

# Freeway anniversary

## Mark 30th anniversary of freeway

By Charles Cooper

Yesterday marks an important anniversary in the stormy history of the California state highway system — on Dec. 30, 1940, the Arroyo Seco Parkway, first in the freeway system, was dedicated at Fair Oaks Ave. in South Pasadena.

In attendance that day were the Governor of California, Culbert Olson, the queen of the 1941 Tournament of Roses and her six princesses, and various state and federal officials.

Battles over routes for freeways, though seemingly at a peak during the last few years, are nothing new; the route for the parkway, now the venerable Pasadena Freeway, sparked a six-year running feud between representatives of the three cities involved.

Major points of contention were whether the highway would be built over land dedicated for use as Arroyo Seco Park, whether it would follow the alignment of N. Figueroa St. or of Ave. 64 past York Junction, and how the costs of the highway construction would be met.

### FIRST SURVEY

The first survey of a highway through the Arroyo, connecting Pasadena, South Pasadena and Los Angeles, was made in 1895 by T. D. Allen of Pasadena.

Discussions continued through the first part of

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20th Century, and in 1934 the Arroyo Seco Parkway Association was created.

The association secured the passage of an act making the parkway a state highway, and after several years of false starts, lawsuits and recrimination, the route from Glenarm St. in Pasadena to Ave. 22 in Los Angeles, a total of six miles was adopted.

After some thought of creating a special taxation district so that the people in the area immediately around the freeway would pay for the \$5.7 million construction cost, along with the \$400,000 for land acquisition, the present system of financing the highways out of gas tax funds was created.

In addition to the \$5.7 million, \$6.4 million was required for work on the Arroyo Seco flood channel adjacent to the freeway.

First ground for the parkway was broken in March of 1938. When it was completed, a contemporary newspaper account called the parkway "the first

completed unit of the proposed system of modern express highways, absolutely essential in this most congested metropolitan area in the west."

Today, the six-lane freeway, one of the few in the system with a speed limit of 55 miles per hour, is considered by many to be on the verge of obsolescence.

### SAFETY RECORD

The highway division maintains that the road, which carries an average 90,000 vehicles in both directions, has "an impressive safety record," and "enjoys the benefit of all safety refinements as developed," according to a spokesman.

A Northeast Newspapers campaign against unsafe light standards, originally erected close to the freeway lanes, was one of the contributing factors in their replacement by new "breakaway" standards.

Pavement has been grooved to improve skid resistance in wet weather, and raised pavement markers, considered more visible in wet weather and at night, have replaced painted lane stripes.

In Los Angeles, trees bordering too closely on the driving lanes are now being removed and replaced with new plantings of trees and bushes considered in safe position.

The highway division reports that this summer the two lanes closest to the median will be completely reconstructed "resulting in better driving conditions and a reduction in the maintenance work which now occasionally interrupts traffic flow."

### LANDMARK

After 30 years, the freeways have become a Southern California landmark, object of community pride and butt of jokes at the same time.

But today, as in 1940, planners and concerned citizens are still debating the question of whether high-speed auto expressways are the best possible answer to Southland transportation woes.

As local rebellions, such as the struggle against the adopted Long Beach Freeway route through South Pasadena, continue, state highway planners may be forced to take a long hard look at their 30-year-old "system of modern express highways."