

Digital-Desert : Mojave Desert

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Heritage of the Mojave River Valley --

Barstow. In 1886, Waterman junction was named Barstow after William Barstow Strong, president of the A & P Railroad. Inasmuch as his name had been previously used for Strong City in the Midwest, railroad officials used his middle name, Barstow.



Barstow's "Old Town" was sandwiched between the Santa Fe railroads freight tracks on the south and the passenger tracks on the north. By the late 1890s, the community had become an important freight consolidation point as well as a junction for passengers. In the forepart of the century, Barstow had a two-story brick depot, a roundhouse and what passed for a Harvey House. Fires had destroyed each by 1910. Likewise, much of "Old Town" had burned down in the business and residential areas expanded largely south of the tracks on a level with the railroad grade.

Because of increased railroad traffic demands during World War I and the years immediately following, the Santa Fe bought the existing business district and Barstow moved up the hill, its Main Street becoming the newly realigned National Old Trails (US 66) Highway. Half of the town's residences were also moved. The two-story Melrose Hotel, a garage that claimed to be the biggest west of Albuquerque and two

entire business blocks started the new Barstow in the mid-1920s.



During the intervening years, Barstow has never stopped growing. Its strategic location can be likened to the hub of a wheel, the spokes radiating out representing the Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroad lines and that [US Highways 66](#), 91 and 466. Expanding railroad activities and increasing agricultural development throughout the Mojave River Valley have played a tremendous part in its economic life. World War II set off a new tempo with the establishment of the huge military bases nearby. Then it's tourist trade, of growing significance each year, zoom to a new high, now bringing in more than \$11 million annually.

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