

## Laborde Canyon was early route through the Badlands



Laborde Canyon as it appears today. For many years, it served as a thoroughfare between San Jacinto and the San Gorgonio Pass. PHOTO BY STEVE LECH

One of the earliest routes through the Badlands was probably one called Laborde Canyon, located west of Lambs Canyon, between San Jacinto and Beaumont. Non-Indian settlement in it dates to around 1870, showing that it must have been an early route between two important sections of the county.

In its earliest incarnation, it was known as Necochea Canyon for Jose Maria de Necochea, who had been in the area as early as 1863, according to church records in Agua Mansa. The canyon, with a relatively smooth and even floor, was a natural transportation route between the westernmost point of the San Gorgonio Pass and the San Jacinto Valley. Therefore, it made sense that someone would claim ownership of it very early.

In the ensuing years, Necochea Canyon became a major route of travel between the San Gorgonio Pass and the San Jacinto Valley, with connections continuing north to San

Bernardino and south through San Jacinto to Temecula, Warner's Ranch and beyond.

While living in the canyon, Jose Necochea had a daughter named Rose. Rose met and married Jacques LaBorde in 1884, and the couple took over the farm in the canyon at that time. Gradually, as many more people used the canyon for travel and got to know Jacques and Rose LaBorde, the canyon took on their name. The new name of Laborde Canyon was set by the turn of the century, when the U.S. government, under the auspices of the U.S. Geological Survey, set place names when it went through to create official topography maps.

In the overall scheme of things, travel through Laborde Canyon was nowhere near as numerous as other nearby routes. The Southern Emigrant Trail, for instance, saw thousands of travelers for years. This is the route through Temecula, Elsinore and Corona, then through Chino, El Monte and eventually Los Angeles. Later, along the Bradshaw Road, travel would head east from San Bernardino to the San Timoteo Canyon, then the San Gorgonio Pass, then through the Coachella Valley and eventually to Arizona.

The part that Necochea/Laborde Canyon played was in connecting these two major routes with travel between the San Gorgonio Pass and Temecula. As far back as the Spanish mission days, there was an outpost in the San Jacinto Valley, near today's intersection of Warren Road and the Ramona Expressway. There is also speculation of a mission-era outpost in the Pass too, but these two outposts belonged to different missions and there may not have been very much interaction between them in the far reaches of the land holdings. However, by the late 1860s, San Jacinto began as a town, and would have needed road access into the only other large town in the region — San Bernardino.

The routes of travel through Riverside County were many. Laborde Canyon is one of the smaller ones, but by no means less important.

*If you have an idea for a future Back in the Day column about a local historic person, place or event, contact Steve Lech and Kim Jarrell Johnson at [backinthedaype@gmail.com](mailto:backinthedaype@gmail.com).*