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Warren Church: The founding the Monterey County Parks Department and the development of Royal Oaks Park.

Warren Church, elected county supervisor in 1964, served three terms from 1965-77 on the Board of Supervisors. During his tenure in the 1960s and 1970s he helped establish the Parks Department and the following parks: Royal Oaks Park (1966), Lake San Antonio Recreation Area (1967), Toro Park (1971), San Lorenzo Park (1976), and Jacks Peak Park (1977). Following, the Laguna Seca Recreation Area was established in 1981, and Manzanita Park in 1984.

Beginning in 1965 the Board of Supervisors led by 1st District Supervisor Warren Church, promoted and established the Monterey County Parks Department, hired the first Parks Director, appointed the first Parks Commission and budgeted \$100,000 for park acquisition. It was the impetus that Supervisor Church needed to begin actively searching for a regional day use park. With interested constituents, he explored North Monterey County for potential sites and established Royal Oaks Park in 1966.

The Royal Oaks property was considered to be the best available land for a public park. The land was formerly a turkey ranch, and the surrounding grassy hills were used for cattle grazing. Adjacent lands were primarily agricultural. Supervisor Church brought in his bulldozer for grading and to make fire breaks. Parks Department crews built a restroom and a large group barbeque area. Park volunteers transformed the former turkey ranch feed storeroom into a small meeting room, christened the Acorn Room and the park was opened to the public.

Supervisor Church asked Dr. Emil Ramos from Hartnell to suggest an appropriate Spanish name for the park. He suggested Encinos de los Reyes, the name of a park near Madrid, Spain. Supervisor Church liked the English translation, “Royal Parks”, which eventually became Royal Oaks and which later served as the inspiration for the community of the same name.

Royal Oaks Park consists of a total of 122 acres overall and about 40 acres are developed within a gently sloping open space turf area shrouded by coastal live oaks. BBQ Areas, children’s play areas, sports courts, hiking trails, restroom/parking facilities and other amenities have been developed over the years. The park has a unique character and charm and the staff who work at Royal Oaks Park take great pride in maintaining it, and keeping the park in its original, envisioned condition.

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