

Roadways and vehicles mark progress of this area

(Seventh in an exclusive series of articles about places, incidents and people in Northeastern Los Angeles history.)

By WILFRID DELLQUEST

Like veins and arteries that bring vitality to a living organism, the pattern of roadways threading the hills and valleys of the Highlands measure the progress of Northeastern Los Angeles.

Roads are seldom accidental. There was purpose even in the trails broken by wild animals in prehistoric days through underbrush and along canyon beds in search of water.

LOTS OF WATER

The Highland dweller of today must draw upon his imagination to envision a time when water was plentiful. Before fires and cutting away had denuded the watershed, there were lakes and there were bubbling streams winding through the valleys, churning over rocks in the Arroyo, finally flowing into the Los Angeles River to the south. Early pictures show the river, filled to its banks, undulating like a glistening serpent past the sleepy pueblo.

Gabrieleno Indians followed the animal trails and broke new pathways leading to numerous villages established near both banks of Arroyo Seco. Occasionally modern hikers uncover arrowpoints or other stone artifacts indicating former hunting grounds or habitations of the Indians.

DAYS OF THE RANCHO

With the coming of Spanish and Mexican settlers, vast ranchos, their boundaries roughly defined by Castilian land grants, sprawled over the acres now comprising Pasadena, South Pasadena, San Rafael Hills, Eagle Rock Valley and the Arroyo region, sloping southward to the Los Angeles River that formed the eastern and northern limits of the old Pueblo.

There were three major roads in the area in the middle 18th century. One road paralleled the Arroyo Seco south and north skimming between the hills and hills to the west, and turning sharply east where the Arroyo was easy to cross as it approached the great San Gabriel Valley through what later became South Pasadena. Another road, then hardly more than an Indian path, followed York Valley from west to east where it joined the Arroyo road. The third road took a course generally parallel to the present Colorado Blvd. through Eagle Rock Valley between the San Rafael Hills on the north and York Hills to the south, passing numerous artesian wells that afforded the traveler welcome shade and water.

TRAFFIC BEGINS

There was even then a little traffic along valley roads. An occasional ox-drawn carreta, a two-wheeled cart with wooden wheels, laden with hides or barrels, plodded beneath a cloud of dust to and from the great ranchos. Less frequently troops of Spanish or Mexican horsemen rode through the valleys. Sometimes a Don, resplendent in silver trappings, leisurely guided his horse on a visit to nearby ranchos. Virginal and unspoiled, the valleys slept century after century and generation following generation. It was the time of the siesta. The few inhabitants, like the land itself, were happily unmindful of manana.

GREAT AWAKENING

The great awakening came in the 1840's when the gringo arrived. The Americanos were aggressive. They were ambitious. They sought eagerly for wealth and for the land that produced wealth. Political upheaval separated the region from the crown of Spain. Presently another revolution brought independence from Mexico.

The roads changed, and the traffic changed. Horsemen became plentiful in the Highland valleys. Stage coaches hurtled along valley bottoms, climbed hills through the passes; they carried passengers who were always in a hurry. The siesta faded away before impatient Americanos who worshipped at the shrine of speed.

THE IRON HORSE

The picture altered completely with the coming of the railroad. Rivalries and rate-wars between transcontinental railroads brought new settlers swarming to the Southland and led directly to the great boom of the 1880's. For a time railroads sold round-trip tickets from the East to Southern California for fifteen dollars and, for one day the rate was slashed to one dollar for an excursion ticket from Kansas City to Los Angeles. Thousands of migrants brought their families and threw away the return portion of their tickets. While Los Angeles grew like a sprouting mushroom, a crazy quilt of subdivisions blanketed Southern California. In the mid-1880's, the Garvanza settlement was subdivided. Auctioneers sold lots like popcorn at a carnival.

THE "BIG THREE"

A number of small, independent steam railroads connected Los Angeles with Pasadena, Whittier, Alhambra, Glendale and other nearby communities. The old Pasadena Railroad was the origin of the Union Pacific system in Southern California. Eventually, the "Big Three" — Union Pacific, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe — obtained a monopoly on steam transportation in the area. Union Pacific and Santa Fe held franchises routing their trains along the Arroyo through Highland Park.

PASSING OF THE HAY-BURNERS

In Los Angeles, electric tram lines were established, experimentally and briefly, in 1881; abandoned, then revived in 1892. During the interlude, horse-cars were prevalent, and the "hay-burners" endured until 1897.

In the meantime, the short

steam rail lines, near Los Angeles were electrified. In 1902, they were consolidated by Henry Huntington into the Pacific Electric system, afterwards a subsidiary of Southern Pacific. P.E.'s familiar "Red Cars" formed a network over the area, continuing in operation until gradually superseded by motor buses. Electric lines were brought to Garvanza and South Pasadena out Pasadena Ave. along the Arroyo. Tourists rode the red cars through Highland Park on their way to Rubio Canyon in Altadena, the first hop on the celebrated Mt. Lowe excursion.

Horses gave way to cable cars on certain steep-grade lines as early as 1885. The Temple St. cable car ran until 1903, and a cable railway in Highland Park took commuters up the slopes of Mt. Washington where many fine homes were being built.

THE "GREAT ROUND"

Although horses were on the way out, they still managed to hold their own for a number of years between Los Angeles, Sycamore Grove and as far north as Garvanza. Tallyhos and stages ran vanza before turning east into San Gabriel Valley and Pasadena.

In 1880, a unique transportation method was inaugurated on Euclid Ave. in Ontario where a mule pulled a street car up the gentle slope as far north as Foothill Blvd. For the return trip, a special platform was attached to the rear of the car, the mule taken aboard, and the car rolled down the grade all the way back to Ontario.

A popular carriage drive of the late 1880's was the "Great Round," taking tourists through Highland Park, Garvanza, South Pasadena, stopping briefly at the Raymond Hotel in Pasadena for a breath-taking and smog-free view of the great valley; continuing east and north to Sierra Madre, then south through Santa Anita, San Gabriel Mission and back to Los Angeles.

When the 1900 calendars were printed, electricity was used to light some streets, although the lights were always turned off on moonlight nights.

NEW CENTURY

In that year, the Los Angeles Express advertised: "Wanted: a lady cashier for a store. Must be experienced and have good references. \$8 week." About this time Bill Garland, a real estate broker, began making optimistic predictions about the growth of Los Angeles. When a new decade began, Garland posted billboards forecasting the population increase during the next ten years. His predictions were so amazing-

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ly accurate they became nationally famous. His last prediction, made in 1951, declared "Three million by 1960."

BICYCLES BUILT FOR ALL

The bicycle craze hit Arroyo-land in the late 1880's. On Sundays, hordes of bikes pedaled out Pasadena Ave. for a day at the park in Sycamore Grove. When riders attempted Cahuenga Pass in Hollywood headed for San Fernando Valley, the grade was so steep they had to walk their bikes up to the summit. If they had dreamed of a Sunday afternoon on Hollywood Freeway, they would have been frightened out of ten year's growth.

HORSELESS CARRIAGE

Paving of the rough dirt roads began about 1900 when the Auto Club of Los Angeles, forerunner of Auto Club of Southern Cali-

fornia, was organized. Improvements continued through the following decades. Subdividers built numerous roads to their tracts and hundreds of new residential streets were opened.

The horseless carriages came, terrified the horses, ran over chickens, belched smoke; then filled the roads, increased in power and rapidly dominated all transportation.

FREEWAYS

Building of the first freeway followed the historic route along Arroyo Seco through Highland Park. Public transportation relied more and more upon motor buses until electric lines were a thing of the past in the North-eastern District.

Over the freeways fly the planes: helicopters carrying mail and on rescue missions; air transports winging toward New York, Boston and Chicago; military jets breaking the sound barrier and scaring the inhabitants with sonic booms as thoroughly as the horseless carriages once frightened the horses.

And we will soon be watching for the man-made satellite as it circles the earth and wondering what will happen next.