

MORE MESA PRESERVATION COALITION



MMPC e-Update

May 2016



You Can Help

We urge our many supporters who enjoy More Mesa to use their cell phones to try out the More Mesa Guides. Find a bird, insect or plant that you don't know and look for it in the various guides sections as we described in "Ask the President" of this issue. Then let us know how the guide worked for you, if you will consult it again and if you have any suggestions on how to make it more useful to you.

Thanks so much!

Valerie Olson
President, MMPC

What's Happening With Potential Development?

As always, we have checked with County Planning and no development has been proposed.

Ask The President

Q: Is there a way to identify the things I see on More Mesa while I am out there?

A: ABSOLUTELY YES!

Three guides, "Birds", "Insects" and "Plants" were created and uploaded to our web site in February of 2014, and introduced at the bottom of page 2 in our [April 2014 Web News](#). And, since our web site is mobile friendly, these guides are especially useful when citizen scientists and other visitors to More Mesa are in the field. So ... when you are out enjoying lovely More Mesa and see something you want to identify immediately, you have the perfect option.

Grab your smart phone, bring up [our web site](#) and look for the appropriate Guide; [Birds](#), [Insects](#) or [Plants](#). It works "like a charm"!



This Month on More Mesa

Another Chapter in Our "Book of Cautionary Tales"

It seems as though we have been relaying cautionary tales with alarming frequency. Exactly [a year ago](#), and even [earlier](#), we warned of the unstable nature of More Mesa's cliffs and the heavy erosion that takes place, not only after rain, but even in dry weather. There is no doubt that the record-breaking drought we have been



It is the mission of the More Mesa Preservation Coalition, to preserve More Mesa, in its entirety, for all times. We've been at it since 2001.



is no doubt that the record breaking drought we have been experiencing is the source of many of the issues we have already discussed. Now another weather element has entered the picture to complicate and exacerbate the situation even further ... WIND!

As we have described, More Mesa's trees have been severely stressed with the drought, especially non-natives like eucalyptus. For example, the trees at the southeast corner have been especially hard-hit as they have no accessible water at all. In addition eucalyptus have extremely shallow root systems, and topple so easily that they are known familiarly as "Widow Makers". Add to this the fact that, of late, we have been experiencing consecutive days of heavy winds, many with gusts up to 40 mph. Coping with these conditions is difficult enough for healthy trees, let alone those that are severely compromised. We have already lost two of our giant trees, as well as many large branches of standing trees, all victims of the heavy winds of the past 3-4 weeks.



Most importantly, we don't want to lose any of you! Please go out and revel in this place that is still incredibly beautiful ... despite the drought. But do not linger under these big trees ... especially when it is windy ... or has been windy for several days. It is both risky and courting danger. Enjoy More Mesa, but please stay safe!

The Past - More About Trees ... the "Witness" Tree

We are deeply indebted to Tom Modugno and his excellent web site "[Goleta History](#)" for the information on this topic. We encourage all our supporters to check out the entire [Witness Tree](#) story, as written and illustrated on this excellent site.

Although there are no folks still around to tell the tale of More Mesa from the Chumash to the present day, there is a grand old tree that has seen it all. It is the "Witness Tree" located at Hollister and Kellogg. Why is it called the "Witness Tree"? As it turns out, this tree was extremely important to our very own Daniel Hill. As you may remember, Mr. Hill was the first "owner" of La Goleta Ranch, the rancho that contained what is now More Mesa. He took legal title after he filed for, and received a [land grant](#), using the kind of primitive map that was common the 1800s. It is clear from looking at this map, that real estate boundaries were determined in pretty loose terms back then. Indeed, things like boulders and trees were often used as markers.



Almost 20 years later, when Daniel Hill hit his [troubled period](#), he found himself in danger of losing his home and all his land to foreclosure. Therefore, in an effort



to protect himself from the tax collector and creditors, he filed a homestead claim on roughly a quarter of his property. The map describing his claim shows two sycamore trees; one marked the actual corner, and the other represented the "witness stake", a safeguard used by surveyors in the case that the main marker was destroyed. That second tree is the one that still stands today, the marker tree being cut down when Hollister Avenue was realigned.

After many incarnations of the property, this grand old tree, since 1966 always the centerpiece of some restaurant, is now the centerpiece of the Butler Event Center. When you are stopped at the light on Hollister at Rte. 217, you might reflect on the tales this old tree could tell.



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