

## Morgan Hill Historical Society

# Historically Speaking

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

Published Quarterly

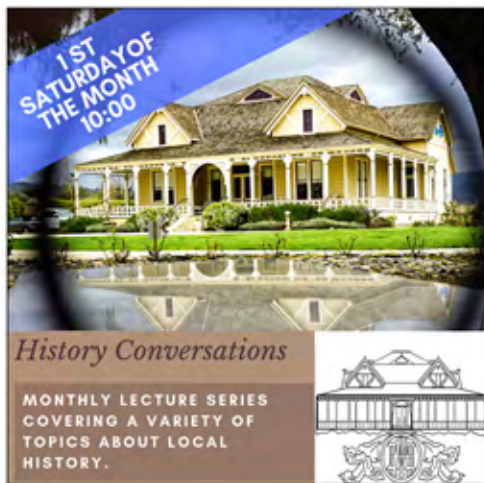
Jan 2020

### Downtown Historic Walking Tour



Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the Month  
Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm  
Location: Meet at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Plaza near Monterey Road & 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Tours are no charge. Donations gratefully accepted.

### History Conversations



Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Of Each Month  
Time: 10:00am - 11:30am  
Location: Hiram Morgan Hill House  
Event is no charge. Donations are gratefully accepted.

### Spring Membership Social & Meeting



Date: Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Time: 6:00pm Social  
7:00pm Meeting  
Location: Hiram Morgan Hill House  
RSVPs will be requested closer to the event date.

### Mad Hatter's Children's Tea



Our annual children's tea is returning with another wild adventure through Alice's Wonderland. Please watch for our emails, social media and website updates for ticketing information.

### Member & Volunteer Recognition Meeting



Date: Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Time: 6:00pm Social  
7:00pm Dinner  
Location: Villa Mira Monte

Help us celebrate YOU and others in the community that support MHHS. Dinner and outdoor seating will be provided. RSVPs will be requested closer to the event date.

# Co-Presidents' Messages

## Co-President, Bill Briggs



Bill Briggs

Co-President

When you read this it will be the New Year and the holidays will be behind us, the beautiful decorations at Villa Mira Monte put away for another year. But I'm actually writing this column in November, so I have other holidays on my mind, like Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.

On Veterans Day I gave a salute to the men and women of our community who have served in war and peacetime to preserve our democracy. That's an important part of our history. When you drive by the memorial in the middle of Monterey Hwy., think about those veterans and don't take your right to vote for granted.

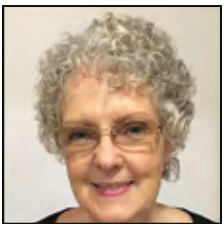
Years ago, I volunteered to build houses in Mexico with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Now in his nineties, with health issues, he's still volunteering for Habitat for Humanity. I'm thankful for our own volunteer leader, co-president Kathy Sullivan, who has been the cement bonding the Morgan Hill Historical Society for decades. Her tireless dedication will not be equaled.

I'm thankful for the Native Americans who lived lightly on Mother Earth here for millennia. It's a lesson we haven't learned very well as we continue to degrade the planet instead of protecting it. Learn more about our indigenous ancestors by visiting our Historical Museum.

I'm also grateful for those in our community who are secure enough in their own cultural history that they can engage with others who may be different. Change is inevitable and history teaches us that it is the only real constant in the universe. Embracing it can be life-affirming and builds a stronger community..

Now, in the New Year, I'm grateful for everyone who has volunteered and contributed to our historical mission. Collect and preserve your own family stories before loved ones are gone. The historical record deserves those stories. Love your family, be kind to one another and continue to support the Morgan Hill Historical Society.

## Co-President, Kathy Sullivan



Kathy Sullivan

Co-President

### **MHHS Honors Linda Withrow**

By Kathy Sullivan, Co-President

Each year the Morgan Hill Community Foundation provides an opportunity for nonprofits to honor a volunteer at their annual Philanthropy Dinner. This year MHHS honored Linda Withrow. Linda was a director on the board and served as membership chair. When she left the Board she found an outlet for her creative talents. For several years has put together hundreds of beautiful raffle baskets and silent auction items for our fundraising events. With the help of other volunteers, she coordinates the gathering, sorting and packaging of items.

For the last two years, she and fellow volunteer Madeline Bottari have designed themed holiday trees to raise funds. In 2018 their "Grinch Tree" raised over \$700. In 2019, with funding from Rosy's at the Beach, they created two duplicate "Under the Sea" themed trees. Rosy got to keep one – you may have seen it in her restaurant – and raffle tickets were sold for the other. At the time of this writing, we do not have the amount of the funds raised. We can't wait to see what theme they come up with this year.

Thank you Linda for your years of service and for the thousands of dollars you have helped raise to support our mission.

## 2020 Save The Dates

Morgan Hill Museum & Hiram Morgan Hill House

Open Hours

Fridays 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Saturdays 10:00am - 1:00pm

•

History Conversations

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the Month

10:00am - 11:30am

(check website for speaker information)

•

Historic Downtown Walking Tour

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the Month

10:00am - 12:00pm

•

Spring Membership Meeting

Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>

6:00pm Social

7:00pm Meeting

•

Mad Hatter's Children's Tea

Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

11:00am

•

Member & Volunteer Recognition Meeting

Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>

6:00pm Social

7:00pm Dinner

•

Founders' Dinner

Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup>

5:00pm Social

6:00pm Dinner

•

Holiday Boutique

Friday-Saturday-Sunday

November 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>

10:00am - 5:00pm

•

Holiday Teas

Friday & Saturday

December 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>

11:30am

## Mad Hatter at the Alice in Wonderland Children's Tea

Join us for a "MAD" adventure at this May 2<sup>nd</sup> event. A fun event for kids of all ages. Postcard invites will be sent out in March and reservations will open on our website in mid-March.

From Alice in Wonderland reading her story, the rabbit hole, the keys to the door, a scavenger hunt, croquet with flamingos, a giant game of chess, face painting, great raffle and silent auction items, and much more, you will be elated at the attention to detail.

After being seated for tea, the Queen of Hearts gives an etiquette lesson with the threat of "chopping off heads" if not obeyed! Attendees enjoy a plate of treats before the games resume and raffle winners are announced. The Morgan Hill Photography Club takes keepsake portraits and action shots that can be downloaded at no cost on Shutterfly. Come join us and go "down into the rabbit hole" with us.

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## Your Membership Means a Lot

If you paid your 2020 memberships before December 31st, you were entered in our **History Makers Drawing**. Winners will be announced and notified by the end of January. Thank you for being an early responder!

MHHS does not have a sophisticated billing system so our memberships run through the calendar year. No matter when you pay during the year, you are considered a member for the year. We appreciate all memberships, no matter the level. Membership fees help preserve, maintain and operate Villa Mira Monte. Without your contributions we would not be able to provide these educational and recreational programs for the community: Living History Field Trips (about 900 students per year); In-class Trunk Program providing pre-field trip information on our Native Americans (about 500 students per year); monthly History Conversations at the House and Historical Downtown Walking Tours; our "Stories from the Past" documentary films that record the stories of our land and its people; and our many events and fundraisers.

If you haven't renewed or joined, please locate the invitation we mailed you or go to our website for information.

Thank you!

## MHHS Living History Field Trip Volunteers Honored By Delta Kappa Gamma



Margaret  
Rodrigues

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, at the stunning Blackhorse and Bayonet Country Club overlooking Monterey Bay, Teri and Tom Hennessy were honored by Delta Kappa Gamma, California for their volunteer work and community service at the Morgan Hill Historical Society's field trip program. Tom and Teri were winners of the Distinguished Service to the Community Award. A delicious brunch, auction and guest speaker rounded out the morning's activities. The Hennessy's work tirelessly to make the field trip program so successful. Teri does all the docent scheduling, procures supplies, sets up and takes down all the materials needed. Tom also sets up and takes down all materials plus often volunteers as our butler.

Our spring field trips are all scheduled with almost a full schedule. Docents will sign up for dates in January. If you are interested in volunteering or just observing what we do, please contact [mlrgiants@comcast.net](mailto:mlrgiants@comcast.net) for schedule.

### Villa Mira Monte Closure Dates

Villa Mira Monte will be closed on Fridays and Saturdays that fall on weekends around the following holidays:

#### 2020 Holiday Closures\*

New Year's: Friday and Saturday,  
January 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>

•

Children's Alice in Wonderland Mad Hatter Tea:  
Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

•

July 4th: Friday and Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>

•

Holiday Boutique: Friday and Saturday,  
November 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>

•

Thanksgiving: Friday and Saturday,  
November 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

•

Holiday Teas: Friday and Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>

•

Christmas: Friday and Saturday, December 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>

**\* There may be additional closure due to rentals for private events. Please check our website for additional closures.**

### 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Tea

A gala holiday celebration for all involved. Our guests are the best, many have made the event a tradition.

One of our most successful fundraisers, this year we had some premiere sponsors that significantly increased the funds raised. CordeValle, Cinnabar Hills and Coyote Creek golf courses all donated certificates for foursomes, including golf carts. Rosy's at the Beach donated funds to decorate two "Under the Sea" themed Christmas trees created by Linda Withrow and Madeline Bottari. Rosy got to keep one and the other went to the winning ticket holder.

Thank you to Chair Edie Atkins and committee members Andrea Bazely, Madeline Bottari, Sandy de la Cuesta, Gayle Lewis, Nancy Reynolds, Kathy Sullivan, Ellie Weston and Linda Withrow. We are very grateful for the many volunteers, too numerous to mention, who work the days of the event. We also appreciate the generosity of the individuals and many community businesses who donated. Special appreciation goes to Jim Carrillo for adding some "new spice" to the tea by serving as MC for the event.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2020 Teas on December 4 and 5, 2020.

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### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Founders' Dinner

Another great evening celebrating our Founders. We thank the honorees and attendees for their very positive comments about the evening and the 2019 "Stories from the Past" documentary.

Our apologies to Jim Xavier, native of Morgan Hill, who has been anticipating hearing his name called as a 70-year founder. Unfortunately, his name was inadvertently left off the list and did not get announced. Next year he will get a special shout out.



## Villa Mira Monte Book Nook Reviews



Sue Olt

***The Making of “Mammy Pleasant”, A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth Century San Francisco*** by Lynn M. Hudson, University of Illinois Press, 2008

Novels and plays have been written and movies made about this Mary Ellen Pleasant, also known as “Mammy Pleasant”. And yet “Every detail about her past is contested: her birthplace, her parents, her name, her occupation, and her wealth. She was called a mammy, madam, voodoo queen, and sorceress...” “Although a participant in critical junctures in U.S. history – the Civil War, John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, the Gold Rush, and the urbanization of the West – she is largely absent from the annals of American historiography.”

This amazing lady, born 1814, died 1904, also gave new meaning to “entrepreneur”; her business interests were varied and “ran the gamut from operating boarding houses, traditionally women’s work, to investing in mines and real estate, considered men’s work...And she practiced the financial strategies of robber barons common to this era: stock speculation, insider trading, and monopoly.” Using information she secretly gathered in her boarding houses from her clients, she became both financially and socially powerful. She was financially involved with the richest men in San Francisco and herein lies her connection to Morgan Hill.

Hiram Morgan Hill’s sister, Sarah Althea Hill, became one of Mary Ellen’s close friends. Mary Ellen encouraged Sarah to sue a U.S. Senator for not acknowledging his supposed marriage to her. Just as you might suspect, Mary Ellen had ulterior motives: she had lost some money, as the Senator had, in a business deal. Mammy was hoping to recoup some of her losses.

A tangled web of fiction and truth, this well-researched book unravels some of the myths and lets us get a clearer picture of the life of a “free black female entrepreneur in post Gold Rush California”.

Available at BookSmart book store in Morgan Hill.

***The Martin Murphy Family Saga by Marjorie Pierce, published*** by the California History Center & Foundation, De Anza College, 2000.

Looking for a really special book for someone with a strong interest in California and Morgan Hill history? This is it!! Martin Murphy was Diana Murphy Hill’s grandfather, she the lovely wife of our Hiram Morgan Hill. This book “chronicles the migration and settling of the Murphy family from its roots in Ireland to its heyday in Sunnyvale...” The lives of Mr. Murphy’s sons, daughters, grandchildren and their children are intricately interwoven with the history of California from the 1840s on.

In 1820, feeling the limiting influence of the British Protestants in politics and religious freedoms, Martin Murphy and his wife decided to leave their farm in Ireland and move to Canada where his children would have better educational opportunities and religious freedom. However, the religious freedom part was not a reality in Quebec where they settled.

So, off they traveled by boat along America’s rivers, stopping along the way and checking out the farming situation. In the course of their travels, they started hearing about the wonders of California and the opportunities for emigrants there. A decision was made to keep traveling west by wagon train.

Travel was difficult by river, but it didn’t compare to the hazards of wagon train travel! There were insects, weather, lack of water, topography, and native Americans to contend with. The Murphys joined two other groups, one traveling to Oregon, the other also traveling to California. The assortment of personalities was amazing and many are described. In spite of many hardships, these travelers were exceptionally determined to continue their journey to a better life. In October 1844, they reached the Sierra Nevada mountains and became the first wagon train bringing wagons and American cattle to reach the Sierra divide (later to become U.S. Hwy 80).

Because the snow was getting too deep to move the wagons over the summit, several of the men left to get help after building a shelter for women and children. The men reached Sutter’s Fort and learned that a Revolution had started and foreigners were not welcome by the Californios. The Murphy boys fought with Mexico against the Californios in various armies. Eventually, the men returned for the women and children – a baby was born during that time! – and they continued their journey to several California towns, buying up land grants and establishing ranchos.

The Murphys proved themselves energetic, innovative business men. Dan, who was to become Diana Murphy Hill's father, struck it rich during the Gold Rush, and used his fortune to buy land and cattle. In this book, each Murphy son has his own chapter, detailing his life. All were interested in education – established schools - and some were involved in California politics.

Martin Murphy's dreams of religious and political freedoms were certainly realized through generations of Murphys!

### Around Villa Mira Monte



Ellie Weston  
Property  
Manager &  
Director

Each year we get an early start on the Holidays. Halloween weekend the House and Museum are “dressed” for Christmas in anticipation of the Holiday Boutique the following weekend. We thank the decorating crew: Karl Bjarke, Sandy & David de la Cuesta, Kathy Devine, Margo & Rich Hinnenkamp, Janie & Roger Knopf and Sue Olt. David also coordinates student volunteers, 15 Sobrato High school students and alumni assisted this year. A special thank you to the students and David, you are awesome.

To complete the beauty of Villa Mira Monte grounds for the holidays, California Color Growers Of Morgan Hill donated 18 flats of red & white cyclamens planted in front of the Hiram Morgan Hill house. Rudolf, our red-nosed reindeer, keeps watch over them from the veranda.

### Rent Villa Mira Monte for Your Next Event



We have had many weddings, receptions, anniversary parties and meetings held at this beautiful venue. Check it out for your next event.

*You can find information on our website. Contact: Ellie Weston at [eweston@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:eweston@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com).*

## **Experience A Bygone Era At Villa Mira Monte**

Explore the museum, wander the house and gardens, and host unforgettable events at Morgan Hill's signature estate.

Step through the gates of Villa Mira Monte into a timeless world of hospitality and refinement. Constructed in 1884, this grand former residence is one of the only buildings in Morgan Hill listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Passionately maintained by the Morgan Hill Historical Society since 1992, it offers modern visitors rare glimpses of both the city's vibrant history and the everyday lives of one of the area's original families.

### **The City's Namesake**

Looking to escape the bustle of thriving San Francisco, socialites Diana and Hiram Morgan Hill built Villa Mira Monte as a countryside getaway for themselves and their elite guests. When the first local Southern Pacific railroad station was built in 1898, the vicinity around the Hills' luxurious home was known as Huntington Station. However, due to the steady stream of guests requesting to stop at "Morgan Hill's Ranch," conductors began to casually refer to the stop as Morgan Hill. In 1906, this moniker was adopted by the city when it incorporated.

### **A Gracious Example**

Reflecting the immense wealth of its glamorous owners, the gracious design and elegant appointments of the Hiram Morgan Hill House summoned visitors from far and near in its heyday. Over 130 years later, the estate's allure remains as strong as ever. History buffs and architectural enthusiasts alike visit the 2.5-acre property to marvel at its ornate "Victorian Stick" design and exciting array of antique amenities, while tourists congregate to learn of the distinguished home's history. Oftentimes, neighboring residents stop by to unwind in the tree-shaded gardens and peruse the collection of over 300 rosebushes.

### **Experiential Learning At Its Finest**

Also on the grounds is the Morgan Hill Museum, a Craftsman-style farmhouse constructed in 1911. The home was relocated to Villa Mira Monte in 2005 where it serves as a carefully curated visual archive of local history. Exhibits in the six main-level rooms of the museum include domestic accessories and furnishings from the early 1900s, in addition to Native American artifacts and memorabilia. Students can examine the indoor displays, or follow historic milestones mapped within the Centennial History Trail that spirals through the rose gardens. They may also partake of docent-led tours while wandering the richly decorated rooms of the Hiram Morgan Hill House, learning of local history and the social graces of the day.

### **Perfect For Events**

The rich historic character and innate versatility of Villa Mira Monte make it ideal for private, corporate, and social functions. With the exception of the museum, the Hiram Morgan Hill House and gardens are available for rent, and include a large, gated parking area and an updated prep kitchen for catering. Guests can mingle in the opulent rooms, relax on the wide, sweeping veranda, or gather on the expansive front terrace. Located nearly halfway between San Jose and Gilroy, Villa Mira Monte forms a highly accessible, excellently appointed venue for your next event. For more information and hours of operation, please go to:

***[www.MorganHillHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.MorganHillHistoricalSociety.org)***

Villa Mira Monte

17860 Monterey Road, Morgan Hill, CA



# Thank You To All Our Business Sponsors

We at the Morgan Hill Historical Society thank all the many individuals and businesses who help us preserve the history of our community through events at Villa Mira Monte. Throughout this newsletter, you'll see the advertisements for the wonderful businesses who have donated generously to our mission. If you might wish to join these businesses and help us through sponsorship, please feel free to contact us at [info@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com). Your donations are tax deductible.

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Morgan Hill Historical Society Presents

# **MAD HATTER**

## *Alice in Wonderland*

# **Children's Tea**

Girls and Boys of All Ages are Invited

Accompanied by an Adult

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*Follow The White Rabbit To*

**Villa Mira Monte**

17860 Monterey Road, Morgan Hill

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**Saturday, May 2, 2020**

**11 o'clock in the morning**

Online Reservations Open in March  
[morganhillhistoricalsociety.org](http://morganhillhistoricalsociety.org)



*Erin Stauss  
Design*



# 2020 MEMBERSHIP

**RENEW OR  
JOIN NOW!**

## **MORGAN HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Preserving and sharing the history of Morgan Hill, and its environs, to inspire a sense of community.**

**Your membership donation supports historic Villa Mira Monte:** Hiram Morgan Hill House, Morgan Hill Museum and the Centennial History Trail along with many community education and recreational programs.

**Membership benefit for all members:** Historically Speaking, three annual membership meetings and an annual Member & Volunteer Appreciation BBQ.

Individual \$ 35	_____	
Family \$ 50	_____	
Patron \$ 150	_____	Recognition in MHHS Newsletter
Champion \$ 250	_____	Recognition in MHHS Newsletter and Website
Enthusiast \$ 500	_____	Recognition in Newsletter, on Website and on the Museum Donor Window
Benefactor \$ 1,000	_____	Recognition in Newsletter, on Website and on a Framed Sign at the Entry of the House

### **Business Memberships are also Available**

Supporter \$ 250	_____
Sponsor \$ 500	_____
Contributor \$ 750	_____
Philanthropist \$ 1,000	_____

In recognition of your generous donation, a business card size ad will be placed in our quarterly newsletter and you will have the opportunity to attend a Business Mixer Event hosted by MHHS.

With a donation of \$750 or more, your company name will be printed on a framed poster to be hung in a prominent location at the Hiram Morgan Hill House and at events throughout the year.

### **Volunteer Opportunities Available**

Expand Your Experience by Volunteering. Help us preserve & share our community's history. There are many opportunities for your talents. **Email [info@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@morganhillhistoricalsociety.com)**

**MHHS is a 501(c)(3) all volunteer organization.** Tax ID 94-2562450 – Consult your tax advisor for deductibility.



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- Ellie Weston, Property Manager

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## City Partnership



We thank City Staff members, Chris Ghione, Maureen Tobin, Nichole Martin, Jennie Tucker, and others for their work with our team to provide services that support Villa Mira Monte and MHHS events. We appreciate the work of Norma Bussing and Brigitte Crawford – Library, Cultural and Arts Commissioners (LCAC) – as they work with MHHS to explore opportunities for support.