



CALIFORNIA ORIGINALS

A Quarterly Newsletter of the California State Archives
A Division of the Secretary of State's Office
www.sos.ca.gov/archives

Volume IV, No. 4

Summer 2016

CALIFORNIA
STATE ARCHIVES

Getting "There" Was Difficult

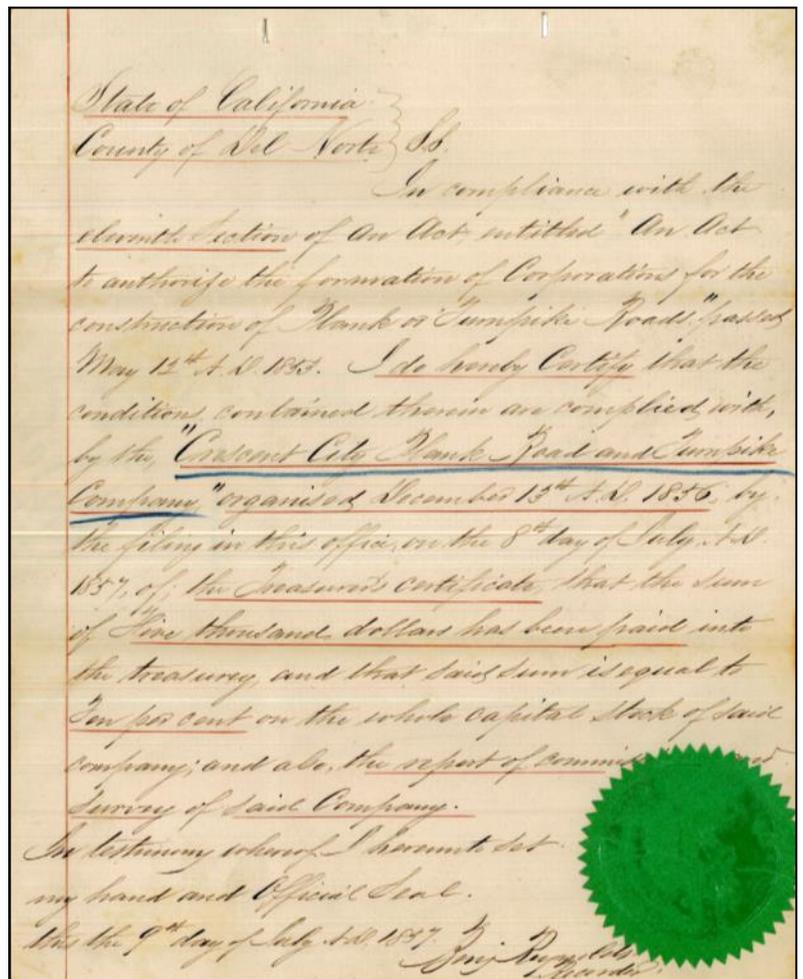
Turnpikes, Plank Roads, Wagon Roads, and Toll Roads

California in the 1850s was a sparsely populated land mass, with mountain ranges, deserts, rivers, and lakes that needed to be traversed for commercial and personal needs. With a burgeoning population, most looking to strike it rich in either the gold fields or through the exploitation of the abundant natural wealth of the area, it was imperative that people and goods could be moved relatively quickly and inexpensively. Much of the movement centered around the waterways and along the coast, but it became apparent to many newly established communities, especially in the hinterlands, that optional routes needed to be selected and improved.

The state legislature attempted to meet these needs with the passage of "An Act concerning roads and highways" (Chapter 80, *Statutes of 1850*) as well as by providing for the creation of corporations for the specific purpose of constructing and operating turnpikes (an early toll road in which a long stick, called a pike, was turned to allow passage) and plank roads (a pathway covered with wooden timbers) (Chapter 128, *Statutes of 1850*). The original corporation law was later revised and two separate acts were established to govern two types of corporate bodies: those formed to build and operate the aforementioned turnpike and plank roads (the Turnpike Act, Chapter 121, *Statutes of 1853*) and those formed to build and operate wagon roads (Wagon Road Act, Chapter 73, *Statutes of 1853*). Somewhat later in time, the Toll Road Act (Chapter 580, *Statutes of 1870*) came into the picture.

Many of today's highways, byways, and scenic routes follow these early roads, make getting "there" less difficult!

By Linda Johnson, Archivist



Articles of incorporation for the
Crescent City Plank and Turnpike Road Company, 1857
Records of the Office of the Secretary of State

Inside this issue

From the State Archivist	3
Records in the Spotlight	3
Staff Favorites	4
California Digital Archive	6
Upcoming Events	6
Contact Information	6



From the State Archivist

My father, William Zimmelman, was born in Detroit, Michigan, in April 1914. He learned to drive on a Ford Model T. When he was twenty years old, Ford Motor Company hired him and he worked for the company for forty-two years until his retirement. Growing up in the Detroit area coupled with my father's interest in history inspired my love for the subject, particularly in the history of automobiles. The automobile has played an important role in California -- in its history, in its development, and in the lifestyle of the state's population. The State Archives' collections are rich in information about not only automobiles and everything associated with them, but also trains, steamships, and ferries. The documents include maps, records of highway construction, plans for bridges, photographs of emergency vehicles from the 1930s and 1940s, and much more. The Archives' holdings include a map of the first state-maintained road, the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road, a route followed largely by today's Highway 50. I encourage you to visit the State Archives to learn more about California's transportation history.

Nancy Zimmelman Lenoil

Records in the Spotlight

Records of the Dept. of Public Works

Within the records of the Dept. of Public Works are a wide variety of photographs, including images of road construction and maintenance, bridges, and more. These photographs, numbering in the thousands, depict the work done by the Department's various divisions and span the years 1912 to 1973. The photographs have not been digitized; however, the public is encouraged to come into the Archives to view the images.

The photographs are described on [Minerva](#), our online catalog. Simply type Public Works in the creator field and select photographic from the drop down list under type of material, then hit search. A results list of about 300 descriptive records will be returned. You can then click on the first line (Series title) and a fuller description will appear, giving you more information about that particular series. In addition, the Photograph Guide can be found on our [webpage](#).

By Linda Johnson, Archivist



*Rincon Causeway, Ventura County, 1912 [ID no. F3778:1796N]
Records of the California Department of Public Works,
Division of Highways, District VII*



*Plank Road, Imperial County, circa 1930
[ID no. F3778:3019(1022)]
Records of the California Department of Public Works,
Division of Highways, District VII*

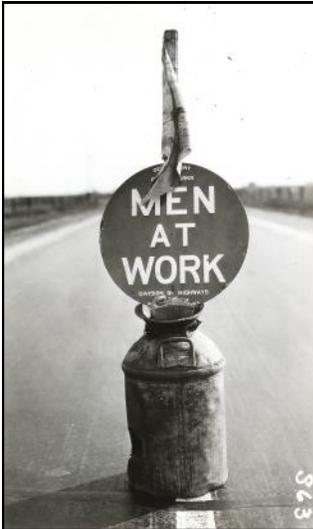


*San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge construction,
Tower #3, Sept. 7, 1934 [ID no. F2516(6-329)]
Records of the California Department of Public Works,
Division of Highways, Bridge Department, Toll Bridges*



Men at Work

Convict Labor and California Highways



*Men at Work Sign
[ID no. F3778:1364C]
Miscellaneous Photographs,
Records of the Dept. of Public
Works, Highways Division*

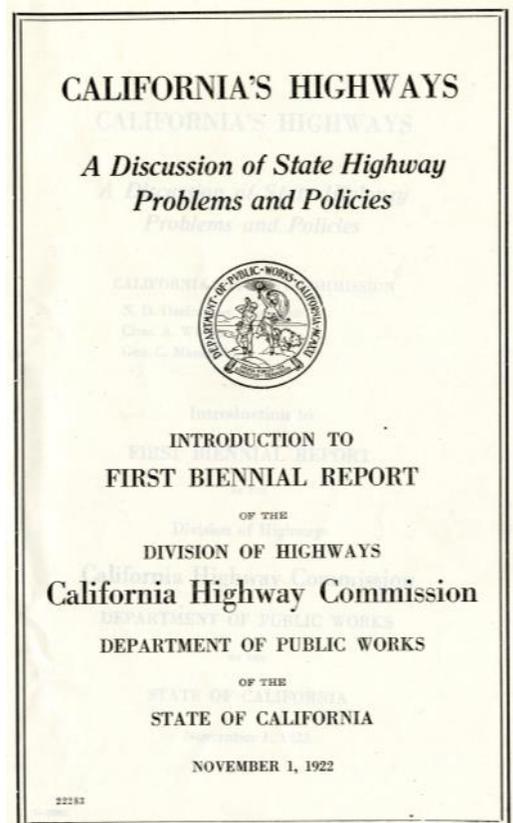
California has employed its inmate population in numerous work activities since the state's earliest days. In particular, California's transportation system greatly benefited from convict labor with the establishment of prison labor camps specifically organized to build the state highways and bridges.

In 1907, the California legislature created the Department of Engineering, and charged it with the maintenance and construction of highways. The Department of Engineering utilized convict labor as early as 1915, but the program in place proved inefficient due to prison guards and engineers sharing the supervision of convicts. Engineers were not equipped to handle convicts and prison guards did not have an understanding of road construction. In 1921, the Department of Engineering was renamed the Division of Highways and was placed under the newly created Department of Public Works. In 1923, a reorganization of the Department of Public Works occurred and the Division of Highways became the responsibility of the California Highway Commission. The reorganization created six new divisions, including the Division of Prison Road Camps. The new Division of Prison Road Camps (also referred to as the Department of Prison Road Camps) sought to remedy the inefficient use of prison labor to build California highways. By 1928, the work assigned to the Division of Prison Road Camps was moved back to the Department of Public Works and placed under the Department's Division of Highway Construction section.

In its 1922 publication, *A Discussion of State Highway Problems and Policies*, the California Highway Commission wrote, "the use of [convict] labor was made particularly desirable by the shortage of free labor" (i.e., the non-convict labor force). The publication also noted that the average daily cost of convict labor was \$2.30, while the average daily cost of free labor was \$4.50. At the time of publication, convicts had completed a total of 132 miles of state highways mostly located in remote mountain districts where work was more difficult. The remoteness of the prison road camps also reduced the chances of escape. The camps proved a success in regards to inmate rehabilitation.

The prison road camps program peaked between 1929 and 1930, with seven camps housing and employing 700 inmates. From 1915 to 1936, inmates built more than five-hundred miles of roads connecting California's rural areas with cities, helping to boost tourism and industry. The influx of free labor and government work programs designed to employ men and women out of work during the Great Depression reduced the number of inmate laborers. The California Highway Commission repurposed five prison road camps as civilian labor camps and, even after the economy rebounded, inmate labor numbers never reached the pre-Great Depression era numbers. By 1950, the number of inmates working out of the prison road camps had fallen to 200.

By Michael McNeil, Archivist



*First Biennial Report of the Division of Highways, 1922
[ID no. F3778:268]
Records of the California Highway Commission*

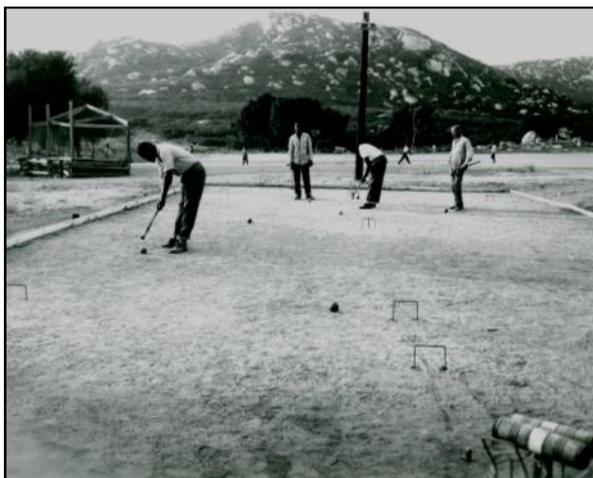


Men at Work (cont'd)



These three photographs show prisoners working on various roads in rural California, circa 1920s [ID no. F3778:1792A]

Records of the Dept. of Public Works, Division of Highways - Construction, Records of the Convict Labor System, 1915-1949



The road camps provided also provided recreational options, such as playing croquet, circa 1940s [ID No. F3717:871B]

Dept. of Corrections, Correctional Program Services, Institutional Photographs



New Online Exhibits

In partnership with the Google Cultural Institute

On June 28th, Secretary of State Alex Padilla announced a new partnership between the California State Archives, a division of the Secretary of State's office, and the Google Cultural Institute. This partnership will make State Archives exhibits available to a global audience online. The first three exhibits highlight the history of California state parks, the California Secretary of State's office, and the nation's first political consulting firm, Campaigns, Inc. "The historical treasures of the State Archives belong to the people of California, and they should be easily viewable," Secretary of State Padilla said. "Our partnership with the Google Cultural Institute will allow us to use materials from the State Archives to share stories about the rich history of California. These stories deserve to be shared with the world."

"Preserving history, art, and culture is crucial to remembering where we've come from and who we are as people. Google is thrilled to partner with Secretary Padilla and the State Archives to bring archive collections onto the Google Arts & Culture platform and make them accessible the world over," said Mufaddal Ezy, Google's California State Manager for Government Relations.

The State Archives will continue to digitize exhibits for inclusion on the Google Cultural Institute. "This is only the beginning of our partnership with Google. We look forward to sharing more digital exhibits in the months and years to come," Padilla added.

Visit the [California Digital Archives](http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives) webpage to view the online exhibits.

Upcoming Events

July 29, August 26, September 30	Monthly Public Tours of the California State Archives, Sacramento	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/tours
July 8 - 24	California State Fair at Cal Expo, Sacramento	www.castatefair.org
July 10-22	30th Western Archives Institute at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/wai
October 1-31	October is Archives Month! Look to our next issue for activities and events.	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/public-events/archives-month

California State Archives
1020 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Visit us on the web at www.sos.ca.gov/archives/

For general assistance, call (916) 653-7715

For reference assistance, call (916) 653-2246
or email ArchivesWeb@sos.ca.gov

For event information, call (916) 653-7715
or email ArchivesEvents@sos.ca.gov

For the California Museum visit
www.californiamuseum.org/



Search our online catalog at

www.sos.ca.gov/archives/minerva/



Search state agency records retention schedules at

www.sos.ca.gov/archives/athena/



Visit the new California Digital Archives at www.sos.ca.gov/archives/cda



Visit the [Secretary of State's other divisions](#) for election information, campaign finance filings, business records, and more.