

Historical Society Tells Hacienda's Story with Pictures

By Sophie Braccini



Parks and Recreation staff Kimberley Nelson and Jay Ingram with antique pictures of the Hacienda

Photo Sophie Braccini

Even in a town as young as Moraga, there are historical stories to be told. The Hacienda de las Flores is one of the places where history meets romance and the past can come to life.

The Hacienda was built in 1929 by Donald Rheem, son of the president of Standard Oil Company of California. When the Town purchased the Hacienda in 1973, for \$343,750, it came with archives – including a pictorial history of the land and the building going back to 1857, when Jesse Hall William bought the 160-acre lot from Jose de Jesus Mor-

aga. “The pictures were hanging in the hall of the Hacienda, but they were not framed properly and there was no explanation (of what the pictures depicted),” says Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, who turned to the Moraga Historical Society for help.

“We decided to frame the pictures and do the research for the plaques that explain the history of the property,” says Historical Society Recording Secretary Susan Sperry, “Historical Society co-archivist Margaret DePriester had records from when the Town bought the Hacienda,

and she had written a history of the property at the time.”

The pictures are mounted in six groups of a few pictures each and the plaques below tell the story. They are hung on a wall in the main corridor of the Hacienda de las Flores, which is located at 2100 Donald Drive in Moraga. The images tell of hard working pioneers as well as elegant parties in the mansion of an oil magnate. The display is open to the public.

For information about the Moraga Historical Society go to: <http://www.moragahistory.org/>.

Balancing Act for a Chamber

By Sophie Braccini

It can be tricky to occupy the hot seat of local government—needing to make sound financial decisions yet ensure that the electorate understands the motivation and consistency behind each vote. At its last meeting, the Moraga Town Council wrestled with that problem as it decided in a 4 to 1 vote to pursue the study, and later construction, of a 105-seat meeting room in the Town’s office building at 329 Rheem Boulevard. The Council wondered if the added expense would be understood by voters who will soon be asked to contribute more

money to road and drain maintenance. “It’s about perception,” said Council Member Dave Trotter, the dissenting vote.

Council Member Ken Chew, in a discussion about municipal finance mechanisms, noted, “That money could not be used for roads anyway.”

“What happens is that when developers pay a town fee per housing unit built, a portion of that money has to be used for Town capital improvement,” explained Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf after the meeting, “it cannot be used for roads or drains. Conse-

quently, if the money is not spent for that type of use, it is lost.”

The project is considered cost-effective at this time, since remodeling and retrofit activities are getting underway at the building; the addition of the large room, which could function as a Council Chamber and site for other community meetings, would add about \$200,000 to the overall cost that is estimated at roughly \$1.5 million.

The Town currently rents meeting space for the Council at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School.



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