



Historically Speaking

Morgan Hill Historical Society

Established 1971

Our Mission is to “preserve and share the history of Morgan Hill, and its environs, to inspire a sense of community.”

Published Quarterly

July 2021

☆ *50th Anniversary Celebration* ☆

Events

September 11th ~ 11:00 am to 5:00 pm

Villa Mira Monte

Special Displays * Guided Tours * Entertainment * Bring a Picnic



September 12th ~ 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Morgan Hill Community Playhouse

Debut of *“History Makers”*

Film Screening & Reception

See **page 6** for more information

We request that all visitors comply with COVID Protocols.

President’s Message - Roger Knopf

rknopf@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com

This fall the Historical Society will celebrate 50 years of significant accomplishments in our community. A major part of our celebration is thanking the many community partners who have committed precious time and resources to the preservation and sharing of our local history. As we move forward into the next 50 years, the Historical Society will continue to need the involvement of our entire community to preserve, maintain and operate this awesome historical resource.

If you or someone you know would like to support our mission, you can JOIN, VOLUNTEER and DONATE at <https://www.morganhillhistoricalsociety.org>.

SAVE THE DATE

October 2 ~

Youth Mariachi Competition and Picnic

October 30 & 31 ~

Dia De Los Muertos Altars at Villa Mira Monte

WELCOME BACK

Kathy Sullivan, Director



A giant step towards getting back to normal! On June 19th our docents once again welcomed visitors to the Hiram Morgan Hill House and the Morgan Hill Museum on Saturdays from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. The grounds will be open to enjoy daily from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm. Ellie Weston and her property management team have taken excellent care of the grounds. The hedges are beautifully groomed, and the roses are in their second glorious bloom of the season. Patriotic bunting is hung to celebrate July 4th through Labor Day, complemented by the red and white perennials in front of the veranda.



Art and history go hand in hand, as you can see on your next visit to Villa Mira Monte. While you explore our Centennial Trail, you'll notice a bronze sculpture of children at play, donated by former MHHS board member Linnie Lee before her relocation to Georgia to be near her family.

“ Three Children on Log Holding Bird” by artist Nifao (Nifao.com)

Filling Gaps in Racial and Ethnic Area History

Kathy Sullivan, Director

MHHS is making a concerted effort to uncover the less documented stories of the many ethnic groups that have contributed to the diverse history that has shaped our community. If you are interested in exploring the local history of other racial and ethnic groups, please contact Kathy Sullivan at ksullivan@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com

Black History Project

Patrice Lyn

The Historical Society has recently formed the Black History Project. The first step is establishing a network of people interested in discussing, researching and documenting the stories of the Black people who have helped shape the history of our community and greater South Bay Area. Our goal is to preserve the history that reflects and includes the diversity of all our residents for the benefit of future generations. If you are interested in participating in this new project or would like more information, contact Patrice Lyn at:

blackhistory@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com

MORGAN HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

50 YEARS OF PRESERVING HISTORY

The Seeds of Our Founding

Kathy Sullivan, Director

Back in the 1960s, three Morgan Hill residents, Bob Foster, Francis Crawford and John Hammond, met at Lum's Café. Over coffee, their conversation about local affairs led them to conclude that "every city needs a historical society." They planted the seed for what would become the Morgan Hill Historical Society, which was established in July 1971.

The Morgan Hill Museum

Kathy Devine, Museum Director

As we look back at all that the Morgan Hill Historical Society has accomplished in its first fifty years, preserving the community's History Museum stands out as its first major accomplishment.

It started in 1979 when Chris and Ida Williams donated their home to the City of Morgan Hill for use as a community museum. The house, built in 1911 by John and Charlotte Acton, was located on Warren Avenue on what is known to locals as "Nob Hill." To take on the task of moving and renovating the Acton house, the Morgan Hill Museum Foundation was formed under the direction of Norma Edes Link, a Historical Society Board Member. In January 1983, the house was moved to West Main Avenue, next to the library. In three years, after renovation that was funded by the Foundation, a Community Development Block Grant and the assistance of many local supporters, the Acton House was opened to the public as the community's first history museum. This was the Historical Society's first major achievement.

In September 2005, the Morgan Hill Museum was moved a second time to the Villa Mira Monte property to make way for the new library. With support from City redevelopment funds, a County grant, and the community, the Morgan Hill Museum was moved, renovated and reopened to the public in 2008.



The Move to West Main Ave.



Renovated Museum on West Main Ave.



Museum after move and renovation at Villa Mira Monte

JOIN ~ VOLUNTEER ~ DONATE

Villa Mira Monte and the Hiram Morgan Hill House

Roger Knopf, MHHS President

The second significant accomplishment of the Historical Society was saving and restoring the historic Hiram Morgan Hill House on its original 2½ acre site at Villa Mira Monte. This effort spanned a decade and a half, starting in mid-1980s with the Historical Society's lead to save the century-old house from almost certain destruction.

The house had numerous owners and uses since its construction by Morgan and Diana Hill in 1884-1886. The Hills occasionally occupied it until the late 1890s. Then it became a rental, a home to a family of seven, and later served as an antique store for more than 20 years. In 1978 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and was eventually deeded to the City of Morgan Hill after the death of its last owner. In 1993 the Historical Society took title to the house and property and agreed to stop deterioration, renovate the house, and have it open to the public within five years. In 1998 the first event was held there, the wedding of Morgan Hill Mayor Dennis Kennedy, and this treasure has been open to the community ever since.



Before



After

Centennial History Trail

Roger Knopf, MHHS President

In 2005 the Historical Society hosted a group of community members, led by the Morgan Hill City Council appointed Centennial Committee, to brainstorm, design and construct the Centennial History Trail, which is located at the front of the Villa Mira Monte property. This



Photo by Janie Knopf

unique spiral labyrinth presents 100 snippets of local history and beyond, starting at the center with the early Ohlone Native Americans who lived in the area. The trail was built as a permanent monument to commemorate our city's 100th birthday, November 10, 2006. This was yet another major undertaking for the Historical Society, to host and maintain, creating a third must-see community gem at Villa Mira Monte. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the financial support and thousands of hours donated by history-loving volunteers.

Volunteer Profile: Betsy and Jim Lang

Margo Hinnenkamp, Volunteer Coordinator

Betsy and Jim Lang have lived in Morgan Hill for 41 years. Through their close friendship with Ellie Weston and her family, they learned about the MH Historical Society and became an indispensable part of our team of volunteers.

Betsy was the smiling face who greeted attendees at the Holiday Boutique and offered them a glass of wine. She also served as a docent at the house.

This dedicated couple also welcomed attendees at countless Founder's Day dinners. They would spend hours sorting guests' name tags for these celebrations. Jim used his technical skills to create databases of attendees. In 2019 he designed and printed beautiful name tags that were embellished with gold. He has created a template and detailed instructions for the next name tag team to follow.

When asked what they most enjoyed about their volunteer experiences with the Historical Society, they both agreed that the people they met and worked with were the highlight of their time with the organization.



Photo by Susan Brazelton

Betsy and Jim are planning to move to the greater Phoenix area in the near future. We will miss them and wish them well in their new adventure. We appreciate them and the contributions that they made to enhance the MHHS and to share it with others.

BE A VOLUNTEER.

<https://www.morganhillhistoricalsociety.org/volunteer>

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

Visit [Amazon Smile](https://www.smile.amazon.com) when making purchases online and select **Morgan Hill Historical Society!**

Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to MHHS!

Over the past few years MHHS has received \$505.53 from Amazon. You can help grow this amount by using <http://www.smile.amazon.com> when ordering from Amazon!

For 50 years, Bob Foster, one of the original MHHS founders, and his wife Nancy have been dedicated members and supporters of our mission to preserve and share local history. For more about their story and the others who helped build the Historical Society, don't miss "History Makers," debuting September 12, 2021.

Morgan Hill Historical Society MEDIA

Robin Shepherd

History Makers A Documentary Film Series



Film Screening & Reception
September 12
3:00 - 5:00 pm

Morgan Hill Community Playhouse

The first film in our new *History Makers* series is coming together nicely, as we knew it would, given the storytellers and filmmakers involved. Get ready for time travel, people watching, and the inside scoop on a surprising turn of events that led to the preservation of iconic Villa Mira Monte as Morgan Hill's unique history park. Like all great stories, this film chronicles an unlikely cast of characters whose lives intersected in unexpected ways with the most extraordinary results!

We've never done a film quite like this, and we believe it will serve as an important community asset for many years to come.

History Makers is a multi-film, multi-year project made possible by a grant from a generous local family that

shares our desire to keep history alive and share it with our community for future generations. Save the date. Watch for updates on [social media](#) and our [website](#).

DID YOU KNOW???

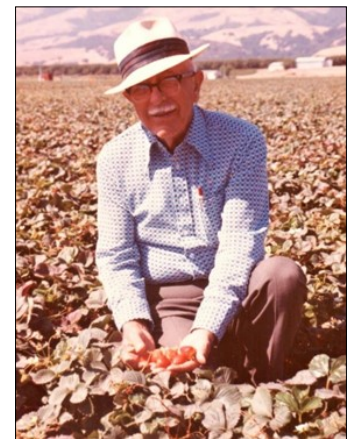
Historical Facts from the 1500 and on....

In the late 1700's, many houses consisted of a large room with only one chair. Commonly, a long wide board folded down from the wall that was used for dining. The "head of the household" always sat in the chair while everyone else ate sitting on the floor. Occasionally a guest, who was usually a man, would be invited to sit in this chair during a meal. To sit in the chair meant you were important and in charge. They called the one sitting in the chair the "chair man." Today in business, we use the expression or title "Chairman" or "Chairman of the Board."

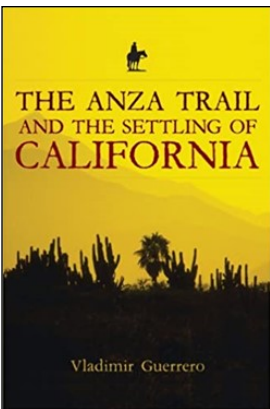


The latest installment of “Historically Speaking,” our regular column in *gmh*TODAY magazine, features the remarkable story of Rhoades Ranch, a beautifully renovated property at the base of Anderson Dam that has earned its place on the National Register of Historic Places. Morgan Hill is fortunate that Joe and Sheila Giancola had the passion, talent and resources to preserve this unique property.

This ranch was once home to Harold Thomas, a UC Berkeley faculty member who came to be known as “the Father of the California Strawberry.” He launched the Strawberry Institute at Rhoades Ranch, and it gained prominence in horticultural research and breeding before it merged with Driscoll Strawberry Associates in 1966. Be sure to get a copy of this wonderful community lifestyle magazine to learn all about it. Look for the Summer issue of [gmhTODAY](#) on local newsstands, or read it [online](#).



For Book Lovers



In response to popular demand, we created a virtual book nook of sorts for folks who enjoy kicking back with a history saga or nonfiction book but don’t have the time or energy to search for it.

[Visit our website](#) to browse an assortment of books on different topics and time periods in history, including works by talented local and regional writers: *The Anza Trail* by Vladimir Guerrero, *In This Land of Plenty* by Mary Smathers, and *The Ohlone Way* by Malcolm Margolin.

And, of course, there are local classics like Beth Wyman’s *Hiram Morgan Hill* and *The Martin Murphy Family Saga* by Marjorie Pierce. Some of these titles and more are available at the Morgan Hill House where sale proceeds benefit the MHHS. You can also support our local indie bookseller, [BookSmart](#), and the [Morgan Hill Library](#). There are also popular online sites like GoodReads or Amazon.

(See page 5 for information on Amazon.Smile.)

JOIN ~ VOLUNTEER ~ DONATE

Museum News

Kathy Devine, Museum Director

Oh, the Treasures You Will Find

You may have seen our past plea for help in inventorying boxes of old newspapers. Thank you to all who came forward and helped with this project. To those that are just learning about it or had forgotten about it, please *read on*.



Within our museum collection, we have several boxes of old newspapers. They are not all from the same source; they are not all Morgan Hill news and there may be some magazines and other pamphlets. We have been asking volunteers to take a box home and “discover” just what is inside. We have created a list of criteria detailing the type of information we would like to keep. Anything not on that list can be recycled. Anything worthy of keeping will be returned to the box and with basic information recorded on a spreadsheet. Contact Kathy Devine to schedule a time/date to deliver a

box directly to you or make arrangements for you to pick up a box at the museum:

kdevine@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com. 408-891-2789.

Museum Pandemic Project

“History never looks like history when you are living through it.” John W. Gardner

These are extraordinary times, and our lives have been forever changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Morgan Hill Historical Society and Museum recognize the importance of capturing this history and would like the communities of Morgan Hill, Coyote, Madrone and San Martin to help us document local experiences and preserve them for future generations.

We want to collect your stories, photos, and personal accounts. What have you experienced? How has the pandemic impacted your life? What are images of life around Morgan Hill during this time?

Please go to <https://www.morganhillhistoricalsociety.org/pandemic-project-description> for more information and to submit the donation form. Visit us and enjoy the Museum and all that it has to offer: archives to artifacts, exhibits and educational programs.



**“WE LOOK FORWARD
TO SEEING YOU SOON
STAY HEALTHY”**



ON THE MARQUEES

**“THANK YOU
HEALTHCARE WORKERS”**



**“WE MISS YOU ALL!
PVEA STAFF”**

2021 Upcoming Events at Villa Mira Monte

October

Kathy Chavez Napoli, Director

YOUTH MARIACHI COMPETITION and PICNIC

The MHHS will host the 8th annual Community Picnic on **Saturday, October 2, 2021, 2 - 5 pm**, with activities for the entire family. A highlight will be the Youth Mariachi Band Competition and Folklorico dancers.

After a challenging year, this is an opportunity to enjoy a picnic lunch on the lawn, gather with friends, view WERC raptors, learn how to start a garden, and tour the museum exhibit of traditional mariachi musical instruments. The Mariachi Competition is funded by a grant from the County of Santa Clara Historic Grant Program.

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS ALTARS



The 2nd annual Dia de los Muertos event will be hosted at Villa Mira Monte on **October 30-31, 10 am - 3 pm**, to help preserve the cultural tradition of setting up altars to honor loved ones who have died. Community members will be invited to participate by placing ofrendas (offerings) on the altars in memory of their family members. The event is supported by a grant from the County of Santa Clara Historic Grant Program.

Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15 to October 15.

★ Holliday Events ★



November

The Holiday Boutique returns this year, and is scheduled at Villa Mira Monte for November 5, 6 and 7. Details will be announced in the near future.

December

The Holiday Tea will not be held in December due to the many unknowns related to COVID-19. We are considering a 2022 Spring/ Mother's Day Tea.



STORIES FROM THE PAST

Robin Shepherd

Ring in the winter holidays with a movie matinee. The newest film in our *Stories from the Past* docuseries will be released in December. This year's storytellers will leave you feeling nostalgic for the good old days of downtown Morgan Hill.

[Visit our website](#) to view past films free on-demand.

Stories from the Past (2021) is supported by the Santa Clara County Historic Grants Program.



Stories from the Past

A Film Screening & Discussion
with
Special Guest Speakers

Saturday, December 11th
3:30 - 5:30 pm

A virtual event co-hosted with the
Santa Clara County Library District
(Zoom and Facebook Livestream)

Morgan Hill Historical Society

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