

Key Dates Regarding Betteravia, the Sugar Mill, and the Railroad

April 1882

Pacific Coast Railway arrives at Santa Maria

September 1897

Union Sugar Company organized

March 1895

Southern Pacific (SP) reaches Guadalupe

1897

Union Sugar mill completed at Betteravia

August 1899

SP completes branch from Guadalupe to Betteravia

July 1911

Santa Maria Valley Railroad incorporated

August 1911

Material arrives in Santa Barbara aboard the steam schooner "Yellowstone" transported via SP to Betteravia, construction begins

October 1911

First train to Santa Maria

1925

Railroad goes into receivership, sold at auction for \$75,000 to Captain G. Allan Hancock

1926

Union Sugar Mill closes

1934

Union Sugar Mill reopens

1986

Holly Sugar purchases Union Sugar, taking over operation at Betteravia

1994

Holly Sugar mill closes

1997

Sugar mill demolished

2008

The SMVRR moves its headquarters to Betteravia



To learn more about the town of Betteravia, the sugar refinery, and the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, the book "Betteravia, Memories of a Modern California Ghost Town" by Hal Madson is available in the Santa Maria Valley Railroad Company Store or online at <http://www.smvrr.com/store.html>.



BETTERAVIA

"The town of Betteravia was as complete as any factory town could be, with about seventy houses, store, post office, fire department, church, schools and a boat dock on the large lake that existed next to the town."

"The town is long gone, dismantled in the mid-1960's. One finds it hard to believe that Betteravia was once a "social hub" with barbecues, dances and other festivities, not to mention Lake Guadalupe, one of the largest natural lakes in southern California."

Excerpted from "Betteravia, Memories of a Modern California Ghost Town" by Hal Madson, with permission.

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#1. This is the site of the Plant Managers large impressive house. The terrain drops off just behind where the house stood, to a large depression that once contained a natural lake.



#2. This passenger car was brought here to be used by the now defunct Betteravia Historical Society, to exhibit photos and artifacts related to Betteravia. The Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad plan to help the property owner, Ed Sutti, utilize it for this purpose. [Photo by Jamie Foster]



#3. The church sat here diagonally to the road. Note the size of the palm tree in the foreground of the photo compared to today!



#4. The Factory Superintendent's cottage was at the end of a row of cottages that stretched up the street to the west.



#5. The Club House at Betteravia was quite a grand building. Again, the palm tree attests to the passage of time!

#6 (at left). Children from Betteravia and surrounding farms would have attended this two room school house. The upright posts nearby would have supported the flag staff.

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