



101 HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS of Camarillo and the Pleasant Valley

Presented by



**Pleasant Valley
Historical Society**





Dear Friends—

In the early 1960's, a group of people, including the Honorable Stanley J. Daily, Mayor Emeritus of Camarillo, Ms. Pat Meredith and Mr. Jack Fulkerson, had a dream and a mission to establish an organization to maintain and preserve the history of the general geographic areas of Camarillo, the Pleasant Valley, Somis and Santa Rosa Valley. In 1964 the Pleasant Valley Historical Society (PVHS) was created to preserve and conserve landmarks, collect historical artifacts, books, photos and oral and written histories of the area for the general public to see and enjoy. In 1985, the Museum and Botanical Garden were established, and we now display the many items that have been collected.

This year our Society is happy to celebrate its 50th Anniversary, and we invite you to celebrate it with us by visiting our Museum. Your community has a lot of history, and we want to share it with you. This commemorative publication describes many important historical events in the Pleasant Valley area in a relative timeline, to honor our founders, increase your appreciation for history, and heighten your interest in the PVHS Museum.

This is also a year of many other anniversaries in the area, and I would like to congratulate all of them, for they touch the lives of so many in our community.

CONGRATULATIONS to:

Pleasant Valley Historical Society (50th Anniversary)
The City of Camarillo (50th Anniversary)
St. John's Seminary (75th Anniversary)
St. Mary Magdalen Church (100th Anniversary)
Adolfo Camarillo's Birthday (150th Anniversary)

Sincerely,

Franklin D. Roth
President, PVHS & Museum

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1 In 1875, a road was built to connect the missions established by Padre Serra. Called El Camino Real, it came from the south through Newbury Park and down Potrero Canyon then across the vast Pleasant Valley, allowing travel between the San Fernando Valley and the missions to the north.

2 Before modern agriculture, there was a high water table and extensive wetlands on the Oxnard Plain.

3 The Butterfield Stage line ran through the area from 1861 to 1887. It went from Thousand Oaks down to the upper Santa Rosa Valley to a spring near the Santa Rosa School. The route was later shifted to Santa Susanna Pass. By either route, the stage eventually went through the early town of Springville.

4 Springville was near the intersection of Old Conejo and Wood Roads. Farms sprang up here when unclaimed land was found between the Spanish land grants. Sheep and cattle were driven over the hills to water at a nearby spring before moving them on to the abattoir at Port Hueneme.

5 The Pleasant Valley Baptist Church was founded in 1869. A post office was established in 1875. By 1879, the Santa Clara Water and Irrigation Ditch Company was diverting water to farms. A hotel was built in Springville in 1880.

6 The first lath and plaster house in the area was built on the Totty Ranch in 1880.

7 The Center School was built near Somis at Bradley Road and Los Angeles Avenue in 1885. Unhrue's grocery store opened in 1894. The town of Somis was established by Thomas Bard in 1892.

8 Somis School was built in 1895. The Somis Thursday (Women's) Club, founded in 1904, moved into the old school building in 1924 and continues there to this day.

9 Jonathan and James Fulkerson were blacksmiths in Somis in 1892. They opened a hardware store in 1912.

10 In the 1880's, more than 6,000 acres of land were owned by the American Crystal Sugar Co. It was later subdivided into 140 small farms.

11 In the 1890's, wagon trains carried grain through the area to Port Hueneme from wheat fields in Simi Valley. This primitive road went along Calleguas Creek.



12 In 1885, Adolfo Camarillo took over responsibility for operations on Rancho Calleguas. He built a large house in 1892 and planted "The Lane", two rows of eucalyptus trees along the road that would later become U.S. Highway 101.

13 The Pleasant Valley School District was established in 1868 and is the oldest existing school district in Ventura County. A schoolhouse was built in Springville 1887. The Springville School was built in 1930 at the corner of Wood and Pleasant Valley Roads and is still used today as a residence. Students went to Oxnard for high school from 1901 until 1956 when Adolfo Camarillo High School opened. Rio Mesa High School opened in 1965.

14 The oldest school currently active in the Pleasant Valley District is Santa Rosa School which first opened in 1911. It was acquired from the Conejo School District in 1975.

15 Pleasant Valley School, the first schoolhouse in Camarillo, was built in 1895. In 1921, a new school was built with eight classrooms. Five more were added in 1928 and there was major new construction in 1947. The auditorium served as a community center for many years.

16 Lima beans were first planted here about 1890 by Michael Flynn, Joseph Lewis, and Adolfo Camarillo.

17 In 1887, the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad ran from Los Angeles to Saugus and down the Santa Clara River to Santa Paula. In 1898, rail was extended from Ventura to the Oxnard sugar factory, then to Camarillo and Somis in 1901. With construction of the Santa Susanna tunnel in 1904, the route north from Los Angeles was significantly shortened going through Camarillo, and a depot opened in 1906.

18 The town of Camarillo grew near the new railroad, and the first mercantile store (Sebastian's) and post office opened in 1901.

19 Ike Norman operated a blacksmith shop on Somis Road (now Lewis Road) from 1910 to 1969.

20 Accidents were common on the steep haul routes from the Conejo Valley to the Hueneme wharf. Between 1900 and 1911, five families built the safer Norwegian Grade (now Moorpark Road) at the head of the Santa Rosa Valley.

21 The main auto route from Los Angeles was along the old El Camino Real, since the coastal route from Santa Monica was blocked by the Malibu Ranch. U.S. 101 was one of the first major highways in California.

22 The first housing tract was on Barry Street in 1910, followed by homes on Davenport and Fulton Streets. The People's Tract was approved in 1952, and the Arneill/Raemere tract in 1953, followed by the Edgemont and Sunshine tracts.

23 In 1914, St. Mary Magdalen Church was built for the family by Juan Camarillo. It was designed by Albert C. Martin. From its hilltop position, the chapel was the dominant landmark of Pleasant Valley.



24 In 1917, the Buckhorn Saloon opened in the Cawelti Building at Somis Road and Old Conejo Road. It operated as a business until 2006.





25 The Fulton Hotel opened in Camarillo in 1915 and burned down in 1927.

26 Early in the century, there were producing oil wells at the foot of the Conejo Grade, on Pitts Ranch and in Camarillo Heights.

27 In 1923, the population of Camarillo was 150. It became known as the “chapel city”, the “jewel of the Oxnard plain”.

28 The *Camarillo Daily News* began as a weekly newspaper in 1926. It ceased publication in 1993.



29 Camarillo State Hospital opened in 1936 and was the largest of its kind in the state. Before it closed in 1997, more than 160,000 patients were treated there, including musician Charlie Parker and actress Francis Farmer.

30 St. John's Seminary was built in 1939 on land donated by Juan Camarillo. The campus includes the Doheny Library, designed by Wallace Neff.

31 The Camarillo Protective Association was organized for fire protection and street lighting, and hired a night watchman. E.C. Putnam was the first full time fire chief (1940).

32 The Camarillo Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1940. The Chamber was instrumental in facilitating the incorporation of the City in 1964.

33 Camarillo Airport (formerly Oxnard Air Force Base) began in 1942 when the California State Highway Department constructed a

5,000 foot runway. In 1951, the Army Corps of Engineers extended the runway to 8,000 feet. The airport runway was further extended in 1959 to accommodate jets. There were 99 officers and 990 enlisted stationed there.

34 From 1941 to 1943, Mike Dizdar organized the removal of neglected graves from the pioneer cemetery to create the park now named in his honor.

35 During the war, many soldiers saw the area briefly on their way up the coast to Camp Roberts. It was the first time many of them had ever seen an orange tree.

36 In 1945, a camp for German POW's was built on Central Ave. near Vineyard Ave. Its 437 prisoners worked on nearby farms.

37 Many dairies located here, due to the good climate and proximity to Los Angeles. The State Hospital had its own dairy and brand. Other brands were Giacopuzzi, McGrath, Sanitary, Chase and Adohr. Merritt Adamson and his wife Rhoda Rindge Adamson, whose parents were the last owners of the Spanish land grant in Malibu, founded Adohr Farms and moved it to Camarillo in 1947.

38 Carmen's Snack Shop (later Dorothy's Restaurant) was open from 1947 to 1974. Constable J.C. Ellis would enter, point to two people and say “Come with me, you are needed for the jury”.

39 In 1947, the population of the area was 800.

40 In 1947, El Tecolote restaurant was opened on Barry Street by Mike Loza.

41 In the 1950's, a camel from Jungleland escaped from a parade and ran down Ventura Blvd. from Lewis Road to Las Posas Road. Meliton Ortiz from the Camarillo

Ranch noticed and mounted Rico, one of the white horses that had been in the parade, chased the camel down and roped it.

42 Actor Joel McCrea consulted with Adolfo Camarillo when he bought his 1,650-acre ranch in the upper Santa Rosa Valley. He asked him why he had so many more workers on his ranch than the amount of work required. Adolfo's answer was “I don't need all of them, but they need me”.

43 The first public library was a shelf in the old schoolhouse. It then moved around to various homes and stores until 1940, when it became part of the first community center near Dizdar Park.

44 Ventura Highway was realigned to its current location in 1951. By 1954, the Ventura Freeway was completed from Los Angeles. Originally planned to follow the path of Potrero Road, south of Camarillo, CalTrans decided to lay the freeway parallel to Ventura Boulevard. This resulted in the infamously steep 7% descent known as the Conejo Grade.

45 The Camarillo Sanitary District was founded in 1955. It was considered to be the heart of the community when the proposed city boundary was drawn.

46 Las Posas Country Club opened in 1958. The golf course was designed by Lawrence Hughes.

47 The last business in Springville was a gas station and auto court operated by Sadie Newell until 1958. She continued to live on the property until 1970.

48 In 1959, the Capehart military housing tract opened with 315 housing units on 51 acres. It was rebuilt in 2010 as Catalina Heights.

49 The Ventura Walnut Shelling Company (aka Somis Nut House) was established in 1959 by Stephen Resnik when walnut trees were abundant in the area.

50 The Ventura Youth Correctional Facility was established north of town in 1962.



51 The Pleasant Valley Recreation & Park District was established in 1962. The Oak Grove Park at the foot of Conejo Grade was donated by Adolfo Camarillo. Kihi Pool in Somis served the community for recreational swimming and pool parties until the Aquatic Center opened in 1969.

52 In 1963, the County swept the streets only once a year.

53 In 1963, the 5,500-acre Camarillo Ranch went up for sale and the land was developed into housing and commercial buildings. The ranch house, barn and 4.4 acres were donated to the City.

54 The first area supermarket, Vons, was opened in the Ponderosa Shopping Center in 1963.

55 In 1963, 3M built a magnetic tape factory that employed 900 people, becoming the largest local employer before closing in 2008.

56 In 1964, Joel McCrea sold 1,500 acres of his ranch in the Santa Rosa Valley. Describing himself as a rancher with an acting hobby, he was active in Camarillo, especially with the Boys & Girls Club.



57 In October 1964, pork chops sold at Von's for 39 cents/lb.

58 In October 1964, a can of Ajax Cleanser sold for 7 cents.

59 The Pleasant Valley Historical Society was founded in 1964. Charter members were Ruth Andress, Pat Bell, Stanley Daily, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Richard Underwood, Jack Fulkerson, Dan Hartman, Irene Kitchen, Gloria Longo, Jack McEwen, Patricia Meredith, Fred Stein and Edith (Tweedy) Rouce.

60 Since its inception, the Pleasant Valley Historical Society has honored 439 local residents as Dons & Doñas.

61 In October 1964, you could buy a house for \$13,000.

62 In October 1964, a stamp for first class mail was 5 cents.



63 The incorporation movement came out of the Chamber of Commerce, and a key planning meeting at Carmen's Snack Shop (later Dorothy's Restaurant) on Ventura Boulevard that was attended by Harold Kinch, Earl Joseph, Guy Turner, Bob Littell, Ray Liddle, Dr. John McHale, Tom Bohan, Dr. Fred DeLay, Dick Miller, Stan Daily, Ted Daniel and Max Riave. An Incorporation Study Committee was then organized consisting of George Longo, Max Grant, Bill Fuller, Bob Mason, Robert Cribb and Edith (Tweedy) Rouce.

In 1963, Oxnard tried to annex Las Posas Estates and provide sanitation services for the new "Monte Vienda" subdivision which would have served as an anchor for further annexation. This aggressive reach by Oxnard stimulated an interest to incorporate, and a petition was filed with the County to incorporate 5.4 square miles. The main reasons for wanting to incorporate as a city were to have home rule and good planning, to create our own destiny.

An election was held on September 29, 1964 to decide if we should become a city. There were 3,739 eligible voters and it was a 64% turnout. There was a vote on forming the new city, and a vote for members of a new city council. The vote was 1,990 in favor of incorporation, 353 against. The new City Council was Earl Joseph (Mayor), Stan Daily (Vice Mayor), Ned Chatfield, Guy Turner and Edith (Tweedy) Rouce.

On October 22, Councilman-Elect Ned Chatfield flew to Sacramento to deliver the results of the election and receive the Certificate of Incorporation from the Secretary of State. He then flew directly back to Camarillo and the first meeting of the City Council was convened in the Pleasant Valley School auditorium.

New ordinances had been drafted to provide a seamless transition and not leave the new city temporarily without laws. All of these had to be read out loud before the vote, a process that took over four hours. A budget of \$144,360 was passed and Kay Kelly was hired as the first city employee.

The Camarillo Daily News collected names, and Charter Resident certificates, signed by the new City Council, were issued to people living within the new city limits at the time of the election, and the rest...is history.

64 In September 1964, a record crowd of 91,300 attended the Ventura County Fair.

65 The first traffic light in the area was at Las Posas and Pleasant Valley Roads. In 1964, a traffic light was installed at the corner of Arneill and Las Posas Roads.

66 In October 1964, gasoline was 30 cents/gallon.



67 Two card rooms had to close after a vote of the new City Council in 1964. The Council also banned door-to-door peddlers.

68 In October 1964, the favorite movie was Mary Poppins.

69 Hit songs in 1964 were "Working My Way Back To You" (The Four Seasons) "I Get Around" (The Beach Boys) "Everybody Loves Somebody" (Dean Martin) and "House of the Rising Sun" (The Animals).

70 The proposed city boundaries did not include most of Camarillo Heights, which had a population of 1704 people in 1960.

71 1965, Ray Corrigan sold his movie ranch, Corriganville, to Bob Hope for \$2.8 million.

72 George Longo, Max Riave and Harold Bell secured the water supply for the City by leading a ballot measure for the Calleguas Water District to become part of the Metropolitan Water District. Camrosa Water District was established in 1966.

73 A & W Root Beer opened downtown, but later closed due to expansion of the freeway.



74 The City's official flower is the Bougainvillea Fiesta.

75 Las Posas Village Shopping Center was built in 1967.

76 Organized in 1968, Camarillo Players and the Children's Theater were combined in 1975 to form the Camarillo Community Theater.

77 In 1969, the Camarillo Health Care District was established and the Pleasant Valley Hospital was approved. The hospital opened in 1973.

78 The Camarillo Boys & Girls Club was founded in 1967 and moved to Ponderosa & Temple in 1975.



79 Actor Walter Brennan lived on a ranch near Moorpark and was involved in Camarillo life. He served as grand marshal of the Camarillo Christmas Parade for several years.

80 One reason for incorporating the City was to provide an orderly approach to growth, which began with the sale of the Camarillo Ranch. Aerospace and other industries moved to the area, fueling the development of new subdivisions.

81 In the early 1970's, Leisure Village and Mission Oaks master plans were initiated, and construction of all-electric Leisure Village, a 2,136-unit retirement community, began in 1973 and was completed in 1984.

82 Pardee Corporation developed 1,312 acres of land in Mission Oaks over 35 years, completing the project in 2004.

83 The population of Camarillo was 25,111 in 1970.

84 When the Air Force Base closed in 1970, many in Camarillo were concerned that it might become a regional airport for large jets, so a condition of closure was to abandon the western end of the long runway. It is now a public airport with one runway for general aviation.

85 The last base commanders were Col. Cofer and Col. Herb Prevost, who closed the base in 1970.

86 A General Plan for the City was written in 1974 by a citizens committee of 100.

87 Early locations for city hall were the Pleasant Valley School and the old Bank of America building on Palm Drive. It moved to its current location on Carmen Drive in 1977.

88 The PVHS Museum was established in 1985 when it obtained a lease on the land and building formerly owned by the Camino Water Company.



89 In 1977, the population was 27,641 and there were 9,563 dwelling units in town.

90 In-N-Out Burger opened in 1983, the first in Ventura County.

91 Camarillo Premium Outlets opened in the mid-1990's and now has 160 stores.

92 California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) was founded in 2002 on the site of the former state hospital. It has 700 employees and more than 7,000 alumni.

93 Being in an ideal location in a coastal climate, but well outside the Los Angeles area, Camarillo continued to be attractive. In 1981, a citizens' initiative ordinance, Measure A, was passed to achieve a steady rate of residential growth. Greenbelt agreements were made to protect the open space and agricultural areas around the community along with the SOAR (Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources) ordinance.



94 The new Camarillo City Library opened in 2007. It is 65,621 square feet, four times larger than its former location on Ponderosa Drive.

95 Studio Channel Islands Art Center was located on the CSUCI campus until 2010, when classrooms were leased for artists' studios on the former campus of Pleasant Valley School on Ventura Blvd. The Studios now have forty-two Artists in Residence.

96 In 2010, there were 25,702 housing units in the area.

97 Pleasant Valley Fields, a 55-acre sports park, opened in 2011.

98 The Springville interchange on U.S. 101 opened in 2012.

99 In 1980, the population of Camarillo was 44,138. By 1990, it had increased to 52,300 and was 57,077 in the year 2000. In 2010, it was 65,221, with 17% over the age of 65.

100 Service organizations formed in the area include the Lions (1945), Rotary (1955), Kiwanis (1966), Optimists (1984), Soroptimists (1980), Toastmasters (1973), Moose (1984) and American Legion (1946).

101 The climate here is ideal, with temperatures in the 70's most of the year. Average annual rainfall is 13 inches, average humidity is 62% and there are more than 300 days of sunshine each year.

CITY OF CAMARILLO

Golden Anniversary



**October 17th
Dinner Dance**

**October 18th
Celebration in the Park**

**October 22nd
Anniversary**

**JOIN OUR
CELEBRATION!**

50th Anniversary of Incorporation

Come celebrate with us!

October 17, 2014 – 6 pm to 11 pm 50th Golden Anniversary Dinner Dance at the Serra Center, 5205 Upland Road. Evening includes:

- Catered dinner
- No host bar
- Mayor's introduction with champagne toast
- Magician Paul Dwork
- Comedian Jason Love
- And dancing to the music provided by DJ Bruce Barrios

Advanced tickets may be purchased online at www.cityofcamarillo.org.

October 18, 2014 – 11 am to 7 pm Celebration in Constitution Park, 601 Carmen Drive. **Free to all!** Five Decades of Music, featuring Adolfo Camarillo High School Band; Camarillo Community Band; C.A.P.E. Band; March 4th; The Rick Hunter Band; 80's Invasion, and The British Beat. A Kids Corner with face painting, roving magician, inflatable jumps, balloon guy, and Kid Print booth. There will also be food & drinks available for purchase from food trucks and booths, as well as a beer/wine garden and souvenir sales.

October 22, 2014 – the City's actual anniversary
1 pm to 4:30 pm Open House Tours at these locations:

- City Hall – 601 Carmen Drive
- Camarillo Public Library, 4101 Las Posas Rd.
- Camarillo Ranch House, 201 Camarillo Ranch Rd.
- Camarillo Police Station, 3701 Las Posas Rd.
- Camarillo Health Care District, 3639 Las Posas Rd. Suite 117
- Pleasant Valley Historical Society Museum, 720 N. Las Posas Rd

7:30 pm – City Hall, Celebratory City Council meeting for public comments and presentations, adjourning to the Courtyard for cake cutting and live mariachi music.

For more information visit

www.cityofcamarillo.org

or call 805.383.5633