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## How Moraga streets got their names

By Vera Kochan



"England meets Mexico" when it came to naming some of Moraga's streets Photo Vera Kochan

The town of Moraga was named after Joaquin Moraga, whose 1835 Mexican land grant and subsequent ranch helped to begin the roots of this community that grew from orchards to subdivisions with nearly 60 miles of criss-crossing streets and cul-de-sacs.

It makes perfect sense to name the two main and longest vehicular arteries in and out of town Moraga Way and Moraga Road. However, the many and varied street names within town may not have a "rhyme," but they do have a "reason."

Thanks to an amazingly information laden manuscript, "DEVELOPING The Moraga Company Ranch, 1922-1977" by Frank Draeger, an engineer who also had a hand in naming many of the town's streets, these historical aspects of the project are not lost.

Draeger states that because the Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados was part of the 1835 land grant, it became appropriate to use Spanish words for the street names. Some subdivisions used only Spanish names within their tracts such as: Arroyo Drive, Corte Amigos, Del Rio Way, and Ramona Drive. As the use of Spanish names increased, 1960s Moraga Fire District Chief Al Baitx (whom Baitx Drive was named after), requested that future street names be more simplified, because the names were difficult to understand over the phone when the caller was in the midst of an emergency and overly excited.

Looking for new ideas with regards to Moraga's burgeoning growth of housing tracts, Draeger made a request of his secretary who was about to leave for England to visit family. "I asked her to bring back a London street directory. From this directory, many of the streets in Rheem Valley and Moraga Valley were named." Amberwood Court, Birchwood Drive, Cumberland Lane, Deerfield Drive, Fairfield Place, Greenfield Drive, Kent Court, Lynwood Place, Oxford Drive, Selborne Way, Whitethorne Drive and York Place are just some of Moraga's streets that have their roots in England.

Many of the town's streets were named after the Rheem family, their friends, or business associates. Alice Lane (Mrs. Donald "Alice" Rheem), Calvin Drive (Mary Calvin - Donald Rheem's secretary), Hall Drive (Herbert Hall - Donald Rheem's attorney), Kenneth Drive (William Kenneth Rheem - Donald Rheem's brother), Turk Drive (Ed Turk - Donald Rheem's accountant), and Zander Drive (Bill Zander, Senior Vice President of Rheem Manufacturing Company).

Street names in the Moraga Bluffs were named by Joan Bruzzone (wife of developer Russell Bruzzone), after her family members. Breck Court (derived by using the first two letters in Bruzzone and adding Eck, Joan's maiden name), Russell Drive (her husband), Santa Catalina Court (her daughter, Kathryn), David Drive (her son, David), and San Pablo Court (her son, Paul) are just a few.

Many of the streets were named after ranchers or business people in the town. Carr Drive (the Carr ranching family), Carroll Drive (Carroll family, in Moraga since 1865), Dickenson Drive (Elinor Dickenson, former postmaster), Hetfield Place (Helen Hetfield, owner of the Moraga Bar (before it was called Barn - thanks to prohibition), Sanders Drive (Sanders ranching family), and Shuey Drive (owners of then Golden State Dairy).

Scores of streets were named after friends or people involved with the Moraga Ranch. Some of them are Canning Court (Margaret Armsby Canning - Frank Draeger's secretary, and the woman who brought back the London directory), Corliss Drive (wife of Utah Construction and Mining employee), Ivy Drive (abbreviation of Inland Valley "I. VY."), Rimer Drive (a builder in Moraga Ranch), School Street (Willow Spring Grammar School), and not to be left out, Draeger Drive (Frank Draeger, Moraga Company Ranch engineer).

There is information available, for dozens upon dozens more street names and their origins (some even located in Orinda near the Moraga border), through the Moraga Historical Society. Email: [info@moragahistory.org](mailto:info@moragahistory.org).

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