

# **SAN RAMON A SHORT HISTORY**

## **A COMMUNITY BEGINS**

**Today San Ramon is a dynamic young city, one of California's outstanding urban villages. It has a variety of homes, parks and stores and a major employment center --- all in a setting of remarkable beauty.**

**It was once home to the Seunen and Souyen, Ohlone Indians who lived adjacent to the valley creeks. After 1797, it became Mission San Jose grazing land and, beginning in 1834, Jose Maria Amador's 20,000+ acre Rancho San Ramon.**

**San Ramon Creek and Valley were named for an Indian vaquero, Ramon, who tended mission sheep here. In an 1855 land title case, Don Amador explained that "San" was added to the name to conform with Spanish custom.**



**Minerva and Joel Harlan**

**American settlers first arrived in 1850 when Leo and Mary Jane Norris purchased 4,450 acres of land from Amador. In 1852 Joel and Minerva Harlan bought land from Norris and built their first house. Other early landowners were the Lynches, Doughertys, Bollingers and Russells.**

**Many of San Ramon's founding families are remembered because their names grace various canyons, hills and streets such as Bollinger, Crow and Norris Canyons, Thorup Street and Wiedemann Hill. The second Harlan home (1858), called El Nido, at 19251 San Ramon Valley Blvd. and the Wiedemann home (1865) near Norris**

**Canyon Rd. still stand in their original locations. The 1877 Glass House has been moved to Forest Home Farms Historic Park.**

-----**San Ramon Firsts**-----  
~~1848 Jose Maria Amador, his son, and Indian workers prospected for gold in an area now called Amador County  
~~1850 First permanent American settlers in the San Ramon Valley were Leo and Mary Jane Norris. They bought the northwest corner of Amador's Rancho San Ramon, near the intersection of today's Bollinger and Crow Canyon Roads.  
~~1851 First wood frame house built by Leo Norris and William Lynch.

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## **A VILLAGE DEVELOPS**

**San Ramon had several names in the nineteenth century. It was called Brevensville (for blacksmith Eli Breven), Lynchville (for rancher William Lynch), Limerick (for the many Irish settlers south of the Creek) and finally San Ramon. The first village developed at the intersection of today's Deerwood Rd. (formerly Crow Canyon Rd.) and San Ramon Valley Blvd.**

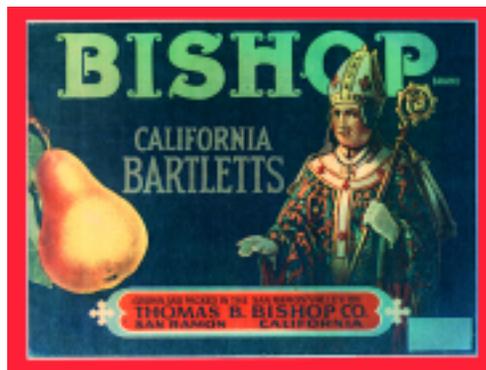
**During the 1860s the village became a hub of community activity. In 1864 a stage line established by Brown and Co. ran from San Ramon through the valley to Oakland. A general store was built in 1863 and students attended the new San Ramon Grammar School beginning in 1867. Saloons, a jail, Chinese wash houses, the Thorup Shoe Shop, and blacksmith shops lined County Road No. 2 which later became San Ramon Valley Blvd. San Ramon's permanent post office was established in 1873.**



*Locomotive turnaround and engine house in San Ramon*

**With the arrival of the Southern Pacific's San Ramon Branch Line in 1891, other changes took place. The name "San Ramon" permanently replaced "Limerick." Crops and passengers could travel in and out of the area no matter what the weather. Until 1909 when the line extended south, San Ramon was the Branch Line terminus and boasted a two-story depot, engine house and "gallows" turnaround for the locomotive. Visitors took a wooden bridge over San Ramon Creek to reach the village hotels and other businesses.**

**In 1895 attorney Thomas Bishop acquired 960 acres of Norris land for a ranch. Bishop Ranch grew to several thousand acres, raised livestock and was planted to hay, grain, fruit and walnuts. Bishop's Shropshire purebred sheep earned numerous awards. Partially irrigated from an underground aquifer, at one point the ranch included the world's largest single Bartlett pear orchard.**



**Bishop Ranch Label**

**The San Ramon Community Hall was built in 1911, after planning and fundraising led by Anita Glass and Minnie Lynch. It became the community's center and drew ranch families to dances, school programs and plays for fifty years. Residents belonged to several community groups in these years, including the Danville Grange # 85, Odd Fellows, Rebeccas, Ramona Club, San Ramon Ladies Association and the San Ramon Hall Association.**



**San Ramon General Store, 1911**

## **MODERN SAN RAMON**

**As with the entire Tri-Valley, agriculture was the basis for San Ramon's economy until suburban development was sparked by the opening of the Interstate 680 freeway through San Ramon to Dublin in 1966. For years a sign "San Ramon Population 100" reflected the number of people in the area, with the whole San Ramon Valley having around 2000 people for many decades.**

**The designation "San Ramon Village" first appeared in the 1970 census with a count of 4,084 people, part of a San Ramon Valley population of 25,899. Developers Ken Volk and Bob McLain built suburban homes in both San Ramon and Dublin. The Valley Community Services District provided the water, parks, sewer, fire protection and garbage collection for these residents.**

**In 1970 Western Electric purchased 1,733 acres of the Bishop Ranch and proposed a "new town," planning a variety of housing, parks, stores and light industry. New homes and retail centers were built and, in 1978, the 585-acre Bishop Ranch Business Park began.**

-----San Ramon Population from Census-----

1970	4,084
1980	22,356
2000	44,722
2010	72,148
2015	78,820

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### **Forest Home Farms Historic Park**

**In 1997 Ruth Boone bequeathed Forest Home Farms, the remaining 16-acres of the Boone family ranch at 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd, to the City of San Ramon.**

**Accepting this generous gift and recognizing San Ramon Valley's rich agricultural heritage, the city developed and manages Forest Home Farms Historic Park on the property. The Boone House, built in 1900, is a retreat and meeting center. The 18 outbuildings provide classrooms, exhibits, and school programs -- all listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

**The 1877 David and Eliza Glass House has been moved south from its original location, placed on the park site, restored, and now offers docent tours.**

**For more information about the Historic Park programs and open hours, call 925-973-3284**

**Before the city was incorporated, the San Ramon Homeowners, the Homeowners Association of Twin Creeks and several business groups represented San Ramon's interests at the County. They provided a local voice as modern developments replaced traditional ranch land and orchards.**

**In 1983 seventy-five percent of San Ramon's voters created a new city which took control of development, police, parks and city services. Two new libraries, community centers, numerous parks and a hospital testify to the energy which the young city displayed. A new city hall will open in 2016. No longer a pastoral village at the edge of the Bay Area, vibrant San Ramon looks to the future and values its past.**



**Written by Beverly Lane with thanks to  
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