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Stan Daily Scholarship
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Volcanoes, Bells, and Bonds: A Culminative History of Rancho Campana High School

“Right where we stand today, my father planted an orchard of walnuts” declares Stan Daily, former mayor of Camarillo. He is at the groundbreaking of a major construction project in Camarillo on March 4th, 2014. “My dad would be very proud to see,” Stan continues, “that we are no longer growing walnuts on this land, but that we are now growing students...” He finishes. The crowd, full of students, teachers, and parents applauds. A few minutes later, Stan Daily strikes a shovel into the ground; This marks the first step in the construction of Camarillo’s second high school, known as Rancho Campana (RCHS).

Rancho Campana, a 2021 and 2026 California Distinguished school, opened its doors in 2015 and has bolstered 8 graduating classes of seniors since. But there is a bit more to that story: Let me, Matty Perkins, a current senior at Rancho Campana, take you back...

Around 15 million years ago, the Pacific and North American tectonic plates started slipping against each other, releasing Volcanic Magma onto the surface. According to Thad Robins, a Science teacher at Los Colinas middle school, this event created the Conejo Volcanic Mountains, more colloquially known by the residents of Pleasant Valley as “The Grade.” The ashes from these volcanoes also left behind the fertile soil of the Oxnard Plains.²

In the late 1800s, the Bell family immigrated to the area of the Somis Adobes and claimed 77 acres of this fertile volcanic land as “Bell Ranch.” A direct neighbor to the Daily family, this rancho was well known in the area as can be seen from multiple mentions in the 100+ year old news archives from the Ventura County Star newspaper!

In November 2004, Measure H passed by 62.7% of Ventura County voters, allocating 135 million dollars to build and improve schools. A Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) was formed of community members including parent and teacher of Camarillo, Erin Huizinga. In October of that same year, Bell Ranch was purchased by the Oxnard Union High School District. Here, a new school was planned to be built. The BOC came to the decision that this school, unlike others in the area, would offer multiple different pathways, or, “academies” focused on work-based learning, funneling the students directly into the local workforces of engineering, health sciences, and the arts. As can be seen on architectural drawings stored on CDS and within archives of the nearby Camarillo Public Library, the working title of this institute was the “Camarillo Academy High School.”

Several ideas for names for this new school were proposed, including, “Las Posas High”, “Pleasant Valley High”, “Tres Campanas”, and “Adelante High.” The name “Bell Ranch High” was considered the most popular. However, the district at the time had a policy that new schools couldn’t be named after people, and so “*Bell Ranch High*” was off the table. So, after months of deliberation, they settled on the Spanish translation for Bell Ranch: Rancho (de) Campana!

After groundbreaking, a year was spent on construction. Then in the Fall of 2015, 200 freshmen and 200 sophomores were welcomed into the school. A mascot hadn’t been decided yet, nor school colors! According to Sam K, a former student, everything from “The Turtles” to “The Golden Eagles” was proposed. The purple and silver lion Monty the Monarch won: the mascot of RCHS would be The Monarchs. (Look again at the last four letters of “Monarchs”)

So, the rest is history. The first class of those initial 200 sophomores graduated in 2018, and since then, nearly 1700 graduates have passed through its halls, such as Sam Kristofferson (Class of 2018) who now works as a successful journalist in the area! Rancho Campana, additionally, ranks as one of the best schools in the state, and the current #1 school for academics in the Oxnard Union High School District. It was even awarded as a California Distinguished school in both 2021 AND 2026!

Soon, I will join these graduating students as I sprout into the next chapter of my life and leave Rancho Campana behind. But I know that wherever I go, this school will stay with me. In the volcanic ash that built this stone, the generations of hands that farmed this soil, the hours of deliberation that planned these walls, the hundreds of workers who laid these bricks, the thousands of students that have graced these halls, and the hundreds of teachers who have helped us thrive. Although Rancho Campana is young, I have no doubt that it will grow, like a bed of strawberries, into something amazing for Camarillo and our wonderful community!