

# Post–World War II Castro Valley: From Ranches to Suburbia

## The End of the Agricultural Era

Before WWII, Castro Valley was known for its **chicken ranches**, **dairy farms**, and **orchards**. But after the war, returning veterans and their families fueled a **housing boom**. Farmland was quickly sold and subdivided into **residential tracts**, changing the landscape forever.

## The Rise of Castro Village (1950)

- In response to the growing population, developers **Arnold Anderson** and **Robert Nahas** built **Castro Village**, a modern shopping center on what had been a tomato field.
- Opened in **November 1950**, it featured 28 storefronts and was designed to serve the new suburban families who now owned cars and needed local shopping options.
- The grand opening included square dancing and a miniature train ride for kids—a symbol of the town’s new family-friendly identity.

## A Post Office of Their Own (1965)

- As Castro Valley’s population soared from **18,000 in 1950 to over 50,000 by 1960**, residents demanded better services.
- Until the mid-1960s, all mail was routed through **Hayward**, and Castro Valley had only two small postal branches.
- In **1962**, after years of lobbying, the U.S. Postmaster General approved a **first-class post office** for Castro Valley.
- The **Castro Valley Chamber of Commerce** led a campaign to make the post office independent from Hayward, collecting over **5,000 signatures** and urging residents to stop using “Hayward” in their mailing addresses.

## Suburban Identity and Civic Pride

- The post-war years brought **schools**, **parks**, and **shopping centers**, but also a strong desire to maintain a **distinct identity** from neighboring Hayward.
- Civic groups and local leaders worked hard to brand Castro Valley as a **self-sufficient, family-oriented community**—even though it remained unincorporated.

