



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO FROM 1847 TO THE 1880s

My own memories of transportation in California are from the early 1940s. There were paved roads. Most of the roads were two lanes with dirt shoulders. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks were pretty much limited to cities. State highways were also two lanes. In Simi Valley in the early 1960s, the roads were mostly rural-type. In the 1940s there were the railroads. Air transportation was limited. Very few people had ever flown. So, transportation was and is a work in progress.

Following the end of the Mexican War, California was a new frontier with a handful of small settlements near the former missions. The former El Camino Real was really a route for people on foot and on horses, mules, and burros. There were even a few sailing vessels that could go between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Transportation was limited and human contact infrequent outside of the settlements.

As late as 1860, when people referred to "road," they were referring to trails. Eventually "wagon roads" came about, however, they were slow in coming. In Simi Valley, after the arrival of the railroad in 1900, "Tapo Road" extended north from the then eastern terminus of the railroad to what is now the intersection of Alamo and Tapo streets and from there it ran diagonally to the mouth of Tapo (Continued on Page 2)

RSTB CLUB MEETING

This month's club meeting will be at:
Sycamore Drive Community Center
1692 Sycamore Drive - Room B-1
7:00PM – February 16, 2011

January Work Party Success!



After having to cancel two work parties in a row due to rain, January's work party on the upper portion of the Lower Stagecoach trail was successful. Thanks much to John Sabol, Bart Hibbs, Alan Cueba, Mike Kuhn, and Larry Ribbeck for their fine work!

The next work party is scheduled for February 26th. We will tackle the Upper Stagecoach Trail. More information is available on Page 5 and on the website. Hope to see you there!

RSTB LOGO T-SHIRTS

Sporting the beautiful RSTB logo, these are great shirts! Call Marty if you'd like to order at 805-526-4414.

- short sleeve \$12
- long sleeve \$14
- sweat shirt \$18



Upcoming Events

February 5th
Johnson Motorway to Rocky Peak
9 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,700' elevation gain) **8 AM – Stearn St. Park & Ride**

February 12th
Big Sky Ranch: Whiteface Mountain Shuttle Hike
8 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,200' elevation gain) - **8 AM**

February 16th
Club Meeting - 7 PM

February 19th
Work Party
Upper Stagecoach Trail - **8 AM**

February 26th
Santa Paula Canyon
8.1 MRT - Moderate (1000' elevation gain) – **8 AM**

More information about these events can be found on Page 5 and on the Activities page at <http://simitrailblazers.com>



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Canyon. In other words, that portion of the wagon road was a “use road” across private ranches.

Prior to 1860, carretas travelled north from Los Angeles over San Fernando Pass, which was considered the most dangerous and notorious wagon road in the west at the time. It was referred to as El Camino Viejo or as El Camino Cuesta to distinguish it from “Beale’s Cut.” That route was 12 miles longer than either via the Conejo or Santa Susana Pass.

The event of the California Gold Rush brought a flood of Anglo-Americans and foreign nationals into California. With it came business interests and newspapers and a demand for mail service. Newspapers were dependent upon the receipt of newspapers from other cities in order to reprint stories from those newspapers in their own papers. Without mail service there was no news.

The first mail service between San Diego and San Francisco after the end of the Mexican War was carried by the U.S. Army. It was started on Monday April 19, 1847. Two soldiers on horseback were to leave each city carrying the mail and newspapers free of charge. The riders were to meet in Nipomo the following Sunday and exchange mail bags. They would return to their respective cities on the following Sunday. On Monday morning the whole thing would begin again. This service lasted until 1848 when it was replaced by coastal steamers. [Charles Outland, Stagecoaching on El Camino Real: Los Angeles to San Francisco 1861-1901, Glendale (The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), p. 51]

Stamped mail was carried by pack animals and by coastal steamers -

sometimes as frequently as twice a week. Even then it usually took a week or more for outside news to arrive. News from the east coast or abroad could take months. In April 1861 the trip from San Pedro to Santa Barbara via Triunfo Ranch and Cayeques Ranch then past the present-day intersection of Olsen and Moorpark roads took 30 hours. [Ibid. pp. 106-108]

With the exception of mail service in the gold fields, no stagecoach line outside of the gold fields was economically viable without a mail contract. The Overland Mail Company received \$600,000 in 1859 for the semi-weekly mail service from St. Louis and Memphis to San Francisco. That first year of operation the Post Office Department received in revenue \$27,229.94. The San Antonio to San Diego mail contract was for \$196,000. The postal receipts were \$601.00. [Ibid., pp. 48-49]

With the flood of immigration to the Gold Rush, there was a need for improved communication and mobility. People who did not want to walk or ride an equine species over long distances demanded commercial conveyances. Railroads were a long way off, and the use of a coastal steamer meant many days of seasick travel. So the next leap forward in transportation was to be the stagecoach. There was, of course, one wee obstacle - there were no wagon roads between Los Angeles and San Francisco. There was no mechanism to provide them, so it was concluded that each county would have to provide them. There would be rivers to cross and mountains to pass over. They would present monumental problems. Government agencies would have to start from scratch.

The first stagecoach route went over the San Fernando and San Francisquito passes, past Lake Elizabeth, over to Fort Tejon into the San Joaquin Valley, and over Pacheco Pass to Gilroy.

However, it ran through a lot of virtually uninhabitable territory and did little to open the more coastal settlement to outside contacts. Finally, the demand for a “coastal route” won out. It would mean the end to the interior route since only one route could have the mail contract. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors was happy because they were responsible for and were maintaining a long and costly route nearly to Fort Tejon.

The route was problematic in our area. Should the Conejo, the San Fernando Pass or the Santa Susana Pass route be selected? At that time Ventura County was part of Santa Barbara County. So an agreement between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties was required. Both counties seem to have rejected the San Fernando Pass route due to its difficulty and 12-mile longer route. Los Angeles County was dead set against spending any more money than necessary on road construction and maintenance, so they pushed the “shorter to the county line” route, i.e., over Santa Susana Pass, which was less than 30 miles from the city center. The agreement between the two counties stipulated that L. A. County would build their portion of the route once Santa Barbara County had completed their portion. Santa Barbara County, of course, was reluctant to build their portion, especially to the top of Santa Susana Pass, which would require a great deal of blasting, because they were afraid that the L. A. County Board of Supervisors would change their mind after Santa Barbara County had expended great sums on the Santa Susana Pass route. These worries were not likely to result in quick and decisive actions. In the end the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County did proceed. In the meantime, the Butterfield Overland Mail Company’s first stage arrived (Continued on Page 3)

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in Santa Barbara from the north on April 1, 1861.

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors allocated \$15,000 and the state provided another \$15,000 for Santa Barbara County's share of the road. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors allocated \$2,000 for their share of the road. The route used by L. A. County was the old Indian trail/El Camino Real, which ran straight up the rock face to the present day Lilac Lane. The roadbed, one wagon wide, had to be chiseled out of the bedrock. If you have ever walked "Devil's Slide" you would be forced to conclude that they were out of their minds - but it was cheap! The L. A. County Board of Supervisors took action on the contract to build their road over the eastern side of the pass on July 10, 1861. [Ibid., p. 103]. The road was finished on August 3, 1861. [Ibid., p. 104] The contract for the Santa Barbara County portion, some 150 miles in length [to Elwood, west of the City of Santa Barbara], was let in June 1860. [ibid., p. 90] The western side of the pass road was completed by the middle of September 1861 at a cost of \$3,915.89. [Ibid., p. 105]

Horses were changed on both sides of the pass at the respective bases of the grades - six horses to a team.

In 1870 the L. A. County Board of Supervisors recommended to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors that the route be changed to the old Butterfield road instead of continuing to use the Santa Susana Pass route. The change was considered by the Santa Barbara Board on January 6, 1871. The Board declined to concur. [Ibid., pp. 109-110] At the time, Supervisor Thomas Bard was opening up the Simi and Las Posas ranches for settlement. He had little interest in rerouting the stage from the Simi to the Conejo. The route was shifted from Simi to the Conejo in 1875, however, that route was used for only one year.

Stagecoaches, which were often mud wagons, were king until the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The railroads were faster, more comfortable and less subject to being held up by bandits. Unlike the stagecoaches, the railroads are still with us.

Mike Kuhn
1-26-11



January 15th 2011 - Cheeseboro Canyon / Palo Comado Canyon Loop



10 hikers (+ Heidi, a cute dog) met at the carpool point near the intersection of Royal Avenue and Madera Road on a crisp

winter morning and then traveled to the Cheeseboro Canyon trailhead in the Simi Hills via Hwy 23, Hwy 101, and Chesebro Road. The hike began on the Modelo Trail as it rose to the north from the main parking lot along a ridge, providing views of the rolling countryside under a clear blue sky. Soon the trail headed west on the Palo Comado Connector trail, passing a couple of horse ranches whose four-legged residents curiously watched our passage. Heading north along the main dirt road in Palo Comado Canyon, we passed through a wide grassland dotted with occasional stands of large oak trees; it was a beautiful, somewhat windy day. At the junction with the Ranch Center Drive, three of the hikers elected to follow it eastward up and over to Cheeseboro Canyon, thus shortening their hike. Soon after the Palo Comado road began its climb toward China Flat, we turned right (east) onto a dirt trail that led up to an overlook of Palo Comado Canyon to the south. We shared our overlook perch with a group of bicycle riders. After a short break to rest and enjoy the view, we headed east, descending toward Shepherd's Flat at the north end of Cheeseboro Canyon and passing the abandoned Sheep Corral along the way. Turning southward, we began our return trip via always lovely Cheeseboro Canyon, first passing through terrain dominated by striking rock formations and then passing through a riparian woodland at Sulphur Springs. The bicycle traffic in the canyon increased significantly in Cheeseboro Canyon since many other people were also taking advantage of the nice weather. We continued southward, passing through a dense oak woodland and then through an open grassland, eventually reaching the parking lot, having completed a 10.5-mile hike with 1,254' of elevation gain on a great day to be outside.



RSTB Calendar February 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Long Canyon 6:30PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Caroline Carroll	2 	3 Chumash Trail 6:00PM See Schedule	4 	5 Johnson Motorway to Rocky Peak 8AM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Mona Steffen
6 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4:00PM See Schedule	7 	8 Long Canyon 6:30PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> John Atwood	9 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Catherine Cappadona Marilyn Ryder	10 Chumash Trail 6:00PM See Schedule	11 	12 Big Sky Ranch: Whiteface Mountain Shuttle Hike 8AM See Schedule
13 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4:00PM See Schedule	14  <i>Happy Birthday</i> Doug Marsh Paula Lightfoot	15 Long Canyon 6:30PM See Schedule	16 Club Meeting 7 PM	17 Chumash Trail 6:00PM See Schedule	18 	19 Work Party Upper Stagecoach Trail 8AM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jamie Robbins Pete Lestrel Melissa Steffen
20 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4:00 PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Mary Ann Campbell	21 	22 Long Canyon 6:30PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Lorraine Ferrall	23 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Karen Schroder	24 Chumash Trail 6:00PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Connie Ankrom	25 <i>Happy Birthday</i> David Seifert	26 Santa Paula Canyon 8AM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Dave Goldberg
27 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4:00 PM See Schedule	28 					



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Hiking Schedule



REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES

(Rain cancels – No hikes on holidays)

Sunday Evening - Rocky Peak Fire Road

Meet at **4 PM** at the Rocky Peak Fire Road trailhead. Take the Rocky Peak exit from the 118 Fwy. Meet at the north end of the bridge; don't park on the bridge. (Moderate to strenuous, depending on distance hiked. 4.8 MRT)

Tuesday Evening - Long Canyon & Oak Canyon Loop

Meet at **6:30 PM** in Long Canyon parking lot. Directions: Take First Street heading south. Continue when the road's name changes to Long Canyon Road. The parking lot is at the intersection of Long Canyon Road and Wood Ranch Pkwy. (Moderate, 3.5 MRT)

Thursday Evening - The Chumash Trail

Meet at **6 PM** at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (Moderate to strenuous, depending on distance hiked. 5.2 MRT)

FEBRUARY HIKES AND ACTIVITIES

February 5th

The Johnson Motorway to Rocky Peak

9 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,700' elevation gain)

Johnson Motorway (aka Rim of the Valley Trail) to Rocky Peak [via the Indian Falls Estates Gate on Poema Place in Chatsworth]. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water and lunch. Wear boots. **Meet at 8AM at the 118 & Stearns St. Park & Ride.**

February 12th

Big Sky Ranch: Whiteface Mountain Shuttle Hike

8 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,200' elevation gain)

Meet at Big Sky Park (2251 Lost Canyon Dr. in Simi Valley) at **8AM**. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water and lunch. Wear boots.

February 16th

Club Meeting

7PM - The Sycamore Drive Community Center - 1692 Sycamore Drive - Room B-1

February 19th

Work Party - Upper Stagecoach Trail

Meet at **8AM** at the dirt parking lot on Lilac Lane (less than a quarter mile from the old pass road). Bring a hat, gloves, water and a snack, if you need one. Tools will be provided.

February 26th

Santa Paula Canyon

8.1 MRT - Moderate (1000' elevation gain)

The trail takes you through picturesque St. Thomas Aquinas College, then along the shady banks of Santa Paula Creek, with plentiful swimming holes, capped by a spectacular 25 foot waterfall just past Big Cone Camp. Bring 2 - 3 quarts water, lunch and a pair of shoes/sandals that you don't mind getting wet. Wear boots. For more information about this hike, click here. Meet at **8AM** near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal.

* Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.



No dogs allowed on trail(s).

For additional information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400.

Special Note: On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots. <http://www.simitrailblazers.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation

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Please enroll me as a New () or Renewing () member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of Single.....\$10 Family.....\$15

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