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## **FROM CRUDE OIL TO FINE WINE, AGRICULTURE TO AEROSPACE, SANTA MARIA HONORS 100 YEARS OF PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY**

### ***Central Coast Destination Launches 12-Month Centennial Celebration in September, Featuring Special Events, History and More***

SANTA MARIA, CA—More than 130 years ago, before even the railroad reached the fertile soils of the Santa Maria Valley, four farmers envisioned a new and prosperous city on California's Central Coast—but even they could not have foreseen the extraordinary developments that awaited the City of Santa Maria, where the spark of an oil strike ignited a community that would later be famed for its fine wines, world-class barbecue, aerospace legacy and more.

Now, approaching 100 years since its incorporation in 1905, the City of Santa Maria is launching a 12-month Centennial Celebration filled with special events, children's activities, historical festivities and more (for information on the unique history of Santa Maria, please see other side).

Under the banner "100 Years of Pride, Prosperity and Progress," the Centennial Celebration will be launched on September 11 with the unearthing of a city time capsule buried on the same day in 1955, and with a 9-11 Veterans Memorial Ceremony to remember the fallen citizens of September 11, 2001, to include a Navy fly-over and POW-MIA plaque dedication. The Centennial Celebration will continue with a multitude of events throughout the year, culminating in the Centennial Anniversary on September 12, 2005. Visit the city's web site at [www.ci.santa-maria.ca.us](http://www.ci.santa-maria.ca.us) for more information on the celebration and events.

Visitors to the Santa Maria Valley during this momentous year may also choose to visit the region's many ongoing historical attractions. "Our local history is long and diverse, and this is reflected in our historic offerings," said April Tunnell, manager of the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau.

Indeed, the bureau offers a free guidebook, **A Walk Through History**, which charts self-guided walking tours of notable local homes, civic facilities and commercial buildings such as the bungalow-style "Minerva Club," designed by famed Hearst Castle architect Julia Morgan. Another popular stop is the **Santa Maria Inn**, a state historic landmark that has lodged an array of celebrities through the years and features an intriguing collection of classic photographs.

Celebrating the history of aviation on the Central Coast, the **Santa Maria Museum of Flight** captures the region's contribution to flight, with two hangars featuring aircraft displays, memorabilia, models and photographs. The **Santa Maria Valley Historical Society and Museum** is rich in artifacts and memorabilia of the Rancho and Pioneer periods as well as the Chumash Indian culture.

Rolling vineyards and picturesque countryside are the setting for the **Chapel San Ramon**, a century-old church and cemetery where many of the area's earliest settlers are at rest.

Visitors interested in these and other historic attractions are encouraged to visit [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com) or call the Santa Maria Valley Visitor Chamber of Commerce & Convention Bureau at (800) 331-3779.

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## **Santa Maria Past to Present: A Brief History**

The story of Santa Maria begins in 1874, when four of the valley's prominent settlers—Rudolph Cook, John Thornburg, Isaac Fesler and Isaac Miller—each donated 40 acres of their intersecting farmlands, forming a city centered on what remains the intersection of Main Street and Broadway today. Subsequent annexations have increased the city's size to 21 square miles.

The new city was called Grangerville, then Central City. But in 1885, after local mail was mistakenly routed to an eponymous city in Colorado, the name was changed to Santa Maria. In 1904, an exploratory well south of the city struck black gold, producing an oil gusher that was affectionately christened "Old Maud." With the discovery of oil came people, and, faced with the need to provide local governance for the growing populace, Santa Maria incorporated as a general law city in 1905.

Oil development intensified in the 1930s, and by 1957 there were 1,775 wells generating more than \$64 million in oil. But in recent decades, it is agriculture, not oil, that has become the enduring natural force in the valley. For example, strawberries alone generated a gross value of more than \$142 million in Santa Barbara County in 2003 (more than 90 percent of the county's strawberries are grown in Santa Maria Valley).

Over time, the Santa Maria Valley also became famed for its signature Santa Maria Style Barbecue and, later, its world-class wines. The origins of Santa Maria Style Barbecue date back more than 150 years to the valley's early ranchos, and its fans have included William Randolph Hearst and President Ronald Reagan. Over the past 30 years, the Santa Maria Valley wine country has joined barbecue as a major attraction, driving local wine tourism while attracting investment from Robert Mondavi, Kendall-Jackson and other industry giants.

Aerospace also played a major role in the development of Santa Maria. As one historian observes, "Since 1957, the local economy has mirrored the cycle of government spending on programs at Vandenberg Air Force Base 20 miles southwest of the city." The 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg is responsible for all Department of Defense space and missile launch activities on the West Coast.

It is impossible to say what the next 100 years will hold for Santa Maria. But if the past is any indication, the region will grow in ways both exciting and unimagined.

*Serving the greater Santa Maria Valley in the heart of California's Central Coast, the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau is a nonprofit association that facilitates local tourism and provides information on the region's many attractions and visitor services. Famed for its fine wines, natural wonders, agricultural heritage and flavorful barbecue, the Santa Maria Valley offers a broad range of cultural, sporting and historical experiences. For information on lodging, dining, tours, attractions and events, please contact the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau at (800) 331-3779, or visit [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com).*

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