THE DEPOT AT CAMPO, CALIFORNIA

By

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San Diego, California, was blessed with a great harbor, a harbor, however, without an interior to serve. Just 30 miles east of San Diego, high rugged mountains prevent travel eastward toward Arizona. All road and rail traffic from San Diego was funneled north along the coastal plain to Los Angeles before turning east for Arizona and eventually the east coast of the United States. In 1907, to pierce this mountainous barrier, the San Diego & Arizona Railway (SD&A) began to build east from San Diego for Yuma, Arizona. Unfortunately, the only feasible route between San Diego and Yuma necessitated the SD&A being built through Mexico.

The SD&A headed south from San Diego for 16 miles to Tijuana, Mexico. After crossing the border, it ran east for 44 miles (Mile 60) before re-entering the United States. Six miles north of the American-Mexican border was the settlement of Campo, California (Mile 66). SD&A reached Campo on October 2, 1916, and circa 1920 built the present depot. The depot is at an elevation of 2,584 feet compared to San Diego at an elevation of 10 feet. In 1941, Camp Lockett, a U S Army cavalry post, was established at Campo. The post was at first home of two cavalry regiments, then a POW Camp, and finally an Army hospital. The post was closed in 1946 and much of the present community of Campo is housed in former Army facilities.

In 1919, SD&A reached Yuma, 218 miles east of San Diego. Then in 1933, SD&A was reorganized as San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway (SD&AE). In 1979, San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) bought the SD&AE and began to convert its right-of-way to light rail use. The portion of SD&AE within Mexico has been out of service since circa 2000. The San Diego Railroad Museum is presently based at Campo. It leases the line from Campo to the Mexican border from MTS and uses the Campo Depot for ticket sales and boarding of their excursion trains.

Campo Depot from the street side

Campo Depot from track side.