

Ridge Route Information

Joe LeMay in Joe's Garage



[Ridge Route - Home](#)

[Ridge Route Preservation Organization – Working to protect and preserve the Scenic and Historic 1915 Ridge Route](#)

What is the Historic Ridge Route?

The Ridge Route Highway is the section of road that winds over the San Gabriel and Liebre Mountains between Castaic Junction on the south (where I-5 junctions with Hwy 126 to Ventura) and extends to the bottom of Grapevine Grade on the north where I-5 enters the San Joaquin Valley.

The Ridge Route is open from State 138 to at least as far as the Tumble Inn at the north end, and from approximately one mile north of Templin Highway in Castaic at the south end. There are gates at these locations that can be closed due to weather conditions. On my scouting trip, the gate at the Tumble Inn was open and I drove to Reservoir Summit before turning around.

The roadway is officially "closed" to through travel from State 138 to Castaic. This closure has been in effect since January 2005 when a series of severe storms caused three major landslides, severing the roadway. These slides, and others off the roadway, also affected the utility lines that run alongside the road. At the time, the USFS enacted a Forest Order which closed the area, not just the roadway. In time, these pipelines were fixed, the roadway was repaired, and the Forest Order was lifted. All open sections are traversable by two-wheel drive automobiles with average clearance. Walking, bicycling, and horseback riding are allowed along the entire length.

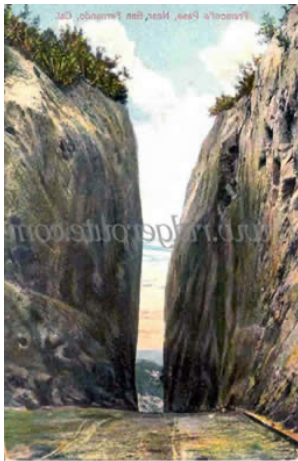
History of the road into and out of LA

Since travel to the south first began in the 1800's, there had been only two routes followed. The Tehachapi, (Midway Route) which was due east from Bakersfield to Mojave, then south through Lancaster to access Mint or Bouquet Canyons. The other being the "Tejon Pass Route," which used an old wagon road to climb up the Grapevine grade from the Bakersfield side to Quail Lake (today Hwy 138), then east roughly following the San Andreas rift to the head of either San Francisquito (Tuner Pass) or Bouquet Canyons. The Tejon Pass Route was considerably shorter than the Tehachapi Route

but neither pass could be called direct, for both curved widely to the east to reach the heads of the canyons while the objective point was at most due south.

Getting into and out of Los Angeles was also a roadway challenge. The early motorist heading north from Los Angeles had to deal with the Newhall Pass also known as Fremont Pass. General Fremont gave it prominence when he took this route in 1847 to confront the Mexican forces in the San Fernando Valley. This is the southern approach to Beales's Cut as well as the divide which separates the Santa Susana Mountains on the West from the San Gabriel Mountains on the east. The early motorist would venture up the grade to the top of the pass which was described in a club tour book as a 30 percent grade!

It was here at the top of the pass that General Beale, federal Surveyor-General of California and Nevada, and a capable engineer, in 1862 dispatched a crew of Chinese laborers to deepen an earlier 1858 cut established for the Butterfield stage. Beale's laborers cut a 12-foot-wide passage through 60 feet of sandstone to reduce the climb by 50 feet.



This cut was also referred to as "The Narrows." The first automobile went over the pass in 1902. In 1904, to further lessen the grade, men with picks and shovels once more laboriously deepened the cut, and the roadbed was graded and oiled. Beale's Cut was the only way over the pass until the Los Angeles County Road Department constructed the 435-foot Newhall tunnel just west of Beale's Cut, opening in October 1910.

The road through the tunnel was only two lanes, and loaded trucks often scraped the sloping walls inside unless directly in the center of the tunnel. This obviously created a traffic hazard. The tunnel was dark as well as low and narrow, 17.5 feet wide and 17 feet high at the center. For this reason, the state awarded a contract in May 1938 to "daylight" the tunnel. This road is now known as the Sierra Hwy.

The Ridge Route

There have been three roadways highways that are named the Ridge Route. The 1915 highway which is the original one and our focus; the 1933 three-lane Ridge Route Alternate Highway later identified as US 99 (converted to a 4-lane expressway between 1943 and 1951); and today's 8-lane I-5 freeway completed in 1970. Maintenance on The Ridge Route was abandoned in 1933 when Ridge Route

Alternate Highway was built. The Ridge Route Alternate was severed with the construction of Pyramid Dam.

Pyramid Lake and Dam, completed in 1973, were named after a pyramid-shaped rock carved out by engineers building the Old Highway 99. Travelers between Los Angeles and Bakersfield christened the landmark "Pyramid Rock," which still stands just adjacent to the dam. Pyramid Lake is formed by Pyramid Dam on Piru Creek, near Castaic.

Many early maps and documents for The Ridge Route refer to distance from or to the Castaic School. Castaic School was located on the southeast corner of the Lake Hughes Road and the Ridge Route, approximately where a fire station is currently located. We will drive by this location and use it as a reference point in the information that follows.

All along the 48-mile stretch from Castaic to Grapevine, entrepreneurs set up shop to cash in on the steady flow of cars, buses, and trucks that was created with the opening of The Ridge Route. We are going to recreate the location of these establishments during our drive. Now let's look at the early history.

In 1895, the State Bureau of Highways was created. The areas throughout the state were surveyed, and options were looked at. Specifically, was suggested a direct route from Los Angeles to the San Joaquin Valley to replace the roundabout Midway Route.

From the State Bureau of Highways work, the route chosen was practically a direct line between Newhall and Bakersfield. This proposed route went straight up to the top of the mountains where it would go mile after mile. Before 1914, there was not even a vestige of a trail near the proposed highway.

Construction work on the Ridge Route started in 1914, with the 40 miles of heavy construction between Castaic School and the Los Angeles-Kern counties boundary. The initial road was an oiled surface of nearby dirt and rock.

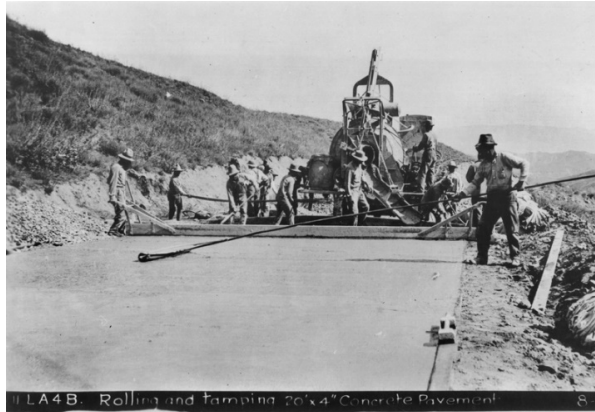
The Ridge Route shortened the distance between Bakersfield and Los Angeles 58 miles, as compared with the old path over the Tehachapi. The new road was 24 miles shorter than by the way of Bouquet Canyon. At a cost of \$450,000, the unpaved road was opened to the public in October 1915.

The reason the roadbed followed the ridge contours was to save grading costs at a time when highway expenditures were tightly budgeted. Due to the elevation and circuitous nature of the new highway, the speed limit was set at 15 miles per hour. The speed limit for heavier trucks with solid rubber tires was 12 miles per hour. It took about 12 hours driving time under normal conditions to make the Los Angeles to Bakersfield trip.

Two years after the road opened, the Highway Commission solicited bids to have the Ridge Route paved. It was paved from 1917-1919. With paving completed, the road reopened November 15, 1919.

The Ridge Route was constructed, graded, and paved with concrete at an approximate cost of \$1,500,000. The road was paved with 4.5 inches of concrete with reinforced twisted iron bars laid transversely 18 inches apart and bound on either side with rods laid lengthwise. 20' wide slab of concrete. Substantial concrete curbs were constructed at all dangerous points, six inches wide and ten high to protect reckless drivers and to assist with drainage problems. The high curbs were installed in

locations where it was impossible to anchor wooden rails. The high curbing acted as a deflector to the narrow-tired vehicles should they get too close to the edge of the cliff.



Fencing and 10-inch-high curbing kept the death toll from being worse than it was, but 31 died in accidents between 1921 and 1928, many resulting from runaway trucks and cars or drivers' failure to negotiate turns. Because many early cars and trucks had no fuel pumps, it was not unusual to see vehicles going up steep grades backward. Truck drivers often took drastic, almost stuntman-like measures to escape the heat that had built up in their cabs. They would drive standing on the running board with their hand through the window to steer.

Between 1923 and 1927, there were realignments and other improvements, such as asphalt overlays, constructed to facilitate easier travel. As traffic increased in volume and speed, the sharpest curves of the Ridge route were "day-lighted" but by 1929 it became apparent that any further major improvement on this highway would not be justified in proportion to the resulting savings to traffic, thus marking the end of the road. We will see evidence of "day-lighting" along the way where the concrete is only a part of the open roadway or where the concrete 'ends' in a dirt hillside.

On October 29, 1933, The Ridge Route Alternate opened to traffic. Traffic along The Ridge Route came to an end as The Ridge Route Alternate was a superior road.

SACC drive of The Ridge Route

This is a drive made for a C1. Leave your C7 at home. It will not like the road. The idea of this drive is to experience the beauty of this roadway and to identify the landmarks that one would have seen. The drive will highlight the named places that we would have seen while driving The Ridge Route during the 1915 to 1933 era of the road. We will start our journey at the southern beginning of The Ridge Route. From our meeting location, go south on Castaic Road and turn left on Ridge Route Rd. We are now on the original roadway. That would have been graded and oiled in the beginning. Well, we will get to the original roadway later with a photo opportunity.

The complete road from Castaic to Grapevine had more than 600 curves and some 110 full circles. It is 48 miles from Castaic School to Grapevine.

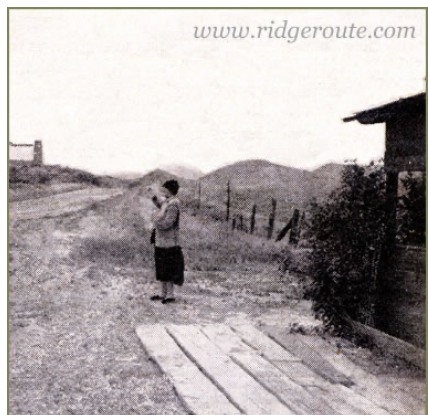
Castaic School

It is noteworthy to mention that many early maps and documents refer to distance from or to the Castaic School. Castaic School was located on the southeast corner of the Lake Hughes Road and the

Ridge Route, approximately where a fire station is currently located. Here we set our south to north odometer to zero and proceed. Look at your odometer and do the math. It is the best way in a C1.

Queen Nell's Castle

We will climb 2.4 miles. On the right side of the road, we would have seen "Queen Nell's Castle," Cornelia Martinez Callahan's home. She and her late husband homesteaded here in 1909. In 1914, she deeded some of her property to the State for the new road. She had a small green wooden shack and sold gasoline and cold "pop" to motorists. The highway originally veered west at this point and was destroyed with the construction of the southbound lanes of the I-5 freeway.



Today Nell's homestead is marked by a few remaining pepper trees and two tall side-by-side wooden power poles. A water tank on your right is close to the former site.

A short way beyond, one of the metal electric towers marks the former spot of the Owl garage.

Ridge Road House

The next establishment, 5.3 miles from the Castaic schoolhouse was the Ridge Road House. On your right, you will see a large private residence surrounded by pepper trees. Just below the house was the site of the Ridge Road House. The buildings for this site were located on both sides of the road.

A favorite with travelers in the 1920's, it was mentioned in a 1926 touring guide thusly: "Reputed very fair, lunch." The garage and restaurant were on the west side of the highway and the foundations are still visible. Ridge Road House sold Richfield gasoline and advertised with a high pole and a sign sporting a race car perched on top of it. Across the road on the east side was a grouping of green and white sleeping cabins among a grove of pepper trees. The cabin foundations have been removed. The Road House did not have indoor plumbing but was considered comfortable. A large water tank remains, located on a small hill behind the new home.

The station was owned by Porter Markel and his sister Ruth. Prior to the Markel's tenure, "Ridge Road Garage now owned and operated by Jameson & Wiesman," according to a newspaper clipping of September 1920.



Martin's

One mile north of the Ridge Road Garage (approx. 6.3 mi) on the left (west) side was Martin's, a small gas station operated by Mildred and Martin Deceta. Martin's was sometimes pronounced "Marteen's" because he was a Frenchman. The 1926 touring guide simply states: "Garage, gas and water." Today, there appears to be a house at this site.



We cross Templin Hwy and go a mile or so further to a turnaround. This may be the end of our drive if the gate ahead is closed. Otherwise we may be able to make it to the next stop. I do not plan to go any further than this next landmark on the southern part of this drive.

Continuing north we would have seen the following if the gate is open.

View Service Station

The View Service Station was the next establishment. It is at 10.2 miles past Castaic School in a small clump of bamboo. It was on the right, or east, side of the road and did indeed command a sweeping view of the San Gabriel Mountains.

This is also the area where Serpentine Drive is located.



National Forest Inn

At 12.4 miles (2.2 miles further) we reach the National Forest Inn which was situated on government-owned land. All that remains today are cement steps on the west side of the road. It was described in a 1932 highway beautification pamphlet with this unkind caption: "The sort of filling station that gets into a national forest and is no addition thereto."

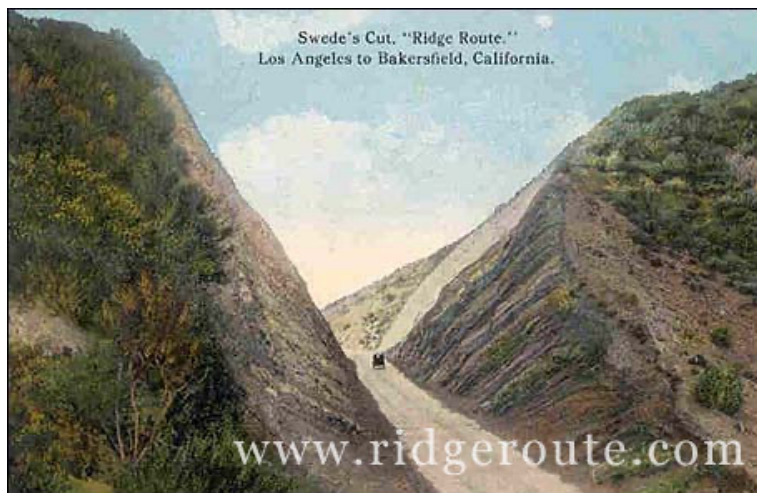


Unlike Sandberg's several miles to the north which was constructed of logs, the National Forest Inn sported neatly trimmed white clapboard buildings. It was built by a gentleman named Courtemanche. A news clipping of 1925 indicates a Joe Palmer as proprietor of the National Forest Inn garage. The 1926 touring guide indicated that there were nine rooms in cottages, most with running water, from \$1 to \$2, lunch 75 cents; garage; camp 50 cents. A 1926 topography map spots a ranger station at this location. All the accommodations were on the west side of the road. However, there was a large metal building on the east side which housed the highway repair facility and the ranger station.

Above this structure on a hill is a small cement-lined reservoir believed to have been built for fire control. Also, west of the of the reservoir are the foundation remains of an old airplane beacon. The beacon site is also shown on a 1928 topography map of the area.

The National Forest Inn was destroyed by a fire which originated in the garage on October 20, 1932. Mr. Martin owned the resort at the time and was reported to have lost considerable cash in the blaze.

Immediately north of the National Forest Inn site, if we look to the west, we can see the Ridge Route Alternate and the new I-5 highways. Serpentine Drive is located north of National Forest Inn. Many post cards "imaged" Serpentine climb which at the top entered the largest cut on the road, Swede's Cut. This cut is also referred to as the "Big Cut," and "Culebra Excavation," all referring to the same location. Steam shovels provided the muscle for this lengthy dig.



At the location of the locked gate or maybe the National Forest Inn, it is time to take our C1s north on the freeway.

Accessing the North Part of the Tour

We go a short distance south from the locked gate and turn right, travelling west on Templin Hwy. Go north on I-5, exiting at Hwy 138 east. After a few miles on Hwy 138, we turn south onto The Ridge Route. We have again arrived!

We are going to travel south as far as we can or dare and continue our experience from south to north. I am hoping to drive to Reservoir Summit and will continue the trip description again from south to north.

Reservoir Summit.

At 17.6 miles from Castaic School, 11 miles from Hwy 138, and another 2.1 miles beyond Kellys Half Way House is about as far as I will go today. Here we find Reservoir Summit. The 1926 touring guide lists garage, lunch, rest rooms and a camp. The same guide of 1928 omits the auto camp. The restaurant,

gas station and garage were all located on the east side of the road. The garage was very small, housing a tow truck, and located just south of the restaurant which literally hung over the side of the cliff. It was green with a screened porch. It had a lunch counter with three or four tables. It was a high-class, popular restaurant with men waiters in solid white uniforms. Truckers were welcome.

On the west side of the road was a wider area with a water trough and parking space. On the west side, on top of a small hill was the auto camp. On the same hill west of the camp is a large cement-lined water reservoir, originally with a wooden top. It is larger in capacity than the one at the National Forest Inn.

Although not confirmed, the forest service constructed these reservoirs for fire control. They must have had fire issues then too. Times do not change. There was also the need for water for the paving operation. However, documentation indicates all water was hauled to mix the cement.

An early undated map spots a forest station here, which would coincide with the similar arrangement at National Forest Inn, both having reservoirs and forest stations. A 1932 newspaper clipping states, "New fire truck for Ridge Route. The new truck will be stationed at Reservoir Summit." The reservoir at this location was fed from a natural spring on Liebre Mountain just above Sandberg's. A water pipe trailing along the road supplied water to other sites as well. The spring may still be active today, supplying water to the former Los Angeles County fire station at the Pine Canyon-Ridge Route intersection.



Kelly's Half Way Inn

At 19.7 miles from Castaic, 8.8 miles from Hwy 138, we arrive at "Kelly's," which is how it is indicated on early maps. Others mark it "Half Way Inn." There was a Kelly Ranch in the canyon to the south, but it is not certain if Kelly's Ranch had any connection with Half Way Inn. A newspaper clipping of May 1925 states, "Joe Palmer who maintained the National Forest Inn garage has purchased the Kelly's place formerly operated by C.O. Cummings."

A topography map of 1926 reflects the site as Kelly's. Maps of 1931 and 1933 have it as Half Way Inn. The 1926 touring guide states, "Half Way Inn; rooms, cabins, lunch, small garage." They sold Richfield gasoline. A 1932 newspaper account references a "Mr. & Mrs. Avis of the Half Way Inn." The Highway Department had a repair yard and sand tower dispenser here used to sand the road when it got icy. Located on the right-hand side of the road leading north, the yard was located on a small knoll. It is difficult to find today, marked solely by power lines crossing above the road and one remaining tree on the knoll.



Tumble Inn

Continuing our drive toward Liebre Summit, we reach Tumble Inn at 22.1 miles from Castaic and 6.4 miles from Hwy 138. It is worth making it this far as the stone arch in the photo below is still standing and it is a good photo opportunity for your C1.

This site is on the west side of the road; it is listed on topography maps of 1926, 1931, 1933 and 1937. Information is not clear as to when it was constructed or demolished. The touring guide of 1928 states: "rooms, dbl. \$2, meals, gas, free camp space, water and rest rooms. It is described as a small resort with a far-reaching vista. The buildings were constructed of round stones, with the garage and lunchroom structures level with the grade of the highway. Steps to a higher terrain located the rest rooms and lodge accommodations. The garage sold Richfield gasoline. At some point in time, the name was changed to "Mountain View Lodge." During road construction, this site was one of the larger construction camps for workers. Today all that remains is a stone retaining wall, archway, and the steps that once led to the sleeping rooms.



The Tumble Inn is our early turnaround point. Farther up the road we will find Kelly's Half Way Inn in 2.4 miles. If you want to continue, you have passed the worst part of the road as the road is in better shape through to Reservoir Summit. I will see how I feel about taking my car farther down the road.

Liebre State Highway Camp

Pushing on, at 23.3 miles we reach the Liebre State Highway Camp, 5.3 miles from Hwy 138. Here were various wooden barracks on both sides of the road in addition to two long metal buildings on the west side of the highway. The metal structures were like the one located at the National Forest Inn. From this facility, crews maintained the highway.

Granite Gate

Venturing to 24.1 miles we see "Granite Gate," today marked by the large rock situated to the west; 4.4 miles from Hwy 138. At one time prior to shaving the cliff to the east, the road veered closer to the monolith giving the appearance of a passage or "gate."



Horseshoe Curve

Our trip marks 24.6 miles from Castaic locating "Horseshoe Curve". A close look at the remaining pavement reveals that at one time the road cut deeper into the cup of a horseshoe.



Liebre Summit

Nothing is significant about Liebre Summit other than it is the high point of the Ridge Route. The Ridge Route reached its highest elevation of 4,233 feet on the Los Angeles side just south of Sandberg's Summit Hotel.

Sandberg's Summit Hotel

At 26.0 miles from Castaic, (2.4 miles from Hwy 138) we see the plaque for Sandberg. Sandberg's Summit Hotel, later called Sandberg's Lodge, is located just north of Liebre Summit (4233 feet) near the intersection of Pine Canyon road and the Old Ridge Route. There is a marker on the west side of the road identifying the location. The hotel stood at an elevation of 4,170 feet.

Originally a one-story log structure built in 1914, later it was enlarged to a three-story building. The first floor held a dining room, public room with a large fireplace and a post office. The second story was the living quarters for the Sandberg family. The third floor contained guestrooms for the weary travelers. Cottages were also available.

A three-story log hostelry set amid a grove of California live oaks; Sandberg's was the high-class place. This is where one would see the Cadillacs, Packards and Studebakers parked. They had a sign, "Truck Drivers and Dogs Not Allowed." An early touring guide reflects: "Sandberg's Summit Hotel, 25 good

rooms in hotel and cottages; most with running water and toilet; single, \$1.50-\$2.50; double, \$2-\$4; lunch 85 cents, dinner \$1.00."

It was a small tourist community, post office, telephone, and all-night restaurant. It had a garage which gave almost complete service. "Labor \$2, after 6 p.m. \$3; never closed." It was built by Harold Sandberg in 1914.



The Sandberg Ranch was a short distance east on Pine Canyon Road, and from here they supplied their hotel with fresh vegetables, poultry, and eggs.

The hotel was on leased National Forest property and after Mr. Sundberg's death various people assumed the lease to maintain the hotel. When the Ridge Alternate opened in 1933 Sandberg's was one of the few remaining Inn's that remained open. Unfortunately, with little traffic, the hotel closed. A man by the name of Fox acquired the hotel after the Ridge Alternate opened and destroyed the "carriage trade" on the old road. Fox instituted gambling and prostitution in the aging structure.

Lillian Grojean leased the property from Fox before the war and established a pottery factory in the garage north of the lodge. The last operator of the lease was Walter "Lucky" Stevens in 1950. Lucky intended to turn the derelict property into a children's camp. However, while renovation of the hotel was proceeding, sparks from the fireplace ignited the roof and the hotel burned April 29, 1961. All that remains today are foundations and a rock wall on the West Side of the old road just prior to entering the Angeles National Forest and unmaintained section of road.

On Towards Very Old Roadways

We pull back onto the road continuing north again, past the old county fire station on the right just beyond Pine Canyon Road. Here we begin our descent into Antelope Valley. Before the junction with Highway 138 is an abandoned wooden house and oil tank. This was the site of the General Petroleum Quail Lake Pumping Station. The crude oil was received from the oil fields at Taft. At this site the crude was heated and pumped to Willow Springs Pumping Station and from there on to Mojave where it was loaded into tanker cars for rail transport. It was called the "Bank Line" because the oil was like money running through it.

Just a short distance east of the pumping station we see a rather large complex with an enclosed water tower. This was the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Booster Station built in 1929 to amplify long distance circuits for the telephone cable being laid between Los Angeles, Bakersfield and on to San Francisco. The location was so remote that living quarters were provided for the men and families that operated the station. They also provided electricity to the families manning the oil pumping station, their neighbors to the west.

We now intersect with some very old roadways. The Butterfield Stage came from the east in the Antelope Valley and down the Grapevine. It is also the Tejon Pass Route.

Kinsey Mansion, Bailey Ranch House, and Quail Lake Inn

Turning left onto Highway 138, we pass the Kinsey Mansion, once part of the Bailey Ranch. General Petroleum (Mobil Oil Company) purchased it from the Baileys for a duck hunting location for their employees, directly across from Quail Lake (which in 1919 was identified as Crane Lake). This property had a small cottage on it at that time. Later the property was purchased by a Mr. Sattler of Gaffers & Sattlers Gas Ranges. A little farther west was the Bailey Ranch house, which sat just east of some Arizona Cypress trees on the southwestern shore of Quail Lake.

Quail Lake Inn, a short distance west of the Ranch house, also on the right-hand side of the road, hosted a two-storied building with a post office and rooms on the second floor. In back was a family restaurant. They had two gas pumps and a tin garage.

We will turn right off of Highway 138 at our first opportunity, accessing Gorman Post Road, previously called The Ridge Route, and head toward Gorman.

Holland's Summit Cafe

At the top of the rise, with our mileage indicating 32.3 miles, we locate Holland's Summit Cafe. It was located on the east side and was a trucker's joint. Tourists did not frequent Holland's in the early days where trucks jammed the roadside as well as the parking lot. It also had a Standard service station and garage. After the Ridge Route Alternate opened in 1933, Holland's relocated to the new highway.



Caswell's

Moving along, 33 miles from Castaic we find Caswell's. It is at the base of the grade that extends up to Holland Summit. There were ten rooms with running water in cottages, a double, \$2, garage, restaurant, and a pay camp. The restaurant, garage and gas station were located on the east side of the road with the auto camp and store on the west. Nothing remains there today.



Gorman

Continuing 3 miles north of Caswell's we reach Gorman, formerly known as Ralphs at 36 miles from Castaic.

A bachelor named Reed took up land in the early 1850s and built a substantial one story-and-a-half log house that became the Butterfield station in 1858. In the early 1860s Reed sold the property to Charles Johnson. After Johnson passed away, his widow ran the station for several years. During that time, it was referred to as Rancho La Viuda, (widow). Mrs. Johnson sold the station to Don David Alexander. Alexander was a partner of Phineas Banning in operating a stage line between Los Angeles and San Pedro.

Alexander sold the place to Gorman. James Gorman Sr. was a veteran of the Mexican War and had been at Fort Tejon hunting fresh meat for the soldiers and laborers while the Fort was being constructed.

Oscar Ralphs of supermarket fame purchased the Gorman Ranch and old log station house from Mr. Gorman in 1898. Previously known as Ralphs' Ranch, the Ralphs family of supermarket fame purchased 2,700 acres back in the 1890s, which include the township. During the old Ridge Route days, circa 1926 Gorman was a small settlement. The 1928 touring guide states, "a small settlement: store, garage, café, and a Standard Oil gas station."



Chandler

About two miles north of Gorman was the small settlement of Chandler, which was located a short distance south of the I-5 Frazier Park exit. Today it is under the northbound lanes of the freeway. The site was owned by a man named Chandler, and at one time there was a motel, some small houses, a Richfield gas station, garage, and restaurant. Mr. Chandler raised pigeons in the back and served them in his cafe. The touring guide of 1926 indicates: Lodging, meals, small garage, reputed reliable and good,

labor \$1.75 day or night. It is interesting to note that a State Camp and cabins were under construction at this location in 1928.



Lebec

The name commemorates Peter Lebec, a French trapper who was killed in 1837 under a tree near Fort Tejon by a grizzly bear that he had shot and wounded.

There are two landmarks in Lebec, first we see the Lebec Hotel, then just to the north is the Sandy Inn. There is also a third landmark. Let's stop next to the post office in front of Old Ridge Route Antiques and see the sign on the window.



The last major structure in place during the highway's glory was the Lebec Hotel. Construction began on January 15, 1921. The hotel was the brainchild of entrepreneur Thomas O'Brien, a saloonkeeper from Bakersfield. Financing for the opulent hotel was provided by Cliff Durant, an automobile manufacturer and airplane instructor from Oakland.

The Lebec Hotel had Spanish Mission type architecture and was a "complete gambling joint with a ball-room, rooms and apartments." It was a playland for Hollywood executives and stars during its heydays from 1925 to 1934. Clark Gable and his actress wife, Carole Lombard, as well as gangster Benny "Bugsy" Siegal, frequented the Lebec Hotel. A 1926 touring guide describes it: "Hotel Lebec is new and high class, 80 rooms, thoroughly modern single \$2-\$3, with bath \$4, coffee shop open 24 hours." The Lebec Garage nearby was the largest and best equipped on the ridge. Labor was \$1.75 an hour, increasing to \$2.40 after 6 p.m.

Shortly after the hotel opened, Durant apparently tired of his investment and sold his interest to Foster Curry (son of the concessionaire at Yosemite) of San Francisco in 1922. Early postcards from this period show the hotel under its brief stint as "Curry's Lebec Lodge," once located along the west side of Lebec Road just north of the Lebec off-ramp.

The hotel fell into disrepair and was officially closed on November 13, 1968, in response to health department charges concerning its substandard water system and dilapidated condition. The hotel went into receivership and was purchased by the Tejon Ranch Company. They torched the hotel and demolished the remains on April 27, 1971, only two weeks after acquiring the property. Two tall Italian Cypress trees mark the former location.



Just north of the Lebec Hotel is the Shady Inn. The Shady Inn was located on the present site of the Lebec Community Church. It was one of the most popular auto camps of that era. The 1928 touring guide states: "25 cents, water, comfort stations, lights, tables & benches, shade or shelter, 3 cabins \$1 \$1.25; noted for good meals, 50 cents."

Fort Tejon

Leaving Lebec, we arrive at Fort Tejon. Construction of Ft. Tejon began August 10, 1854. A tremendous earthquake (estimated to have had a Richter scale magnitude of 8.5) hit the grapevine in 1857, causing extensive damage to the Fort. The first Butterfield Overland Stage stopped here on October 8th, 1858 on its way to San Francisco from St. Louis. The Fort was abandoned in 1864. The ruins of the old fort were one quarter mile to the west of I-5.

In 1926 along the Ridge Route the Fort Tejon area was a supply point having a garage, cafe, and cabins.



This is our planned turnaround spot and the end of the drive. The SACC hopes you enjoyed the drive and maybe plan to connect the entire road someday.

For now, we are going to finish The Ridge Route to its end.

Camp Tejon and Combs Service

Two miles beyond the fort was Camp Tejon which had a service station and auto camp. The cost of the auto camp was 50 cents and included water, lights, comfort stations, tables and benches with a community kitchen or cook house. For \$1.50 you could rent one of the six cabins at the site.



Another half mile located Combs Service station and repair shop. From this point the early motorist continued down the grade until he reached Grapevine, also known as Grapevine Station. This was a small community of oil pumping station workers, with "good modern rooms" in cottages, dbl. \$3, lunch room and soda fountain, one garage, open camp space.

Grapevine

We will end our journey here at the bottom of the Grapevine. 48 miles from Castaic School is the community of Grapevine. When the current I-5 was constructed, the town of Grapevine was isolated from any access and, in effect, disappeared. A few derelict buildings remain. Although the I-5 freeway destroyed much of the remaining segments of the old road after it left Gorman, we have experienced the encounters of the early motorist. In the early years of the road, we saw that various establishments quickly appeared along the highway.

From this bottom point the early motorist ended at the bottom of the grade at Grapevine, also known as Grapevine Station. This was a small community of oil pumping station workers, with "good modern rooms" in cottages, dbl. \$3, lunchroom and soda fountain, one garage, open camp space.



What about the Grapevine? The "Grapevine" is the 6 1/2-mile segment of the Ridge Route that extends from Fort Tejon to the bottom of Grapevine Grade. Many people erroneously believe that the "Grapevine" got its name because the original 1915 highway had a series of "switchbacks" which allowed early vehicles to gain elevation as they climbed the grade heading from Bakersfield toward Los Angeles. The serpentine path resembled a giant grapevine. Although this observation was true, the

name came from the fact that early Wagoneer's had to hack their way through thick patches of Cimarron grapevines that inhabited "La Canada de Las Uvas," Canyon of the Grapes. Traveling the grade today, look for patches of what appears to be ivy on both sides of the canyon near the truck runaway escape ramps. What you see are descendant vines which date back to the 1800's.



Information and photos were obtained from ridgeroute.org and ridgeroute.com