

Historic Highway 395

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Mission Statement

The preservation and the promotion of Historic Route 395 from San Diego to the Cajon Pass.



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Telling the story, one mile at a time

Wildomar

by Jeffery G. Harmon

Our journey begins at the city limits of Murrieta and Wildomar at Washington Avenue and Palomar Street. Here U.S. Highway 395 took an S-curve turn to align with Palomar Street. The gently rolling grassy hills on the east side of the road remind us of the rural farming community that defined the history of Wildomar.

In December 1885, the Wildomar town site was recorded in San Diego County. The name Wildomar derived its name from its three founders: "WIL" for William Collier, "DO" for Donald Graham and "MAR" for Margaret Graham, wife of Donald Graham and sister of William Collier.

The town grew slowly from 1885 to 1935 thanks in part to the railroad that traveled between Temecula and Colton. The town was an agricultural community, with large farms and a few commercial businesses. U.S. Highway 395 paralleled the rail-

road route through the community.

By the mid 1950s, the highway shifted east through Menifee and Perris Valley. Wildomar soon became a quite community between Murrieta and Lake Elsinore. Sporadic housing booms in the 80s and 90s brought many housing subdivisions to the rural area. On July 1, 2008, Wildomar became the 25th city in Riverside County.

We travel north on Palomar Street to the Clinton Keith Road intersection. Three and a half miles to the west of this intersection is the beautiful Santa Rosa Plateau. An excellent weekend destination in the spring and fall seasons, the Plateau offers many trails for outdoor enthusiasts. One of the most popular trails is the Granite Loop located next to the Visitor's Center.

Traveling north on Palomar Street from Clinton Keith we find Plowboys Market, a local

fruit and vegetable stand featuring produce from the surrounding area. Continuing further, we see on the west side of the road an enormous eucalyptus tree. At one time there were several trees planted along this side of the road, but several had to be removed to widen the road near the Wildomar Elementary School. This tree may be removed in the near future due to a sidewalk construction project.

We arrive at the intersection of Palomar Street and Central Street. I drive into the school parking lot and meet with Councilman Robert Cashman, who agreed to give me a tour of 395 through Wildomar.

"Welcome to Downtown Wildomar!" Mr. Cashman exclaimed as I climbed out of my car. Robert Cashman has lived in Wildomar for thirty years. He is the founder of the Wildomar Historical Society. He is also the author of the book, *Images of America: Wildomar*, by Arcadia

Wildomar Continued....

Publishing.

The original Wildomar School opened in September 1886 at this location. It was razed in the 1950s to build a modern facility. In front of the modern day school is a monument of the original school bell and tower. The monument was built in 1959 and restored in 2006.

At the northwest corner there are two historic buildings. The corner building was the Wildomar Post Office from 1961 through 1999. "There used to be a service station at this location operated by the Turner family." Mr. Cashman explained.

The second building was the Wildomar Store, owned by the Turner family. The store operated a service station, a small milk shake shop with three seats, a grocery store, and a post office. "The original store was added onto and became the Turner Realty building." Mr. Cashman shared as we got in my car and drove out of the parking lot.

As we pulled out of the parking lot, Mr. Cashman pointed to a vacant lot on the southeast corner of the intersection. "There was a two story building there at one time. It had several owners who operated a service station"

"What happened to the building?" I asked.

"It was torn down in the late 1980s." Mr. Cashman commented "The building needed repairs to be saved and no one could pay for its preservation."

As we drive north on Palomar Street we come to the Wildomar Cemetery. Established in 1898, the 5-acre cemetery holds over a thousand graves. One notable grave is that of Joseph W. Nichols, the train station agent who died on July 16, 1889, at the age of 31. Joseph was jilted by the girl he loved, became despondent, and took his own life.

"People who committed suicide were not allowed to be buried in the cemetery." Mr. Cashman stated. "Joseph was buried in another location for a number of years, but was relocated to the Wildomar Cemetery in 1978."

One of my favorite highway segments in Wildomar lies between Gruwell Street and Mission Trail. This road conforms to the lay of the land. Sometimes called "camel backs", the two lane road takes a few up and down dips along this path producing a roller coaster effect called, "air time".

Palomar Street curves to the northeast and becomes Mission Trail. The Round Up Feed & Supply calls this intersection home. It combines three businesses into one, gas station, grocery store, and feed store. "For many years this place was known as Nick's." Mr. Cashman pointed out as we continued driving down the old highway.

Mission Trail was once a two lane road that dipped up and down while traveling north. In the early 1990s, heavy rain storms flooded portions of Mission Trail. Motorists had to slow down as they crossed numerous flooded low spots along the road. Afterwards, Mission Trail was graded and widened to four lanes. The puddles are now gone, and cars speed along the road as if it was an expressway.

As we drive pass the Mission Trail Public Library, Mr. Cashman points to a vacant field, kitty-corner from the library. "This was the location of Eve's Café. It was known for its tasty southern fried chicken." Mr. Cashman said with a smile. "When the highway shifted to the east, the café went out of business. The place was boarded up with everything still inside for forty years. The owner's granddaughter had hoped to reopen the restaurant one day, but the building was razed in the 1990s."

As we travel north on Mis-

sion Trail we pass the Lake Elsinore/Wildomar Elks Lodge #2591 and its neighbor the VFW Post 1508. The original Elks Lodge burned to the ground in November 2007. The lodge was rebuilt and completed in 2010. Both organizations have been strong supporters of the community. One final note, in the VFW hall there is a sign that reads, "It's not the price you pay to join, it's the price you pay to qualify."

Across the street from the lodge is the Wildomar Chamber of Commerce. "Part of the building was an original one room school house that was located on Lemon Street." Mr. Cashman pointed out. "The building was relocated to this location to be near the railroad tracks. Later the building was used as an office for the local water district."

At the intersection of Mission Trail and Corydon Road we turn left to visit the DeJong Dairy. The original dairy was established in 1935 near the intersection of Central Street and Dunn Street. In 1958, the DeJong family bought the dairy and in 1961 they moved the dairy to its present 30-acre location on Corydon Road. The business has been a mainstay in Wildomar every since. Here the family continues to milk cows, bottle, and sell their products. This lone dairy family business beckons us back to a much simpler time.

Robert Cashman and I drove back to the Wildomar Elementary School parking lot. He brought a copy of his book for me to look through. He showed me historic photos of the three Wildomar service stations and photos of Eve's Café. I thanked him for the tour and he stated he looked forward to reading the article.

Our journey will continue next time at the intersection of Mission Trail and Corydon Road. Join us as we explore the Sedco subdivision in the City of Wildomar. So remember, slow down and "Take a Drive on Route 395".

The Driver's Seat

In June, Tanya Griffiths, Senior Society President for the Red, White and Blue Society, asked the Association for guidance in creating a U.S. Highway 395 exhibit for the Rancho Buena Vista Adobe. The Association was able to present to her several ideas for creating an exhibit tailored for the City of Vista. Along with the suggestions we provided, the Society has begun gathering materials for this future exhibit.

What types of transportation themed exhibits are in your local museum? Common transportation themes in Southern California usually center on the stagecoach era, such as the Butterfield Stage, or the railroad. Because of limited space in most museums, there are few exhibits about the local history of roads and highways. This history is important because the roads and highways helped generate resi-

dential and commercial growth in most towns and communities along its route.

A small museum exhibit interpreting the history of Highway 395 can be created to educate visitors on the importance of the highway. A roadmap and a few pictures from the museum archives could be bundled together as a simple exhibit exploring the contributions the highway made in daily life. Maybe there was a service station, a hotel, or restaurant that operated along the route during this era. One or two photos of a family business can demonstrate the human connection to the highway.

As parents drive down the road, their children often stare out the car window and wonder where the road will take them. A roads and highway exhibit could take children on a journey to the

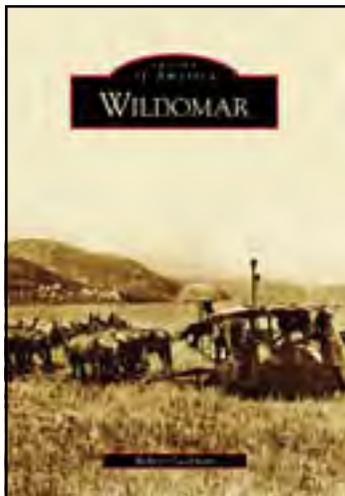
past, connect them to the present, and give them destinations for the future. Chances are children may never see a stagecoach rumbling over a mountain pass, but they will see a semi-truck rolling over the highway's summit.

Next time you visit your local museum, ask to see their roads and highway exhibit. If there isn't an exhibit, please let us know. Members of the Association are available to assist museums in creating an interpretive exhibit. Together we can tell the history of the highway one mile at a time.

So remember, get off the interstate, slow down, and "Take a Drive on Route 395"

Jeffery G. Harmon

Editor



Images of America: Wildomar

By Robert Cashman

To purchase a copy contact
The Wildomar Historical Society



Downtown Wildomar, Intersection of Palomar and Central Streets. Photo of Former Post Office (1961—1999)

U.S. Highway 395

My Highway to Heaven

By: MaRaya Schrokosch

(Originally Published in *The Pioneer Room Press*, Winter 07/08 Edition)

“Can you believe this? We’re going to enter California on Friday the 13th,” I exclaimed upon seeing the calendar in the roadside café.

The morning had already been beyond the norm as we had awakened to the giggling stares of a school bus load of kids and the curious gaze of the café customers across from where we’d parked the car and the Ryder truck the night before.

Our sleeping arrangements in this vast empty area of Western Nevada were necessitated by the lack of accommodations for miles around. So my two daughters, Marie and Cathy, (12 & 8) slept in the locked car, my sons Chuckie and Tony (10 & 9) on the ground between the car and the truck and my then fiancé and I in the back of the truck.

The move to California was financed by a small inheritance of mine. I knew the move was the right thing to do yet I was terrified in doing it.

It was July 1973 and we had been on the road for seven blazingly hot days from the south suburbs of Chicago. Excitement and exhaustion were prevalent that Friday the 13th.

We had many adventures along the way. One was as we were going along at 65 mph on I-80, I suddenly felt sharp piecing nails in my right shoulder. Freaking out, I found myself eyeball to eyeball with the children’s pet rat!

I’d just learned to drive in a small town six months before and now I am crossing the country with mountainous roads, freeways and all, terrifying. I didn’t need the rat to scare me too.

We entered California on U.S. Highway 395 in the crook of California’s arm. Cheering wildly as the first CHP car passed us; he waved and gave us the thumbs up sign.

The beauty of the snow capped Sierras were breathtaking. A side trip to the ghost town of Bodie was fun and educational. Everywhere along 395 was gorgeous.

Never having done anything even remotely close to this, I just followed the Ryder truck not sure how much further our destination was. Passing through Fallbrook, the hills were studded with fantastic boulders of all shapes and sizes. Continuing south we saw wide open vistas with beautiful valleys and rock filled mountains. The sight filled my eyes and gladdened my heart. The highway curved its way through areas filled with California oaks and eucalyptus trees.

Soon we were in the town of Escondido. U.S. Highway 395 went straight through. As we drove through from north to south, the sight of the majestic eucalyptus trees flanking both sides of the highway and the colorful pink and white Oleanders appeared to my eyes as tall and stately soldiers escorting the pretty pink belles of the ball for

the lance dance at the cotillion.

“Oh I like this place,” I thought to myself not knowing how much further we had to go. Our destination was Penasquitos, or as I called it, Pena. . . What?

When we arrived in Pena . . . What? I took one look at the undeveloped area and stated unequivocally, “I want to live back there in that **real** town, it’s wonderful!”

Luckily we found a three bedroom house that day. Thirteen years later I married the landlord of that house on Grand Avenue and I lived on 13th Avenue when we married. Who says the number 13 is unlucky? Not me!

It turns out that my future husband, Harry, had also taken 395 to Escondido from the Los Angeles area in 1968. He loved Escondido and bought a house that day. After we married, every year on July 13th, we would drive north a ways on 395 and then re-enter Escondido just as we had each done separately in the 60s for him and the early 70s for me. It never failed to greatly move us. How blessed we were to live in this wonderful place and to have found each other here in paradise. The stately soldiers beamed own on us and the pretty pink and white belles of the ball danced prettily for us in the breezes of each July 13th day.

On July 12th, 2055, the day before our 32nd anniversary of meeting, we had to go to Fall-

brook. "Let's not take I-15," I pleaded. "Let's take old 395. I've not been that far north on it since coming here."

"Neither have I," said Harry.

After our business was done we returned to Escondido on Old 395 going south. For the first time in all those years, we both saw the valleys and mountains the same way we'd originally seen them. Amazingly beautiful!

It was even more so because we were seeing them together. We always called it our "Highway to Heaven" and upon our return to "our valley" we'd say, "coming back to paradise."

Two days later my precious Harry passed on. He physically left "our valley" during a by-pass redo. We were married 19 years, 3 months and 3 wonderful days all of them here in our beautiful "Hidden Valley."

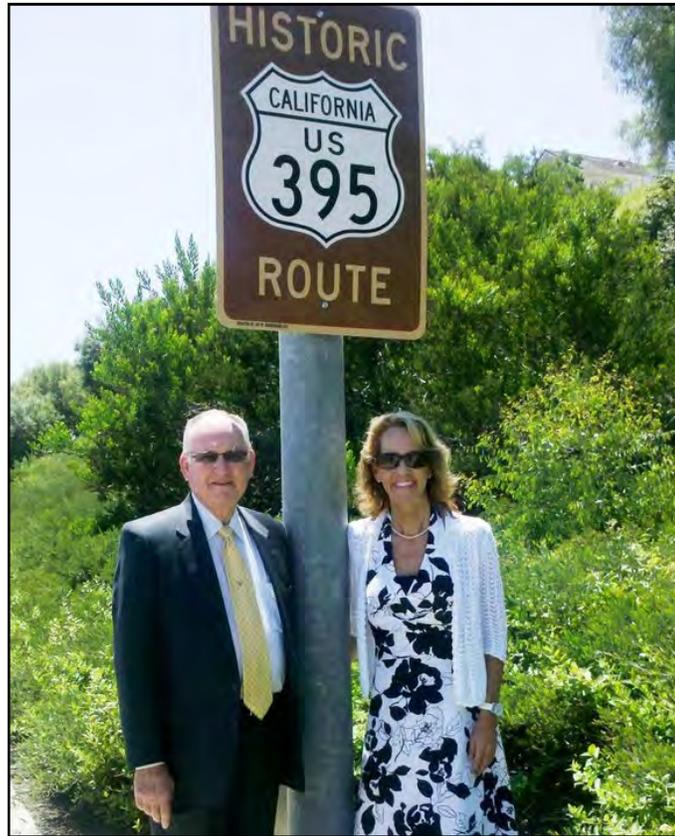
Of all the wonderful trips we took to places far and wide, our last little road trip on old 395 to where it had all begun, will always be most memorable and dear to me.

Old Highway 395 will always be our Highway to Heaven

Permission to reprint granted by MaRaya Schrokosch and The Pioneer Room

If you have a personal story, an article or photos of Highway 395, please share them with us.

Send to: jethrosire@yahoo.com



Attorney Jay Henderson and Cindi Wade visit Jay's Historic Route 395 sign donation location in Rancho Bernardo on Pomerado Road at I-15

New Sign Donations

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If you would like to donate a sign please contact

Tom Casey at (760) 723-3232 or

tom@rainbowcrestranch.com

Life along Highway 395, Part 2

By Jack Story

These memories took place during the forties and I can't really remember the sequence.

In the summertime, when I was out of school, my dad would sometimes have me drive all the dairy cows across 395 to the hills in the west and let them graze for a few hours. At that time, there were no houses on the hill. I would ride my horse accompanied a dog named Suzie, an Australian Sheppard. Suzie was very cow wise and kept the herd together the whole time. That was a good thing, because I used to get sleepy from the boredom. After awhile, I would bring the cows back across the highway to their home pasture. I don't recall ever having trouble crossing the highway. There usually wasn't much traffic and the cars always stopped and waited.

During the summer, I used to play the saxophone in the Fallbrook Community Orchestra. We rehearsed once a week in the evening and we played a couple of outdoor concerts every year. I used to hitch a ride with Esles Smith, a local plumber and baritone horn blower. On the way home, after practice, he used to gain enough speed coming out of town to turn his engine off and coast all the way to Story's Dairy to let me off. Remember this was gas rationing time. You couldn't do it now, because there are too many stop lights.

Many times, when I wanted to go into town for some reason, I would just start walking. During these walks I always looked for items of worth along the side of the road. Pop bottles with a deposit on them were a popular item. In those days people had a bad habit of tossing trash out of their car windows. There probably was no fine for littering back then. While I was walking to town someone would pick me up, usually someone who knew me. There didn't seem to be a fear of this at that time.

There were unpleasant things that happened on the road too. We lost pets now and then. I remember one time we were caring for our neighbors' Dalmatian while they were away on a trip. She got out on the highway and was hit by a car. She survived, but was crippled up quite a bit. We brought her up to the house and doctored her for quite awhile. She always walked with a limp after that.

My dad's favorite horse, named Goldie, got loose one night and wandered down on the road. She was hit by a passing vehicle and broke her leg. She had to be destroyed.

My younger brother, Clifford, was about two years old and I was about seven when our family owned a 1939 Chevy sedan with suicide doors. One day, with my mother at the wheel, we

pulled out of our driveway onto Highway 395. The car was just getting up a little speed when Clifford, who was sitting in the back seat with me, grabbed the rear door handle. The door swung open and dropped him on the street.

Luckily, there was no traffic. My mother stopped the car, ran back and picked up my brother. He was skinned up and his lower jaw was all askew. She took him back to the house, cleaned him up and after a few days, his jaw straightened back to normal. It was a happy ending to a potentially dangerous situation

One time I was down by the creek trying to learn how to use a sling shot like the one that David used to kill Goliath. I let the sling fly with a rock, but it did not go where I was aiming. The rock flew towards the road. I heard a car coming and then I heard the brakes screech to a stop. I couldn't see the car from where I was. I don't know if the rock hit the car or not, but I hid till I heard the car drive off.

These are some of the things that I remember about Highway 395.

Reader's Corner

There is one thing I remember when my folks took my sister and I down to San Diego. As we were approaching this bridge (Lake Hodges Bridge) there was a Burma Shave "saying" along the west side of the road just past the Via Rancho Parkway entrance to the freeway. It is the only one I

remember. It read "30 days hath September, April, June and the speed offender" Burma Shave. I miss seeing that.

Ginger Kullman
Escondido

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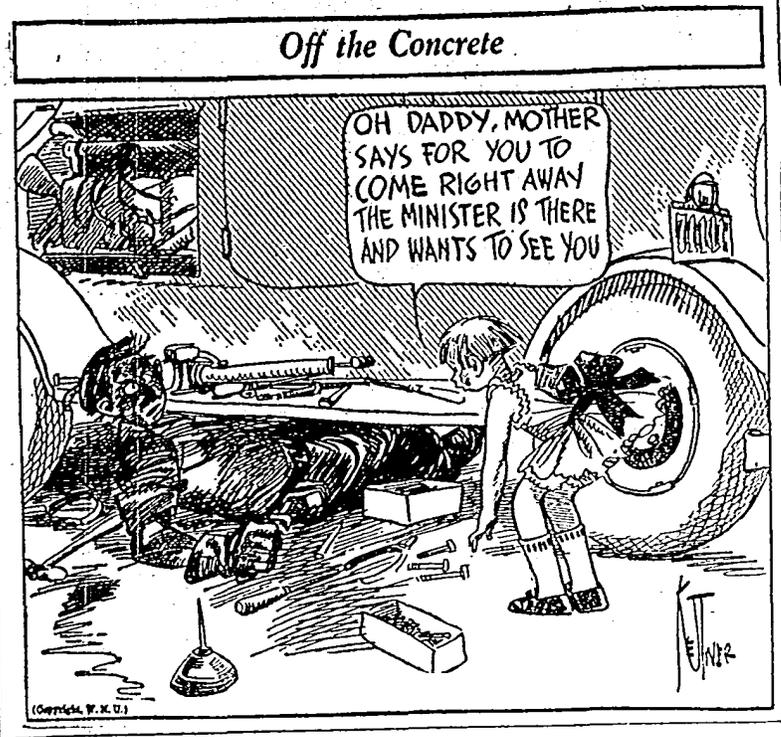
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Announcement:

The September Monthly Meeting
Has been Cancelled



Reprint: The Vista Press September 25, , 1930

New Speed Law

Lake Elsinore Valley Press, August 27, 1909

Owing to the many maimings and killings by the speed maniacs of Los Angeles, who in most cases belong to the idle rich class, and therefore do not care a rap for a fine, an ordinance has just passed the city council which provides jail sentences for these reckless and heartless autoists.

The best part of the proposed ordinance is that the jail sentence is mandatory and not discretionary with the court.

The scope of the ordinance includes six radical changes.

1. Jail for anyone who drives faster than 30 miles an hour.
2. Jail for any person who is con-

victed a third time in a year for violating the present speed law of 18 to 20 miles an hour.

3. Revocation of permits for drivers who travel faster than 30 miles an hour – first offense.
4. Impounding automobile for 60 days when laws are violated, but not sufficient evidence exists for court action.
5. Police commissioners have power to revoke permits of chauffeurs at pleasure.

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