

# LAGUNA LIFE

Laguna Beach Historical Society, Inc.

March\*April 2000

## Artist's Studio Tour

March 19 & March 26

See the enclosed brochure for details.

This has been a very successful fund raiser for the Museum and the Society, and has been a sell out the last time it was done. Make reservations early.

## Wonderful Donations

We have been gifted with some great items. Florence Fainberg, of Newport Beach, donated the old School Bell from the 1886 one room school house in Laguna. The Kibbey Family, who owned the Sandwich Mill, gave us the original Edward Cochem photographs which had hung in the restaurant. Included are some photos we have never seen. Also, they donated postcards and misc. photos. And we received a wonderful watercolor by Lewis C. Dixon, of Goff Isl. in the 40's, from his brother Ray Dixon who owned Ray & Al's sporting goods on Broadway. We also received cash donations from the John Bing's and Phoebe Whipple, among others, which were greatly appreciated.

## Annual Meeting in May

The annual Meeting will be in late May 2000 at Wells Fargo Bank. We need to reelect Members of the Board, and adopt amended bylaws, to bring them up to date. A Copy of the bylaws will be available at the Smith House for you to peruse by April 2, 2000. If you would like to serve on the Board, give us a call. We need volunteers. Pauline Buzan joined the

Peace Corp. and we've lost one other board member. Please let us know if you can help.

## The Festival Story

The Laguna Beach Art Festival has a long and colorful History in Laguna. It is a shame that the current Board wants to move to San Clemente. However, few people actually know the truth about how the Festival came to be at Irvine Bowl.

The Festival of Arts began in 1932 during the height of the depression, when paintings weren't selling well, or at all. The artist's from the Art Association organized, and the town's resident and business people got behind the effort 100%.

The first year-1932-was an "Intellectual Festival" one week long, involving all the arts, and was held in a vacant lot behind the old Sandwich Mill on the corner of Coast Boulevard, South and Forest Avenue. Summer of 1933 was held in El Paseo, near the hotel. In 1934 the street was blocked off on Ocean Avenue. 1935 was held where the Las Brisas parking lot is today, and 1936 was back at El Paseo. Each of these lasted 10 to 14 days. 1937 thru 1939 was held on a lot to the left of the old Woman's Club and to the right of the Lumber Yard parking lot on Forest Ave (basically the area where the Rec. Dept. is today) as the City Hall wasn't built there until much later. In 1940 the festival was held at the foot of Third Street hill, which didn't go through to Park Ave. at that time.

Roy Ropp took over the "living Pictures"

in 1935, designing a show which was acclaimed far and wide. His later memoirs said that he declined many offers to take the "Living Pictures, or "Pageant of the Masters" (as he renamed them) "on the road," or to make a personal profit on the show. He said he did it all to benefit the citizens of Laguna Beach.

In 1938, the City Council agreed to purchase the Thurston lot the Festival of Arts was using for \$4,915.27 and rent it back to the Festival. The City made a \$1,000 payment into escrow at Bank of America.

Also in 1938, the City Recreation Advisory Commission, made up of 25 members, one from each civic club in Laguna, put forth a plan for a 15 to 25 acres park on what we now call Irvine Bowl. It was to be an active recreation park with community club house, concert amphitheater, and a multitude of other recreation uses, including a children's playground and wading pool, to serve the needs of all the citizens, and the plans were quite ambitious. The City Council applied for a WPA (Works Project Admin.) Grant to do the project.

After the Festival of 1938, the Festival of Arts tried to get the Woman's Club to sell them 20 ft. of their property, so that they had enough room for seating for the stage. But the ladies said no. Then the City offered to trade the Community Playhouse for the Woman's Club, but the Woman's Club voted against the sale. The Festival of Arts asked the city to cancel the sale. The City did so, but had a lot of trouble getting the \$1,000 back from escrow.

During the fall of 1939, after the grant from the WPA was denied, the Recreation Advisory Commission put together a long Report and gathered 426 signatures to put the

issue of a 10-cent tax on each one hundred dollars assessed valuation on the ballot. At about the same time, Frank Hevener, Pres. Of the Festival of Arts, and Chairman of a sub committee of the Recreation Advisory Committee, and Roy Ropp decided to look over the land proposed for the City Park, to see if there was any room for a stage and seats for the Festival of Arts, since an outdoor amphitheater was included in the plans. Roy Ropp found what he felt was the perfect spot for the stage, but to put it where he wanted it, the seating area would have to be up on an adjoining property, owned by E. W. Pyne (of Pyne Castle fame). This land was not part of the park plan.

Since the Festival only ran for 2 weeks, and only took about a week to set up, the Recreation Advisory Committee agreed that the Festival of Arts could be accommodated within the park plan. This was not a bond issue, but a tax that was estimated to raise \$3,500 the first year, and each year after that.

The City did not want to purchase the E. W. Pyne property, which is reflected in a Res. they adopted just before the election, which said no more \$28,000 would be spent on the park, and no other property would need to be acquired, other than the Irvine land.

The tax increase was divided into two issues. Prop. 1- do you want to raise taxes to acquire and build the Irvine park, improve the beaches, acquire other parks and for advertising, and Prop. 2- do you want to limit the amount spent on the Irvine Park to 75% of the tax income for the first 10 years, not to exceed \$28,000. A lot of people didn't want the money spent on the Festival of Arts.

An Ad in the South Coast News on March

old floor heater which is being taken out, please get in touch with us. Call your plumber friends. The house is cold.

**A Night at The Beach  
with Ben Sorrell**

On Friday, February 25, 2000 at 7:00 p.m. (First show sold out) and 8:15 p.m. at Wells Fargo Bank. A \$10.00 donation for the Hevs McClelland Memorial Fund is requested. Ben is doing a one man play about being a life guard in Laguna in the 1950's. With musical accompaniment, it sounds like great fun.

**Your Board Members**

Belinda Blacketer, President; Anne Frank, V. President; Jan Nagurski, Treas.; Nelda Stone, Sec.; Jane Janz; Ed Perry; and Eric Jessen.

**Historical Society On Line**

The Historical Society is on the Web. To visit our homepage, go to <http://freeyellow.com/members/laguna/index.html>

Call Belinda Blacketer at 949-497-4439

Fax # 949-376-9519

e-mail address [bblaw@ix.netcom.com](mailto:bblaw@ix.netcom.com)

Note: For your security, we do not share our membership list, your name, your address, your phone number or any other personal information. We use the information you give for our records, and do not lend it or sell it.

**Please send in your dues for 2000 today**

If everyone pays their dues, we can send 6 newsletters this year. Postage is \$98.00, copying \$115.00 ea. Issue

**Join or Renew Your Laguna Beach Historical Society Membership - 2000**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  New  Renewal

Add to Mailing List  Would Like to Host at Murphy-Smith House or/Volunteer in some other capacity - have a special talent or skill you could share. 2-3 hours a month would help.

The Laguna Beach Historical Society, Inc.  
278 Ocean Avenue,  
Laguna Beach, Ca. 92651

TO: