

A 60-Year Slice of History

A barn in Sacramento has a 60-year slice of history to offer those caught up in this year's Spirit of '76.

It's Crawford's Barn at College Greens East, a Morrison Homes residential community near Folsom Boulevard and Watt Avenue.

The structure, once the home of a well-known 19th century race horse named Crawford, is on the former Cowell Estate and the focal point of a picturesque two-acre private park that is available for the exclusive use of College Greens East residents and guests as a recreation center.

The estate was founded by Henry Cowell in the early 1850s. His family had huge holdings of land and was in the limestone-cement business.

Crawford was one of several race horses raised and trained at the Cowell Estate. He earned fame as a trotter in the 1920s and 30s, and never lost a race in California, according to Ralph Krpan, a former caretaker there.

"When he was running, there weren't many high stakes events," Krpan said. "Mostly the racing was done at county fairs and at the state fair.

"Crawford was one of those horses that just didn't want to lose. All he wanted to do was stay out front."

Crawford's Barn has been used by homeowners of the development, according to sales manager Dan Joslin, for "wedding receptions, birthday parties, holiday gatherings, and homeowner socials. In addition, the homeowners have sponsored several get-acquainted parties there and they plan to continue them on a regular basis as more new people move in."

The original architecture and the native trees of the area have been intentionally and carefully retained by Morrison Homes so that Crawford's Barn will be seen as it was viewed by Crawford, said Ric Davis, vice president of marketing for the firm.

"We even kept the old irrigation pump house to complement the barn and to maintain the physical characteristics of the original Cowell Estate. But to provide a safe place for kids to play and pleasant open spaces for outdoor games, family picnics and barbeques, the old farm house, fish pond and bare dirt barn yard had to go," he said.

In place of those original features of the Cowell Estate, there is now a paved basketball court, a children's play area, picnic tables and built-in barbeques, horseshoe pits, drinking fountains and meandering paved walkways, all among the huge native trees and rolling lawns.

Architecturally, Crawford's Barn is essentially now as before, in terms of exterior appearance and size (nearly 90 feet long and 45 feet wide and almost three stories high to the roof ridge). Gone is the three-quarter century old wood roof, replaced by new cedar shingle roofing. The windows have new shutters and the barn doors and hay loft doors are new, but all are designed as detailed as they were originally.

The barn is fresh with newly-painted stucco and stained wood trim. The original 10-foot-high, galvanized iron cupola at the roof ridge stands tall with new paint, topped with a new eight-foot weather vane of solid steel, custom designed and fabricated by Morrison with "Crawford's" logo of College Greens East.

Several local-area firms and people were involved in the revitalization of the barn. The weathervane was designed and installed by Ellis Sign Co.; the Spink Corp. was involved in site

development and landscape design; Mike Moss was the site's landscape contractor and Barbara Shults handled interior design.

The old yard light with its goose-neck stem, bare bulb and white porcelain reflector remains with a modern-day version of the old design—at the same spot high on the south wall of the barn. Thus, the walkways and lawn below are illuminated after dusk as was the old barn yard many years ago.

Inside the barn, only a portion of the area was converted by Morrison. The original stable doors and partitions with wrought iron grille work remain, providing open cubicles for table games and a kitchen alcove with built-in cabinets, range, refrigerator and stainless steel sink. In addition, much of the original wood structure has been left exposed, including the ceiling joists, beams and posts (supporting the old hayloft above). All were sandblasted and sealed to maintain the color and texture of the original wood material.

A concrete slab and footings were poured within the old exterior walls and the modern conveniences of complete electrical and plumbing systems were also installed.

New partitions replaced the older stables, providing space for restrooms, storage and administrative offices. The central area (between the old stable bays) is now the lounge area, attractively decorated to complement the interior barn structure. This space is ideal for meetings, group bridge playing and arts and crafts.

Hung from the joists above are quaint electrical fixtures, reminiscent of the kerosene lanterns of Crawford's day.

Joslin has noticed, in addition to the success of the barn, an increasing amount of activity in the private park, particularly because of the unseasonably warm weather in January. "People have been out practicing and getting exercise on the basketball court, pitching horse shoes, and even picnicking and barbequeing. And the little ones have been making good use of the playground equipment. There is certainly a lot of activity," he said.

"Bordered on two sides by public streets and on the other two sides by future residential lots, the slightly-sloping site is perfect for a community private park," said Davis. "With 29 existing mature trees (11 different species) ideally situated to enable spacious open areas and summertime shade, we merely enhanced the natural contours by creating grassy knolls along the public streets and adding some specimen trees and shrubs and a simple system of paved pathways for walking and biking," he said.

College Greens East residents will utilize Crawford's Barn more and more this year as the Bicentennial celebration reaches a peak, according to representatives of Morrison. "It's a perfect place for that sort of thing."

Homes in the residential community are priced from \$34,800. There are four models to choose from at the site, 2737 Tiber Drive. Workmen are beginning their fourth phase of development at the site which is on the banks of the American River.

The new phase of 88 homes will bring to 245 the number of units at College Greens East. Ultimately, the development will have about 400 homes.

Morrison Homes is an Olin-American company. It has been building in Sacramento since 1972 and in the East Bay area since 1947.