

**The Camarillo Sisterhood
Stories of Women Who Made a Difference at the Camarillo
Ranch**



**Each week our research team will present a story for your
enjoyment.**

This week : Martina Hernandez Camarillo

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April 17, 2020

Martina Altagracia Hernandez Camarillo (1825-1898)
Mother of Adolfo Camarillo

The Camarillo family roots in California run deep and long, stretching back to the Gaspar de Portola Expedition of 1769. Martina Altagracia Hernandez Camarillo was the great-grand daughter of Maria Antonia Victoria Carrillo and Don José Francisco Ortega, who served under Portola's command. For his many years of extraordinary service to the King of Spain and most notably his contributions to the Portola Expedition, Don José was awarded 26,529 acres of ocean view land located 20 miles north of Santa Barbara. He called it Nuestra Senora del Refugio (Our Lady of Refuge).

The peaceful rancho had a commanding view high above the canyons and the Pacific Ocean. It extended twenty-five miles along the coast. Don José and his sons built a wharf for trading ships hauling cargos of hides and tallow. Martina loved the rancho and spent much of her childhood there. Later in life, Martina would be called a pioneer for she was born at Mission San Luis Rey, grew up at Mission Santa Barbara and married Juan Camarillo there. Mission San Buenaventura became a major part of her life when she, Juan and the first eight of their fourteen children moved into an adobe in Ventura. Adolfo, the twelfth child blessed to Martina and Juan, was born in Ventura.

Martina ran an orderly household. She taught her children the virtues of thrift, patience and the value of a job well-done with assigned chores. Adolfo's job was to collect the household's twenty-one lamps to clean, polish and light them using only one match. He suffered many burns, but never wasted an extra match. The children also grew up with a love of music. The Camarillos had the first piano in Ventura.

Though she lived some distance away, Martina remained close to her Hernandez family who lived in Carpinteria. Her son Juan would follow her example and shared a lifelong closeness with his Hernandez cousins.

Martina and Juan cherished land. When they owned property in Ojai, Martina was pregnant and told not to travel there for the rodeo. She insisted on going and their tenth child, Arcadia, was born in Ojai. Martina loved Rancho Calleguas, the

Camarillo Ranch. She saw the rancho when there were no fragrant eucalyptus trees. Up until her husband Juan's death in 1880, it had been primarily grazing land covered with cactus, mustard, wildflowers and sage. For some time before her death, Martina was unable to travel far from her home in Ventura to visit the celebrated rancho. Martina had suffered severe injuries in a serious carriage accident. She knew that Adolfo was a skillful guardian of the 10,000 acres.

Martina was always in the hearts of her children. Adolfo named one of his daughters after his mother. The Camarillo siblings frequently visited their mother in her Ventura home. They would gather for her birthdays and special occasions organized by Adolfo's sisters. Adolfo's brother, Juan, who supervised her care, had lived with Martina until her death. As a memorial to his mother, Juan donated her home to the Order of Sisters of St. Joseph in 1908. The nuns organized a Catholic school called the Camarillo Academy. In 1914 Juan had the St. Mary Magdalen Chapel built and dedicated to his mother and father.

When Martina died in 1898, she was remembered for her great kindness and generosity, especially to the sick and the poor. Mourners crowded into Mission San Buenaventura where she had donated funds for major repairs over the years. Martina was a beloved California pioneer and her funeral procession was one of the largest in Ventura.

***Camarillo home (3 connected adobe buildings) on corner of Main Street and Ventura Avenue.
Date unknown***





Martina Hernandez Camarillo (date unknown)



Martina's Ventura home 1895



Martina from her son Juan's photo album.