

SHADY JOHN'S HIKE FOR 27 MARCH 1996 ED DAVIS/TOWSLEY CANYON STATE PARK

Reference: Qat Mountain Quadrangle Geological Survey Map

The area: Towsley Canyon is one of the more recent additions to the State Parks. It was acquired by the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy from Chevron and adds 3000 nearly pristine, undeveloped acres to this previously small park on the north side of the Santa Susanna Mountains in the Santa Clarita Valley. The trail that we will be hiking has not been opened officially so *The OTP and Others Hiking and Debating Society* will be one of the first groups to traverse it although it has been in use by individuals for a month or two.

Clam and oyster shell fossils indicate that this was once warm water seabed which was uplifted and exposed one million years ago. Mammoth hunters and later Tatavian (Dwellers of the Sunny Hills) Indians lived in this region and made use of the asphalt which oozed out of the earth for both medicinal and water proofing for their baskets and other purposes.

After the Civil War, Darius Towsley was granted a claim for oil on June 24, 1865. He mostly made use of the oil that was on the surface of the earth.

Later, a few miles to the North in Pico Canyon, a man named Mentry brought in the first commercial oil well in the area in 1885 and the "town" of Mentryville was born. At its peak, Mentryville had 100 families. When the wells played out, by 1932, the families "packed up their homes" and moved on. Today Mentryville, with its one room school house, the Mentry house and a few sheds, are within the park boundaries but not open to the general public. Much restoration work is required, especially to the Mentry house which was badly damaged in the 1994 earthquake.

In more recent times, Towsley Canyon was the site for the filming of cowboy movies such as *The Lone Ranger* (Clayton Moore), Gene Autry and Roy Rogers and the production of oil for Chevron. A few producing wells still exist and the hike transitions from the road to the trail just a few hundred feet short of one such well. Elsewhere the oil still seeps out of the ground and into streams.

The hike: 6 mile loop; some road; some trail; some lush; some burned (this is where the lupine grow).

Elevation gain and loss: 1000 feet.

Rating: Moderate.

Flora and Fauna: It is still a bit early for wild flowers but some are starting to show such as lupine, prickly phlox, poppy and ~~de~~weed. Mule deer were aroused from their rest under an oak tree. Bobcat tracks were seen as well as lots of coyote scat. The ranger said there are also some mountain lion in the area too. (We saw neither the cougar or any sign of them during our shake down walk).

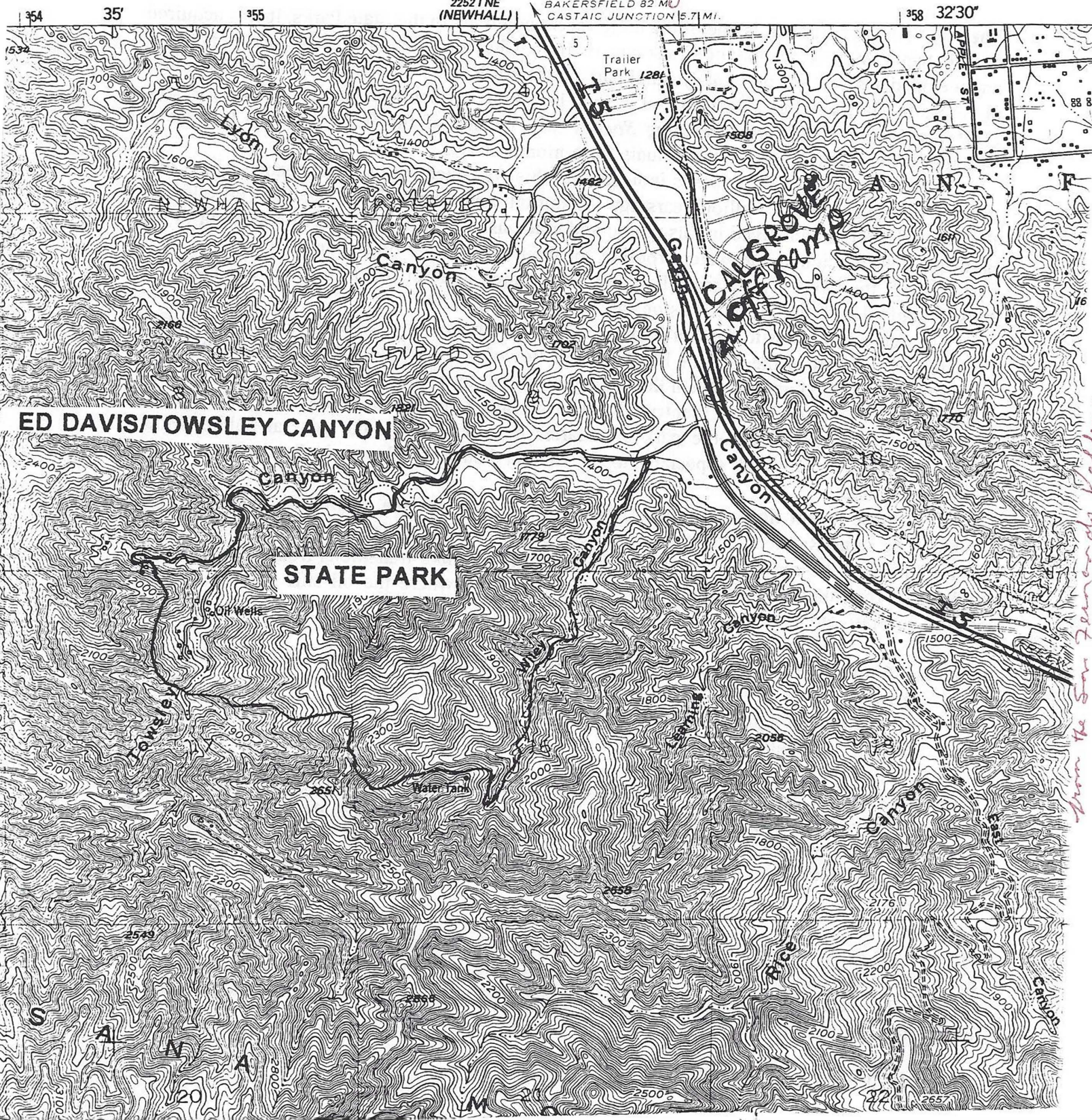
from the I405
How to get there: Take I5 north. Exit on Calgrove. Turn left under the I5 and proceed 0.3 miles to the entrance to the park. The entrance sign sits back from the road and can be easily missed. However, it will be your second chance for a right turn; the first is Lyons Canyon. Enter the park and drive 0.6 miles to the parking lot on your right.

Time: We'll meet here at 9:15 for a 9:30 AM departure.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REPRESENTED BY THE
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

to Valencia & beyond
22521 NE (NEWHALL) BAKERSFIELD 82 MI
CASTAIC JUNCTION 5.7 MI.



From the San Fernando Valley

