



# Orinda Historical Society Newsletter

July 2009

P.O. BOX 82, ORINDA, CA 94563

(925) 254-1353

### Museum Location

Lower Level of  
Orinda Library  
26 Orinda Way

### Museum Hours of

#### Operation

Monday,  
Wednesday, &  
Friday 3-5 pm\*\*  
Or by Appointment  
Call 925 254-1353  
Or  
Lucy: 650-349-3382

#### Web Site

[www.orindahistory.org](http://www.orindahistory.org)

#### Newsletter

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[teresa@orindausa.com](mailto:teresa@orindausa.com)

\*\* If planning a visit,  
please call ahead to  
confirm museum hours  
We are a volunteer staff  
and thus our hours can  
vary.

## History of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe



OHS Archivist Kent Long  
speaks at the OHS May  
meeting

Who were the Moraga family? Why is their adobe in Orinda historically significant? What has happened to the adobe since 1841? OHS archivist Kent Long, the featured speaker at this May's OHS annual meeting, answered these questions and many more in his fascinating account of the history of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe.

To understand the origins of the adobe, you must go back to 1776 when Jose Joaquin Moraga, second in command of the Anza expedition, led 200 settlers from Mexico to the Spanish colony of Alta California. Moraga played a significant role in Bay Area history; he helped found San Francisco, Mission Santa Clara, San Jose, and established the SF presidio. He commanded the Presidio until his death in 1785. By this time the Moraga family was a prominent family in this area. Jose's grandson, Joaquin Moraga, was born in 1793. In 1835, Joaquin Moraga and his cousin Juan Bernal petitioned the Mexican Governor for a land grant. The rancho named Rancho Laguna de Los Palos Colorados included southern Orinda and Lafayette, all of Moraga and Rheem to the south of Canyon. In 1841 when the land grant was finalized, work began on building the two room adobe using local redwood beams and Indian labor. The house was built near a spring on the hill with a sweeping view of the valley and Mt. Diablo in the distance. In 1848 the house was expanded when Joaquin's son and family moved in. The Moraga family ranched cattle on the property and held many fandango dance parties at the adobe.

The Mexican-American war which ended in 1848 changed life for the Moraga family; California became a state in 1850 and all Mexican land grants were challenged. Gold Rush squatters occupied portions of their land. The Moraga family was forced to defend their claim in the US courts. In January 1855 they were finally granted title, but Joaquin died soon after in June of 1855. The Moraga family had land, but little money, and the legal fees were a major hardship. Before he died, Joaquin Moraga sold off

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## Upcoming Events

- **August Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, August 19th, 3 to 5 pm at the Museum
- **September Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, Sept. 16th, 3 to 5 pm at the Museum
- **Orinda Classic Car Show**  
Sept. 19th, 10 am to 2 pm at Orinda Motors

### *Moraga Adobe*

Help preserve the Adobe  
visit [www.MoragaAdobe.org](http://www.MoragaAdobe.org)  
for more info.

## Orinda Village Bridge Restoration Project

Thanks to the efforts of OHS new Vice President Charles Vollmar, the City of Orinda and the Orinda Historical Society are joining forces to restore the 1920's **San Pablo Creek bridge** located at Orinda Way and Camino Pablo at the north end of Orinda Village.

Be a part of this effort by joining the OHS work party on **August 1st from 8:30 am to 3pm**. For more information, contact **Charles Vollmar at 368-4181 or [charlie@epicureanexchange.com](mailto:charlie@epicureanexchange.com)** The City of Orinda is doing all the repairs and prep work to the bridge, and the OHS members will help restore it to its glory days by painting it a nice clean white with the "1920" painted in black. *Continued on page 4*



# Thank You

## Recent donations to OHS

- 1977 & 1978 OIS yearbooks were donated by **Kent Long**.
- Anniversary card from Mitt & Eve Nelson (The Willows) given by **Joy McCoy**.
- **Lucy Hupp Williams** gave a Longs shopping bag
- **Ilene Holmgren** donated a wooden spool of floss.
- Many Sleepy Hollow original road signs given by **Tracy Bagnall-Lloyd**.
- Orinda in Action items contributed by **Sue Severson**.
- 1950's scrapbook from Sue Kilgo donated by **Kathy Eastman**.
- **Mary Louise Armsby** donated a restaurant guide: *A Forkful of Diablo Valley Contra Costa*.
- **Sue Johnson** donated a book made by her 3rd grade class: "Orinda History."
- **Lois Palsey** gave a framed copy of a 1874 San Pablo Rancho map.
- **Helen Frakes** donated planning commission documents.

Thank you to Rose Bolin, the owner of Treible's in Orinda, for generously providing the printing of this newsletter.

## 4th of July Parade Historic Entries

For the second year in a row the Orinda sign was featured in Orinda's 4th of July parade. Many thanks to the efforts of OHS member **Carol Lu Zischke** and **Orinda Motors, John and Brian Vanek** and owner **Allen Pennebaker**, for making this possible.

New to the parade this year were **The Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe** group. They rode on **Mel Silva's** wagon which was pulled by four horses. FJMA members riding on the wagon included President **Kent Long**, Vice President **Jeff Boero**, Secretary **Connie Boero**, **Joanne Frudden**, and **Teresa Long**.



OHS's historic Orinda sign pulled behind the "Handy Guys" truck



Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe ride in Mel Silva's 4-hitch wagon

## French Exchange Students Visit OHS Museum

On July 10th, exchange students from France took to the streets of Orinda on a scavenger hunt. Among the things they needed to find were answers to these two questions: what year Orinda became a city? and what is the oldest structure in Orinda? Do you know the answers? Maybe you need to visit the OHS Museum like these teens did to find out!

These French students are part of a Berkeley-based non-profit group, EDU-Culture International, which organizes summer language immersion programs for high school students from Europe who spend 3 weeks living with local host families. This year Orinda and Moraga families are hosting students from France during July 9th to July 29th. If you see them around Orinda, say "bonjour." For more information about this program visit [www.educulture.org](http://www.educulture.org).

## Thank You to Erik Andersen

Erik Andersen has been the OHS Vice President for the past four years; he did a great job supporting the organization and finding fantastic speakers for our meetings. Thank you Erik for all your efforts! Erik has graciously taken on a new role at OHS as the Publicity board member.



**OHS Board Members**  
**2009/2010**

**President:** Lucy Hupp Williams  
(650) 349-3382

**Vice President:** Charles Vollmar  
(925) 368-4181

**Treasurer:** Betty Karplus  
(925) 254-4970

**Recording Secretary:**  
Carl Weber  
(925) 254-8473

**Archivist:** Kent Long  
(925) 258-9771

**Publicity:** Erik Andersen  
(925) 254-8444

**Membership:** Randy Lamont  
(925)-631-0525

**Technology/Publications:**  
Teresa Long  
(925) 258-9771

**School Liaison:** Kay Norman  
(925) 254-9536

**Videographer:** Jerry Vurek  
(925) 253-7995

**At-Large:** Susan Ross  
(925) 254-3720

**At-Large:** Marge Rieger  
(925) 254-2759

**At-Large:** Lindy Phillips  
(925) 254-8478

**Meet OHS Newest Board Members**

***Charles Vollmar: Vice President***



Charlie lived in Orinda when he was very young (2 to 5) on Stanton Ave. near Claremont. His family then moved to Loomis in the foothills where he grew up. Later he and his wife Doaa wanted to put down roots and moved back to Orinda in 1992, buying their first house on Vallecito Lane. It is two doors from OHS President Lucy Hupp Williams' old house. "I knew Lucy's parents," says Charlie. Besides being a well-know cooking instructor and chef, Charlie is owner of Epicurean Exchange. He also writes cooking articles for the Orinda News.

Having seven year-old twin girls, Charlie wants his kids to feel grounded and have a sense of place. "I was drawn to the Historical Society because it showcases our past, its relationship to the present and shapes the future," explains Charlie, "As a strong supporter of our City's unique and colorful history, it is my intention to help make our City's history more relevant and engaging, especially to our younger families."

***Randy Lamont: Membership***

Randy grew up in Southern California, but he and his wife Jill moved to Orinda in 1989. It was a easy choice with both sets of Jill's grandparents from Orinda. They moved into Sleepy Hollow across the street from then OHS President Bob Paterson. Randy was outside one day about 20 years ago when Bob says, "You guys don't look like you have enough to do." Thus began the Lamont family's volunteer efforts with OHS. In the 1990s, Jill did the OHS Newsletter for five years and Randy gave computer/database advice to Bob. Randy has spent his professional life doing marketing analytics, so OHS couldn't have a better person to get its membership database in order. "Besides," says Randy, "it's good to feel appreciated and helpful. Working at the museum is fun—Lindy and Marge are a hoot."

***Marge Rieger: At-Large***

Marge grew up in Portland Oregon, but moved to Orinda in 1946 after meeting her husband, who was from Berkeley. "Orinda's a wonderful place to raise your children," says Marge. She should know - she and her husband raised four children here. They were married for 64 years before her husband passed away last year. Marge has been involved in many ways in the community. As long time Park Pool members, she ran the canteen there when her kids were little. She's been active at the Orinda Community Church and worked for over 30 years with the Children's Home Society in Oakland. Luckily for OHS, she decided last year to help out with the arduous task of getting our files in order. She considers filing an "interesting adventure" and enjoys finding articles about things she remembers and seeing "so many changes over the years."

***Lindy Philips: At-Large***

Another long-time Orindan, Lindy Philips first moved to Orinda in 1950. She lived at the end of the Moraga Highway as it was known back then where people would venture out on a Sunday drive. Her husband's job was transferred to LA, so they moved there for a time, but soon came back to Orinda this time finding a house near the Village. They raised two children in Orinda. "It's a beautiful place to live," says Lindy. She and her husband were active boaters and spent lots of time out on SF bay. After her husband passed away last year, she started volunteering at OHS. She and Marge Reiger have done a remarkable job cleaning up the OHS lateral files. "Marge and I have a great time together," remarks Lindy.

**For a color version of  
this newsletter:  
[www.orindahistory.org](http://www.orindahistory.org)  
select "Newsletters"**



## Joaquin Moraga Adobe History *(continued from page 1)*

some of the Rancho to pay the bills. In 1855 one third of the rancho was used to pay legal fees. Joaquin’s son Jose de Jesus Moraga in 1857 was unable to pay on a loan taken out on the property. Between 1857 and 1885, lawyer/speculator Horace Carpentier acquired most of the rancho including the adobe in 1879. In the early 1900s the property was run as a local dairy. The adobe started to deteriorate, and by 1929 it was condemned by the county and was used only for storage until 1939.

Luckily for the adobe, Katherine Brown White Irvine took an interest in it, decided to make it into their family home and conducted a full renovation in 1941. Her husband John Irvine’s company (Moraga Company) had purchased the property in 1912. New bedrooms and a kitchen and bathrooms were added; the adobe walls were covered in white plaster. The Irvine’s sold the remaining 20 acre property to their grandson William White III in 1950. In 1954 it became a California Historical Landmark. The adobe was sold to the Don Manuel family in 1965. The Manuel family modernized the adobe again giving the kitchen a 60’s upgrade among other things. In 1976 the Claxton family purchased the property and owned it until recently. By this time the adobe has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1972), and has been designated a City of Orinda Landmark (1995). Ever since it was built in 1841, the adobe has been privately owned. This might be one of the reasons it has survived relatively intact and is the oldest existing adobe in Contra Costa county.

In September 2008, a development partnership purchased the property and are currently preparing a proposal for development of 16 houses on the site, but they have express a willingness to set aside the adobe for preservation. In February 2009, a new non-profit group “Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe” was formed of citizens with the goal of preserving and enhancing the historical benefits of the adobe for the entire community. OHS archivist Kent Long not only knows a lot about the history of the adobe, he is also the President of this newly formed group. To find out more about preserving this historic Orinda site, visit [www.MoragaAdobe.org](http://www.MoragaAdobe.org).

## Orinda Village Bridge Restoration *(continued from page 1)*

When coming into the Orinda Village from El Toyonal or from Camino Pablo, one can’t help but notice the bridge’s crumbling “1920” pillar on the right and the worn out paint. The City of Orinda has been extremely helpful and supportive of this project, and OHS is excited to work with them and help give this bridge a well-deserved face lift. **Help preserve one of Orinda’s historic treasures. Bring your paint brush and help out on August 1st —it will be fun!**

San Pablo Creek bridge was built in 1920 to provide access to the Orinda Village area after San Pablo Dam, built in 1918, made the road that followed the east side of San Pablo creek to Richmond no longer usable. The bridge, built by the county, provided a way over the creek. Its the City of Orinda’s fourth Historical Landmark, it and was designated as such on January 9th 1990. Look for the plaque on the village side of the bridge.



San Pablo Creek Bridge in 1924 looking toward Orinda Village from Camino Pablo



San Pablo Creek Bridge as it is today looking toward Orinda Village from Camino Pablo—crumbling and in need of repair