



# Historic Highway 99 Explorer

The Official Publication of the  
Historic Highway 99 Association of California

Volume I Issue 6 – July 2021

## The Grapevine or The Ridge Route?



**Grapevine Canyon and Dead Man's Curve. Courtesy – Michael F Ballard**

I-5 is commonly referred to as “The Grapevine” by locals and traffic reporters. Most assume the name derives from the twisty nature of the original roadway – the Ridge Route. That road was indeed very twisty, much like a grapevine. However, that is still not the reason. The name Grapevine actually comes from Grapevine Canyon, where old US 99 and I-5 come down from the mountains and into the San Joaquin Valley. The canyon is called such as wild grapes grow along the canyon walls. It was formerly known as Canada De Las Uvas which is Spanish for Canyon of the Grapes. The name Tejon Pass is also a “new” addition to the area. The current Tejon Pass was known as Grapevine Pass or Badger Pass until

the 1850's. Old Tejon Pass, much farther to the east, was a very treacherous route. That pass was eventually abandoned in favor of the current Tejon Pass. The name was just shifted to the new route.

After the 1933 bypass of the original road to as late as the 1970's, the roadway over the mountains was still referred to as "The Ridge Route". It wasn't until sometime in the 1980's that the name "The Grapevine" was extended to the entire roadway. Why this was done is still unclear. Even Caltrans called it the "Ridge Route" when I-5 was completed. So, if you want to call it proper – call it Tejon Pass, when being specific to the actual pass, and the Ridge Route when referring to I-5 from Castaic to Grapevine. While you're passing through Grapevine Canyon, be sure to spot the wild grapevines that still grow in the canyon. Names may change, but the name Ridge Route should live on. It applies to I-5 better than "The Grapevine" ever will.

## 99 Alert – Mammoth Orange in Fairmead

The Fossil Discovery Museum near Chowchilla, California needs your help. They are in the process of restoring the former Mammoth Orange that was cited along Highway 99 at Fairmead until freeway construction closed off its access in 2007. The last operating Giant, or Mammoth Orange stand along old 99 was rescued and will be reopened nearby. The museum is raising funds for this effort. They can use your support! Lets help bring back a piece of Highway 99 history. Make sure to tell them the Highway 99 Association sent you!

**Their website:**

<https://www.maderamammoths.org/projects.html>

**Link to their fundraiser:**

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/mammothorange>

## Events

Our monthly meetings and presentations have been a success and will continue to grow. In the future, we will have member-only presentations, so make sure you sign up for a membership today! Your tax-deductible donations help us continue to keep Highway 99 alive.

On July 6, 2021 at 6 pm, we will have a presentation on the history of US 99 through the San Gorgonio Pass by Michael Ballard. The presentation will include maps, photos, and detailed information about the roadway from Calimesa to Edom, near Thousand Palms.

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEqd-moqj4vHdJw6RL5SEOPiOfdgV2J3M4G>

In August, we will have our first guest speaker. So, join Historian Evan Decker; President of Mentryville, California Inc for a presentation and Q & A on the History of Mentryville, California on August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm; Hosted by the Historic Highway 99 Association. Mentryville is a historic ghost town known as the site of the "birthplace" of the Oil Industry in California in 1876 with the drilling of California Star Oil No. 4. Q & A to follow.

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMkd-2hqDoqEty9IHOFgyUWO0ns2\\_ZKrq\\_7](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMkd-2hqDoqEty9IHOFgyUWO0ns2_ZKrq_7)

## YouTube Channel

We now have a YouTube channel, which we plan to use to post videos of any events, points of interest along 99, meetings, presentations, and much more. Come check it out!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAvGZpwJjMnoBplxbkxMmaw>

## Highway 99 Online Calendar

We started a new calendar for Highway 99 Association events and any other Highway 99 related events. We are looking to fill it in! If you'd like to add your event or have one in mind to add, let us know!

### Membership and Outreach

Our membership now extends across all three states US 99 traversed and British Columbia. It seems the word is slowly getting out there. We want to do more, however, and need your support. If you're not a member already, sign up! Your membership is tax-deductible and your membership fees will go to helping us bring Historic Highway 99 into the spotlight it deserves.

We also need your help. Soon, we will develop brochures and flyers for the Association for distribution. We will need your help in doing this as well as helping represent the Association throughout California. We're also looking for ideas for fundraisers and outreach programs. If you'd like to help, contact us! We want to see this Association succeed and it cannot without help from all over.

We do wish to thank all those that have donated so far and signed up for memberships. Your contributions, regardless of size, have been very helpful to our cause.

## Sign Design Contest

Interested in helping design a new sign for 99?



Mileage sign on US 6 in Bishop, California. Courtesy – Michael F Ballard

We are holding a design contest for a new terminus mileage sign for US 99. US 6 has one in Bishop. US 50 has one in Sacramento. I-40 has one in Barstow. US 99 does not and we intend to change that. Two signs will be placed, one in Calexico, California and the other in Blaine, Washington to commemorate the historic termini of US 99. What we are looking for is a sign that stands out among the others and gives the mileage to each end. For reference, the historic mileage of US 99 was 1499 miles in 1958 per AAA. The sign should contain a US 99 shield, possibly three for each of the states it passed through. We aren't looking for a large sign as there may be space constraints but certainly a sign 24" x 36" or smaller, horizontal or vertical, would be acceptable. At the present time, we are not certain as to when the signs will be posted. All designs must be submitted by August 15, 2021.

The winner will be announced in our September newsletter.

## Featured Image



US 6 / US 99 Interchange on December 28, 1956. Courtesy - Caltrans

Newhall Pass has been a congestion point for centuries. It is one of the three passes that lead to central California from the Los Angeles area. Until cuts were made in the summit, beginning in 1854 and culminating in Beale's Cut in 1863, the pass was nearly insurmountable by wagons. In 1910, the cut was bypassed by a narrow tunnel, which itself was replaced by a much larger cut in 1939. US 99 itself bypassed the old pass in 1930, following a new route through Weldon and Gavin Canyons along the "Newhall Alternate". Tunnel Station, where Sierra Highway and US 99 met, was again a point of congestion. In 1953, construction on a new freeway, complete with direct connector ramps, began in the pass. It would be the first section of freeway for US 99 in the area. In 1955, it was completed removing the congestion point at Tunnel Station with a direct ramp from WB US 6 to SB US 99.

Today, the original three-level interchange remains but with only two levels still in use. The lower ramp is now partially filled in, having been replaced with the newer I-5 / State 14 interchange in 1975. Newhall Pass today remains a very busy and vital corridor for Southern California.



**Historic Highway 99 Explorer**

**Official Publication of the Historic Highway 99 Association of California  
A 501(c)3 California Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation**

**PO BOX 34062  
San Diego, CA 92163**

**[info@historic99.org](mailto:info@historic99.org)**

**619-752-0478**

## **Board of Directors**

Michael F Ballard	President
Vicki Farmwald	Secretary
Sara Lazarus	Treasurer
Huzail Hassan	Art and Graphic Design

**Website: <https://historic99.org>**

**Instagram: @historic99ca**

**Twitter: @historic99**