

PIKES PEAK AUTO HIGHWAY

Welcome to Ontario, California!

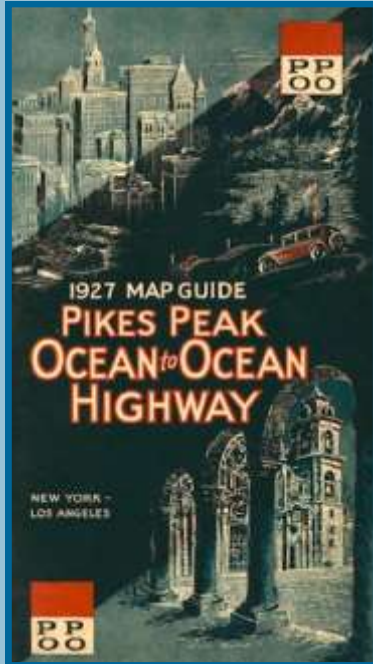
Automobile Era



Arriving from Europe, the automobile first appeared on the American scene during the 1890s and was not regarded as having practical, workday uses. It was **considered an elaborate “play thing” for the wealthy class.** Nonetheless, it excited the curiosity of American mechanics, who immediately began to construct adaptations of the European models.



Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway



Long before freeways and highways existed in Ontario, travelers relied on Native American trails and stage coach routes. Some of these routes evolved into highways such as the Pacific Coast Highway and Route 66. One of the **nation's first transcontinental highways commencing construction in 1912** is the Pike's Peak Ocean-to-Ocean Highway. The highway spanned the continent from Los Angeles to New York and passed through Ontario, along Holt Boulevard. This occurred at a time when paved roads were rare and traveling by car for more than 10 miles was an adventure.



Road Boosters & Auto Clubs

As more well-to-do people acquired automobiles, social clubs such as the American Automobile Association (AAA) emerged in the early 1900s as strong advocates for supporting recreation auto touring and long-distance road racing. Other vested groups such as local booster clubs, petroleum companies, and auto manufacturers and dealers banded together to push for new roadways linking one town to another promoting the American auto-tourism movement.



Lure of the Open Road

The American version of the automobile continued to develop gaining much popularity and by 1905, 78,000 vehicles existed in the United States. By the late 1920s, nearly 28 million cars were reported on the road. Auto tourism took the nation by storm and resulted in a forever changed landscape of roads and roadside architecture.



Ocean to Ocean Highway

By 1920, Holt Boulevard had been transformed from a 2-lane scenic road lined with citrus trees and grand Victorian homes into a modern 4-lane highway. It ultimately became the main transportation route from Los Angeles to Palm Springs for the newest class of automobile owners: the Hollywood movie stars and Beverly Hills socialites. Soon automobile ownership was widespread and auto tourism was on the rise **thanks to Henry Ford's Model T**. The simple engineering and design applied with the assembly line technique allowed for the first time an affordable auto to be marketed to the middle class.



Auto Services

Early on, petroleum companies began to enlist the services of strategically located livery stables, garages, hardware stores, and grocery stores to sell their gasoline. Initially, gas was sold in cans, but soon roadside gasoline pumps were installed. This method of selling gas quickly caught on and the first stand-alone gas stations began to appear. Gas Stations became beacons of refuge on the open road. Gas station owners responded by selling additional products and services such as auto repair and tire sales.



Auto Camps

As the auto tourism was on the rise, "autocamping" became all the rage during the 1920s. Campgrounds equipped with tents and restrooms sprang up along the highway as a result. By the end of the decade, however, the camps became less desirable and "cabin camping" also referred to as "tourist courts" were then popularized.



Iconic Road Signs

As competition for customers grew more intense and as the speed of cars increased, business owners began to experiment with designs to better attract the attention of the passing motorist. Soon these iconic signs became synonymous with the road and an integral part of the Roadside architecture movement.



Roadside Diners

Existing property owners and businesses along Holt Boulevard began to modify their products, services and buildings to better address the needs of the highway motorist. This is evident by the many residential buildings that were converted to restaurants.



Vince's Spaghetti

Food stands were often shacks virtually thrown together by farmers who owned property along the highway. They would sell their produce and other homemade products to **passing travelers**. Vince's Spaghetti homespun family run Ontario institution that began as a six-stool open air stand with brothers fresh from Chicago serving French Dips and fresh squeezed orange juice to roadside travelers. Soon **Mama Cuccia's spaghetti** made it to the lunch counter and six seats became 450.



Orange Hotel

Originally called Hotel Ontario, the Orange Hotel was constructed in the late 1920s during an era when downtowns experienced growth aided by tourism and the motoring public. At the time of construction, the hotel was considered a local show place having been one of only a few buildings in Ontario large enough to accommodate banquets held by civic clubs and other community groups. Some notable guests of the hotel included the Los Angeles Cubs and Angels who stayed in the hotel during their spring training held at John Galvin Park during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.



Hotel Casa Blanca



The Casa Blanca Hotel opened on April 10, 1915 intending to rival Riverside's Mission Inn and the finer hotels of Pasadena and Los Angeles. An interesting note is that Charlie Chaplin was a hotel guest in 1916. Once the Ocean to Ocean Highway was constructed, it brought many motorists to town. Those businesses that once catered to railroad travelers such as the Casa Blanca Hotel expanded their advertising to Holt Boulevard to get the attention of the auto traveler.

Roadside Tourist Attractions

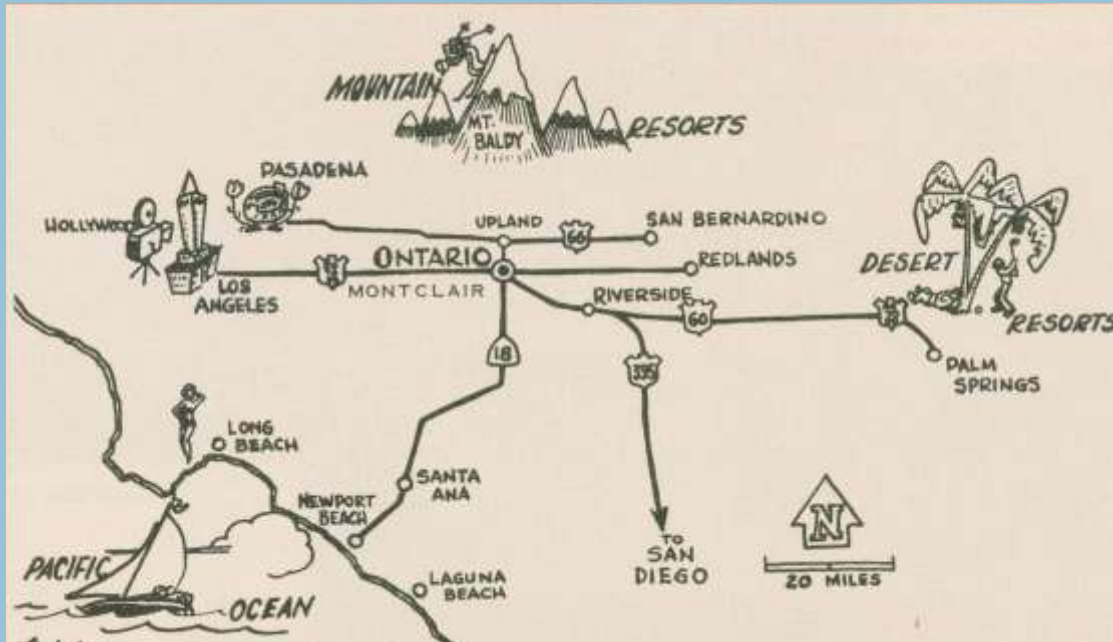
Unlike the businesses that provided necessary products and services to travelers, roadside tourist attractions and souvenir shops simply offered tourists a diversion from the road: Graber Olive, GE Hotpoint, Armstrong Nursery, the Ontario Ice Skating Rink, and both Fountaine and Cucamonga Valley Wineries all benefitted from this notion.



Capri Hotel

Modern “tourist courts” or “motor court” of the 1940s and 50s were professionally designed and much more sophisticated than the auto camps of the 1920s and 30s. They provided travelers with all the comforts of home including kitchens, bathrooms, electricity and comfortable furniture. The motor court building type would later be simply referred to as a motel.





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