

# The Echo

## News from the Pleasant Valley Historical Society

### AROUND OUR TOWN

#### THE CAMARILLO LIBRARY, The Early Days

Excerpts from "History of the Camarillo Library" by Louise M. Burke

In order to trace the fascinating history of the Camarillo Library, we must go back more than one hundred years. Picture California at that time, during the period after the secularization of the missions in 1834, after the California gold rush of 1848 and after the admission of California to the Union in 1850. Among the many challenges this new state faced was the difficulty of establishing an educational system; California covered a huge area and school facilities were scarce. In 1829, a single school, located in San Buenaventura, served all of Ventura County.

The first official school in the newly established Pleasant Valley School District opened on November 10, 1868. The youngsters and their teacher met in an abandoned granary, 12 feet long and 6 feet wide, just west of the present site of Camarillo. In 1895, at a cost of \$4,700, a new school was built. It boasted a library. According to Marie Barry, one of the first teachers, this library consisted of a set of readers. There were no reference books; audio-visual materials were still far in the future. But at last Camarillo had a library of sorts, even if not yet for general public use.

In 1910, Miss Harriet Eddy was assigned the task of organizing a county library system. Her efforts were opposed by the Board of Supervisors. It was Camarillo's own Don Adolfo, then president of the Ventura County Farm Bureau, who turned the tide in her favor. As she recalled later, "Mr. Camarillo was in his element. He had been chosen leader of the delegation and he led them as proudly as a general on parade. A suave, pleasant man of Spanish descent, he was one of the largest taxpayers in the county, one of its wealthiest citizens, and reputed to be its most influential. A hush fell on the room when Mr. Camarillo went forward to the rail. In his slow, Spanish-American clipped accent, he said, 'Gentlemen, we have come to you today about a library system for our county. We do not ask you to establish one. We demand it.' That was all! The crowd was taken by storm. It cheered and gave Mr. Camarillo an ovation. From then on, it was difficult for the chairman of the board to pick the speaker, for there were so many on their feet at once. In the din, the chairman managed to call a vote and, with a bang of his gavel, he announced that a resolution to establish a county library had been unanimously adopted."

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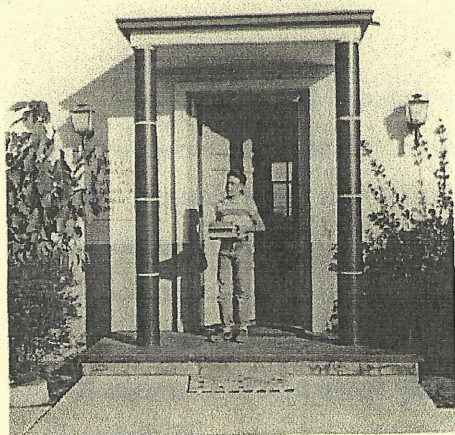


The Ventura County Free Library was established by the Supervisors on April 5, 1915. The next year, the City Library joined the County Library and the first branch library in Camarillo was established. In 1919, Mr. Oscar Hernandez was appointed Branch Library Assistant and Camarillo's first official library was housed in his store, the Camarillo Mercantile Co. Seventy-five books were sent from Ventura. They included *Texas Star*, *Greyfriars Bobby* and *Lone Star Ranger* among others. Mr. Hernandez was an ideal man for the job. He was a graduate of Oxnard High School, a noteworthy accomplishment in those days.

So that this small collection would be more accessible, it was moved the next year to a larger room in the nearby Conejo Inn, where the owners Mr. and Mrs. F. B. Merrill welcomed borrowers any time. When this restaurant went out of business in 1931, Mrs. Ruth Fellows, a housewife on Arneill Road, offered her sun porch as a temporary library. This arrangement lasted more than two years.

In December of 1933, Mrs. Adele Flynn became Branch Library Assistant. She moved the collection first to a "cubbyhole" in the old post-office nearby, and shortly thereafter to the Cawelti Building across the street. Having had hardly any space at all, she suddenly found herself in "a small corner of a cold barn of a place, 350 books and one table." There Mrs. Flynn began a memorable career. She participated in the growth of the Camarillo library for some thirty years.

Mrs. Flynn had lived in Camarillo since 1914. She was born in 1896 on the Rancho Santa Clara, the great, great, great granddaughter of Jose Maria Ortega, who came to California with the Don Gaspar de Portola expedition in 1769. This special California heritage, her great love of books and people (especially children), and an insatiable curiosity made Mrs. Flynn the natural choice to head this expanding library. At first, Mrs. Flynn had no assistants and earned \$10 a month. The library was open only two hours on Mondays and Fridays, and the charge for an overdue book was two cents a day.



With the arrival of more children and more books, another move was necessary, this time to the new Camarillo Community Center on Ventura Blvd., dedicated on April 4, 1941 and made possible by donations from the estate of Juan Camarillo. The library was to occupy one room in this new Spanish-style building. At the time it was called "one of the system's most attractive branches, with library furniture and an attractive yard."

By the late 50's and 60's, Camarillo was no longer depending solely on agriculture for its sustenance. As population increased, shopping centers and all the community services associated with an incorporated city began to appear. More children created a need for more books. To accommodate both required another step in the history of the Camarillo Library.

On May 18, 1962, dedication ceremonies were held in the new branch, constructed at a cost of \$41,444 on the corner of Ventura Boulevard and Glenn Dr. It was spacious and airy, 3,030 square feet of concrete block, liberal



## From the Desk of the President

Dear PVHS Members:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank each of you for your continued support for the Society over this past year.

Even though our national economy is currently in turmoil, our Pleasant Valley Historical Society is in a healthy state. Our board is very active and is representing all of our members on a continual basis. 2009 will bring with it some challenges that we as a nation must face. Likewise, our Historical Society continues to work on a strategy that will ensure the success of our Society for the future.

Enclosed in this newsletter is a membership renewal envelope. We would hope that you would fill this out and give us your continued support as you have in the past through membership renewal.

The Board of Directors and I would like to wish each of you a wonderful and a joyful New Year.

### DOCENTS

Our Docents are at our Museum every Saturday and Sunday from 12:00 to 4:00 P. M. They are there to meet, greet, and guide the public through our displays and garden. Many of you know some of the people who help in this capacity, and there are probably some that you do not know. I thought it might be nice to list these individuals who do so much for our Museum.

Feel free to drop in at any time during the above hours to visit our docents and the Museum, and see all of our displays. We are also privileged to have an ongoing display from the Antique Club, which is changed every three months.

Again, a special thanks to all our Docents listed here: Barbara Brownell, Helen Clausing, Eric Daily, Liz Daily, Ira Grooms, Bob Hernandez, Dave Hibbits, John Kitchens, Caroline Lescher, Suzanne Makuch, Eileen Maloney, Betty Jo McDonald, Val Rains, Shirley Randall, Pat Roth, Bob Rust, Tina Sanchez, Bill Seaver, Shirley Seaver, Cece Shulman, Bernie Smith, Carol Spracklin, Lois Thompson, and Adele Walsh.



## HISTORIC STREET NAMES

### Riave Court named for Max Riave

By Naomi Fisher

Those who remember Max Riave speak fondly of a friendly man who laughed and smiled a lot and devoted his life to helping the community grow.

Max was nine in 1906 when his close-knit Jewish family fled the despotism of Czarist Russia. They lived in Indianapolis IN, for one year then moved to Stanton CA. Max said one night the coyotes howled so loud and long that the next day he started walking back to Indianapolis. He made it to Anaheim where a policeman convinced him to go back home. He joined the U.S. Army in WWI; was with the 25th Engineers as part of the expeditionary Forces in France. After being discharged he married Ruth Goldring in 1922. He and his brother Sam opened their mercantile store in 1923, in the old Railroad Depot building, on Ventura Blvd. He (a Jew) was given a door key to St. Mary Magdalen Church to let the faithful in and lock up afterwards, if the priests were not there.

Max opened his own business in 1943 at 2298 Ventura Blvd. He had an old safe in the back where he kept V.C. residents' valuables. Mr. Adolfo Camarillo, Max's friend, appointed him Secretary for the new Camarillo Chamber of Commerce. Max eventually became a charter member, was a charter member of the Pleasant Valley Lion's Club, helped organize the first American Legion Post in V.C., the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Camarillo, the V.C. Jewish Council, helped build Temple Beth Torah in Ventura, and was a Masonic and Elk Lodge member.

Max worked with Harold Bell and George Longo to bring Calleguas water to Pleasant Valley. Because of his efforts for the City, Max was made an Honorary Don of Camarillo during the City's Charter Days Fiesta! He and Ruth had three children, and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1972. Max had closed his store and retired in 1966 saying, "I shall try to dedicate my future towards the accomplishments which will make Camarillo a model city." Max passed away on March 25, 1982.

## IN MEMORIUM

### Barbara Stirzel

Liz and Stan Daily

Helen Clausing

Pat Wise

Denka Nelson and Phil Carey

Grace Gary

Marianne Porter

### Roy Ash

Fred and Doris Phipps

### Lucille Gisler

Pat Wise



## Notes and Conversations

### Charles Honn Botanical Garden

Two tree trimming crews have been at work in the garden and now sunlight is falling onto the ground. This means that we can see what plants were shaded out and what we can re-plant. Soon we will be replanting new ribes, ceanothus and coffeeberry and the garden will once again be attractive to birds and those of us who want to have weddings and luncheons there.

Many thanks to Bob Pitts and his city crew, Marie Jascina and the Green Heart Garden crew, Jake and the Best Ever Tree Service and especially to our own Dave Hibbits for all his work and to Bob Rust for organizing the city tree trimming.

Happy Gardening to you all in 2009. Betty Jo McDonald

### Antique Club Display

The Antique Club Display, which will remain until the end of January, is called, "A Visit from St. Nick." It features old toys belonging to six of the club members. There is a handmade sled, made in the 1880's in Austria, several 1892 photographs of St. Nick, antique dolls, an old train, lithographed doll houses, an early child's sewing machine, and many other early toys and games. All these are displayed on a turkey red and white quilt, embroidered with "Merry Christmas 1891 - Happy New Year 1892."

You will want to make a point of visiting the museum during January so that you can see this interesting display. Bring your children or grandchildren so that they can get a glimpse of Christmases long ago.

### Time Capsule Buried in 1979

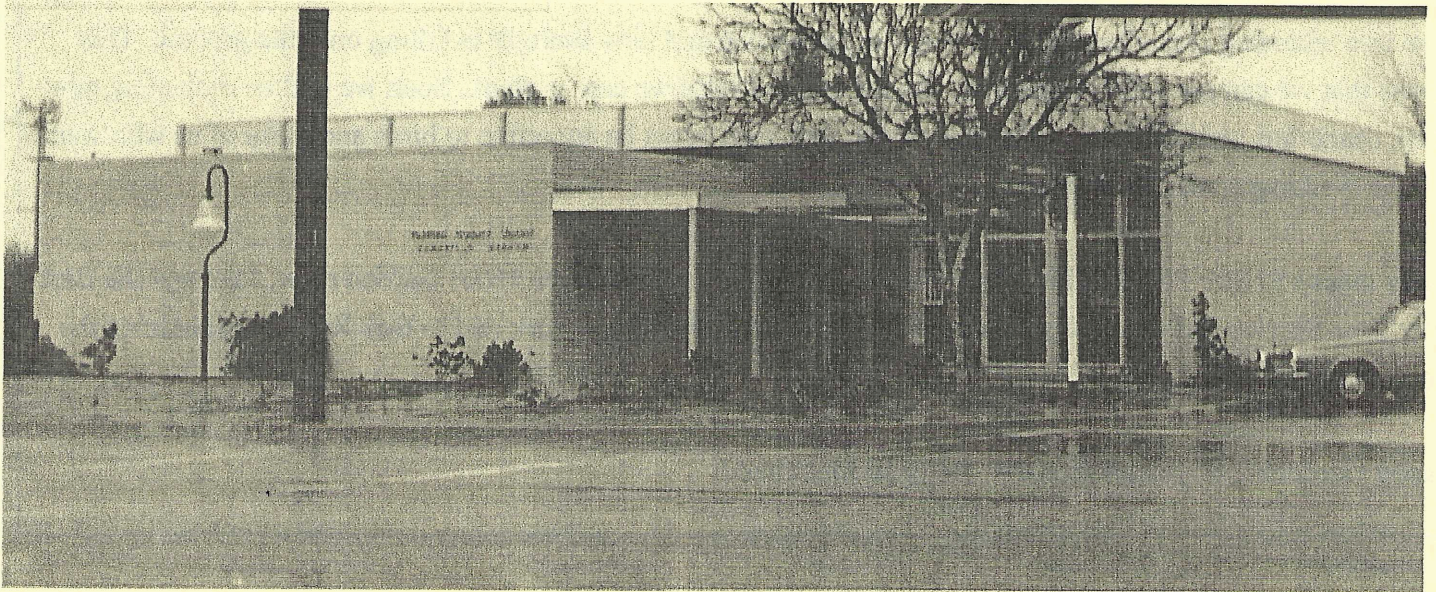
On Thursday, February 22, 1979, a time capsule was buried at Conejo Memorial Park in Camarillo. The capsule was sponsored by the Federated Chambers of Ventura County. Items representative of the nine cities, showing visitors what the county was like in the 70's and before, were collected.

The Chambers then formed a "2030 COMMITTEE" consisting of children from each community, ranging in age from 8 - 14, who had shown leadership in their school or community. Their responsibility is to make sure the capsule is uncovered on February 22, 2030.



## THE CAMARILLO LIBRARY, Continued from Page 2

use of glass, high ceilings, fluorescent lighting, acoustic tile and a turquoise and coral décor. The shelves accommodated 15,000 books, almost double the number at the Community Center. The library quickly became an oasis for pleasure reading and for students doing research.



The Library in Dizdar Park

Especially in the evenings, families came with questions on travel and do-it-yourself projects. Every Saturday morning, a talented storyteller whisked the little ones away on her magic carpet of fantasy and puppetry. The Art Club contributed, too, with prize-winning oils and acrylics; students were encouraged to exhibit their specialties.

During the next few years, library programs and acquisitions expanded. The collection grew from 17,000 books to 19,000. Eight newspapers and approximately ninety different periodicals were ordered. The record collection grew to include foreign language records and Talking Books for the Blind.

The library was growing, and indeed, becoming a modern facility. "Computer age hits the Camarillo Library" was the bold face print in an article in the Daily News in 1969. The Camarillo branch hummed with activity. Every surface was covered, every chair in use. The time had come for a new library.

*The library expanded again in 1971 with the opening of the Branch on Ponderosa Drive, the location which most of us remember. Mrs. Burke's History covers a lot of details that we simply do not have space to include. A copy of her work can be read on request at the Pleasant Valley Historical Museum or the present Library on Las Posas. I think you will enjoy it as much as I have.*

Betty Sullivan, Editor



## **June 2008 - July 2009**

### **Excutive Committee and Board of Directors**

Liz Daily, *President*

Ira Grooms, *Vice President*

Bob Rust, *Treasurer*

Adele Walsh, *Recording Secretary*

Val Rains, *Corresponding Secretary*

Honorable Stan Daily, *Parliamentarian*

David Hibbits, *Executive Committee Member At Large*

Carol Pinto, *Executive Committee Member at Large*

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Liz Daily

Vicky Daniel

Ira Grooms

Paige Jones Hibbits

Eloise Gerry Mansfield

Ron McCown

Nadine Naysmith

Roger Putnam

Tina Sanchez

Kristi Colell

Honorable Stan Daily

Bill Doctorman

Bob Hernandez

John Kitchens

Bill Manzer

Bill Milligan

Raquel Latham

Val Rains

Betty Sullivan

Eric Daily

Ted Daniel

Barbara Fulkerson

David Hibbits

Suzanne Makuch

Raelene Manzer

Betty Jo McDonald

Carol Pinto

Bob Rust

Adele Walsh

### **Society Announcements**

**May 3, 2009**

#### **Living History Day**

To be held at the Pleasant Valley Historical Museum

**June 7, 2009**

#### **Annual Meeting, 1 - 3 p.m.**

To be Held at the Pleasant Valley Historical Museum

**August 23, 2009**

#### **Dons and Donas Festivities**

To be held at Oak Grove Park, 1 - 4 p.m.

E-mail address: [pvhs@pvhsonline.org](mailto:pvhs@pvhsonline.org)

Web site address: [pvhsonline.org](http://pvhsonline.org)