

# Explore Hwy 94, in San Diego's East Co., Where Barrett Junction was Once a Stagecoach Stop

Take the time to explore historic Hwy 94, in San Diego's backcountry. It's a great day-trip, to get away from the city hassle.

This is a road that is just crammed with history. Remember, before Highway 80 existed, Highway 94 was the main route from San Diego to Yuma and points east, according to the book "History of Highway 94," by Shirley Bowman Reider. At that time, the other alternative was two-day trip north to Los Angeles, then east from there...

But, long before that, "...many of the original settlers who came to (this area of southeast San Diego County), came up through Tijuana, Mexico, and went to Tecate (Mexico)." From Tecate, they came north into this area, because "...this route was not as mountainous, and an easier route to follow... At that time there were few immigration agents and only one customs man, Charlie Cameron, who had the entire territory from the desert to the ocean," Reider explains. Many different routes were attempted over the years to reach this southeast county area, from the west, and by 1870, a regular stagecoach line schedule was established along what was to become Campo Rd., then Hwy 94. Today, as you're heading into the hills on Hwy 94, Barrett Junction is an important historic stop. In the horse-and-buggy days, it was originally a way-station, and a rest stop for travelers in the back country. Where Highway 94 meets Barrett Lakes Rd. (out where Hwy 94 is a two-lane road, also called Campo Rd.), the small, original Barrett General Store building still stands quietly, attached to the historic Barrett Junction Cafe (the small building is no longer open as a store). The tiny store structure was built in 1917 to serve locals and travelers along highway 94, which at one time was a popular stagecoach route, especially with those coming from, and going to, the border towns of Tecate, USA, and Tecate, Mexico.

## Some History of the Tecate Area

Tecate is two miles southeast from Barrett Junction on State Route 188. Tecate, USA, is the backcountry's port of entry to and from Mexico. "One of the region's oldest border towns, it was settled after border surveys were made in 1857," explains Dorothy Hom, in her article, "Bits of Tecate History," in the *Historical Guide to the Back Country*, published by the **Mountain Empire Historical Society**.

"In the 1880s a man named Greer opened a store there. Some years later, Joseph Thing opened a general store in 1892.

"In 1911, during the insurrection in Mexico, the 115th Coast Artillery Company, was sent to Tecate, which was just a narrow valley, encircled by layer upon layer of hills. In 1914, they were replaced by Troop M of the 1st Cavalry, which stayed until the United States entered World War I.

“Across the border, Tecate, Mexico, was originally an Indian Rancheria and Visita of Mission San Diego. When the mission properties were secularized, it was granted as Rancho Tecate to Juan Bandini, who operated it in 1836.

“A quiet and orderly place today, its citizens are busy with beer-brewing, bread-making and other enterprises, including the burgeoning maquiladora businesses.

“The town boasts an artist’s quarter and many curio shops on its main street. Parque Hidalgo, at the foot of the main approach from the border, is the setting for many community events, and the town is the scene of an annual Pamplonada – running of the bulls,” Hom concludes.

Tecate also has a restored, historic train station located on Defensores de B.C. Blvd., along the railroad tracks (near the corner of V. Carranza St.), south of the Cuahutemoc Brewery.

When visiting Tecate, it might be best to park on the USA side and walk into Mexico, as the return back to the USA by car, across the border, can take a long time, later in the day. Note: Only those who can walk without effort should park and walk across the border, as the return walk is up a steep incline.

[Please be advised that, beginning in January 2008, the US Federal Government will require a Passport to return from Mexico into the U.S.A., so plan now to get your Passport before the rush. – Helen Halmay, Editor.]

## **Campo Junction Has Three Museums**

Hwy 94 continues, beyond the junction with SR188, further east to Campo Junction, where three museums share the valley. The **Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Assn.** has a train museum, and offers weekend train rides from the Campo Depot. The complex is located at Hwy 94 at Forrest Gate Rd. They have a dirt parking lot for free, off-street parking next to the depot, and picnic tables under the trees, if you bring a lunch. Drinks and snacks are also available for sale in the depot.

For more information, see their Website for costs, days and times of operation, and driving instructions – [www.psrn.org](http://www.psrn.org).

Also located in Campo Valley are two additional museums.

The **Motor Transport Museum** is an eclectic collection of approximately 150 trucks and busses, many of them on display for public viewing. According to their Website ([www.motortransportmuseum.org](http://www.motortransportmuseum.org)), the museum’s objective is to create a positive awareness and appreciation for old trucks and the development of the motor transport industry.

This museum provides “...a place for restoration and public display of antique trucks, as well as photos, literature, memorabilia and other pertinent information relating to trucks, the trucking industry, and the pioneers who have made a significant contribution to the development and prosperity of California and the United States,” explains their Website.

The museum is housed in the historic Campo Feldspar Mill, built in 1929 to mill feldspar that was mined nearby in Hauser Canyon. (At the mill, this mineral

was ground and processed into porcelain, which was then used to manufacture sparkplugs and bathroom fixtures.)

To find the museum, drive east from the Stone Store on route 94 for approximately 1 mile, to 31949 Hwy 94. The Motor Transport Museum is the big mill building with the water tower, on your right. It's open on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entry is by donation. For more information, see their Website (above) or call (619) 478-2492. It is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entry is by donation.

The **Gaskill Brothers' Stone Store and Museum** is at 31130 Hwy 94. The museum features exhibits on the history of the Mountain Empire Region of San Diego County's mountainous backcountry. Using large photos, displays, and a partial store replication, the downstairs exhibit hall interprets the history of the store itself, and the rural life of the area – from prehistoric times through the early part of this century. The upstairs hall presents the unique history of the military in the region, including the significant role of Camp Lockett, the last horse cavalry post in the U.S. Army in the opening years of World War II.

The Stone Store and Museum is owned by San Diego County, and is managed by the **Mt. Empire Historical Society** (MEHS). It is open Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entrance donation is \$2 per adult.

All three Campo museums are members of the Border Californias Museum Association and the Congress of History of San Diego and Imperial Counties.

These three museums, and the Barrett Junction Cafe, help to make this area a worthwhile trip out Hwy 94/Campo Rd. to the backcountry.

## **Barrett Junction Cafe**

Barrett Junction Cafe first opened as a restaurant in 1946. "Mom wrung the chicken's necks and I plucked the feathers," recalls Cathy (Avril) Stevens of the times she prepped chickens for frying, when her parents, Bill and Vi Avril, opened Barrett Cafe.

Cathy and Phil Stevens took over the restaurant in 1980, to continue her parent's tradition, and ran the cafe until 1999, when Leon and Chris Herzog became the present owners. (Chris Herzog is the current president of the **Lakeside Historical Society**.)

"Originally, fried chicken was going to be the specialty of the house, but the fish fry was so darn good, it quickly became their signature item," says Chris Herzog. "It all started when Cathy's dad, Bill Avril, after fishing trips to Mexico, would come home with plenty of fish, which they fried-up and passed-out to customers, free of charge. Eventually, they had to charge for the fish, and it soon became the number one item on the menu.

"To this day, the fish fry is served every day, and it's still the same: deep fried cod, with a bowl of delicious, golden brown hush puppies with butter and honey. Add to this your choice of refried beans; rice pilaf; a tossed green salad, with house dressing; and marinated carrots and peppers (and tartar sauce for the fish). The original price was 75¢. Today, the price is just 'a little bit' more than that!" says Herzog, with a laugh. "We serve other food besides our famous fish dinner," she explains. "We have a complete menu and a full bar. Leon likes to barbecue,

and on the weekends we have really good ribs. We also offer a weekend Breakfast Buffet, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.," she concludes.

Barrett Junction Cafe is a group of buildings clustered together, under ancient pepper trees, on the north side of Hwy 94. The cafe complex consists of the small, original store (which is closed), a small gift shop and antique store, mixed in with a small dining room, which connects to a much larger saloon and dining hall, within a huge Quonset hut.

## **Super Swap Meet on 2nd Saturdays**

Across the street, on the south side of Hwy 94, the Herzogs are developing a riding arena, for local horse-related events. In addition, every second Saturday of the month, a community "Super Swap Meet" is held there, at the arena, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (but, it will be canceled, if it's raining). The Swap Meet is open to the public.

"This is just one more reason to take the time to explore historic Highway 94. It's a beautiful drive to get here, and worth the trip. Come out to see us!" invites Herzog. For details call (619) 468-3416, or see their Website at [www.barrettjunctioncafe.com](http://www.barrettjunctioncafe.com).

*Reprinted, with permission, from Adelante, member newsletter of the Congress of History of San Diego and Imperial Counties ([www.congressofhistory.org](http://www.congressofhistory.org)).*

