



## MORAGA

See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

**Town of Moraga:**

www.moraga.ca.us  
Phone: (925) 888-7022

**Chamber of Commerce:**

www.moragachamber.org

**Moraga Citizens' Network:**

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

**Town Council**

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m.

**Special Town Council**

Wed., Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m.

**Planning Commission:**

Tuesday, Dec 19, 6:30 p.m.

**Special Planning Commission:**

Tues, Dec. 12, 6 p.m.

**Park and Recreation**

Commission:

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m.



# ONODA OPEN STUDIO

DEC. 2 & 3 11-5

24 MERRILL CIRCLE  
MORAGA

## Once Upon a Time ... Moraga almost had a castle

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

**Architect's rendering for Donald Rheem's "Castle"**

A very few number of town-folk are aware of the fact that in 1940 Donald L. Rheem (of Hacienda de las Flores fame) was in the process of building something akin to a rock-like castle within a stone's throw distance of today's Hacienda.

This story would never have been written if Moraga resident Martha Rubin hadn't sent a copy of a 1970 Moraga Sun article along with black and white photo copies of the "castle" ruins to Council Member Kerry Hillis. Hillis, in turn, forwarded the information to Town Manager Scott Mitnick who forwarded it to this reporter, who happens to also be on the board of directors of the

Moraga Historical Society. The Moraga Sun article's author, Juanita Maloney, wrote: "Moraga almost had its own San Simeon, the foundation of which stands today [1970], and on which will be built a 3,000 square foot home. Nestled on the hillside above Devin Drive on what was once part of the vast original Rheem estate, is the foundation of the 'castle.' It wasn't until Harold Smith acquired some of the adjoining property and recently began constructing homesites, that residents were really aware of the 'castle' site."

This reporter, accompanied by Moraga Historical Society President Susan Sperry,

began a Nancy Drew-like quest to find the "castle" location and dig for any pertinent information within the History Center's files. Driving to the end of Devin Drive's cul de sac we spotted a very steep driveway, bordered by low rock walls gently winding up to a modern house on 2.5 acres originally built around 1970, by a Richmond manufacturer named Richard P. Segners. According to "Notes on Donald L. Rheem" compiled by Dr. Lee Nelson, Segners used the 'castle' exterior stone walls but his own foundation.

Rheem's structure had many nicknames besides 'castle.' It was also referred to as 'Chalet' and even 'Rock House.' If completed, the three-story house would have been like nothing ever seen in the area. The first floor would have covered 2,265 square feet to include a dining room, living room, reception, and kitchen. The second floor was planned at 2,025 square feet containing 4 bathrooms, 3 bedrooms, and a den. The third floor's dimensions aren't listed, but at least 1 bedroom was part of the plans. Connecting all three floors would have been a grand circular staircase.

Unfortunately for Rheem, World War II and the scarcity of materials put a hold on construction that had so far cost him between \$30,000 and

\$40,000. Glazed window frames were about to be inserted when building was terminated, and the windows remained behind the foundation for 30 years until juveniles broke the glass. Nelson also explained that the "original chalet had walls partially built so that it would not be taxed as a 'completed' home during WWII." The structure was also deemed unsafe by the county in the event of an earthquake thanks to the stone mason's unfamiliarity with local laws.

With regards to Segners endeavor to take over the property decades after Rheem, Maloney's article states, "After soil engineering tests which showed the existing foundation of sandstone still sound, they acquired the services of an architect who has drawn plans for their new home."

Maloney added, "The architect, as it turned out, was one of the young men who worked with the mason who constructed the original stone foundation and retaining walls surrounding the building."

Included in the photo copies Rubin sent to Hillis were c.1960s pictures from former Moraga resident Daniel Ferguson as a child dressed in a Robin Hood costume. Apparently, the moniker of 'castle' helped boost neighborhood kids' imaginations to the extreme.

- Hardwoods
- Carpets
- Rugs
- LVP
- Vinyl
- Laminate

**FAMILY OWNED  
30+ YEARS!**

**925-284-4440**

3344 Mt. Diablo Blvd.  
Lafayette  
lamorindafloors.com

**LAMORINDA  
FLOORS**

**DECK DOCTORS**  
**FLAT ROOF & SIDING**

Wood Structure Restoration and  
Preservation Specialist

**Decks, Balconies, Pergolas, Siding**

Repairs | Pressure Washing  
Stripping | Sanding | Staining  
Painting | Coatings | Inspections

**FREE ESTIMATES**

**Richard R. Alvarado**  
**925-351-DECK (3325)**  
**www.deckdoctors.net**  
richard@deckdoctors.net

CA Lic# 786427

## Moraga's Holiday Tree Lighting event draws hundreds to Commons Park

By Vera Kochan

There was a ton of holiday cheer in evidence Nov. 30 during the town of Moraga's annual Holiday Tree Lighting. If tickets were sold, this could have been considered a sell-out with folks of all ages bundled up and ready for the countdown that would turn the massive tree in Commons Park into Moraga's holiday tradition, thanks to the folks in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Crowds started showing up at 6:30 p.m. to partake of hot cocoa and cookies served by elves from the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee, and holiday music was

provided by Campolindo Music for the Soul. The man of the hour, Santa Claus, arrived just in time to see the all-white lights glowing in the night at the stroke of 7. Apparently, no one was naughty this year, because the line to see him was extraordinarily lengthy.

Also of note, the North Pole Mailbox, located near the Holiday Tree, will be accepting letters to Santa until Dec. 15. Your child will receive a reply from Santa, if you remember to include a name and return address on the envelope.

Don't be a Scrooge! Participate in the Buy-a-Bulb Fundraiser, and help light the Holiday Tree by donating online at: moragarec.com or send a check to: Town of Mor-



Photo Vera Kochan

**Moraga's holiday tree lights up Commons Park.**

aga, Attn: Buy-a-Bulb, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga, CA 94556.

## Tamplen Plastic Surgery now in Orinda

**Cosmetic Surgery**

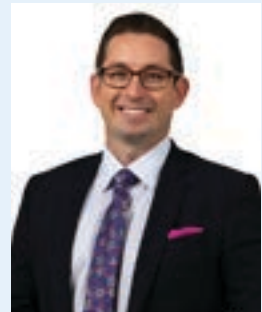
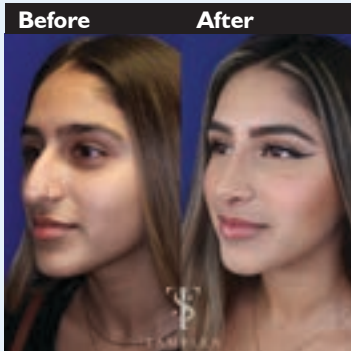
- Facelift
- Facial Implants
- Neck Lift
- Nose Surgery
- Brow Lift
- Eyelid Surgery
- Ear Surgery

**Laser & Non-Surgical Services**

- BOTOX® Cosmetic and Dysport®
- Cosmetic Removal of Moles & Skin Tags
- Fillers (JUVÉDERM®, JUVÉDERM VOLUMA®, Restylane®)
- Fraxel Re:Store Laser Treatment

**Skin Care Services**

- Chemical Peels
- Obagi® Consultation



Dr. Matthew Tamplen, who grew up in Lafayette and is a nationally recognized Double Board-Certified Facial Plastic surgeon, opened a private practice in Downtown Orinda to better serve Lamorinda patients. Specializing entirely in the face, Dr. Tamplen's expertise is nationally recognized for providing patients with beautiful, elegant, and natural results.

**Matthew Tamplen, MD**

Orinda Office: **NEW LOCATION**  
96 Davis Road, Suite #5, Orinda, 925-444-0824  
TamplenPlasticSurgery.com



Double Board-Certified  
Facial Plastic and  
Reconstructive Surgeon.



35 years of experience in architectural design

**KAPLAN ARCHITECTS**

www.kaplanarchitects.com  
(510) 361-0223