

From the Arneill Ranch to Arneill Road

Research Team

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Special Thanks

to

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and

The Gould and Peggy Taylor Family

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by
Beth Miller

Just off Las Posas is a major road named in memory a Camarillo pioneer, John Arneill. With his early death, the land remained in the family. It's been said his son and namesake, John Mather Arneill, II had his heart in his land. Today Arneill Road is in the heart of Camarillo. Once the Arneill Ranch was covered with citrus, walnut, apricot, eucalyptus trees and row crops. Over time it evolved from an important ranch to an important road.

John and Elizabeth (Rae) Arneill came from Scotland and settled in Wisconsin before arriving in the Pleasant Valley in 1888. The couple had nine children. Sons William and John II would play a major role in managing and expanding the ranch.

John and Elizabeth bought 200 acres that was later increased to 365 acres. In tribute to his wife, John named it "Raemere," meaning "home of the Raes." John met with an early death in 1893 when a team of horses bolted and he was run over by the wagon. He was 48 years old. His son, John II, was six years old at the time of his father's death.

William Arneill controlled the ranch from 1894 until his death in 1914. With his brother's death, John II began managing the ranch for their mother. John II had completed agricultural studies at the University of California in 1911. The program emphasized the theory and practice of farming including large scale farm management. He had married Mary Baker of Ventura. Their children were John III and Anna Sheridan.

Under his management, John II also leased an adjoining 400 acres from the Flynns. The Arneill-owned land went from the top of Grandview Drive north along the west side of Arneill Road to almost Las Posas Road and south from Grandview to Pleasant Valley Road (200 acres) and the railroad track at East Fifth Street (165 acres).

Back in 1909, William Arneill had successfully incorporated mechanized farming equipment into his operation with the use of a 40-horsepower engine for plowing. He was able to plow twelve to fourteen acres in furrows ten inches deep in approximately ten hours. He was also a leader in lima bean, apricot and walnut production.

The Arneills and Camarillos were friends. The friendship included travel. In 1916, Mrs. William Arneill and Mrs. Adolfo Camarillo along with Camarillo daughters Ave and Isabella traveled to Hawaii. The newspaper reported it was a “delightful tour.”

An undated photo of John Arneill also has been found in Juan E. Camarillo’s album.



Right corner John Arneill undated photo
From Juan E. Camarillo’s photo album (Adolfo Camarillo’s brother)

John II expanded his brother William’s apricot acreage. In 1917 apricots continued being a major crop on the Arneill Ranch. Two hundred people were employed to harvest the forty-acre orchard of 3,300 trees. On the first day’s picking, 1,040 boxes were filled. By 1922, newspapers continued to report record apricot crops for Arneill. But home development slowly began to edge its way onto the ranch. By 1938, the construction of seventy new homes to accommodate staff at Camarillo State Hospital, was planned for Arneill land near the center of Camarillo.

The financial burdens during the Great Depression led to the loss of 165 acres, but John II was able to later buy back the land. Over the years, the Arneill Ranch was reduced in size with the building of Pleasant Valley School and the Pleasant Valley housing tract. More land was taken as US 101 cut through Camarillo. North of the 101 Freeway, the Raemere housing tract was built by the Arneill family Raemere Corporation. In 1961, The Ponderosa and Ponderosa North shopping centers were built on the old ranch.

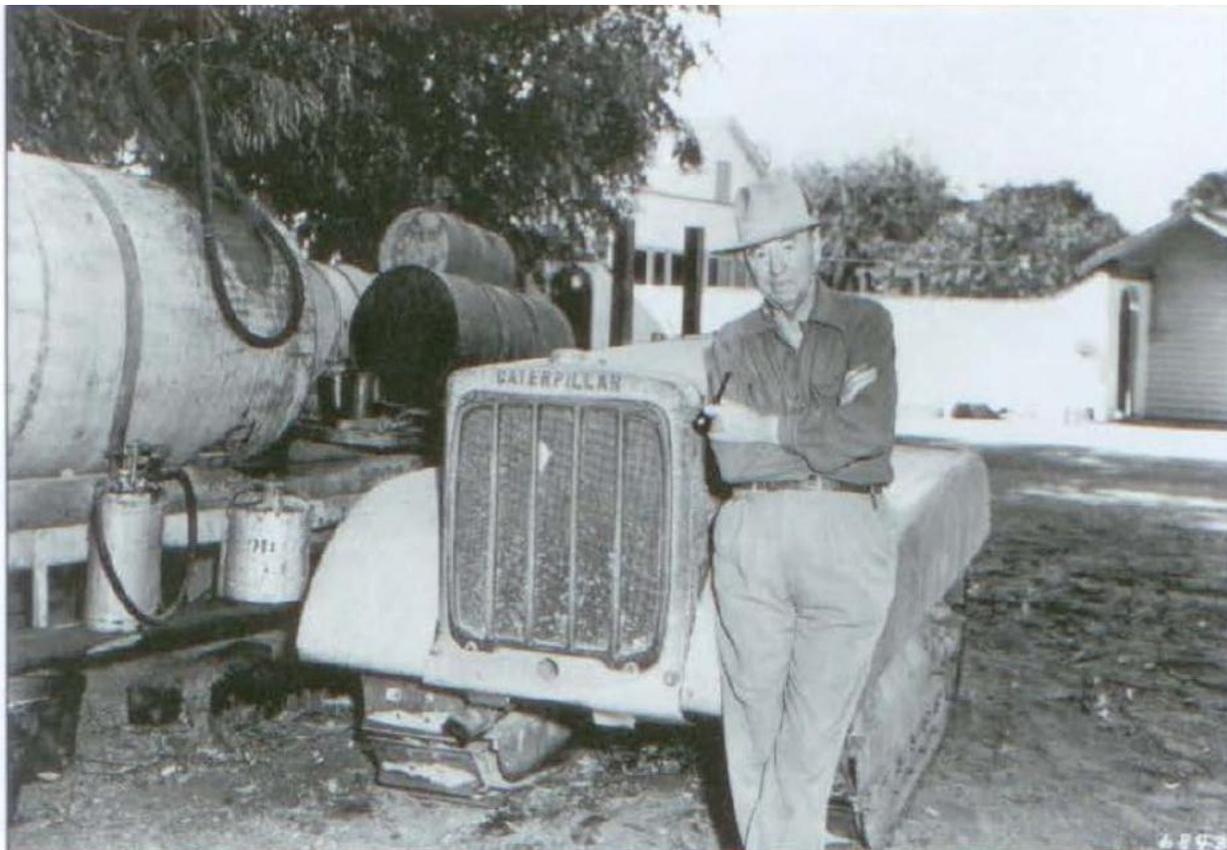
Ranch employees and their families played an important role in the success of the operation. In his 2007 book, Camarillo and other Remembrances, Mayor Emeritus, Stan Daily, recalled his childhood home on the Arneill Ranch, when he was about three or four years old. The screened-in porch, three bedrooms and his parents' closet left an impression on the youngster. But the most lasting memory at that tender age, was the loud ringing that came from the closet. The alarm was triggered in the middle of the night by falling temperatures.

"It was telling Dad to get up, and go start the smudge pots, for the temperatures had gotten down to near freezing in the orchards. I was lucky a time or two and got to go with Dad on this very important mission, or so I thought. It was a critical element in farming, for if you didn't ward off the frost, you could well lose your crop...all of which I did not understand at the time, for I was just 8 years old when we moved away from the Arneill Ranch."

He also recalled the joy of playing amongst the trees:

"Our house was nestled in a large walnut orchard on the east and behind our house on the north. There was an orange grove on the west. In the backyard, there was a tree in which we had swings as well as a great small 'little' house where we had fun playing. We had lots of fun when the walnut trees in the orchard behind our house would get overloaded with leaves and walnuts. Some of the big branches would break from the excess weight. They would come plummeting down to the ground in a thunderous crash. We would then make tree "Forts" out these broken leafy branches with many 'rooms' in which we could play. What fun!"

The Taylor children, a later ranch family, also had fun and games exploring the land.



John Arneill II lost a portion of the ranch during the Great Depression, but he was able to later buy the property back. The ranch stretched all the way to Grand View Avenue on the south side.

Like the Dailys, the Taylor family experienced the demanding job of setting out smudge pots on the Arneill Ranch. Their father, Gould Taylor, was the foreman. His wife, Peggy, prepared meals for the crew, who would gather around the fireplace during breaks. Their son, Jack helped with smudge pots. In 1949, the cold brought snow. When the work was done, the children and their parents played in the snow. “The snow covered the orange trees and made the oranges stand out. It was so pretty,” recalled daughter Ruth Taylor Kilday.

Gould and Peggy Taylor along with their five children called the Arneil Ranch home. It wasn’t always smudge pots that brought out the activities. The children enjoyed “building roads in dad’s irrigation ditches. It was even more fun during the process of irrigating—good clean MUD!” humorously recalled daughter Sharon Taylor Hosier.



Photo Courtesy of the Taylor Family circa early 1950s

Taylor Children: Peggy Ann, Jack, Ruthie, Sherry and Nancy

Sharon Taylor Hosier: Photo: Near a "row of eucalyptus trees that separated the house, yard, barns from fields. The background also has a lima bean field and a cypress hedge that lined" the driveway into Arneill Ranch.

"Eucalyptus trees were a very big part of Arneill Ranch and Road. There were the double/triple row on the west side of Arneill that then ran from Las Posas to Ventura Blvd. (before Daily and the 101 Freeway were developed.) The eucalyptus were in several areas of the ranch, along with cypress hedges for windbreakers for orchards and fields," recalled Sharon Taylor Hosier.

The children walked to Pleasant Valley School with their neighborhood friends who lived on the eastside of Arneill Road in homes occupied by Adohr Dairy families. There were also families on the other side of Arneill Ranch in Barry Street area neighborhoods many of which were occupied by ranch employees.

Sharon's sister, Ruth Taylor Kilday, recalled that it was "wonderful living near a walnut orchard. They are so big and shady and beautiful." Since her youth, the memories of the Arneill trees have remained with her. Living amongst the citrus and walnut trees influenced Ruth's future. Her enjoyment of hiking, walking and

exploring the Arneill Ranch led to a career in the National Park Service. She also worked for the Santa Monica Conservancy and founded the Mountain Conservancy Foundation.



Photo courtesy of the Taylor Family

*Arneill Road eucalyptus hedge in backyard. Ruth Taylor Kilday with sister Peggy Ann Taylor Viser by fishpond
Address: 285 Arneill Road*

Driving ranch vehicles was a matter of course for the Taylor siblings. Sharon Taylor Hosier recalled:

“Keys to tractors and trucks were just left in the ignitions so it was easy to take one for a spin around the barns or through the ranch on the dirt roads and paths, without ever getting on any paved ‘city’ roads. Jack (brother) had probably 3 or 4 different cars before he actually got his license at age 16. The beginning of a lifelong hobby: buying a clunker and building the engines and working on their paint and bodies as well ‘til he’d sell and replace it with another! His first was when he was only 13 years old and it didn’t have an engine! He probably has had at least 35 or more over his lifetime...all with a story and personality of their own.

I always enjoyed when my Dad would ‘borrow’ me to help him in the lima beanfields. He’d attach the spray rig to the back of the wheeled tractor and put me in the seat to steer it down the rows while he walked along beside or behind, spraying the crop with insecticide or whatever. It was fun! I was probably 7 or 8

years old and my feet didn't reach the peddles. The engine was so loud that he felt 'safe' singing because no one would hear us.

I don't remember taking a tractor out on my own, though I do remember turning one on and occasionally sitting on it while it idled in its 'parking space' behind the big barn. The other tractors were track style, not wheels and Dad would sit me in his lap and let me 'drive' with his help—no steering wheel on those either.

Along the inner side of that big line of trees was a dirt road used for getting supplies, equipment around the ranch without being on paved town roads. In fact, Jack and cousin Larry, and eventually we girls too, drove (pre-licensed) all over the ranch.

One evening Jack 'secretly' took mom and dad's Chevy for a spin and I tagged along, (of course, my favorite thing to do with big brother!) He drove and I stood in the seat next to him.

But unaware of new ditches across dirt road, we hit one hard, bouncing hard and hitting brakes. But I took a dive into the windshield, leaving a big spidery crack over its right side. Needless to say, we had unhappy parents when they got home. (Fortunately, I've always had a very hard head!). They never replaced the windshield either!"

Ruth Taylor Kilday recalled another family car story:

"My sisters and I would watch out the middle bedroom window and name the people whose cars we knew.

I had a crush on Donny Chase* who would drive by between 5:30 and 6:00 every evening."

*(*Son of Warren Chase of Chase Bros. Dairy. The Chase family lived on Highland in Camarillo Heights)*

According to current statistics, from the freeway to Pickwick Drive, 23,000 vehicles are driven on Arneill Road everyday.



Photo courtesy of the Taylor Family

The Arneill Road Bridge Dedication

October 25, 2003

The original Arneill Road Bridge was constructed in 1953 as part of the construction of the new freeway when traffic was diverted from Ventura Boulevard. The \$3 million project was 5.7 miles long and eliminated the last remaining main line railroad grade crossing on the U.S. 101 between San Diego and San Francisco. Adolfo Camarillo, at age 89, was a frequent visitor to the construction site and was known as the “distinguished sidewalk superintendent.” At the 2003 dedication, Adolfo was represented by two granddaughters, long time Camarillo Ranch employee and esteemed horse trainer, Meliton Ortiz, and the Camarillo White Horse Association.

*Meliton Ortiz waving
his white hat.*

*J Dolores Moreno Arrellano (J
Moreno) walking along side.*



In the carriage are Carmelita FitzGerald Nicholson and Geraldine FitzGerald (daughters of Ave Maria Camarillo FitzGerald and George FitzGerald).



The new Arneill Road Bridge is part of a larger 1.4 mile Lewis Road Interchange reconstruction project on the U.S. 101 freeway and surrounding area. According to current statistics, from the freeway to Pickwick Drive, 23,000 vehicles are driven on Arneill Road everyday.

Remembering the Dedication

What a day that was! That was Paloma II's first ride out in public. There were bagpipes playing close to the horses; there was a horse pulling a large wagon; they had to cross the 101 Freeway via the new bridge, going by all the people sitting in the chairs; everyone was so afraid of what might happen with that new horse. Paloma II started to get skittish, and Mel said, 'J, bring your horse up beside Paloma and J did as he was asked. The horse remained calm and went across the bridge just fine. Then they rode down to Dizdar Park. Dr. Gish was pushing my aunt in a wheelchair and pushed her right up under Paloma's nose. I quietly took the wheelchair and backed it away from the horse.

Melton, J and Tanya stayed by Adolfo's statue and had pictures taken for the newspaper. And the Arneil Bridge was dedicated!

Audra Seldeen
Camarillo White Horse Association



J Moreno, Meliton Ortiz and Tanya Langkopf
Dizdar Park after Arneill Road Bridge Dedication
October 25, 2003



Meliton Ortiz and Paloma II by statue of Adolfo Camarillo
Dizdar Park



Meliton Ortiz at the Dedication of the new Arneill Road Bridge

Do you have a comment, story or photo you'd like to share?

Please contact Karin Farrin:

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Thank you!