

The Camarillo Public Library - A Generational Gem

I am a Camarillo native and have come to appreciate the Pleasant Valley Area and all of the programs and facilities it has to offer. Despite Camarillo's size, I have found that it has an intriguing history and an abundance of public resources. Because I have lived in Camarillo for 18 years, I have used a lot of these public resources including going to the Pleasant Valley School District (PVSD) schools; Camarillo Heights Stem Academy and Monte Vista Middle School. I have volunteered in the PVSD Youth Strings Orchestra, utilized the public parks, and attended the annual holiday events put on by Pleasant Valley.

However, in my opinion, the most important public resource that the Pleasant Valley area has provided is the Camarillo Public Library. The library offers education while simultaneously offering a unique history, architecture, technology, and programs which make learning an engaging experience.

The history of the Camarillo Public Library began in the early 1900s. This process of creating a countywide library system would not exist until Adolfo Camarillo, the founder of the City of Camarillo, spoke at a public hearing on April 8, 1915. He spoke before the Ventura County board of Supervisors to establish a countywide library system.

Following the public hearing, the Camarillo Library would continuously change in its size and location until it was permanently established on Las Posas Road in Camarillo. The evolution of the Camarillo Library began on January 6, 1919 when the Ventura County Free Library opened with a small selection of 75 books at a local mercantile. In December of 1933, Adele Flynn, the Branch Library Assistant, was hired and she moved the library to the Cawelti building on Lewis Road. By this time the Cawelti library provided the public with 300 books, later increasing to 8,000 in the 1940s. In April of 1941 half of the books at the Camarillo Public Library were relocated to the newly built Community Center on Ventura Boulevard and the rest to Dizdar Park. On October 27, 1974 the Camarillo Library relocated to 3100 Ponderosa Drive, Camarillo.

Finally on March 31, 2007, the Camarillo Public Library opened on 4101 Las Posas Road in Camarillo. It is four times larger than the building on Ponderosa Drive with 65,621 square feet. The Camarillo Public Library was funded by the California Public Library Construction and Renovation Act of 2000 (CPLCR) which provided a grant of \$15,621,473, the City of Camarillo which allotted \$11,000,000, and The Esper A. Petersen Foundation which donated \$375,000 for the Esper A. Petersen Foundation Study Center.

I chose to write about the Camarillo Public Library because of all the outreach programs it has to offer, as well as how these programs have enriched my life. For example, every summer my mother would take my siblings and me to the library and we would sign up for the summer reading program. The program gave us something to look forward to because we had the freedom to choose the books that interested us and create goals for ourselves. I also read with the dogs that were brought to the library for special events. I love dogs and it was a unique learning method. Among the many activities at the library, I found that the unique architecture in the children section was my favorite part of visiting the library. The pirate ship reading area was like a playground. This "playground" was exciting and increased my desire to read new

literature. The pirate ship reading area was created by Scenario Design Incorporated which designed it after the pirate ship in the Disney Movie *Peter Pan*.

An interesting thing to note about the Camarillo Public Library is that it is not limited to a specific age group. The library attracts people of all ages, making it a resource that many have enjoyed through the years. Even as my interests and needs changed, it still has provided me with an abundance of resources. I have used the library to study, to check out books, and perform research using the databases and the technology it has to offer. Another great resource I have utilized is the Friends of the Library, which is run by a group of volunteers. I have donated books, as well as purchased books at a reduced price. I have also enjoyed talking to the volunteers who have given me advice about school and my future. The Camarillo Public Library will always hold a special place in my heart.