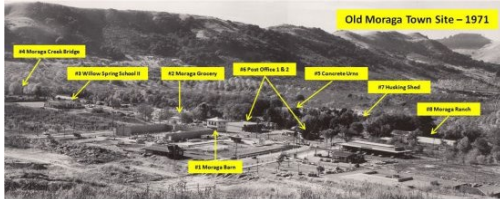




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# Old Moraga Town Site Walking Tour takes history buffs back in time

By Vera Kochan



It's not exactly a time machine, but thanks to the Moraga Historical Society's continuous efforts to bring history to life for the town's residents and visitors, the Old Moraga Town Site Walking Tour was developed as an interactive way to discover some notable aspects near the Moraga Shopping Center while getting in some exercise.

Developed by MHS board members and spouses Susan Skilton (research director) and John Kaiser (digital assets coordinator), the couple focused on sites within town that are still standing and began the informational aspects of the tour with the year 1913.

During that year, James Irvine of the Moraga Company, began to turn the area into a ranching and agricultural mecca. Building the now iconic red and white Moraga Ranch buildings (almost a fully functional town unto itself in its day), soon Irvine's walnut and Bartlett pears were shipped nationwide.

History comes alive on the Old Moraga Town Site Walking Tour Photo courtesy John Kaiser

The Utah Construction and Mining Company bought the land in 1953, after Irvine's death, with an eye towards development. Subsequently, developer Russell Bruzzone purchased the area now known as Moraga Shopping Center from Utah Construction in the early '60s when it was still farmland linked by dirt roads.

There are eight locations/stops on the tour: Moraga Barn; Moraga Grocery (not Safeway); Willow Spring School II; Moraga Creek; concrete urns median; two former post offices; the husking shed; and the Moraga Ranch buildings. To begin the tour one can visit the MHS website (MoragaHistory.org), and click onto Moraga History. Scroll down to Walking Tours and simply follow the instructions or use the QR Code (see below). There is also a "history lesson" attached to each stop on the website. The tour is approximately 1.5 miles and takes about 35-45 minutes to complete. It is suggested for anyone interested in taking the tour, to read the "background" content beforehand in order to enhance the touring experience.

"It took us about 2-3 weeks to scout out the sites and to make a safe path for participants," Kaiser explained. "Then, it took about another month to research the sites with images and content. We will continue to flesh out the history of each stop and add it to the website."

The site's official unveiling was held at the MHS booth during the Fourth of July festivities at Moraga Commons Park, and it drew a continuous crowd of interested visitors both young and old. Kaiser stated, "We want to have young people and families interested in Moraga's history."



This QR Code will also take readers to the Old Moraga Town Site Walking Tour main page.

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