



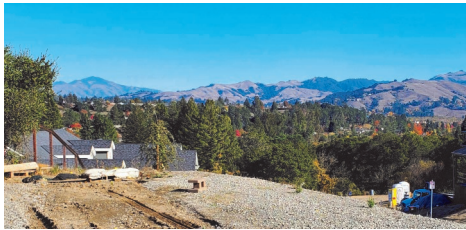
Joaquin Moraga Adobe Newsletter

Adobe Remodel
1941

www.MoragaAdobe.org

December 2022

FJMA Rehabilitation of 1841 Adobe Making Progress



Breath taking views from the Adobe

In 2022, we made great strides in the Adobe's architectural rehabilitation. A new roof, reinforced porch, glass windows and original trim are being replicated and installed. Interior electrical work is mostly complete. A separate bathroom/storage building is built, and final grading of the site is expected within weeks.



Front porch, new windows, reconstructed trim - November 2022



Reconfigured Attic Access

FJMA has worked collaboratively with the J&J Ranch developers on implementing the final plans. After meeting our fundraising goal for the acquisition, we are now waiting for the rehabilitation to be completed, a condition of purchase per the terms of City of Orinda approval.

While some work on the building has been slower than we anticipated, we have been able to make adjustments that will enhance historical accuracy and give us more flexible space for visitors. Fortunately, J&J Ranch has been receptive to our input, and FJMA appreciates their efforts.



New roof is fire safe & historically accurate

For historical accuracy, FJMA requested a significant change to reconfigure the exterior attic access and porch below, based on recently discovered photos. While this modification has added to the timeline, preserving these historical features of the Adobe is well worth it!

It is not too late to buy a personalized paver to be installed on the Adobe grounds. Don't forget to give to the Adobe this year!

Museum Planning Well Underway



Museum Committee Members Mary Carrillo, Jackie Horwitz and Teresa Long inside the Moraga Adobe

The FJMA Museum Committee meets monthly to plan the Adobe's interior. Besides sketching room designs and exhibit ideas, we're conducting lots of research on the Rancho period and the Moraga family. Thanks to the **Moraga Historical Society** for providing photos and historic documents. We have also acquired scans of the original land grant maps from the Bancroft Library. These and more will eventually be on display in the museum.

Committee members have been visiting other historic Adobes to get ideas, including the Peña Adobe in Vacaville and the Castro Watsonville. The latter was a great source of inspiration for our group, as it has just opened with fantastic exhibits. Their curator Charlene Duval has been a wealth of information, particularly with tips on acquiring furnishings authentic to the Rancho time period.

We welcome new volunteers to help with the museum!



Adobe Parlor room, concept sketch

Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, PO Box 872 Orinda, CA 94563

Letter From Our President Thank you for your generous support

Dear Adobe Supporters,

It has been wonderful to see the progress made on the Moraga Adobe rehabilitation in 2022. After years of planning, it is exciting to see this historic building finally take shape and get back to its 1848 configuration. History is indeed coming alive!

FJMA's focus throughout the year has been preparing for the operation of the Adobe as a museum. We are busy planning museum displays, furnishings & exhibits, designing the security system, and finalizing the plans for landscaping the Adobe grounds. This focus will continue into next year as the rehabilitation is completed.

Although the timeline for the construction has been extended, it really feels like we are entering the home stretch, and 2023 will be the year that the Moraga Adobe is finally open to the public!

In October, my wife Teresa and I were recognized by the Orinda Community Foundation as Orinda Volunteers of the Year. As many of you know, Teresa and I both grew up in Orinda, so this honor was very meaningful to both of us. FJMA founder Bobbie Landers was on hand to present the award.

As always, my most sincere thanks to our wonderful volunteers & supporters, without whom none of this would be possible.



Teresa & Kent Long
with Bobbie Landers

I look forward to seeing you all at the Adobe next year!!

*Kent Long
FJMA President*

Avila Family, 1889

John Silveira Alvia is sitting, his wife Gomacinda Avila is standing with her hand resting on his left shoulder.



Story From a Moraga Descendant



Family Lore versus Actual History

by Lance Beeson, Board member, FJMA

As members of the Museum Committee, we are tasked with telling the story of the Moraga family through documents, photos, artifacts and recollections. Recollections can be the trickiest of all, because many memories of the Moraga family as recounted in books, newspaper articles and family stories are often not entirely accurate, in large part because the family dispersed after the final sale of the property. And of course, the stories change over the generations.

Growing up, I heard tales from my grandmother, Irene Avila, that we were "Spanish" and had once had a "Spanish Land Grant," and how my great-grandfather Joseph Avila had been killed in the "Orinda Train Tunnel" in 1906. I found out later that was not quite correct, but I can't blame my grandmother; she was only four months old when her father Joseph was killed. The humble circumstances of my grandmother's family and the sudden further impoverishment caused by Joseph's death were hardly conducive to growing up having great and proud knowledge of the Moraga family legacy.

The Moraga family did not receive their land grant from Spain but rather from Mexico. And while the Moragas were certainly Hispanic, evidence shows that by the 1850s, like most Californios they were mestizo people, with genetic makeups of Mexican Indian, African, and Spanish or other descent. Most Californio descendants like me have some native heritage, now easily confirmed by DNA testing.

To gain membership in *Los Californianos*, an organization for descendants of early Hispanic settlers of California, I had to "prove" my descent. This process involved visits to churches, museums and other sources to research my family history, including learning about my great-grandfather, Joseph Avila.

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A special thanks to Andrew Goett of Pacific Printing for printing this publication.**

Family Lore verses Actual History (continued from page 2)

Joseph was born in March of 1882. His father was João (John) Silveira de Avila, who was born on the island of São Jorge, Azores in 1848. He came to California in the 1860s, likely without a passport and probably via a whaling vessel, as there are no records of his arrival in the United States. Only later census data and citizenship application mention him.

Joseph's mother, Maria Gomacinda Moraga, was born at the Moraga Adobe in 1854 and was later a signatory of the final disposition of the house and lands. At some point, João came to work on the Moraga rancho, met Gomacinda, and they married. They had multiple children before Gomacinda died in 1892 at age 38, when her son Joseph was only ten.

And after much searching in the Oakland Library Museum Room at old newspapers on microfilm, I did find the record of my great-grandfather's death. I already knew that there was no train tunnel in Orinda in 1906, and had already ruled out the Canyon rail line as it wasn't functioning yet. The various news accounts spelled Joseph's name in a variety of ways, but I finally matched up the dates and learned what happened.

As I said, recollections can be tricky. My grandmother Irene, just an infant in 1906, told a gory and morbid account of Joseph's death, "with his body so mangled that they picked up what was left of him in a bucket!" She told me that a friend who was with him had to deliver the bad news to his widow at her home on Fifth Street in Oakland, and that he had his paycheck in his pocket! My grandmother (may she rest in peace) had a vivid emotional memory of these events!

So, to end the suspense, I found that Joseph Frank Avila was killed by a train at the Gately Siding in Pinole, in open air as he walked along his bicycle after work with a friend. No tunnel, not in Orinda. He was a laborer, working on constructing a pipeline between Richmond and Martinez, a far cry from the glorious days of romantic life on a California rancho!

I share this story because it's a good example of learning to tell fact from fiction. And I also hope other descendants will in turn share their stories with us for publication in our museum collection.

Our committee wishes to reach out to all Moraga descendants, to get stories, descriptions and images of the larger family story. We invite you to submit your stories and hopefully, you will have an easier time than I, sifting out the truth.



Joseph Frank Avila 1882 - 1906

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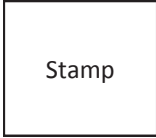
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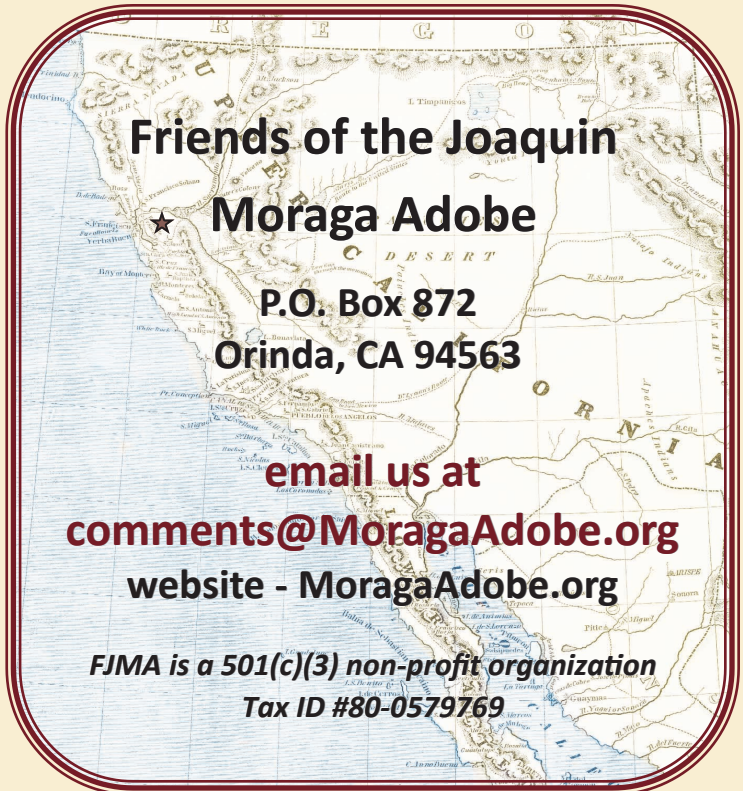
Moraga Adobe
News



*Thank You for Supporting
Our Adobe!*



1835 map used by Joaquin Moraga and Juan Bernal to petition for the Mexican Land grant on which the Adobe was built. Original is at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley.



Friends of the Joaquin

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