

Freeway landslide

Tons of earth block the southbound lanes of the Golden State Freeway near Stadium Way in Elysian Park last Wednesday when a portion of the hillside west of the freeway gave way early in the morning. Alert action by Highway Patrolmen prevented any injuries but the southbound lanes were completely closed New Year's Eve and traffic was stalled for many hours on the northbound lanes. Several small brush fires were started in the area when power lines were knocked down by the slide. Hundreds of gallons of water were released when a water main broke and a pumping station was buried by the earth.

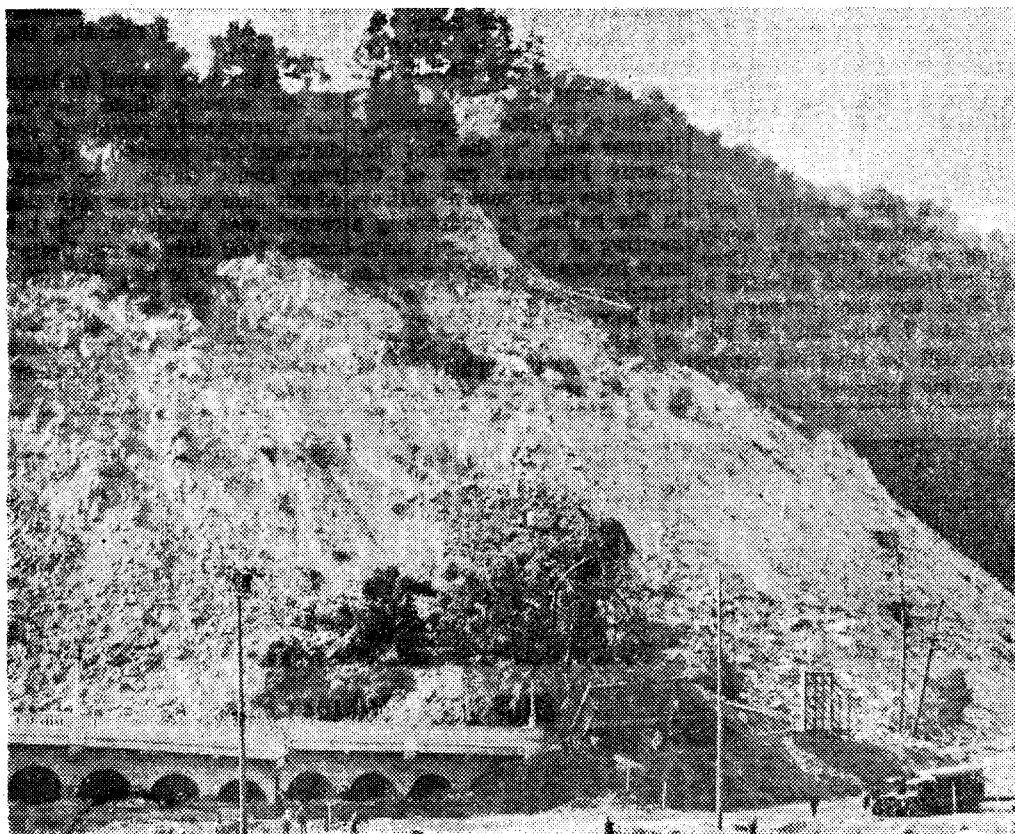
Elysian slide keeps rolling through time

(Editor's Note: The following is from the January issue of 1938 of the News-Herald. The story refers to the earthslide in November 1937 which destroyed a 100 foot section of a viaduct and highway along Riverside Drive.)

By Cary McWilliams

It has been a long time since any happening has tested the verbal resources of Los Angeles reporters to the extent that the recent "earth cataclysm" at Elysian Park tested them. Established verbal techniques have, of course, long been worked out to report such excitements as baby murders, prison breaks, football riots, police scandals, and martial butcheries. But when a mountain starts to move and to groan that, in Jeeter's language, "is something."

Unknowingly the reporters reacted to this strange spectacle in a manner that might have been anticipated by students of folklore. They instinctively sensed, for example, the initial necessity of personifying the phenomenon. With this problem they struggled man-



1937 landslide

Workmen are shown repairing damage to the viaduct and highway along Riverside Drive in 1937 after one of the early and most famous landslides in the Elysian Park area which occurred Nov. 26, 1937. The old slide, near the most recent last Wednesday which closed the southbound Golden State Freeway, earned the hilly area the title of the "Moving Mountain" and caused quite a sensation 32 years ago.

fully. It was an "earth cataclysm," "the moving mountain," "the falling mountain," "an earth Niagra," "a prodigious glacier," "the quivering hill," and so forth.

They proceeded to give it various attributes. It shook, floated, rumbled "a cacophony of subterranean rumbles," growled, moved, "gave out ominous signs," indulged in earthquake-like shivers and emitted ominous rumblings, and spouted water at its base.

While geologists scampered about the hill, 25,000 spectators stared and gossiped and swapped theories. Trains tooted their whistles and slowed down so that passengers might see the great sight; blimps established scenic routes; airplanes droned near the mysterious "break"; newsreel cameramen perched on rocks and photographed one another "right in the heart of the crevice"; and radio announcers crawled about reporting in their ever-melodious voices, the sights, sounds, smells, and miscellaneous trivia of the scene.

Newspaper historians, working feverishly for confirming circumstances, soon discovered, by jogging the memory of several octogenarians, that since '87 the hill has been known as the "devil's abode"; horses shied away from it; cattle would not go near it; and lovers boycotted it.

The hill quickly became a political issue, with politicians strenuously disclaiming responsibility for its quixotic behaviour and attempting, by furtive digs, to fix the blame on their opponents, while city officials kept repeating, over and over, that it was Mother Nature, and not the present administration, that was responsible and that "nature would have to work out the problem as best she could."