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## Joaquin Moraga descendant to perform at annual Fandango

By Sora O'Doherty



Los Arriberos de San Francisco, which includes Joaquin Moraga descendant Lance Beeson, will perform at the Ranch House in Orinda during the annual Fandango. Photo provided

and at the San Francisco Free Folk Festival.

A member of a descendants group who studies history and genealogy, Beeson believes that the Moraga Adobe is a cultural and historical touchstone for this entire valley. Built in 1841, the Adobe is the oldest surviving building in Contra Costa County. It has been recognized as a California State Historic Landmark since 1954, and was designated as an Orinda City Landmark in 1995. The Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe are dedicated to preserving it as an important landmark and working to provide community access to the building and grounds.

Beeson is passionate about the Moraga Adobe and wishes that it was open to all, like the Alviso Adobe in Pleasanton, built in 1854. "The attic is so exciting," he says. "The adobe bricks and woodwork are original and still there." He wishes that the entire 17-acre parcel could be renovated, in the same way that the Alviso Adobe became a public park. He noted that even his own family has not seen the adobe.

In 1854, Beeson's great-great-grandmother was born in the Moraga Adobe. A granddaughter of Jose Joaquin Moraga, Maria Gomacinda de los Santos Moraga, was the daughter of Jose de Jesus Moraga and Cruz Sibrian. Her son, Beeson's great-grandfather, Joseph Frank Avila, was killed by a train in 1906. His grandmother was 4 months old at the time. Beeson's great-grandmother gave Gomacinda up for adoption to her Portuguese godparents, the de Costas, who raised her in Berkeley, while her sister lived in Oakland. The girls saw each other until 1919, when there was a rift in the family and Gomacinda was cut out of a will.

Joaquin Moraga lived in the Adobe from its construction in 1841 to his death in 1855, when it passed to Jose de Jusus Moraga who lived in the Adobe from 1855 to 1887. In 1885 the property was part of a final court settlement and was acquired by Horace Carpentier, an east coast lawyer, who then rented the Adobe out to the Avila family in 1889. The Adobe has always remained in private hands. The property was acquired by J & J Developers and is the subject of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe under which the developer will renovate the Adobe and the FJMA may purchase it for \$500,000. If the FJMA fails to complete the purchase within three years of the final subdivision approval of the plans, which has not yet occurred, the adobe would then be used as a clubhouse for the development. The FJMA is confident that they will succeed in buying the adobe and preserving it for posterity. Thus far, the FJMA has raised over \$140,000. The Fandango is FJMA's major fundraiser.

The large party, in keeping with the history of the Adobe, has been held in various historic buildings in Orinda over the years. This year the FJMA had hoped that the Fandango would be the first event to be held in Orinda's new Art and Garden Center in Wilder. Unfortunately, the building has not yet been cleared for occupancy, so the Fandango will take place at 6 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 25 at the Ranch House, a smaller venue near the Art and Garden Center.

Tickets are \$100 per person and are available at [www.MoragaAdobe.org](http://www.MoragaAdobe.org). Attendees are invited to enjoy a festive evening of music and dancing with delicious food and drink, and all proceeds will benefit the Moraga Adobe.

Growing up, Lance Beeson always knew that he was a descendent of Joaquin Moraga. He knew that during the 1940s, his family would have Fourth of July parties at the Moraga Adobe. A member of the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, he came up with the idea of holding an annual Fandango to raise money for the restoration of the important property.

Beeson was perhaps the perfect person to focus on the project, as both a direct descendant of the land grant holder, Joaquin Moraga, and a musician in the eight-member group, Los Arriberos de San Francisco. The group, a performing unit of the California Fandango Project, presents interactive music, dance and activities of Hispanic California. Beeson is a trained classical guitarist, who also plays the melodian, the button accordion, and performs as a vocalist. He has performed at each Fandango in support of the Moraga Adobe, and this year Los Arriberos de San Francisco will be providing the entertainment for the Fifth Annual Fandango on Aug. 25. They have also performed in venues including the John Muir Adobe, the Peralta Adobe in San Francisco,



Lance Beeson

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