



Altadena Historical Society

From our Files

Southern California Edison

August 28, 2013

A Century of Progress

For almost 100 years, the Big Creek Hydro Facilities have provided electricity to Southern California. Big Creek is Southern California Edison's intricate complex of dams, tunnels, powerhouses, and reservoirs in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The first powerhouse entered service in 1913 (photo right, courtesy of SCE).



In 1905, the Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway Corporation (owned by Henry Huntington) consumed 80% of the electric power in the area just for its Red Line trolley cars. All of that electricity was produced in Southern California, mostly from steam generation. In 1911, Henry Huntington and other investors elected to finance the Big Creek hydroelectric project through a company called the Pacific Light and Power Corporation, a predecessor to SCE.

Construction of the first powerhouse began in 1911. In record time and ahead of schedule, Powerhouse 1 roared to life on Oct. 13, 1913, providing power to Southern California over a 241-mile-long 150,000-volt transmission line that terminated at SCE's Eagle Rock substation near Los Angeles. This line was the longest, highest-voltage transmission line in the world at the time. The last of Big Creek's generating facilities was Eastwood Power Station, which went on line in 1987.

Continuing in the spirit of ambitious projects like Big Creek, SCE is currently constructing the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP). TRTP is the first major transmission project in California being constructed specifically to access multiple renewable generators in a remote renewable-rich area.

In the Altadena area, construction of TRTP will involve the stringing of electrical transmission wire on existing towers. No new towers will be constructed near Altadena. Wire stringing in the Altadena area began August 2013.

Photo Right: Using helicopters and some amazing linemen, Edison is stringing new electrical transmission lines on the existing tower. To read more, check out [altadenablog](#). (Photo courtesy of Paul Ayers and altadenablog.)



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