

# A Long and Winding Road



Travelers along the first road through Oak Creek Canyon passed through this tunnel, which was removed when the road was expanded to two lanes in the 1930s.

## It took a village to build a road through Oak Creek Canyon.

In 1887, settler Jim Thompson started blazing a steep trail from his homestead at Indian Gardens to the rim of Oak Creek Canyon and onto Flagstaff. This trail, known as Thompson's Ladder, allowed travelers to leave their wagons on the rim and then ride on horseback down into the canyon. Around 1900, Louis Thomas and Albert Purtyman linked the road between their ranches. Several other residents soon pitched in; eventually, piece-by-piece, the road was completed through the upper canyon.

Aided by mules, strong backs wielded picks and shovels to build bridges at creek crossings along the one-way road. Despite these improvements, the unpaved road was flooded out more than once, hindering vehicle travel.

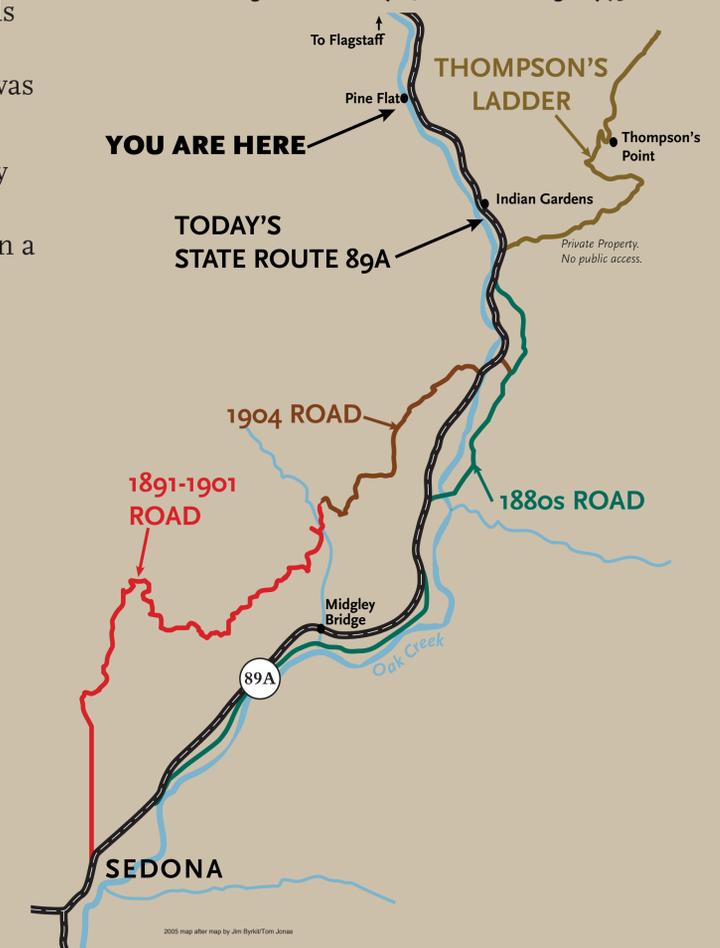
The road between Sedona and Flagstaff was completely paved in the mid-1930s. In the late 1980s, State Route 89A became the first "state scenic road" and ushered in a new era of tourism in Oak Creek Canyon.



Motivated settlers worked to build and re-route the first road through Oak Creek Canyon. The Oak Creek Canyon Road Camp (pictured) included a number of Albert Purtyman's sons.



Postcards, like this one from the early 1930s, promoted the beauty of the improved dirt road through Oak Creek Canyon, known then as Highway 79.

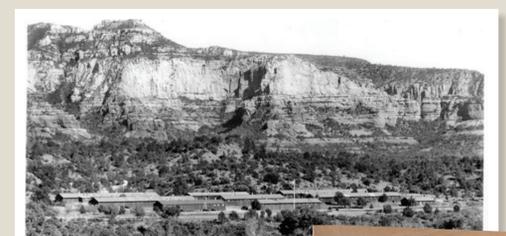


## Building a Legacy



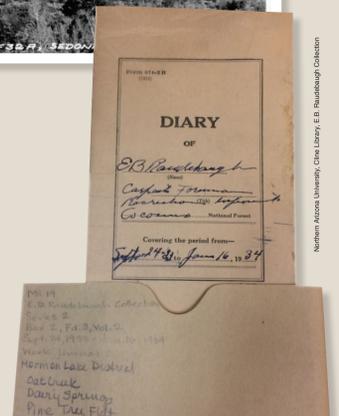
Look around for these stone mounds while you explore at Pine Flat. Why were they built? Although there is little documentation, it's believed that they could be remnants of fireplaces built by the CCC.

In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed thousands of young men during the Great Depression. They worked all over the country and built everything from bridges to bathhouses and trails to telephone lines. They fought fires, controlled insects, and re-planted eroded land. Here, in Oak Creek Canyon, they constructed roads, bridges, and rock culverts, as well as campground amenities, such as tables and fireplaces. While working at "Pine Tree Flat" during the winter of 1933, the CCC built rock mounds, possibly remnants of fireplaces. There is no mystery, however, to the CCC's lasting contribution to public works or its much-needed income to young men during those troubling times.



**"Started 40 [men]—Oak Creek—Pine Tree Flat—clearing & road building ..."**

—E.B. Raudebaugh, CCC carpentry foreman, November 1933



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