# Why a historic highway that united California's two halves may never reopen to cars

**By Charles Fleming, Los Angeles Times**

Harrison Scott discovered the Ridge Route in 1955. Then 18, he was out freewheeling in a brand new Ford he'd bought with a loan from his parents.

The sinuous route, an engineering marvel that tamed the San Gabriel Mountains through the highway corridor that is now known as the Grapevine, was already a relic.

Opened in 1915, and credited by historians with uniting the economies of Northern and Southern California, the notoriously slow and dangerous roadway had been superseded in 1933 by Highway 99, itself to be replaced in 1970 by Interstate 5.

Scott liked the abandoned motorway, but did not return to the route until exploring it again in 1991, this time on a road trip with his son. Spurred by the boy's interest, and retired from a long career with Pacific Telephone, Scott became an amateur historian and began collecting photos and stories of the highway.

He learned it had once been dotted with gas stations, diners, nightclubs and hotels that hosted gangsters and Hollywood stars. Clark Gable, Jean Harlow and Bugsy Siegel visited places such as Kelly's Halfway Inn — set dead center in the 12-hour automobile journey between Bakersfield and Los Angeles — and Sandberg's Summit Hotel, which had a sign by the front door that said, "No Dogs or Truck Drivers Allowed."

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