

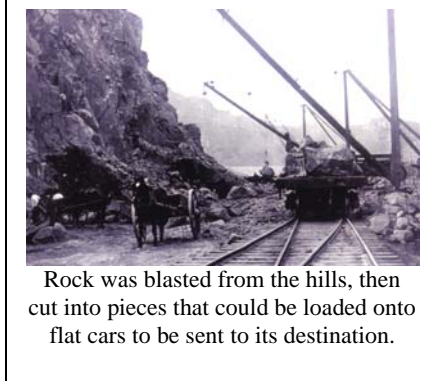
CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

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Chatsworth Railroad History begins in 1893 when the Southern Pacific completes what is known as the Burbank branch all the way to Chatsworth with a depot near the intersection of Topanga and Marilla.

In 1898 an additional mile of track was added up through what is now the Oakwood Cemetery into the Chatsworth quarry, now a part of the Santa Susana Pass State

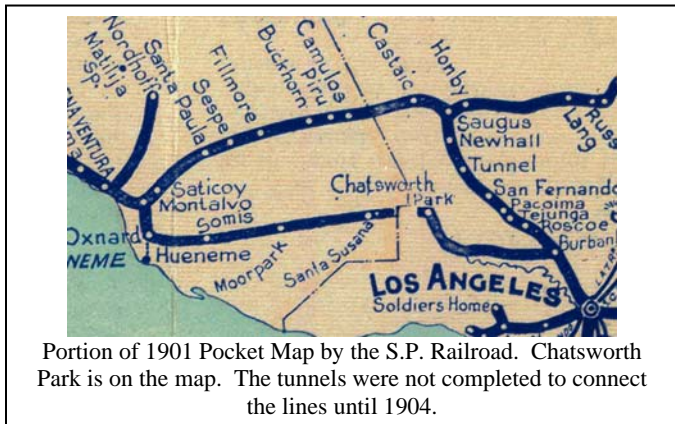


Rock was blasted from the hills, then cut into pieces that could be loaded onto flat cars to be sent to its destination.

Historic Park. The quarry sent sandstone boulders to a stone mill in LA to further shape and form the stone. They also delivered sandstone to San Pedro Harbor where they were used for the breakwater, until it was determined

that the sandstone would dissolve over time.

In 1898, railroad construction began on a short-cut to Burbank from Ventura in what was called the Montalvo Cutoff. The most difficult work was encountered in the pass, where three separate tunnels were blasted for the most part out of solid rock.



Portion of 1901 Pocket Map by the S.P. Railroad. Chatsworth Park is on the map. The tunnels were not completed to connect the lines until 1904.

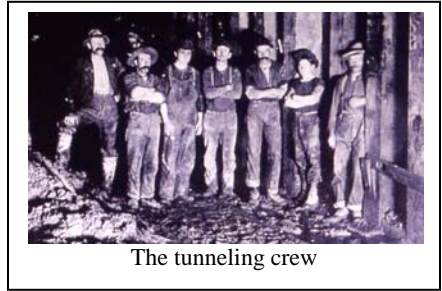
During that time, Chatsworth became a boom town, with many of the workers living in a “tent” city near the heading of the main tunnel. Although the listed resident population in Chatsworth is 23 in 1900, the tunnel construction brought in so many workers that by 1904 the Santa Susana School (now Chatsworth Park Elementary) at Devonshire and Topanga had 120 students.

The three tunnels were #26 from the Simi side of the pass to Chatsworth at 7,369 feet (1.4 miles), Tunnel #27 at 994 feet and Tunnel #28, under what is now Topanga, at 599 feet. It was hard and dangerous work, but paid well, and the engineering skill employed using the instruments of the day was amazing.

Tunnel #26, at 1.4 miles, used crews digging from each side of the mountain. When the two crews met in the middle, they were off by only 4 inches, considered to be “dead on”! Each end of tunnel #26 included a power house with a stationary steam engine belted up to a dynamo to provide electric lights deep inside the tunnel. There was a blower and

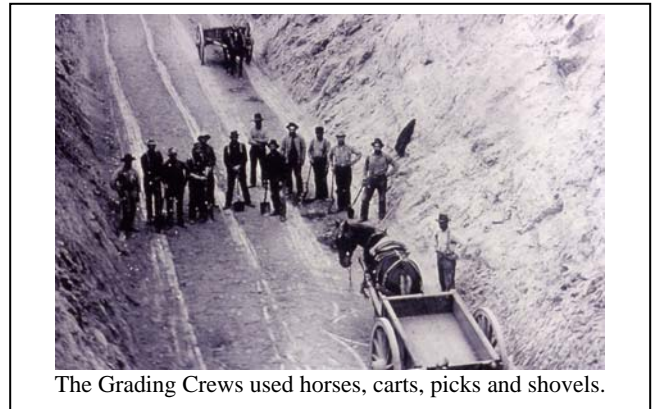
pipe to supply fresh air deep inside the heading.

Compressed air pipes were used for running the air drills to make the holes for blasting. The



The tunneling crew

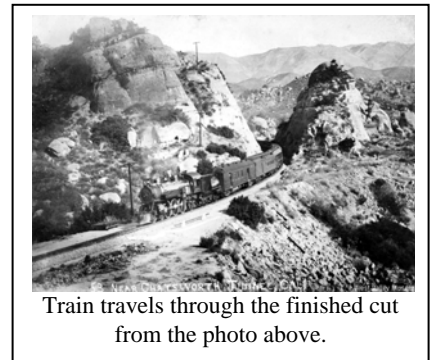
tunneling crews shored up the sides and removed the rubble after blasting took place. These were the iron men of the day.



The Grading Crews used horses, carts, picks and shovels.

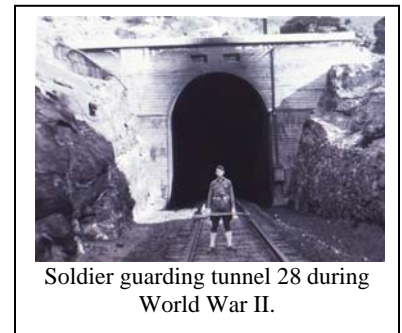
Horse and cart was the method of the day, and the grading crew moved thousands of loads of soft material for the cut and fill. By 1904, the tunnels were completed.

This 1914 photo of a Southern Pacific Train coming through the cut between tunnels 27 and 28 shows the amount of grading and cutting required beyond the work done to create the tunnels.



Train travels through the finished cut from the photo above.

In 1942, soldiers were stationed at the train tunnels following the Dec. 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During the war, passenger traffic ended temporarily and many troop trains ran through Chatsworth. Until soldiers arrived to guard the tunnels, Chatsworth citizens stood sentry.



Soldier guarding tunnel 28 during World War II.

Today these tunnels continue to handle traffic for Amtrak, Metrolink and freight trains. A ride on the train from Chatsworth to Simi is like taking the Disneyland train though the Primeval Valley. This is a section of Chatsworth untouched by time, preserved in its natural setting as you travel through our State Historic Park...enjoy.

It's your community and your history...
Chatsworth Historical Society – February 2012