

The Super Highway of Bushnell's Basin

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

A Monroe County map from the year 1822 documents the existence of an early pioneer thoroughfare connecting Rochester, Pittsford, Bushnell's Basin and on to Victor, in Ontario County, and beyond. Known as Pittsford-Victor Road or Route 96 today, the once primitive stagecoach route was long known as Ketchum Road. Historians identify the route as that utilized by the expedition of Marquis de Denonville in 1687, and even earlier, the indigenous people who lived here, of the Seneca Nation.

It became part of a larger transportation plan, creating some of New York State's earliest high-speed motorways. The booming growth in ownership of automobiles in the United States made many of these narrow and picturesque roads obsolete.



In this 1920s image, Ketchum Road, as it was known at the time, was a narrow dirt thoroughfare. The house, first built by Joseph Ketchum, was owned by Llewellyn and Grace Matthews when this photo was taken. The home was designated a Perinton landmark in 1997.

Plans for the transformation of Pittsford-Victor Road, often referred to as Ketchum Road, were announced by the New York State Highway Department in February of 1938. Referencing earlier updates to the road, the Democrat and Chronicle commented, "Only a little more than a decade ago, this Bushnell's Basin road which is now to be improved was hailed as a model

highway, offering a shortcut to Victor and Canandaigua, and inviting to speed and smooth riding. Now the stream of traffic has outgrown the road, and instead of being a speedway it has become a slow motion way, in which one slow car can hold up a line of others along the narrow twisting course.”

Construction began in August of 1939, and reportedly included 3.3 miles of Pittsford-Victor Road, beginning one third of a mile southeast of Bushnell’s Basin. The construction extended to the Ontario County line. The road it replaced included a few sharp curves and a thirty-foot gully, all of which were eliminated during construction of the new highway.



This 1930s view shows Pittsford-Victor Road, also known as Ketchum Road, prior to the major 1939-1940 project, which transformed it into an “ultramodern superhighway.”

Referred to in news reports as an “ultramodern superhighway,” the divided highway featured a 14-foot landscaped center mall, with two lanes of one-way traffic in each direction. The total cost was estimated at \$300,000. The highway’s grand opening allowed Perinton’s Labor Day motorists in the year 1940 to experience the latest in high-speed automotive travel, more than three quarters of a century ago.

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