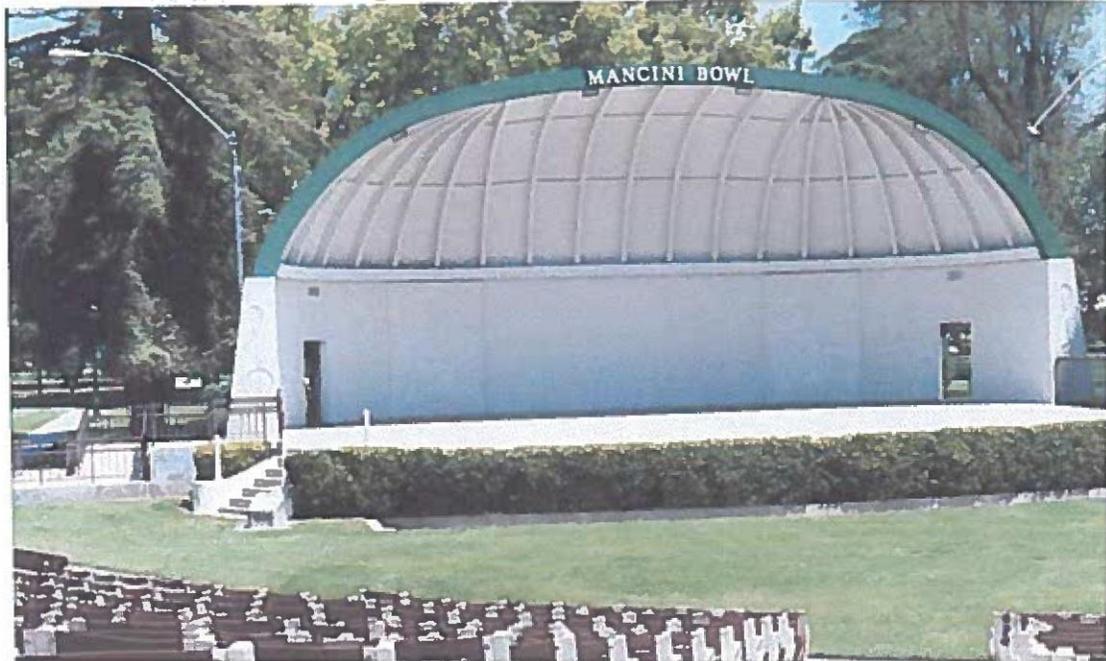


17. GRACEADA PARK

Sycamore & Needham Avenues (Donated 1914)



Landmark Preservation Commission Resolution: August 17, 1992
Designated by City Council: December 8, 1992

Description: Graceada Park, as originally planned consisted of extensive landscaping and walkways. Two rose arbors with benches were installed. E.K. Ekstein gave 1,000 Eucalyptus trees in 10 different species to the park. A tennis court was built adjacent to the rose arbor. Later additions to the park include the Mancini Bowl, tennis courts, playground equipment and picnic areas. The Mancini Bowl was dedicated Sunday, May 12, 1949.

Historic Significance: Modesto's park system began as an outgrowth of efforts made by the Modesto Woman's Improvement Club. When the Club was formed in 1906, the only park in Modesto was a small plot of ground with shade trees at the corner of I Street. In accounts of the time, this small park was described as "...nothing more than a frog pond." An article in the Modesto Daily Evening Herald reported that the Club "...cast about for ways and means to secure desirable land and money to sustain a park." Two prominent citizens, Thomas Beard and T.J. Wisecarver, gave the club 10 acres of land on the north side of town. This land became Graceada Park – named for Grace Beard and Ada Wisecarver, the donor's wives. The club accepted the deed for the park in August 1906. In November 1906, John McLaren, designer of Golden Gate Park, came to Modesto to consult with the club on plans for the park. Retained to draw the plans, McLaren's proposal was submitted in February 1907. The Club agreed to spend \$1,000 the first year and at least \$500 each succeeding year to improve the park. Three city blocks in size, the park was formally given to the city in 1914.

The Mancini Bowl commemorates Francesco Nicolo "Frank" Mancini who came to Modesto in 1923 to teach music at Modesto High School. Under his baton, the Modesto's Boys Band won nearly

every award offered in the state, and placed second and third in nationwide competitions in the mid-1920s.

"Probably no one in the world hears more High School bands than I do, and of all the bands I've heard, I consider none superior to the one you have here," said the famous composer and band director John Phillip Sousa during a visit to Modesto in 1926.

With help from others, Mancini organized the Modesto Symphony Orchestra in 1931. Mancini conducted the symphony until 1961, 11 years after he retired from teaching.