



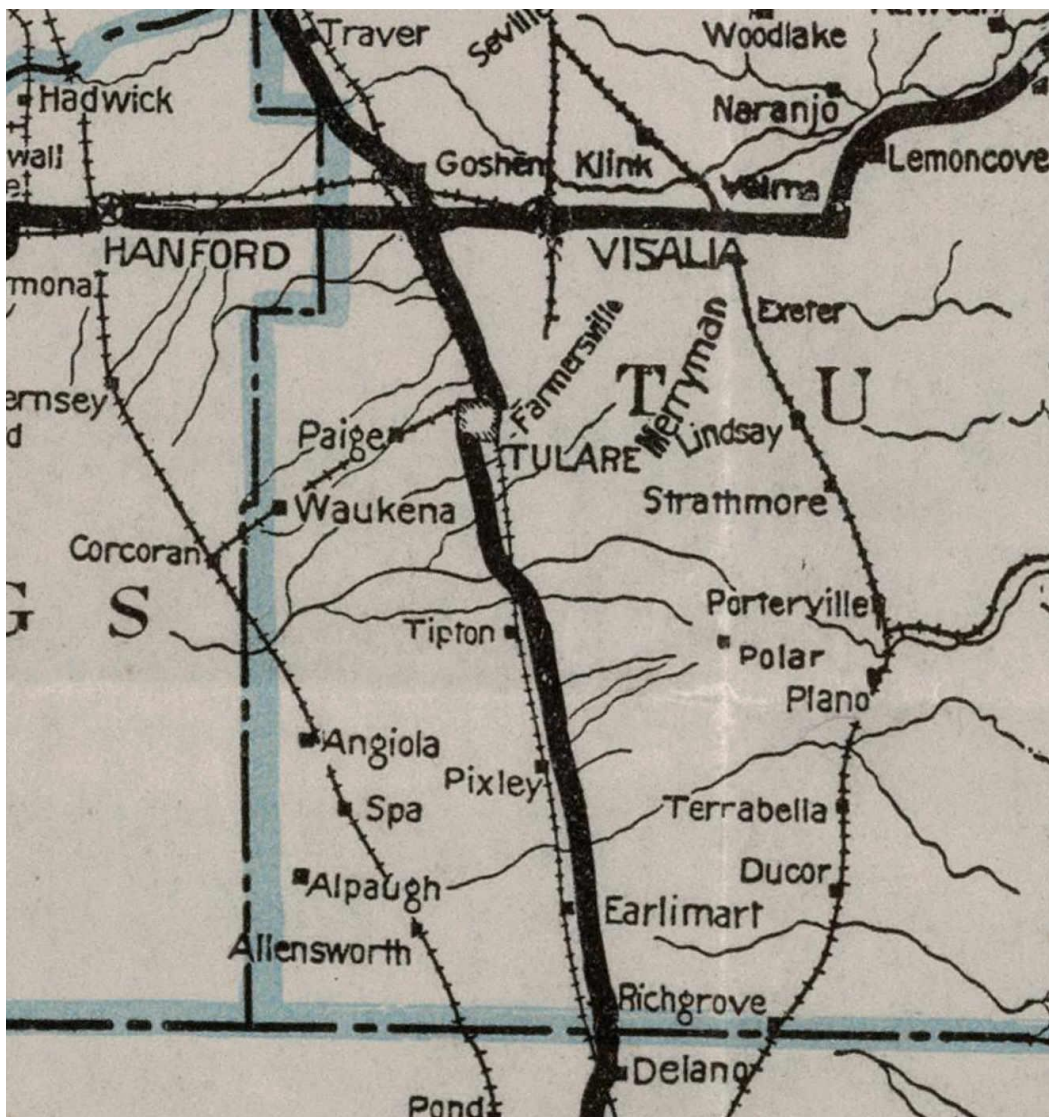
Historic Highway 99 Explorer

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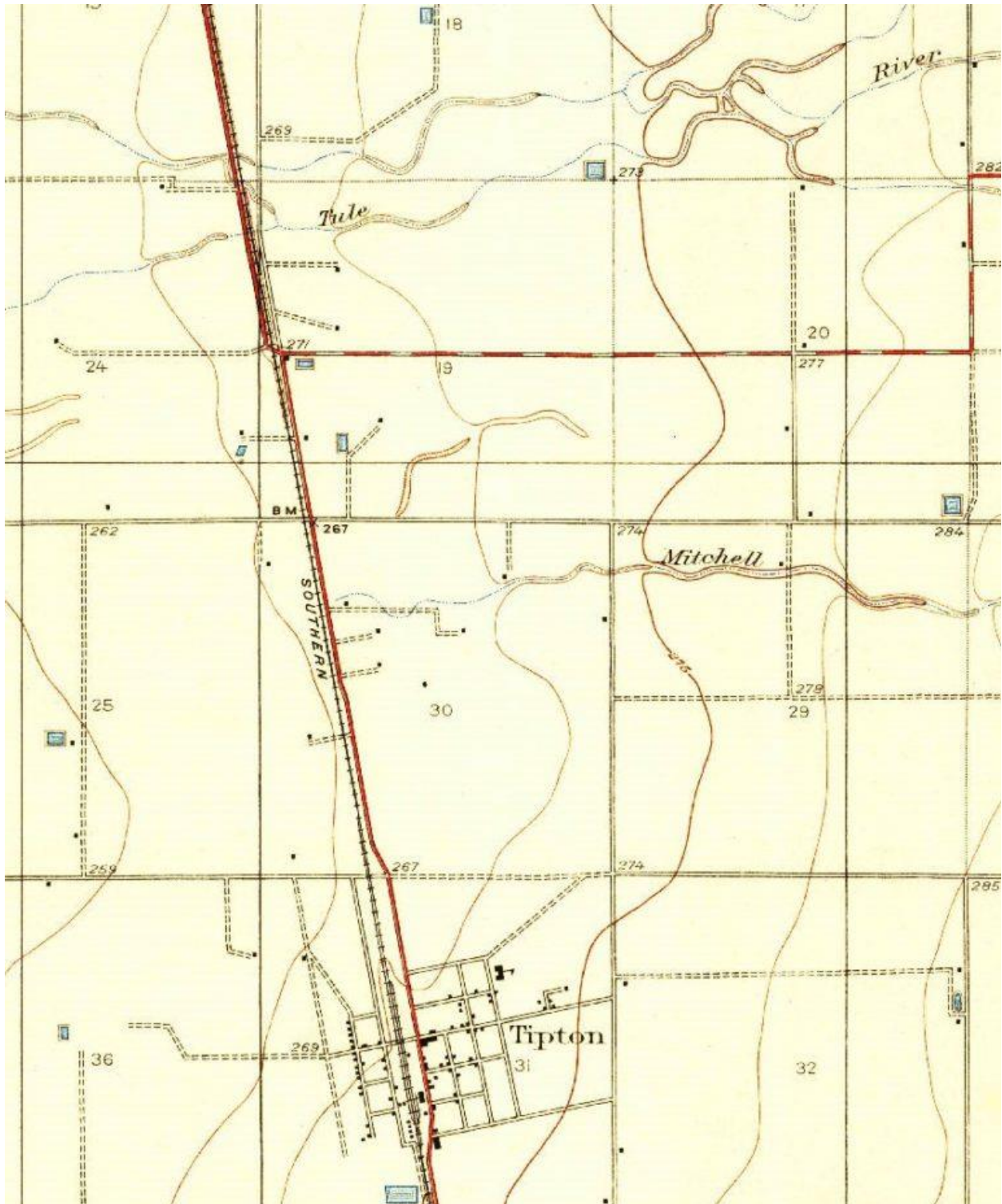
Original US 99 – Tipton to Tulare

I found an original section of US 99 from Tipton to Tulare that has quite a few interesting features. It had been a while since I looked at maps of this section, as most of my research has concentrated between Los Angeles and Bakersfield. The map below shows the alignment of US 99 in 1926.



Portion of 1926 California Division of Highways map showing the original alignment of US 99. Courtesy – Caltrans

Until 1931, US 99, and by extension Legislative Route 4, went on the west side of the Southern Pacific tracks from current Ave 164 north of Tipton to Bardsley Ave in Tulare, following Tulare County Road 112. This section was most likely paved with a 20' concrete slab around 1917.



Portion of a 1928 USGS map showing the original alignment and crossing



Aerial photograph showing the old railroad crossing. Courtesy – Google Earth



Original 1917 paving still intact at the railroad crossing

The roadway also retains four original bridges. The two North Branch Tule River bridges (46C-0004 and 46C-0010 respectively) are from 1917 and retain their original pipe railing. Two other bridges, Elk Bayou and Bates Slough are also original, with the former dating to 1916. The telltale cracking of asphalt over concrete is also visible near the northern North Branch Tule River bridge to near Ave 184 at Octol.



South Branch Tule River Bridge (46C-0004) from 1917

The realignment in 1931 eliminated two railroad crossings without the use of bridges at the tracks. The new road was also built a little higher to help ease flooding problems that were common in the Central Valley. Today, some of the bridges built at that time still remain, albeit widened or otherwise modified. In time, we would like to work with Tulare County to get this section of Historic US 99 signed again.

August Meeting

On August 3, 2021 at 6 pm, we will have our first guest speaker. Please join Historian Evan Decker; President of Mentryville, California Inc for a presentation and Q & A on the History of Mentryville, California on August 3rd at 6pm; Hosted by the Historic Highway 99 Association. Mentryville is a historic ghost town known as the site of the “birthplace” of the Oil Industry in California in 1876 with the drilling of California Star Oil No. 4. Q & A to follow.

Register for the meeting using the link below:

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMkd-2hqDoqEty9IHOFgyUWO0ns2_ZKrq_7

For more information:

<https://www.mentryvillecalifornia1876.com/>

Lake Shasta Water Level Monitoring

As the drought worsens here in California, reservoir levels are continuing to drop. In the case of Lake Shasta, a long section of the original alignment of US 99 is normally submerged below tens of feet of water. This year, the level is expected to get extremely low. Most of US 99 will be fully exposed when the lake hits 900 feet (167 feet below full pool) which is likely sometime this month. You can also follow our Twitter account ([@Historic99](#)) to get weekly (Sunday morning) updates.

<https://cdec.water.ca.gov/dynamicapp/QueryDaily?s=SHA>

Membership and Support

Our membership now extends across all three states US 99 traversed and British Columbia. It seems the word is slowly getting out there. We want to do more, however, and need your support. If you're not a member already, sign up! Your membership is tax-deductible and your membership fees will go to helping us bring Historic Highway 99 into the spotlight it deserves.

We also still need your help. We are developing brochures and flyers for the Association for distribution. We will need your help with design as well as helping represent the Association throughout California. We're also looking for ideas for fundraisers and outreach programs. If you'd like to help, contact us! We want to see this Association succeed and it cannot without help from all over.

We do wish to thank all those that have donated so far and signed up for memberships. Your contributions, regardless of size, have been very helpful to our cause.

Sign Design Contest

Interested in helping design a new sign for 99?

We are holding a design contest for a new terminus mileage sign for US 99. US 6 has one in Bishop. US 50 has one in Sacramento. I-40 has one in Barstow. US 99 does not and we intend to change that. Two signs will be placed, one in Calexico, California and the other in Blaine, Washington to commemorate the historic termini of US 99. What we are looking for is a sign that stands out among the others and gives the mileage to each end. For reference, the historic mileage of US 99 was 1499 miles in 1958 per AAA. The sign should contain a US 99 shield, possibly three for each of the states it passed through. We aren't looking for a large sign as there may be space constraints but certainly a sign 24" x 36" or smaller, horizontal or vertical, would be acceptable. At the present time, we are not certain as to when the signs will be posted. All designs must be submitted by August 15, 2021.

The winner will be announced in our September newsletter.

Featured Book

“**Freewaytopia: How Freeways Shaped Los Angeles**” explores how social, economic, political, and cultural demands created the web of expressways whose very form—futuristic, majestic, and progressive—perfectly exemplifies the City of Angels. From the Arroyo Seco, which began construction during the Great Depression, to the Simi Valley and Century Freeways, which were completed in 1993, author Paul Haddad provides an entertaining and engaging history of the 527 miles of road that comprise the Los Angeles freeway system.

Each of Los Angeles’s twelve freeways receives its own chapter, and these are supplemented by “Off-Ramps”—sidebars that dish out pithy factoids about Botts’ Dots, SigAlerts, and all matter of freeway lexicon, such as why Southern Californians are the only people in the country who place the word “the” in front of their interstates, as in “the 5,” or “the 101.”

Freewaytopia also explores those routes that never saw the light of day. Imagine superhighways burrowing through Laurel Canyon, tunneling under the Hollywood Sign, or spanning the waters of Santa Monica Bay. With a few more legislative strokes of the pen, you wouldn’t have to imagine them—they’d already exist.

Haddad notably gives voice to those individuals whose lives were inextricably connected—for better or worse—to the city’s freeways: The hundreds of thousands of mostly minority and lower-class residents who protested against their displacement as a result of eminent domain. Women engineers who excelled in a man’s field. Elected officials who helped further freeways . . . or stop them dead in their tracks. And he pays tribute to the corps of civic and state highway employees whose collective vision, expertise, and dedication created not just the most famous freeway network in the world, but feats of engineering that, at their best, achieve architectural poetry.

Finally, let’s not forget the beauty queens—no freeway in Los Angeles ever opened without their royal presence.

Featured Image



Former US 399 (now State 33) in Sespe Gorge at the 1932 Sespe Creek Bridge (52-0078).
Courtesy – Michael F Ballard

Errata

Would you like to write an article for our newsletter? Contact us for details.



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