



Camarillo Train Line, Quarry Schloss, Depot
and
Calleguas vs. Camarillo for the town's name

by

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Camarillo Train Line - Acquiring the Rights-Of-Way:

Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) began acquiring the Rights-of-Way by March 1899 (**with work to begin as early as September 1899, but no later than December 1899**). An article in the *San Francisco Call* dated Tuesday, March 14, 1899 and entitled, "Rights of Way of the Southern Pacific – Ventura Men Working on Behalf of the Main Coast Line Extension," states:

“VENTURA, March 13. – Previous reports regarding the extension of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company's line in this county for their main coast route are now confirmed by the active work of prominent men for the corporation.

During the past few days – in fact since Friday – Hon. Thomas R. Bard and Hon. D. T. Perkins, both of Hueneme, have been engaged in interviewing property owners along the proposed line, which it is understood is to run from Oxnard through Pleasant Valley to Chatsworth Park.

When possible, these gentlemen obtained signed agreements for a 100-foot right of way.

They do not make a direct promise as to what will be done, but, according to the agreements, work must be commenced within nine months [*December 1899*].

All the property owners are told that the work will commence within six months [*September 1899*].

Also, the announcement is made that the road will be commenced to Somis and eventually to Chatsworth Park.

The company has applied to Camarillo Brothers for stations grounds [*the Camarillo Depot*] on Lomita de Enmedio, consisting of five acres. The desired tract will be donated.

Considerable right of way already has been signed. The Camarillos, the largest individual owners, have signed for a strip several miles long.”

Note: The Camarillo Depot would not be completed until 11 years after the train line through Camarillo was completed by July 1899. The Camarillo Depot was officially opened on December 23, 1910 (whereas the Somis Depot was completed by the end of 1899).

Calleguas vs. Camarillo (for the name of the town):

From the initial stages of the Camarillo Train Line, and to its completion, the area was being referred to as “Calleguas” (but was not officially the name of the town). Referring to this area as “Calleguas” was due to the fact that so much of this new train line route was built on land of Rancho Calleguas, and that eventually, the depot was to be built on Rancho Calleguas land. **By July 18, 1899**, a petition was being circulated to move the post office from Springville to this new area, and then change the name to “**Calleguas**.” [See next section.]

Completion of the Camarillo Train Line was no later than July 18, 1899:

The work on the Camarillo Train Line began much earlier than the projected ‘start date’ of September 1899 and progressed rapidly. **By July 18, 1899, the train line was completed through Camarillo**, and had reached within one mile of Somis. An article in the *Los Angeles Daily Times* dated Wednesday, July 19, 1899, and entitled, “Southern Pacific Extension Almost Completed to Somis,” states:

“VENTURA, **July 18**. [Tuesday] – Work on the Oxnard-Somis-Chatsworth Park extension line of the Southern Pacific is progressing rapidly. **The road has reached within a mile of Somis**. At the new station at Calleguas, a depot will be erected.

The Southern Pacific Milling Company now has a force of men at work on a large warehouse.

A petition is now being circulated in that vicinity in which the Postoffice [sic] Department is requested to allow the Springville postoffice [sic] to be moved and **to change its name to Calleguas**.

Last night instructions were received by the persons in charge of the construction to proceed with their work until further orders. This means that the road will be extended to Simi, a distance of seven miles beyond Somis, and thence to Chatsworth Park.”

Completion of the Camarillo Train Line in 1899 is also documented in an article in the *Los Angeles Daily Times* dated Monday, January 1, 1900 in which it states:

“The Southern Pacific Railroad Company has increased its track mileage during the past year. **Track was recently laid from Oxnard to Somis**, a distance of twelve miles, and a large force of men is now at work continuing the line to Fremontville, three miles beyond Somis. This is on the proposed route to Chatsworth Park.”

Completion of the Camarillo Train Line in 1899 (and specifically, by July or August 1899) is also documented in a letter written in 1960 by C. W. Sebastian (son of John L. Sebastian) to Guy Lewis (son of Joseph Francis Lewis, Sr.), in which C. W. Sebastian writes:

“Well, Guy, here is the answer as close as we can figure from old papers we have here. Camarillo was established 61 years ago in **July or August 1899**.” [Additional contents of this letter are provided after the section on John L. Sebastian’s General Merchandise store on Ventura Boulevard in Camarillo.]

John L. Sebastian’s General Merchandise store – and 1st Post Office – in Camarillo:

Prior to the Camarillo Train Line, John L. Sebastian (and family) lived in Springville where John L. Sebastian had a General Merchandise store. He also served as Deputy Post Master at the Springville post office (per an article in the *Los Angeles Daily Times* dated Sunday, July 15, 1888).

Adolfo Camarillo understood the importance of establishing businesses near the new Camarillo Train Line (and future Camarillo Depot). To this end, Adolfo Camarillo constructed a building on the south side of Ventura Boulevard (very close to the railroad tracks) for John L. Sebastian’s new General Merchandise store which was **completed circa July or August 1899**.

The Sebastian family remained living in Springville until at least June 1899, but were living in Camarillo by September 1899. In a letter written in 1960 by C. W. Sebastian (son of John L. Sebastian) to Guy Lewis (son of Joseph Francis Lewis, Sr.), C. W. Sebastian said he finished 2nd Grade at Springville (term ending in June 1899), and began 3rd Grade at Pleasant Valley School (term beginning in September 1899).

The **first post office in Camarillo** was housed in a section of John L. Sebastian's General Merchandise store on Ventura Boulevard. It was John L. Sebastian who submitted names to the U.S. Postal Service for consideration for the new post office. Names were submitted sometime between July and August 1899. [See next section.]

The Camarillo post office was not **officially established** until Thursday, **December 28, 1899**. An article in the *Los Angeles Herald* dated Monday, January 1, 1900 states:

"I. L. [sic - should be "J. L."] Sebastian has been appointed to take charge of the new post office at Camarillo, which was **officially established on Thursday last.**" ["Thursday last" was December 28, 1899.]

Calleguas vs. Camarillo (for the name of the town) – Decided by August 16, 1899:

Sometime after the completion of the Camarillo Train Line by July 18, 1899, **but no later than August 16, 1899** (the date of the newspaper article referenced below), the name of "Calleguas" was submitted to the U.S. Postal Service, but was rejected. The second name submitted – "Camarillo" – was accepted. From this point on, both the post office and the town would be called "Camarillo."

An article in the *Los Angeles Daily Times* dated Friday, August 18, 1899 states:

"VENTURA, Aug. 16. [Wednesday] – The new railroad station, town and postoffice [sic], Calleguas, **will hereafter be known as Camarillo**, owing to the fact that Calleguas [sic] is not pronounceable by the people unacquainted with the Spanish language. Calleguas is the name of a large ranch in Pleasant Valley, owned by Camarillo brothers."

Naming the post office and the town "Camarillo" sometime between July and August 1899 is also documented in a letter written in 1960 by C. W. Sebastian (son of John L. Sebastian) to Guy Lewis (son of Joseph Francis Lewis, Sr.) in which C. W. Sebastian writes:

"Well, Guy, here is the answer as close as we can figure from old papers we have here. Camarillo was established 61 years ago in **July or August 1899**.

At that time, the Southern Pacific R.R. was building the tunnel at Santa Susana and the R.R. came through Camarillo – No name as yet.

Adolfo Camarillo built a store building for father (John Sebastian) with a section for a post office west of the tracks, and on the main road to Ventura and L.A. [*The main road to Ventura and to Los Angeles was Highway 101 which continued on through Camarillo by way of Ventura Boulevard.*]

The PO Department asked for a name. Mr. Sebastian sent in the name of "Calleguas." The PO office declined that name as too confusing. Father then consulted Adolfo Camarillo and he was pleased to have them use his name. This was accepted, hence Camarillo PO and also the town."

Although the name of "Camarillo" was accepted for both the new post office and the town by August 1899, the **name of "Calleguas" continued to be used as late as October 1899**. In the *Los Angeles Daily Times* dated Friday, October 6, 1899, there is a full-page advertisement for Hornby's Oatmeal which lists a multitude of grocers' names (who carried this product) and the addresses of the grocery stores. John L. Sebastian's General Merchandise store on Ventura Boulevard in Camarillo is listed as:

Calleguas

Sebastian, J L [*One possible reason for this might be because the Camarillo post office was not officially established until December 28, 1899.*]

Photo - John L. Sebastian's General Merchandise store (on far right) on Ventura Boulevard in Camarillo. In the center rear can be seen a railroad car on the train track (in front of the white RR crossing sign).



Adolfo Camarillo built this structure for John L. Sebastian (for Sebastian's store, and for Camarillo's first Post Office). It was completed July or August 1899, and destroyed by fire in April 1913. An article in the *Oxnard Courier* dated Friday, April 4, 1913 and entitled, "Camarillo has \$3,500 Fire - Mercantile Company's Warehouse Burned by Flame of Unknown Origin - Still Day [i.e., there were no winds] All That Saved Rest of Town," states that "a fire of undiscovered origin destroyed completely the warehouse of the Camarillo Mercantile Company yesterday afternoon." - and - "If there had been a wind, the entire town would have been consumed." - and - "The building was owned by the Camarillo brothers and valued at about \$1000 and carried about \$400 insurance." - and - **"The burned building was the first one erected in Camarillo and around it the town has grown up."**



Quarry Schloss at Conejo Mountain:

In June 1901, Southern Pacific Railroad decided to create a spur line/side track from the Camarillo main line to the Conejo Mountain for access to a new rock quarry that was to be opened.

An article in the *Los Angeles Herald* dated Thursday, June 20, 1901 and entitled, "New Branch for Southern Pacific – Will Be Run from Camarillo to Conejo Mountains," states that Chief Engineer Hood of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, along with the superintendent of construction at the Santa Susana tunnel, "went out on the new line to Camarillo. It was supposed at the time that the trip was made for inspection of the line, but it is now known that it was for the purpose of opening a new line from Camarillo to the Conejo mountains, where a **rock quarry will be opened**. The stone is a volcanic porphyry, and is wanted in ballasting the track on the new line to Los Angeles."

In a July 5, 1901 article (newspaper name unknown) entitled, "A Rock Quarry at Camarillo – Hundreds of Carloads of Ballast to be Taken Out. Five Hundred Men to be Employed." – it states:

"The Southern Pacific Company is making preparations to begin work on the new quarry, near Camarillo. The site recently purchased is located on old Bony [sic] Mountain, on the Camarillo place and consists of 689 acres. The stone is a volcanic sandstone, not suitable for building purposes, but making the finest ballast. A surveying party arrived this week, and the route for a side tract to the quarry will be surveyed. The company's rock crusher will be installed here as soon as possible, and 500 men will be employed."

Wallace Weston Brown was the first telegrapher for the Southern Pacific Company at Camarillo. Prior to his transfer to Camarillo in September 1901, he was working for the railroad at Jalama Spur near Surf, California. His journal entry of July 26, 1901 states that "a large portion of camp has been moved to Camarillo and the office staff split; some of the boys up the line at or near Soledad and some of them at Camarillo, the new Quarry site for Montalvo Branch; Southern Pacific Company constructing a connecting strip there to make direct line [from] San Francisco to Los Angeles." His journal entry of August 24, 1901 states, "A train of crusher material and the greater part of the laborers and employees go to Camarillo." Wallace Brown arrived in Camarillo (at 1:00 a.m.) on September 15, 1901. His journal entry states, "The Quarry is located in and near a bean field. The landscape presents level prospects broken by irregular outcroppings of high mountain formations of a volcanic appearance. Foggy high overhead and mild." *[Mr. Brown eventually married Camarillo resident Laura Etna Willard; they had twin daughters named Florence Brown Dawson, and Frances Brown Holcomb.]*

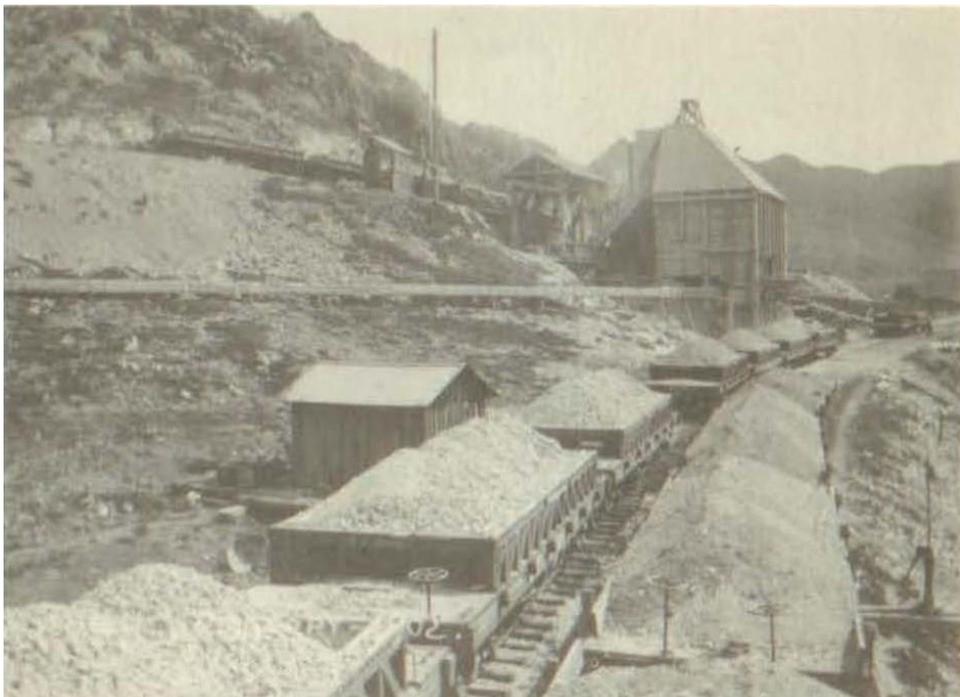


PHOTO - Quarry Schloss at Conejo Mountain.

By November 1901, nearly 500 men were employed, and the work of tearing down the mountain went on day and night (by way of an electric plant). The ballast was ground fine in a big rock crusher. Daily output was nearly 1,300 tons. The rock was spread on the track fifteen inches in depth. Two tons of the rock were used to each length of rail.

The Camp at Quarry Schloss:

Near the Quarry Schloss was the area known as "The Camp." It was located at the east end of Howard Road (at the bend in the road which leads to Conejo Mountain Funeral Home and Memorial Park). John L. Sebastian established his second Camarillo-area General Merchandise store to serve the needs of the workers at the quarry. In an article in the *Oxnard Courier* dated May 10, 1902 about the Quarry Schloss being discontinued because the ballast work for the road from Santa Susana to Carpinteria had been completed, it states:

"The big quarry at the hills southeast of Camarillo about two miles, has been discontinued, the ballast work on the S.P. [rail] road from Santa Susanna [sic] to Carpinteria [sic] having been completed. The great quarry, the immense rock crusher, the tracks and the surroundings are quiet. **The busy camp which furnished customers for the butchers, bakers and candlestick makers, and the saloons of Oxnard, Ventura, and other towns which sent its quota to the county jail every week is deserted. The population of 150 to 200 men which provided an absorbing topic of interest to the politicians of the county has dispersed.** At noon yesterday work in the quarry was finished and 150 men were discharged. The great crusher will not be removed at present for it may be needed when the [Santa Susana] tunnel is completed. The quarry and crusher have provided ballast for the entire [rail] road bed between Carpinteria [sic] and Santa Susanna [sic], and the output of crushed rock has been enormous."

Quarry Schloss would be reopened no later than May 2, 1903 per an *Oxnard Courier* article of the same date about work on the Santa Susana tunnel (once the tunnel was completed, 100 men would join the already 250 men at work at Quarry Schloss). The ballast was being used on the coast road between the Santa Susana tunnel, and a strip of track north of Santa Barbara. According to an article dated May 23, 1903 in *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, the rock was also being used for harbor improvement work.



PHOTO – 1902 – "The Camp" at Southern Pacific Quarry. View is looking north.

At the far left, John L. Sebastian's second Camarillo-area General Merchandise store can be seen. The train tracks left "The Camp" heading north and ran parallel (on the east) to what will be the future industrial park off of Pancho Road. Just north of future Calle Alto (in that industrial park), the tracks turned west and ran parallel (on the south) to Pleasant Valley Road. Just past future Constitution Avenue, the tracks curved north to connect to the main Camarillo Line.

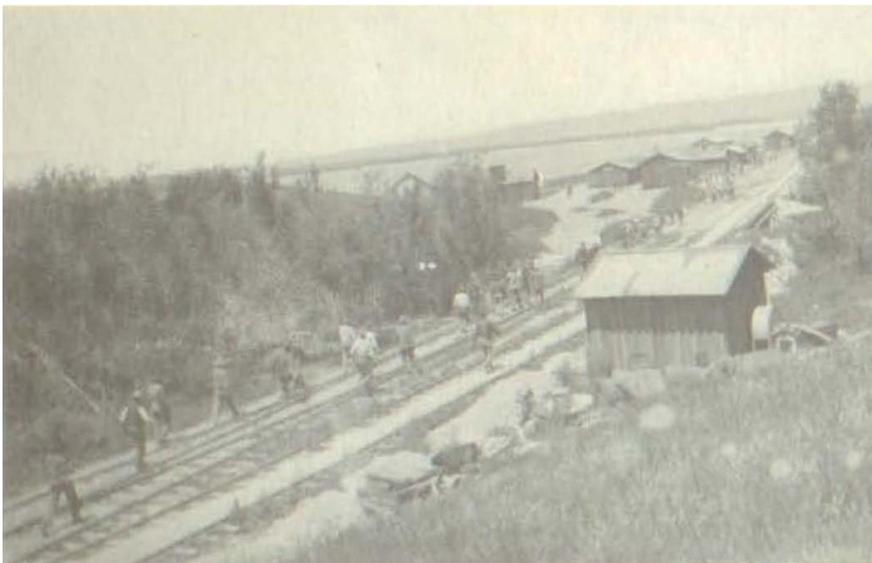


PHOTO – Quitting Time at Quarry Schloss. The men are walking north along the railroad tracks.

In the rear can be seen "The Camp" at Southern Pacific Quarry.

The box car which served as an office for Camarillo's first telegrapher, Wallace Weston Brown, can be seen in the 1902 photograph. It is center right of the photograph (between Sebastian's General Merchandise store and the train cars on the railroad tracks).

Camarillo Depot officially opened on Friday, December 23, 1910:

Eleven (11) years after the Camarillo Train Line was completed (by July 1899), the Camarillo Depot was built, and was officially opened per the *Oxnard Courier* dated Friday, December 23, 1910 and entitled, "New Depot is Opened at Camarillo" in which it states, "The new depot at Camarillo has at last been officially opened for business. Station Agent Mills is at his place of duty and the people of the community are very much pleased with the fine new building that the Southern Pacific has seen fit to give this growing community."

PHOTO - Circa 1939 - View of the depot in its original location. The eucalyptus trees in the center of the photo line the road leading to Somis. In front of those trees is the area known as "The Triangle." In the center is a flag pole, and a gas station is between the flag pole and the depot. The intersection of roads is Somis Road (which dead-ended at this time), Ventura Boulevard, and Highway 101 (on the east side of the railroad tracks).



Reverse chronology of events (of the Camarillo Depot) was as follows:



December 23, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier*

“New Depot is Opened at Camarillo”

“The new depot at Camarillo has at last been officially opened for business. Station Agent Mills is at his place of duty and the people of the community are very much pleased with the fine new building that the Southern Pacific has seen fit to give this growing community.”

December 16, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “The new Southern Pacific depot will be ready for business by the first of next week.”

December 15, 1910 – Thursday – The Camarillo Depot was “**unofficially opened**” per Juan E. Camarillo’s diary entry in which he writes, “The new depot at Camarillo opened today. Frank Fitzgerald was the first man to buy a ticket. Piche second and Ollie third.” [Ollie is Oliver B. Dunn, Juan E. Camarillo’s right-hand man at the ranch.]

November 11, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “The new depot is nearing completion and will ere long be ready for use. Quite a number of families have been supplied with kindling for some time to come by the generous outlay of it in the building of the depot.”

September 2, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “Many Happenings in Camarillo During Past Week” – “Mr. Fraser, superintendent of the bridge and building operations of the Southern Pacific railroad in Southern California, with headquarters at Bakersfield, was in Camarillo Wednesday looking over the construction of the new depot here. A large force of men are [sic] actively at work. The depot is to be 25 x 147 feet in size and constructed on the plan of the one at Oxnard.”

August 26, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “A large force of men are now at work constructing a fine new depot at Camarillo. The old freight platform has been removed and a modern combination freight and passenger depot, one of the best in the county, will take its place. It will be completed in about ten weeks.”

August 18, 1910 – Thursday – **Construction of the Camarillo Depot began** per Juan E. Camarillo’s diary entry in which he states, “Today the depot started at Camarillo.”

July 1, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “Mr. L. Richardson, commercial agent for the Southern Pacific, stopped here between trains and promised us the much needed and long expected depot would soon be built.”

March 25, 1910 – Friday – *Oxnard Courier* – “Plenty of Depot Building In This Part of The County” – The article states, “Moorpark and Camarillo are each to have a [sic] \$8000 depot, the former [Moorpark] to be erected at once and the latter [Camarillo] a little later. These new buildings will be of the new standard type of Southern Pacific depot and the best in the county. Lavatories and other improvements will be in the buildings. They will be more modern than the old style of depot, so conspicuous for their barn-like proportions all along the line, where modern improvements have not been made.”

PHOTO – At bottom right is Ventura Boulevard crossing the railroad tracks to become Highway 101 (the very large white building is parallel - on the east side - to the railroad tracks). The Camarillo Depot is in its original location (north of Ventura Blvd./Highway 101), and can be seen on the far right between two sets of trees.



Multiple Locations of the Camarillo Depot (original, temporary relocation, and permanent relocation):

The original location of the depot was around the bend of the east end of Ventura Boulevard, and slightly north (heading toward Somis). It remained in this location until the 1953-1954 freeway was built through Camarillo which bisected the city (and which caused the relocation or destruction of approximately 50 homes). The freeway bridge would be built through the location where the depot had been located since December 1910.

[Construction of the freeway and bridge began on May 13, 1953. The freeway was officially opened 10 months later on March 24, 1954. The opening ceremony was held on the east-bound lane of the four-lane highway at the intersection (via a median) at Cedar Drive. Speaker of the day was Adolfo Camarillo who cut the ribbon as jet airplanes from Oxnard Air Force Base flew overhead. First to ride over the new freeway was Carmen Camarillo – on Camarillo White Horse “Rico” – followed by a procession of 200 automobiles en route to the Community Center (fire house location) on Ventura Boulevard.]

Prior to the 1953-1954 freeway, Highway 101 entered the town of Camarillo by way of Ventura Boulevard. As Highway 101 entered Camarillo from the east, it crossed the railroad tracks and became Ventura Boulevard. Up until the 1953-1954 freeway, this boulevard had been a thoroughfare, and not the road ending at the railroad tracks that is seen today.

When a train passed through the intersection of Highway 101 (on the east side of the tracks) and Ventura Boulevard (on the west side of the tracks), all traffic at this busy intersection was held at a standstill until the train passed (creating a long line of automobiles backed up far west of the railroad tracks, in addition to the back up created on the east side which was Highway 101). The solution to this problem was to build a bridge over the railroad tracks.

PHOTO – Ventura Boulevard – The 1953-1954 freeway and bridge are being built (a crane can be seen at the bridge). The depot is in its temporary relocation. Once the freeway and bridge are completed, the depot will be moved to its permanent relocation which will be to the right (as seen in this photo) where the first automobile is at the railroad tracks (and Ventura Boulevard will no longer be a thoroughfare).



PHOTO – Highway 101 – The 1953-1954 freeway and bridge are being built. The depot is in its temporary relocation (seen on the far right). This roadway on the east side of the railroad tracks is Highway 101.



Once the 1953-1954 freeway and the bridge were completed, Highway 101 through Camarillo would no longer be needed. The section of road east of the railroad tracks at the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and Highway 101 would be eliminated. The depot's permanent relocation would be at the end of Ventura Boulevard (on the west side of the tracks). It was to be situated - literally - on what had been the west side roadway which crossed the tracks to become Highway 101 (thus ending the thoroughfare across the railroad tracks).

However, until the freeway and bridge were completed, Highway 101 had to remain open to traffic. Until the construction was completed, the depot could not be relocated to its permanent site. Therefore, the need for the temporary relocation of the depot. The depot was relocated slightly south of its original location (it was moved closer to Ventura Boulevard), just enough to be moved out of the area of the bridge construction. Once the bridge and the freeway were completed, Highway 101 was closed to traffic by way of the permanent relocation of the depot being placed upon the roadway.

PHOTO – The depot is in its permanent relocation at the end of Ventura Boulevard. Behind the depot are the railroad tracks which, when crossed, led to the other side of the roadway which had been Highway 101.



Camarillo Depot was closed in 1958, and razed to the ground in 1969:

Southern Pacific closed the railroad station at Camarillo at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, April 28, 1958. In December 1966, the Pleasant Valley Historical Society was given the opportunity by Southern Pacific to accept the Camarillo Depot as a gift, and relocate the depot for use as a museum (else, Southern Pacific would demolish the depot). In January 1967, Carmen Camarillo Jones donated \$5,000 to the Pleasant Valley Historical Society to move the depot to a site below the bluff at the west end of Grandview Drive. Two years passed by, and plans to move the depot fell through, and the depot was razed to the ground on Thursday and Friday, January 16-17, 1969. In a newspaper article highlighting the Camarillo events of Year 1969, it states, "Camarillo's historic railroad depot falls, a victim of age and insufficient interest in retaining it as a museum."



PHOTO - The Camarillo Depot is in its permanent relocation (just south of its original location). Ventura Boulevard now ends at the depot. Prior to the 1953-1954 freeway through Camarillo, Ventura Boulevard continued east across the railroad tracks; on the east side, the road continued on as Highway 101.

Seen on the far left is the 1953-1954 freeway bridge, and the 'pedestrian overpass' over the SPRR tracks. Work on the 'pedestrian overpass' began in July 1958 and was finished in November 1958.



July 20, 1924 – Juan Camarillo returns home (after 8 years in Argentina) and walks toward waiting family and friends at the Camarillo Depot.



July 20, 1924 – Camarillo Depot – Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo greet Juan Camarillo (homecoming after 8 years in Argentina).

Do you have a comment, story or photo you'd like share?
Please contact Karin Farrin at kg.farrin@gte.net
Thank you!