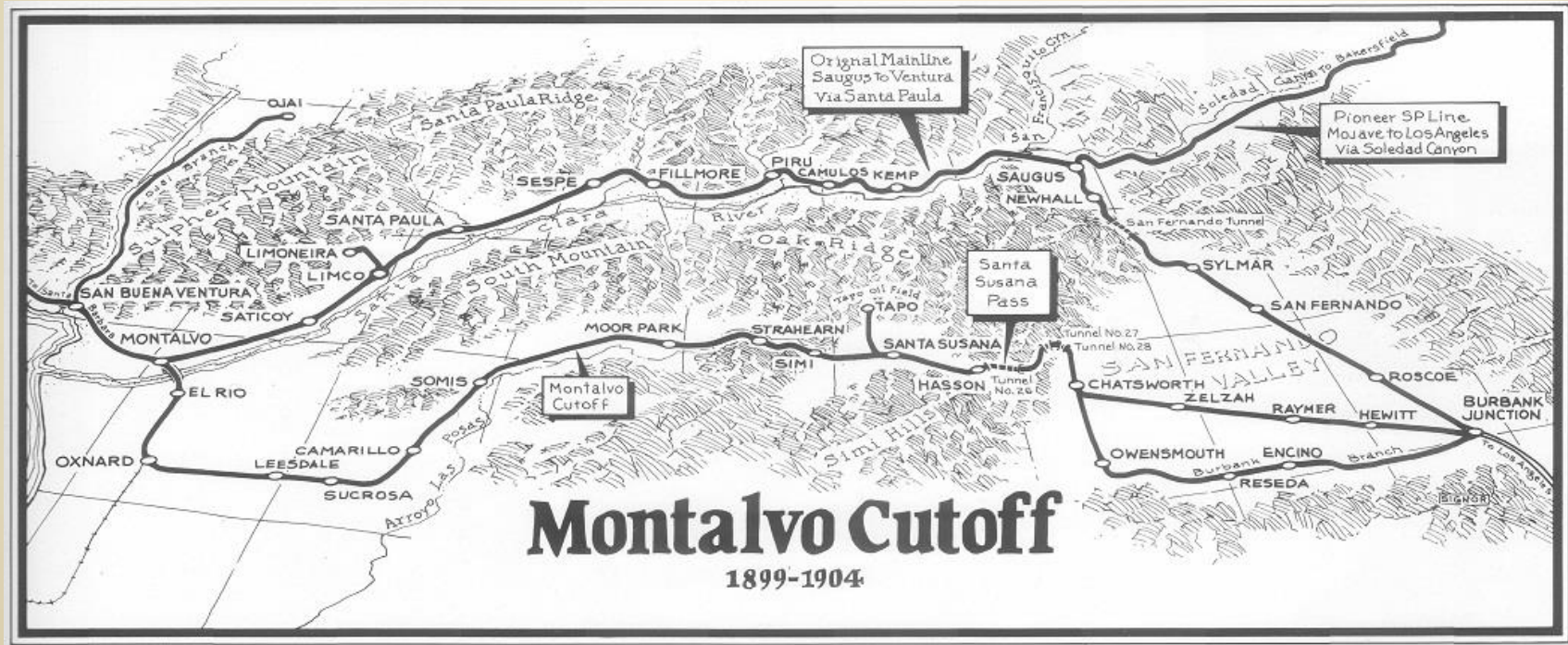
Rock for the San Pedro Breakwater

The illustration below identifies that the Chatsworth Park sandstone forms the core of the breakwater, and is covered by granite and protected from direct action of the seas.



The Southern Pacific Coast Line and the Montalvo Cutoff

The Coast Line of the Southern Pacific opened on March 31, 1901. The goal of linking Los Angeles and San Francisco via major coastal cities had finally been achieved after 36 years.



This map was used to promote passenger rail use when the Coast Line of the Southern Pacific opened on March 31, 1901.

The route south required passage through the congested San Fernando Tunnel to Los Angeles.



An enlargement of the previous 1901 map.

The “short-cut” on the Coast Line was not completed until 1904. The most difficult work on the “Montalvo Cutoff” was encountered in the Santa Susana Pass, where three separate tunnels were blasted for the most part out of solid rock.

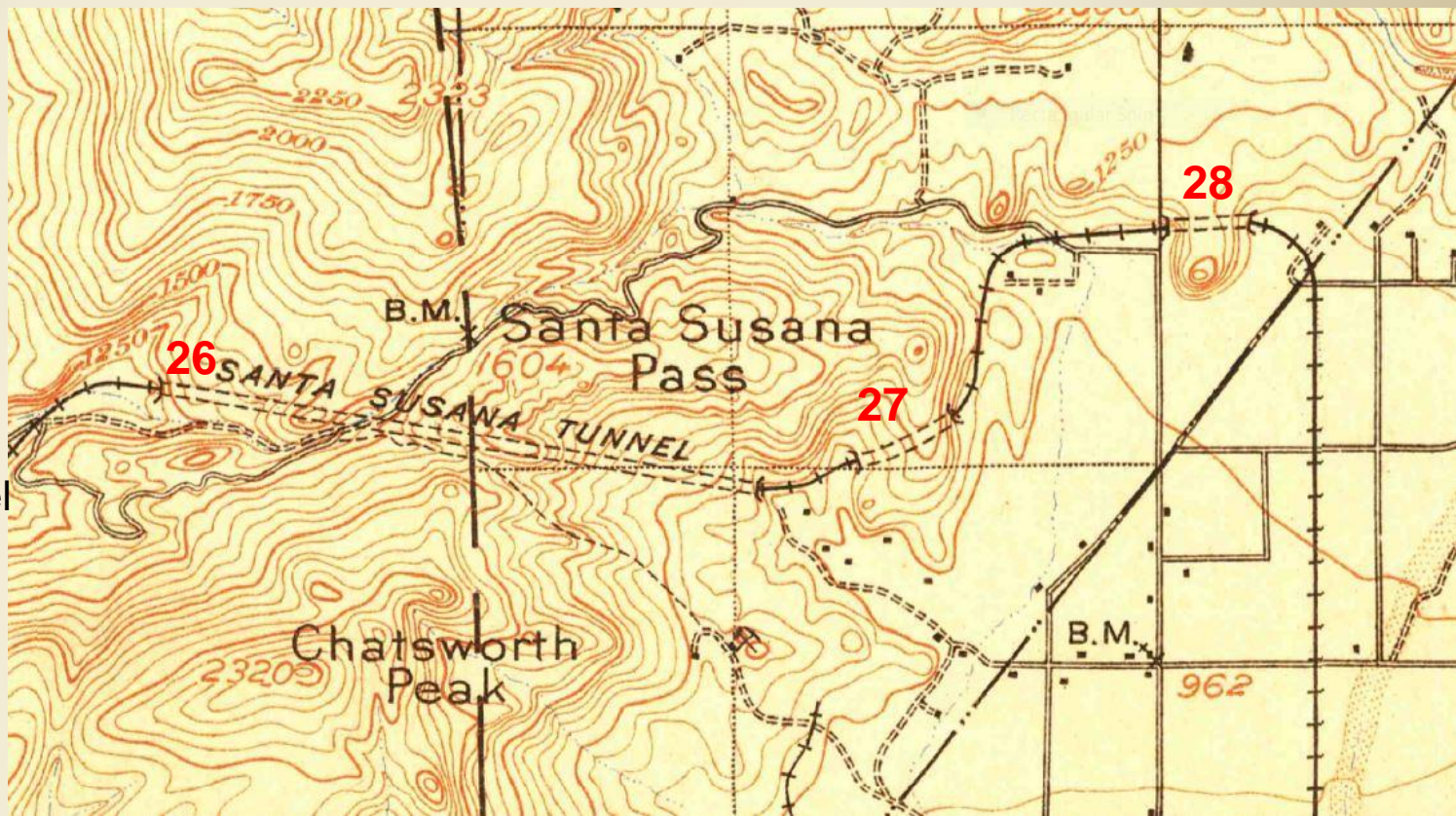


1901 Pocket Map Published by the Southern Pacific Railroad

It took 5 years to complete the three tunnels and right-of-way in 1904.

This 1903 map identifies from left to right (and labeled in red) Tunnel 26, Tunnel 27 and Tunnel 28.

Tunnel 26 is 7,369 feet (1.4 miles), Tunnel 27 994 feet, Tunnel 28 599 feet.



1903 Topographical Map

Cut Section of Right of Way

Most of the right of way grading was completed before the tunneling began.

This cut is between tunnels 27 and 28, viewing south.



Looking North from the Cut

Horse and cart was
the method of the
day, moving
thousands of loads
of soft material for
the cut and fill.



**Grading Crew
Posing for Photo**



**Grading crew
posing for a
photo in the Cut
section**



Tunnel 28 Before the rail is laid

This eastern view
identifies Stoney
Point and the
tunnel that goes
under what will
eventually become
Topanga Canyon
Blvd.

Old Santa Susana
Pass Road goes
up and over the
tunnel in a hair pin
turn.



Steam Power House

Steam power houses were constructed at each end of Tunnel 26.

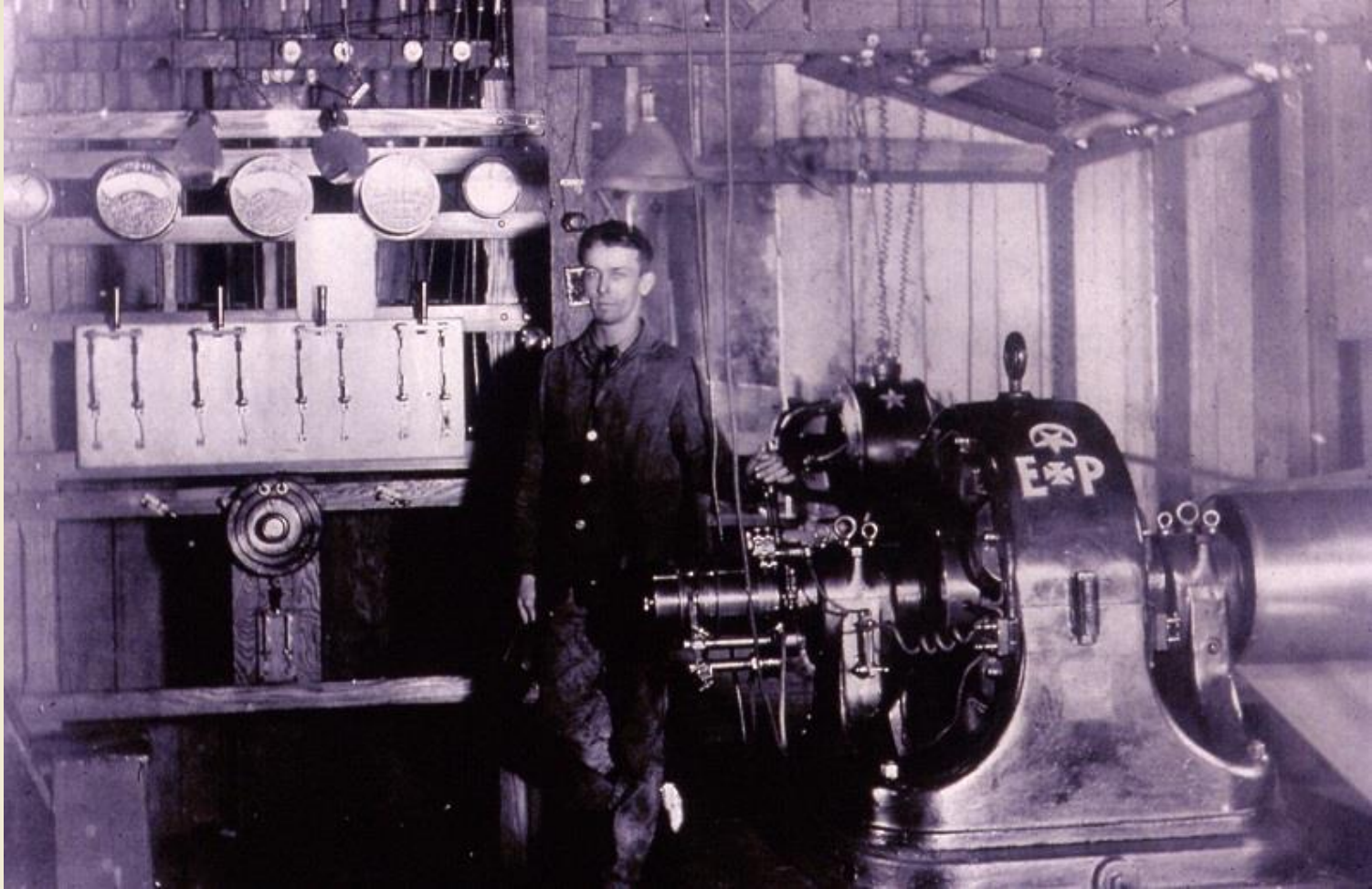
There is a blower and pipe to supply fresh air deep inside the heading.

Compressed air pipes were used for running the air drills to make the holes for blasting.



Generator

Inside the power house a stationary steam engine is belted up to a dynamo to provide electric lights deep inside the tunnel.



View From Tunnel 26

Looking eastward
along the right of
way, you can see
the lumber yard for
shoring up the
tunnel roof.

Note the power
poles along the
finished right of way
heading to Tunnel
27.



JUMBO

Deep inside tunnel 26 we can see what was called the Jumbo.

This is a timber-framed structure that rolls on rails at the heading of the tunnel.

This allows the tunneling crew to work on three levels for softer material.



Tunnel Crew

Here the tunnel crew poses for a picture



Close-up of Tunnel Crew

Notice the
Handlebar
Mustaches, the
trend of the day



Overbreak in the roof of the tunnel

This is why shoring is used to support the tunnel roof.



Tunnel 26 Hits Water

Here in oil-cloth rain gear, the tunnelers operate their air drills in the harshest of conditions.

A July 31, 1901 L.A. Times article describes *“Erickson and Peterson are encountering some water in the Chatsworth tunnel.”*

The water hit here still flows today from the east portal.



Tunnel 26 East and West Headings Meet

The headings met on
August 18, 1903.

Seen here are a
foreman from each
tunnel crew.

Note the electric
lights and wiring
along the rock wall,
and the standing
water.



Tunnel 26 East and West Headings Meet on August 18, 1903

Excavation of the tunnels started on July 16, 1900 from both portals, heading for a meeting inside the mountain. It was up to the engineers to keep each of the crews digging in a straight line on a 1% upward grade toward each other. When they finally met, it was reported as “within one-third of a foot”, or four inches, considered to be “dead on”! Good cause for great rejoicing.

*Simi Valley, A Journey Through Time, 1997,
pg. 401*



Chatsworth Tunnel Crews

The Iron Men
of the Day



1914

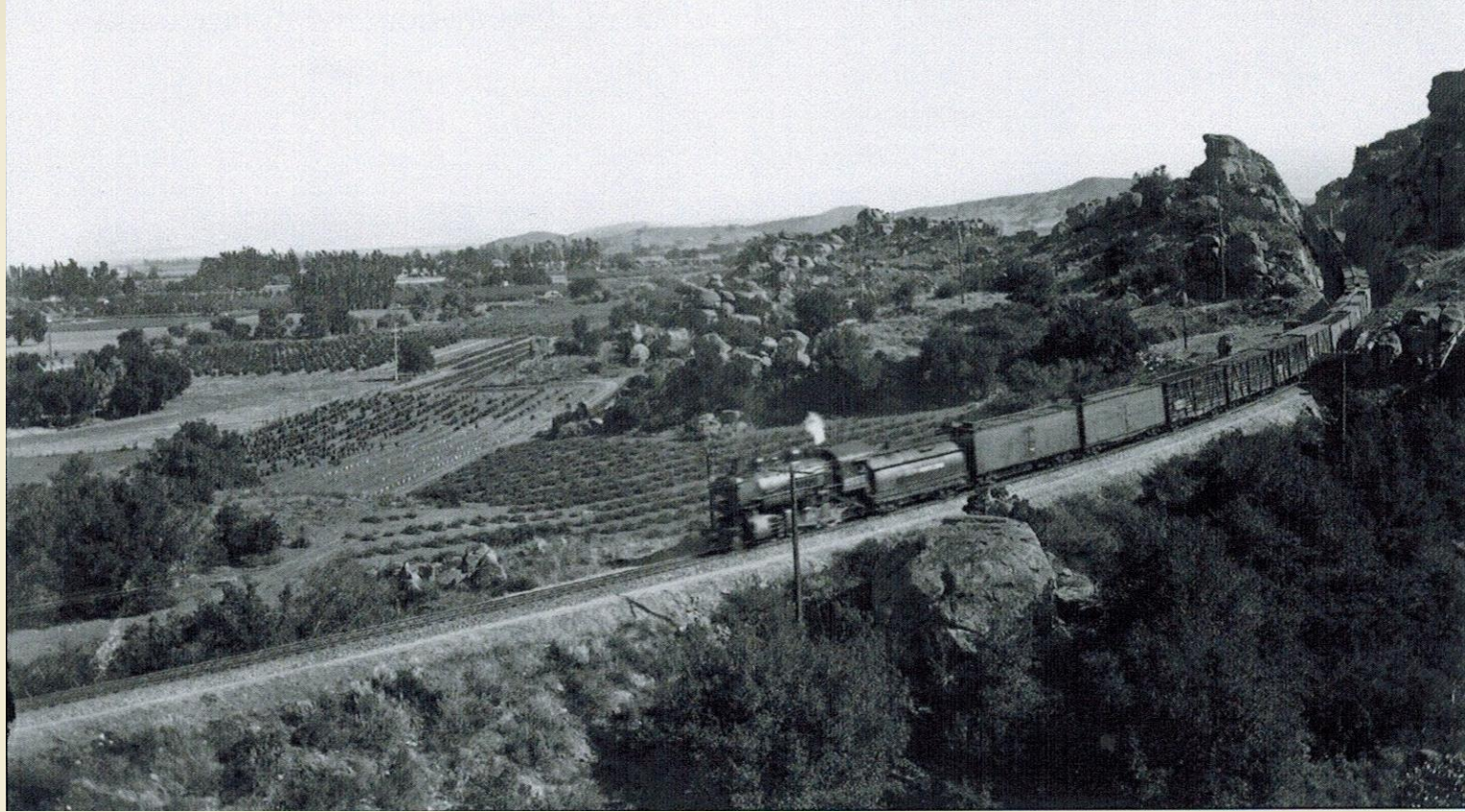
This train is heading north through the cut from Tunnel 28 to Tunnel 27



1912

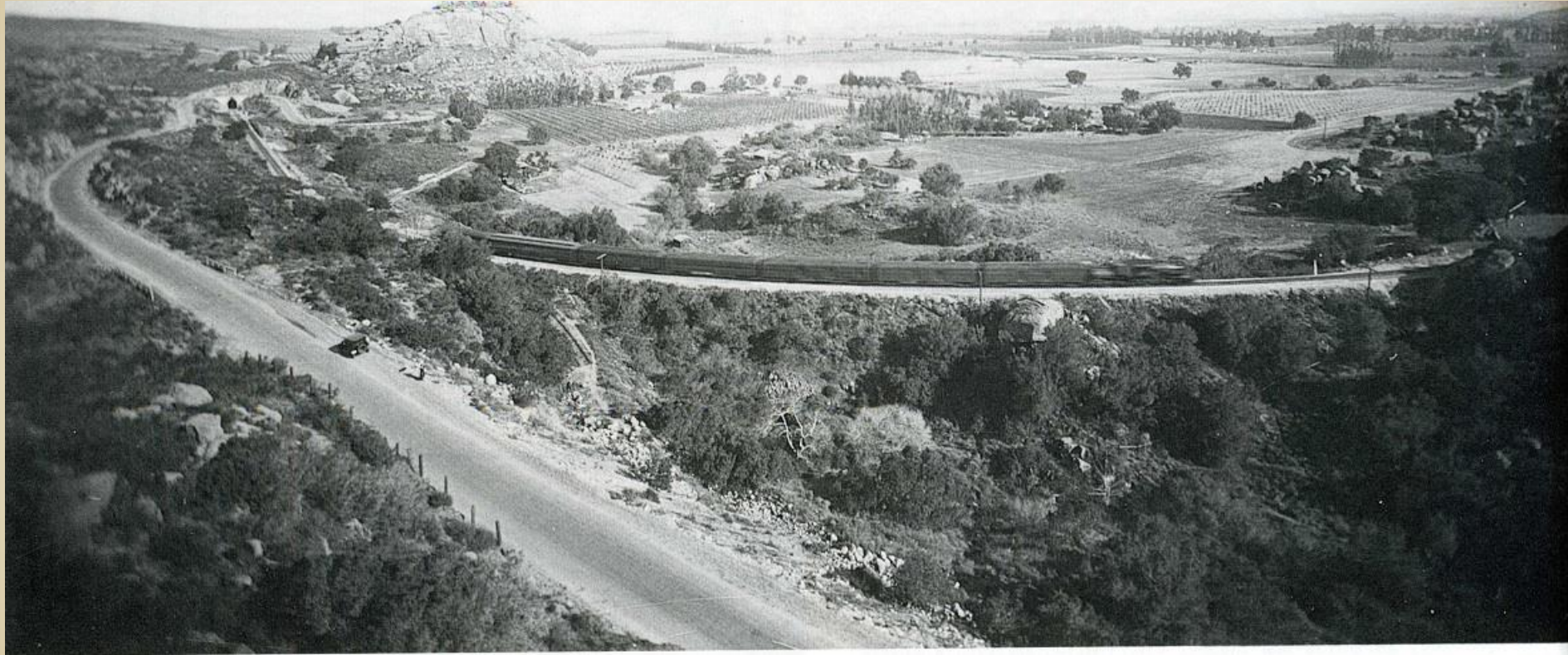
This train is heading south through the cut from Tunnel 27 to Tunnel 28

This picture was taken from Santa Susana Pass road at Red Mesa



Source: Images of America, Santa Susana, 2009

1912 Panorama train heading north from Tunnel 28



Source: Images of America, Santa Susana, 2009

1941 Locomotive Fire

On November 19, 1941, a locomotive fire in the 1.4 mile long tunnel #26 burned for three days.

The train left Chatsworth with 96 cars, 12 of them stock cars loaded with cattle.

The crew was overcome with fumes and died in the tunnel, and Chatsworth residents vividly remember the fire and the sight and smell of the burned train and cattle being hauled back down to Chatsworth.

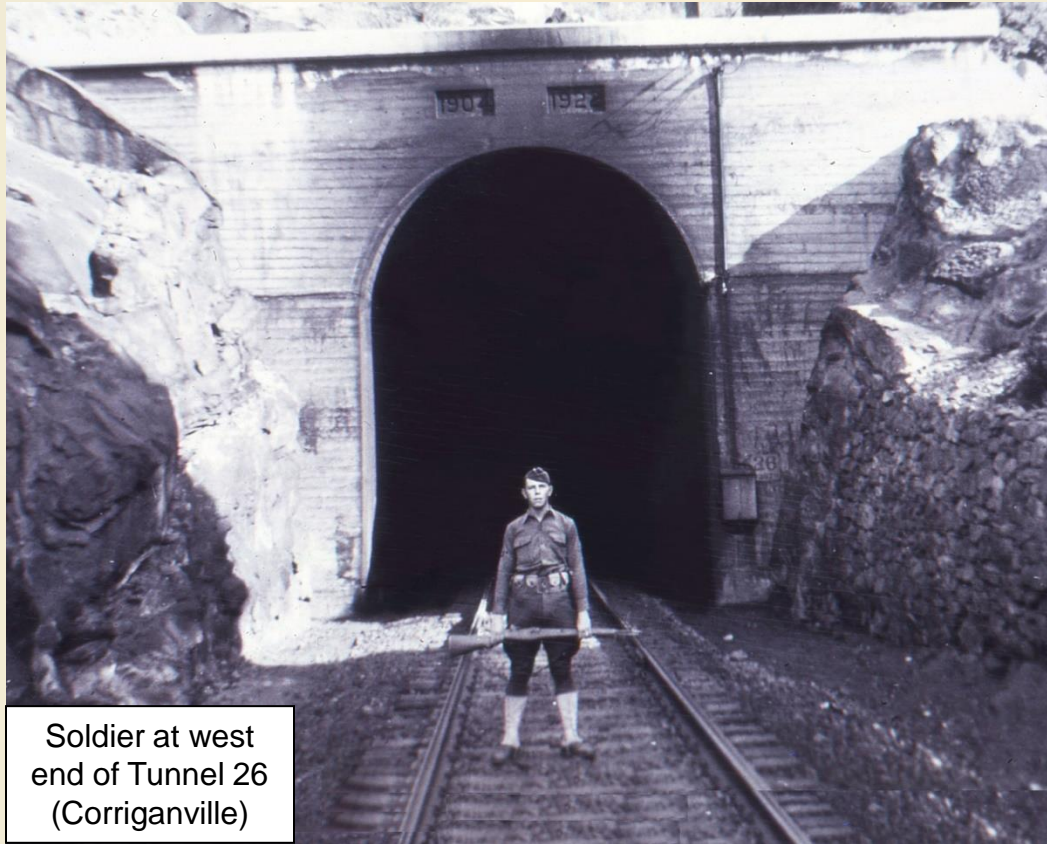


1941 Soldiers Guarding the Tunnels during World War II

Soldiers were stationed at the Train Tunnels following the Dec. 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

During the war, passenger traffic ended temporarily and many troop trains ran through Chatsworth.

Until the soldiers arrived, Chatsworth citizens stood sentry.



Soldier at west end of Tunnel 26 (Corriganville)



2008 Chatsworth Metrolink Crash

On September 12th, a southbound Union Pacific freight train collided with a northbound Metrolink commuter train on the curved section of track just southeast of tunnel 28.

With 25 deaths, this became the deadliest accident in Metrolink history. Chatsworth residents were first responders to the accident and provided support for passengers and emergency crews.



Original Chatsworth 1893 Train Station

Built at the northeast corner of Marilla and Topanga. When the new main line through the tunnels opened in 1904, an additional station was built about 1910 south of Devonshire. The original depot burns down in 1917.



1898 Train Depot and Hotel

Steam locomotive at the 1893 Chatsworth Depot.

The Depot is at the right, the Hotel is behind and to the left of the Depot.

Stoney Point is seen in the center of the picture.



Train Depot #2, 1910

The second depot was located south of Devonshire on the west side of the tracks. The 1893 and 1910 depots coexisted until fire destroyed the first depot in 1917. Depot #2 was in service until it was torn down in 1962. Amtrak used a concrete platform on DeSoto as the Chatsworth Stop until the third station was built 34 years later in 1996.



Chatsworth Train Station

Used by both Amtrak and
Metrolink for passenger
service since 1996



Movies at the Chatsworth Railroad Tunnels and Depot

This presentation will finish with three YouTube videos of eight movies, totaling 12 minutes

1921 Now or Never - Harold Lloyd - Chatsworth Scenes (3 minutes) <https://youtu.be/l-P0ZlHiCcw>

1924 Sherlock Jr Buster Keaton Chatsworth Railroad Water Tank Water Spout clip (1 minute)
<https://youtu.be/HbNnYpxbGtK>

Chatsworth Railroad movies, 5 video clips from the following movies: **1933 The Power and the Glory**,
1948 Superman Serial Episode 1, **1949 White Heat**, **1954 Apache**, **1950 Fancy Pants** (8 minutes)
<https://youtu.be/beagHbsybak>



1921 Now or Never



1924 Sherlock Jr.

The west end of Tunnel 28 (at Stoney Point) was the most often filmed, followed by the west end Tunnel 26 (at Corriganville). There were also many films made at the Chatsworth Depot.



1933 The Power and the Glory



1948 Superman Serial Episode 1



1949 White Heat



1954 Apache



1950 Fancy Pants

1921 Now or Never -
Harold Lloyd -
Chatsworth Scenes

The East end of
tunnel 28 (3 minutes)

[https://youtu.be/l-
P0ZlHiCw](https://youtu.be/l-P0ZlHiCw)

1924 Sherlock Jr
Buster Keaton
Chatsworth Railroad
Water Tank Water
Spout clip (1 minute)

Just south of
Devonshire, west of
Canoga

[https://youtu.be/HbNn
YpxbG Tk](https://youtu.be/HbNnYpxbG Tk)



**Movies at the
Chatsworth
Railroad
Tunnels and Depot**

To finish our
presentation, this is an
8 minute video of a
few of the movies that
have been filmed at the
Chatsworth Railroad
Tunnels and Depot.

Sources/Acknowledgements

- 1900-1904 Southern Pacific Railroad Engineering Photo Book, courtesy Bruce Petty (editor's note: Bruce Petty made a presentation to the Chatsworth Historical Society. He graciously donated the images from his slide presentation to the Society)
- "The Southern Pacific in Los Angeles, 1873-1996", 2002, Larry Mullaly and Bruce Petty
- "Southern Pacific's Coast Line", John R. Signor, 1994, 2002
- CSUN San Fernando Valley History Digital Library
- "The Burning Journal" Newsletter of the Santa Susana Railroad Historical Society – Special Chatsworth Depot Edition by Joel Amromin
- Historical Maps from the David Rumsey digitized collection
- "Chatsworth Hills Homesteaders Part 2", William Bannon, 2013, Chatsworth Historical Society

Prepared by Ann & Ray Vincent, Chatsworth Historical Society, June 2008, revised 2011, 2013, 2017, 2020 (included silent movie videos)