

# Castro Valley's "First Class Post Office"

By John Christian, Hayward Area Historical Society

Castro Valley's status as an unincorporated community has long played a part in its development. Many residents have worked hard to create a separate identity for a place often associated with Hayward. The construction of the Castro Valley Post Office on Santa Maria is a prime example of Castro Valley's identity that emerged in the post World War II era.

Prior to 1965, all mail sent out of Castro Valley was rerouted out of the Hayward Post Office. In fact, Castro Valley's two small postal branches were actually designated branches of the Hayward Post Office. A small facility on Castro Valley Boulevard and an even smaller branch located in the Bellini's Drug Store at Center Street and Heyer Avenue collected all those precious holiday packages and processed them under the auspices of the Hayward Post Office.

Soon however, Castro Valley's growing population made a trip to the post office almost unbearable. In 1950 Castro Valley had a population of about 18,000. By 1960 it was well over 50,000. For Castro Valley residents, the wait times at the two small Hayward-run branches, and the lack of parking grew more frustrating with each passing year. Securing a "first class" post office became an important issue for many civic-minded organizations.

Finally in 1962, after several years of lobbying, Postmaster General J. Edward Day announced that Castro Valley would get a new post office. The new building was to be built at 20283 Santa Maria Avenue. Two small homes were removed from the lot to make way for the building.



***Dignitaries pose for the groundbreaking of the Castro Valley Post Office, April 20 1964. Just over a year later the building was completed. Eden hospital can be seen off in the distance.***

One question that was not resolved in the announcement however, was whether or not the new Castro Valley Post Office would still be a branch of Hayward's post office. It was the Castro Valley Chamber of Commerce that led the charge to make the Castro Valley Post Office independent from Hayward.

The chamber collected 5,000 signatures and traveled to Washington D.C. to advocate for the independence of the forthcoming post office from Hayward's. In addition, the chamber sent letters to the residents of the rural canyon areas and the Baywood area telling residents to stop using "Hayward" as their address and instead write "Castro Valley" on all outgoing mail. Castro Valley Chamber of Commerce president John Nagy claimed "Castro Valley is losing its identity" and implored residents to make the switch and prevent the community's identity from being swallowed up.

In April 1964, ground was broken for the new building and widely celebrated. After a few stops and starts, the new \$160,000 facility was dedicated on November 20, 1965. A community celebration was held in the new parking lot featuring the Castro Valley High School Band. It has been handling packages big and small ever since.



***Ralph Garcia, Assistant Superintendent of the new Castro Valley Post Office (left), demonstrates postal equipment to Castro Valley Chamber of Commerce officials James Toler (center) and John Nagy (right).***



***The Castro Valley Post Office as it appears today.***