

THE MORAGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2021

MORAGA MEMORIES-YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

MORAGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETS \$100,000 PLEDGE TO THE FRIENDS OF THE JOAQUIN MORAGA ADOBE



CHECK PRESENTATION

At the Joaquin Moraga Adobe

On Tuesday, August 24, 2021, Susan Sperry, president of the Moraga Historical Society, presented Kent Long, president of the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, a check for \$53,000 representing the final installment of MHS's commitment to raise more than \$100,000 from the Moraga community toward the \$500,000 purchase price of the Adobe

property. Photographed here receiving the check is Bobbie Landers, longtime FJMA and Adobe project supporter, Dave Trotter, chair of the Moraga Historical Society Fundraising Committee, Susan Sperry; Kent Long, Tania DeGroot, Jeff Boero and Teresa Long, FJMS Board of Directors.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

A huge thank you goes to the MHS fundraising committee:

Dave Trotter, Chair

Sam Sperry, Secretary

Brother Mel Anderson

Ron Louis

Dick Olsen

In 2014 the MHS Board committed to using its best efforts to raise \$100,000 for the Joaquin Moraga Adobe. In a final push beginning in December 2020, members of the Moraga Historical Society received a letter from me asking for urgent help in a now-or-never campaign to save the Moraga Adobe! I implored members to help me preserve the oldest surviving structure in Contra Costa County built in 1841 by Joaquin Moraga on the Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados. MHS was given a deadline of September 21, 2021 to accomplish this Herculean task, during a pandemic! Every member of MHS's Board pledged their personal financial support.

A gigantic thank you goes to the Moraga community who, in a relatively short time facilitated our meeting this goal.

On the Street Where You Live

The history of the naming of streets in Moraga and the nearby cities of Lafayette and Orinda includes, as with many towns and cities, different motivating factors. Those who named the streets were generally the developers of the subdivisions. They paid attention to local history, to community interest, and, as you read on, to ideas that might seem more random as they came up with the names of the streets in the town of Moraga and environs.

Because the land had been a Mexican land grant, early in the development of the Moraga valley Spanish street names were chosen.

These include streets in the Campolindo, subdivision, where there are such names as Paseo Grande, Calle la Mesa, and Quintas Lane. Lincoln Estates and Moraga Del Rey developments also took on Spanish names. Streets with Spanish names were popular all over Contra Costa County, which reduced the availability of names for use in Moraga, so developers had to look further for inspiration.

Many streets in Moraga were named by developer Frank Draeger, who consulted British telephone books for some of the names, hence such street names as Buckingham Drive, Deerfield Drive, Wimpole Street, and Crossbrook Court. Of course, Draeger Drive was named in his honor. Draeger documented many of the sources for the street names, which he included in his manuscript which describes the development of the Moraga Company Ranch over decades.

Some street names were appropriated from street names in subdivisions in other counties. Ascot Drive, Fernwood Drive, and Inverleith Terrace are examples.

While it might seem that street names ending with "wood" might refer to an area where there are glens of trees, that is not always the case.

Fred T. Wood, a developer, named streets Southwood Drive, Northwood Drive, and Woodland Road after himself.

Many streets were named for family and associates of the Donald Rheem family. These street names include Donald Drive, Laird Drive, Alice Lane (Donald's wife), Harold Drive (a brother), Scofield Drive (a brother), Calvin Drive (Rheem's secretary Mary Calvin), Greenwood Drive (Rheem's Treasurer) and Zander Drive (Bill Zander was a senior vice-president of Rheem Manufacturing Company).

Naturally, some streets were named for established families on the Moraga Ranch, and for significant members of the community. Baitx Drive was named for former Moraga Fire Chief Al Baitx. Carr Drive was named for the Carr family who were ranchers. Dickenson Drive was named for former postmistress Elinor Dickenson, and Freitas Drive was named for longtime local residents in the Freitas family.

If you would like to investigate the origins of the street name where you live, you are welcome to check with us at the Moraga History Center to see if we might have the resources you need to figure that out.

Source: Frank Draeger, *Developing the Moraga Company Ranch, 1922-1977*

Susan Skilton, Research Director

Needed!

The Board of Directors is looking for a Treasurer to replace Bob Sornsen who is retiring. Please contact Susan Sperry at 925-376-3053 if you are available or know of someone to fill the position.

Moraga Historical Society loses four important long-time members



Larry Swindell was born in rural Texas in 1929. He graduated from UCLA in 1952 where he majored in English and history. After graduation he served a two-year conscription in the US Army. Larry is remembered for his professional newspaper career in New York, California, Pennsylvania, and

Texas, as well as teaching in five universities.

Author of six books relating to the movie industry, the Moraga Historical Society remembers him for his years of work as editor on *the El Rancho Quarterly* publication.

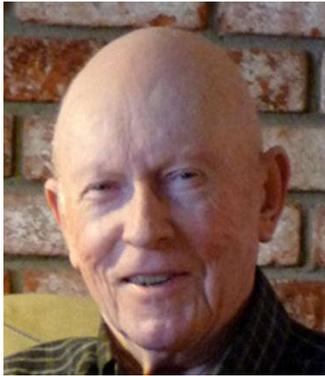
Born in Oakland in 1928, Brother Mel Anderson served as a Christian Brother for 67 years and was a devoted member of the St. Mary's community. As a graduate of Berkeley's St. Mary's College High School and St. Mary's College in Moraga, Brother Mel served as director/principal/ teacher at his high school alma mater in the 1960s, and as St. Mary's College president from 1969-1997. Known for turning the college co-educational in the 1970s, Brother Mel continued to live in one of the resident halls on campus until his retirement in 2019. A loyal member of the Moraga Historical Society Board of Directors, Brother Mel was a valuable contributor to the Society.



Margaret DePriester was a respected Town leader. A resident since 1968, "She wanted to contribute to the community and her goal was to make it an even better place to live in," stated daughter Susan Freeman. Playing an integral role in incorporation of the Town in 1974, Margaret was the first woman appointed to the Planning Commission and later to the Town Council in 1980. Mayor of Moraga for two terms, she was voted Citizen of the Year in 1986. As president



of the Moraga Historical Society, Margaret chaired the committee to raise the funds to build the History Center and worked there for years as an archivist. When the third graders made their annual tour of the History Center each April, Margaret explained the importance of trains in the history of our Town.



Born on September 27, 1922, **Les Krames** passed away on April 15, 2021. Although Les Krames spent 37 years as graphics and shop/scenic artist for KRON-TV in San Francisco, the Moraga Historical Society remembers him as the graphics designer for *Moraga Pride!* Father of three with wife Bonnie, he was awarded the Graphic Arts Emmy for **Dr. Tom Groody's** "Science in Action" program in 1954. He was

the Art Director at KRON from 1966 until his retirement in 1987.

On display in the Moraga History Center are Les's elaborately detailed diaramas depicting life in Moraga for the Saklan Indians and the Spanish arrival. For many years Les authored the Moraga Historical Society's *El Rancho Quarterly*.

BOARD MEMBERS

Vera Kochan

Bonnie Krames

RonLouis

Carole Lucas

Colleen Lund

John Minney

Dick Olsen

Susan Skilton

Bob Sornsen

Susan Sperry

MEMBERSHIP

Dues for 2021-2022 can be paid to:
(If your address has a red dot, you have paid your dues.)

Colleen Lund
1080 Sanders Drive
Moraga, CA 94556

Yearly dues:
\$15 for individual, \$25 Family membership

RECENT HAPPENINGS

The Moraga Historical Society is awaking from an 18 months COVID hiatus! We have resumed Board meetings in person and are looking forward to participating in the September 25th Pear and Wine Festival.

While our doors were closed to visitors, things were still happening! Of importance is the building of our new website atmoragahistory.org under the experienced guidance of John Kaiser and Susan Skilton. Please take time to look at the new site, clicking on the headings and looking in depth into all the pages. Now on-line are the Quarterlies from years past, and a store that will allow you to make purchases from your home! Recently ordered is a new supply of Moraga themedafghans.

Comment [SS1]:

Indian Life in Moraga

The Miwok Indians were the original settlers of the Moraga Valley. The Miwok tribe who lived in the Moraga area are known as the Saclan. They lived in a "triblet" of about 250 to 300 people. The location of their village changed according to the seasons. They moved to fish or hunt, gather seeds or harvest acorns.

The Saclans' houses were built around a frame of tree branches and covered with tule matting. The tules were piled on 10 to 12 inches thick. If you look at the creek across the street from Campolindo High School, you can still see tules growing. The house was pointed at the top and looked like a beehive. The door of the house was on the south side. This would allow light in for most of the day. In bad weather, a fire was built in the middle of the house. The smoke from the fire would go out the hole in the roof. The floor of the house would be covered with several layers of tule mats. In cold weather, rabbit skin blankets would be used. There was always a fire burning outside the house. Cooking and eating would be outside. The Saclans did not have regular meal times. They would gather at the end of the day and eat before sundown. After eating, they would gather around the fire and sing songs or tell stories.

The Saclan wore almost no clothes. Sometimes they would wear two pieces of cloth tied by a vine around their waist. Sometimes they made capes from animal skins. They had no shoes. When it was cold, they would cover their bodies with mud. They also used mud mixed with ashes to make tattoos on their faces. The men had nose-sticks. For special celebrations, they would make costumes out of colorful bird feathers.

In the mornings, the Saclans would take a dip in a nearby river or lake and then scatter for the day. The men would take the boys and go hunting for rabbits, ground squirrels, birds, deer and insects like grasshoppers. They would check the traps or snares they set the day before. If there was a large group of animals, the women would often help surround them and drive the animals into a circle where they were killed. The Saclan also fished. They would string a net across the creek, and then throw buckeye balls into the water. This would stun the fish and the Saclan would wade into the creek to catch them. Sometimes fish would be kept in a trap-cage in the creek to keep them fresh for several weeks. The fish or animals would be taken back to the camp; some would be cooked for dinner for several days. The rest would be dried in the sun to save for when there was no fresh food. No part of the animals was wasted. They cooked and ate the meat; they made clothes out of the fur or skin, and tools were made out of the bones.

The women would go out to gather nuts and berries and grasses for food. They gathered a lot of acorns from the oak trees in the valley. They would grind the acorns with a stone to make a mush (like oatmeal) which they cooked with water. For the Saclans, acorns were like potatoes. They also ate pine nuts. They would gather hundreds of pinecones and throw them into the fire. This would cause the pinecones to open up and the pine nuts could be taken out. They would then roast the nuts to eat.

The Saclan women also gathered weeds, grasses and bark to make baskets. They had no bags, boxes, pots, pans, glasses or dishes. They used baskets of many different kinds. One, shaped like a very large ice cream cone, was used to carry acorns or pine nuts on the backs like backpacks. They made baskets to cook in by placing hot rocks in the basket. Some baskets were woven so tightly they held water.

The children had games to play. One game they played with a hoop made from coiled bark. They would roll the hoop back and forth while other children tried to throw a spear through it as it rolled by. In another game, they would dig a hole in the ground and throw flat rocks at it. There were large festivals and social events between villages and triblets.

Artifacts from the Saclan have been found in Moraga. Lake LaSalle was to the north of St. Mary's College. In 1828 there were skeletons found in the lake. Also found were several mortar stones, and pestles near the Adobe, along Las Trampas Creek and along the upper San Leandro Creek. Obsidian arrowheads were also found in the bluffs along Bollinger Canyon Road, on Rheem Blvd. and in Canyon.



LES KRAMES

MORAGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 103
MORAGA, CA 94556