

This 1918 map shows the 1915 route of Old Highway 2 in orange and the section of the 1925 route recorded on Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton in blue.

Timeline

- 1910** California voters pass the Highway Bond Act, the first statewide bond act to finance road construction.
- 1911** The Chandler Act creates the first California Highway Commission.
- 1912** Construction begins on State Route 2, the "Coast Road," one of two north-south concrete highways connecting southern and central California.
- 1915** The Coast Road is completed through the future Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton.
- 1925** State Route 2 is made wider and thicker to meet new standards.
- 1926** State Route 2 is adopted into the new federal highway system as US 101.
- 1938** The California Division of Highways upgrades US 101 to three lanes and moves it west of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad grade, bypassing Old State Route 2.
- 1942** MCB Camp Pendleton is created on the old Santa Margarita Ranch; Old State Route 2 continues in use largely as a military access road.
- 2010** Old State Route 2 is determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 2012** Archaeologists working at MCB Camp Pendleton discover four short, buried segments of the original 1914-1915 concrete roadway.

Cultural Resources Management on MCB Camp Pendleton

MCB Camp Pendleton is committed to the protection of cultural resources on the Base. Through close coordination with base operators, facilities managers, Native American tribes, the State Office of Historic Preservation, and the public, MCB Camp Pendleton has successfully integrated cultural resources management with its mission of training US Marines. To date more than 100,000 acres of the Base have been surveyed for cultural resources, and more than 625 sites have been recorded. There are ethno-historic villages, rock art sites, prehistoric stone quarries, historic adobe ranch houses, and many others—including Old State Route 2. More than 500 of these sites have been evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Santa Margarita Ranch House Complex (1842) is listed on the National Register and is one of the finest examples of early California Rancho construction. The Las Flores Adobe Ranch House (1864) is a National Historic Landmark and is one of the few remaining Monterey-style ranch houses in southern California. As a result of a successful partnership between the Marine Corps, the National Park Service, and the University of Vermont, the Las Flores Adobe Ranch House has been removed from the list of most-threatened National Historic Landmarks through a program of stabilization and rehabilitation. Future stabilization and rehabilitation are planned for the Santa Margarita Ranch House Complex, as well.



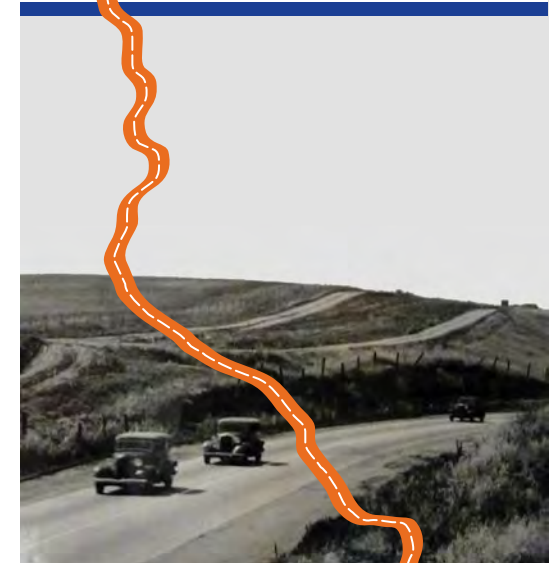
Cover photo:
1925-26 Old State Route 2
now on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton
Courtesy the Caltrans Transportation Library

Designed and produced by
Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc.

2013

A Ribbon of Concrete

The Story of Old State Route 2, Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton, California



From Wagon Road to Highway

On a lonely stretch of San Diego County coastline between Las Flores and San Onofre runs a ribbon of concrete that is 7 miles long, 20 feet wide...and nearly a century old.

This section of two-lane concrete road, located on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, is one of the few remaining sections of California’s first paved highway—Old State Route 2. Today it is dwarfed by Interstate 5, but in its day, State Route 2 was cutting-edge technology. In 1926 *California Highways* magazine even called it “a monument to its builders, both engineers and contractors.”

When it was finished, State Route 2 followed California’s coastline from San Diego to San Francisco, often along the same route as the historic El Camino Real. It was the first state highway to connect these major cities.

Earlier automobile roads in California were bumpy dirt tracks that billowed dust in the summer and bogged down with mud in the winter. Travel was slow and



Photo courtesy the Escondido Public Library

El Camino Real (“The King’s Road”) linked the 21 Spanish and Mexican missions between San Diego in the south and Sonoma in the north. Today most of its route lies beneath modern streets and highways that often carry the historic name (including the segment of Old State Route 2 on MCB Camp Pendleton).



Photo courtesy the San Diego History Center

Pre-1915 travel in San Diego County.

jarring. Imagine, then, the ease and comfort of your first automobile trip on a smooth concrete surface!

In the 1920s, America—and nowhere more than California—was falling in love with the automobile. More traffic, heavier trucks, and faster speeds demanded better roads. The original Route 2, built between 1912 and 1915, was no longer adequate. That very first concrete road was 15 feet wide, roughly the width of a single lane today, and a mere four inches thick. (In contrast, the surface of a modern highway may be up to 30 inches thick and made up of six layers of different materials.) In 1925-1926, the segment of State Route 2 through MCB Camp Pendleton was modernized—widened, thickened and better engineered—to meet updated standards. Typically the older, narrower roadway remained intact below a new “second story” of concrete. The improvements to State Route 2 cost nearly \$32,000

At the end of each work day, the contractors stamped their names, the date, and the engineering station into the last slab poured that day.



a mile, paid for with automobile registration fees and gas taxes.

Old State Route 2/US 101 served as the primary route along this part of the southern California coast until 1938, when the California Division of Highways (successor to the Highway Commission) chose a new route down on the flats closer to the coastline. Four years later, during World War II, MCB Camp Pendleton was created on a portion of the old Santa Margarita Ranch, including Old State Route 2. The engineering marvel of its day was no longer open to public use, but a portion of it has remained in good condition and is still in use on the base today.

Old California State Route 2, Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton.

