

The Danville Depot: Creating Change, Preserving History

June 14 to August 24, 2025



This summer the Danville Depot hosts a space to tell its own 134-year history. ***The Danville Depot: Creating Change, Preserving History*** explores the historic significance, and colorful past of this founding structure in Old Town Danville. The exhibit highlights how the Depot's use changed with the times, the people who lived and worked there, and the community efforts to transform a dilapidated building into a source of civic pride. The exhibit is organized into five eras.

- The first era started in 1891 when it opened as a passenger and freight train depot.

- The need for a depot slowly declined and, in 1944, it entered a second era when it was repurposed as a feed and grain store.
- The third era began when the Depot was abandoned in 1987. The threat of it being a casualty of development inspired a valley-wide effort to save the depot.
- The generosity and industriousness of many community members led to the fourth era. The Depot was rescued by the Town of Danville, moved to its current location, restored and rehabilitated, and reopened as a museum in 1999.
- The current era finds the Depot filling a new purpose for the entire San Ramon Valley as the home of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley.



Depot Era

1891-1956

In 1891 the Danville Depot opened to serve the long-awaited Southern Pacific San Ramon Branch Line. In 1913 the Depot building was electrified, and lights and plumbing were added in 1919. In 1934 passenger service ended, but agricultural usage continued until Southern Pacific retired the Depot from regular freight service in 1956. The Depot supported the transportation needs of the local agricultural community for 65 years. The layout and look of present-day downtown Danville was influenced by the Depot's location and design.



Feed Store Era

1944-1987

Business steadily declined on the branch line. Beginning in 1944, Southern Pacific rented the Depot to a series of feed and grain store operators. Joe Ramos Sr. and his son Joe Jr. purchased the Depot building in 1957. They sold feed, grain, firewood, hay and swimming pool supplies. The second-floor was rented out as an apartment. Legendary tenant (1974-87), Dick Dowell was noted for his bachelor pad with a second story hot tub and his antique collection. Upon the death of Joe Jr. in 1987, the Depot was abandoned and its future uncertain.



Abandoned and Rescued Era

1987-1996

The San Ramon Valley Historical Society dreamed of a history museum. In 1985 they formed the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and began looking for a home.

As the Depot was now available, the Town of Danville purchased the building for a museum in 1989. Then volunteers sprang into action, joining together to write grants, solicit donations, sell bricks, hold Robber Baron Balls, and other fundraising events. The Danville Town Council and Town staff provided critical support. This community effort made the dream of a Museum a reality.



Relocated and Restored Era 1996-1999

June 9, 1996 was a monumental day for Danville. The Depot was moved 810 feet

from its 1891 location, (currently Lunardi's), to its current location. Over the next three years a dedicated group of volunteers, aided by skilled contractors, restored and rehabilitated the Depot, created exhibits for the new museum, and continued to raised money. The project, which cost \$775,000, enjoyed strong support from the public and the Town of Danville. The community's efforts culminated with the grand opening of Museum of San Ramon Valley on June 26, 1999.



MuseumSRV - Current Era

For over 25 years the Museum of San Ramon Valley has fulfilled its mission to preserve and celebrate the rich history and heritage of the San Ramon Valley. The Danville Depot has served as the venue for many exhibits and community functions and is the Town's visitor information center. The serendipity of timing plus Town and Museum aspirations allowed the Depot to be repurposed as a museum and revived its dignity. The Danville Depot embodies the MuseumSRV's motto "History. Alive."

