

## **Santa Maria's Intriguing History**

The beginnings of Santa Maria Valley's development date back to the adventurous era of Spanish land grants and ranchos. After Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo arrived in the Valley in 1542, and the Portola exploration party passed through in 1769 during its search for the Monterey Bay, two sites were eventually chosen to the north and southwest for missions built by the Spanish church. Mission San Luis Obispo (1772) and La Purisima Concepcion (1787) were catalysts for early settlement, and flourished until 1821 when Spain granted Mexico independence and the missions were secularized. Lands were broken up and for the first time individuals were granted land ownership.

When Benjamin Foxen purchased Rancho Tinaquaic in 1837, he and his Spanish Bride, the former Eduarda Osuna, built a small adobe on the property. The Foxen family lived for many generations on the rancho where Benjamin was called "Don Julian" by Eduarda's people. One of Foxen's daughters, Ramona, married Englishman Frederick Wickenden. Their early adobe still stands. Ramona longed for a nearby church as the drive to the Santa Inez Mission proved to be quite a task with their many small children. Ultimately, the death of Benjamin Foxen inspired the construction of the San Ramon Chapel in 1875. Today, the chapel, which may still be seen along Foxen Canyon Road, has been dedicated as County Landmark No. 1 and as State Landmark No. 877.

Santa Maria Valley's first town was La Graciosa, which included a store, post office and school located near present-day Orcutt. However, in 1877, H.M. Newhall was granted the land on which the town was built, and summarily ejected one and all.

While the nineteenth century saw California gain statehood, the Santa Maria Valley blossomed as one of the most productive agricultural regions in the state. The area's multi-ethnic population also grew as Swiss-Italian dairymen, and Filipino, Portuguese and Japanese farmers joined the already established English, Irish, Scottish and Mexican settlers. Between 1869 and 1874, four of the Valley's prominent settlers, Rudolph Cook, John Thornburg, Isaac Fesler and Isaac Miller, farmed the land at the corners of Broadway and Main Streets. In 1874, these individuals each donated a square-mile of land where their properties met to form a four-mile city center. The township was surveyed in the fall of 1874, and the surveyor's maps were accepted and recorded at the county seat on April 12, 1875. First christened Grangerville, and later Central City, the name was ultimately changed to "Santa Maria" on February 18, 1885 because mail was often mistakenly sent to Central City, Colorado. The city remained limited to four square miles until 1954. Since then, annexations have increased its size to roughly 21 square miles.

Rich, gushing oil was discovered in the Santa Maria Valley in 1904 near what is now Orcutt. When exploratory crews struck a huge gusher, they lovingly nicknamed it "Old Maud," and for the next 80 years, the oil industry flourished. Development intensified in the 1930s, and, by 1957, as many as 1,775 oil wells were producing \$64 million worth of oil annually.

### **Santa Maria Public Airport District**

The Santa Maria Public Airport Capt. G. Allan Hancock Field is owned and operated by the Santa Maria Public Airport District. The Airport is located on 2,526 acres of land within the City of Santa Maria and is 3 miles south of the center of the City. The Community of Orcutt abuts the Airport to the south and east.

The Airport is classified as a Commercial Service Primary Airport in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. The designated role of the Airport is to serve short-haul air carrier routes of less than 500 miles.

*The Santa Maria Airport has the longest Runway on the Central Coast. Runway 12L-30 is retained at 6,303 feet and a width of 150 feet to handle commuter business jets, other large aircrafts and general aviation aircrafts. This runway will be extended to 8,003 feet in 2009. Runway 2-20 is retained at 5,129 feet and width of 75 feet to handle occasional commuter business jet aircraft and general aviation aircraft.*

Santa Maria Valley Railroad (805) 925-4670

The Santa Maria Valley Railroad is a privately owned short line-railroad, which has served the Valley since 1911. The Santa Maria Valley Railroad provides daily freight service to customers along 14 miles of well-maintained mainline track in the Santa Maria Valley. Tracks are rated to transport 286,000 lbs. rail cars and can transport the most modern freight cars.

The Santa Maria Valley Railroad connects with Guadalupe, California, interchanging with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) A cooperative Marketing Agreement with the UPRR allows direct access to integrated nationwide marketing, sales, pricing and operations of the UPRR.