

# Laguna Beach Historical Society

P.O. Box 1526, Laguna Beach, CA 92652 494-2318

September 1992

Vol 1, Number 6

## NEXT MEETING

Thursday, September 24, 1992  
Wells Fargo Bank  
7:30 p.m.

Dennis Madison is the guest speaker. He is the founder of Fahrenheit 451 and the Village Sun publisher. He will speak about his experiences in Laguna Beach in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

There will also be an update on the Smith House.  
The public is welcome!

## BENEFIT FOR THE SMITH HOUSE AT OCTOBERFEST

Coldwell Banker is generously sponsoring a booth at the Octoberfest to raise funds for the renovation of the Smith House. Featured will be food from local restaurants (and Pauline Buzan's cabbage rolls). Pictures of historic Laguna Beach will be available for purchase.



## Come and enjoy the Octoberfest

Festival of Arts Grounds  
Saturday, October 3  
Noon-11 p.m.

If you would like to help staff the booth, please contact:

Jim Davison Laguna Beach  
Historical Society  
494-8393

or

Linda Grey  
Chamber of Commerce/Coldwell  
Banker  
494--0215

THANK YOU  
COLDWELL BANKER !

## SMITH HOUSE!

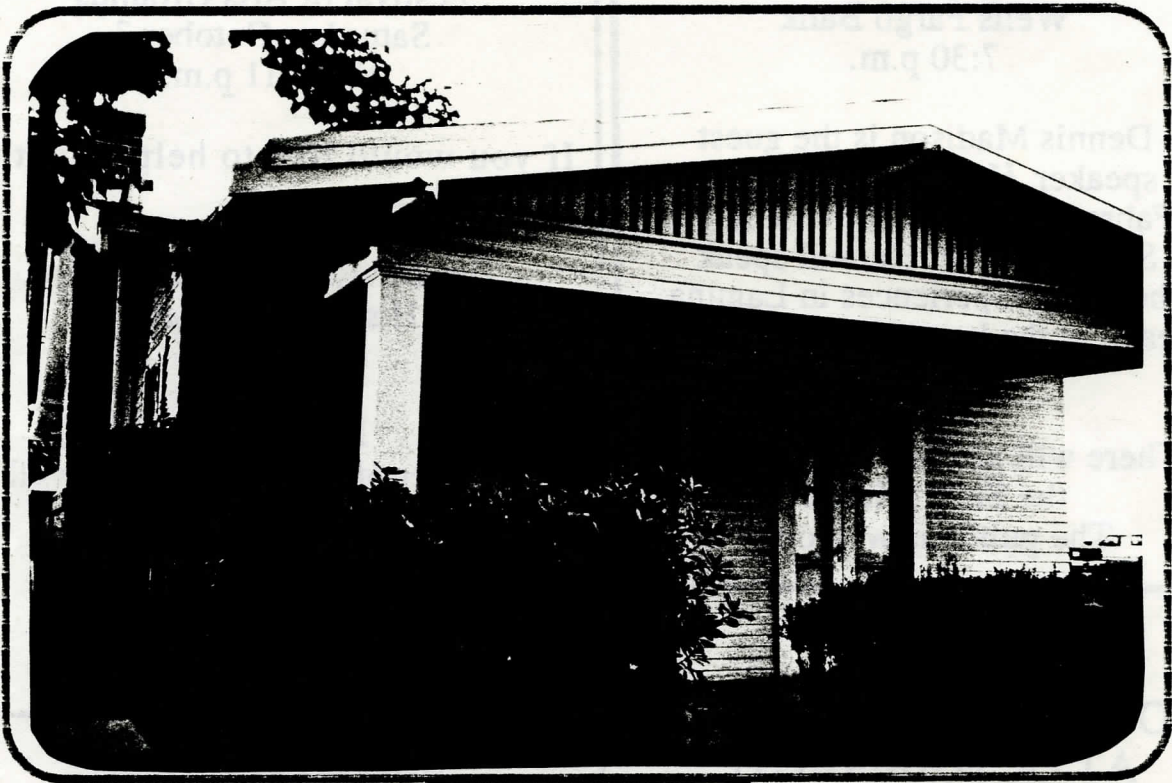
We are thrilled at the decision of the Wells Fargo Bank to lease the Smith House to the Laguna Beach Historical Society. The Society will share the 1920 house at 278 Ocean Avenue with the Chamber of Commerce's Hospitality Committee.

These are the events that led to this happy conclusion. Mrs. Blanche Clapp Smith sold her house to Laguna Federal Savings with the

stipulation that she could live there for the remainder of her life. At her death, the property passed on to Wells Fargo Bank, Laguna Federal's successor. Longtime Lagunan Belinda Blacketer recommended to the Historical Society that we pursue the Smith house as a home for the Society. Therefore, I spoke to Bonnie Rohrer, manager of the local Wells Fargo Bank, and on her suggestion

Mingling of Laguna's past and present in this manner most certainly would enhance both uses. The Bank agreed.

Representatives of the Laguna Beach Historical Society and the Hospitality Committee will be meeting soon with Wells Fargo officials to work out the details. We'll need lots of local support and assistance to get the house renovated



wrote a letter to Wells Fargo Vice President

Glenn Gray last October, inquiring about possible use of the house by the Historical Society. Realizing that tourist information questions most definitely would accompany historical exhibits, and that Laguna Beach has long been in need of a visitor's information center, I brought up this function as well.

The Smith House

and ready for public use.

Thanks to Belinda Blacketer, Bonnie Rohrer, Glenn Gray, and Wells Fargo Bank for this marvelous opportunity to bring these much needed services to Laguna Beach residents and visitors."...Anne Frank

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## BLANCHE CLAPP SMITH

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Who was Mrs. Blanche Clapp Smith? Mrs. Smith was related to the Laguna pioneer Brooks family. She lived with her parents at the old Will-Eva boarding house on Ocean Avenue, which was located where the Bank of America is now. In 1935, her mother, Claudia Clapp acquired 278 Ocean Avenue from the Murphy family, who at that time owned most of the property on that corner.

As a young woman, Mrs. Smith worked in a bakery on Forest Avenue. After her marriage, she and her husband moved to Los Angeles. However, they returned to Laguna and the house on Ocean Avenue when he became ill. He died in Laguna in 1959.

For the next 32 years until her death on June 30, 1991 Mrs. Smith lived alone at 278 Ocean Avenue. She took daily walks and attended the senior citizen lunches at the Presbyterian Church.

We trust Mrs. Smith would have approved of the use of her house as historical museum and visitor information center for the city in which she spent most of her life.

## ALLEY UPDATE

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From the "Public Forum" section of the SOUTH COAST NEWS, March 13, 1931:

"Take a survey of the back premises of [the] Laguna Beach business district and the sight is

anything but pleasant. Through the neglect of proper city planning in the past Laguna has no alleyways that would facilitate the removal of debris and waste and make back premises less conspicuous, nevertheless a little thought and effort would make a great difference in the attractiveness of Laguna to our increasing number of visitors and prospective residents.

The view to one traveling Ocean Avenue is particularly unsightly looking to the back premises of Forest Avenue stores..."

(Thanks to Jane Janz for this timely tidbit.)

## FOREST AVENUE ALLEY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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How does one go about documenting the history of an alley? That was the problem faced by members of the historical society when asked by project director Meg Monahan for historical background on the Forest Avenue Alley. What we did was to find visual images of the general area and provide information about businesses which bordered on the alley over the years since its creation in late 1931. Michael Onorato took the lead, and with the assistance of Jane Janz and Judith Brunner, consulted city directories and other sources to document businesses which existed during years selected at random (1932, 1943, 1945, 1967, 1978, 1992) in order to see how the area has changed. It's no surprise to see a

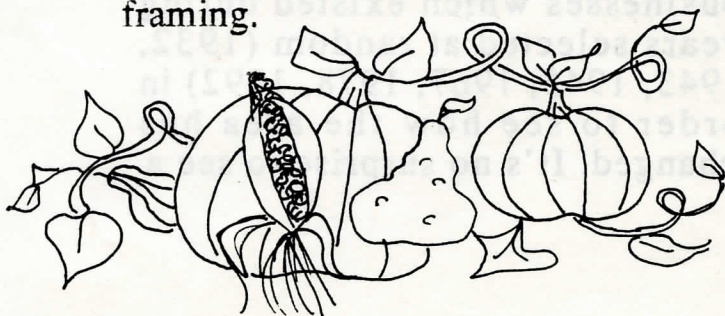
move from resident-oriented services to a preponderance of retail establishments that appeal primarily to tourists on Forest Avenue. In addition, Ocean Avenue has changed from a primarily residential to a commercial area.

A noticeable feature of the photographs that document the downtown area is the change from a semi-rural, heavily wooded area to an area with relatively little vegetation in the early 1960's. Since that time some trees have been replanted in the alley area.

Charts showing the location of business establishments along Forest, Ocean, and Coast Highway, and photographs of the downtown area from the teens through the 1960's were exhibited and discussed by Anne Frank at the first community meeting for the project on September 12.

## LASER PHOTOGRAPHS

Laser photographs of historic Laguna are available at the Laguna Beach Art and Antique Mart on Ocean Avenue. There are many new views of old Laguna available by the new laser process, which is considerably less expensive than a "traditional" print. (The quality is quite good.) Come in and choose from many views. 8 x 10 photos are only \$3.95 and are suitable for framing.



## CASA LAGUNA

Does anyone have any information pertaining to "Casa Laguna" the hotel/apartments on South Coast Hwy. in the Victoria neighborhood? Please direct any information, history, photos or clues to Jane Janz.

## ORAL HISTORY

The interviews with Bob Peacock and Joe Sweeney are now available in the local history section of the library. They are bound under the heading "Summer 1992". Please ask the reference librarian.

## BOOK ACQUISITIONS

Karen Turnbull is donating two historical books for the local history collection. The first is The Old Spanish and Mexican Ranchos of Orange County by the Title Insurance Co, Santa Ana, 1955. The second is Evolove by Issac Frazee, The Printer of Laguna, 1929.

## PHOTOS SAVED!

The extraordinary efforts of Ken Posthuma of Lerner Processing Labs Inc. have saved three damaged photographs recently donated to the Society. Liquids had caused the photos to become cemented to the glass of their frames, but Mr. Posthuma and his lab succeeded in freeing them intact. This heroic act of historic preservation was done entirely at his own expense! We appreciate your great generosity and considerable skill! Ken. Thank you!



## RICHARD G. AYOTTE

1947-1992

Laguna Beach Historical Society founding member, Richard Ayotte died July 27, in Flint, Michigan after a long illness. He was 44.

Ayotte, a resident of Laguna Beach until shortly before his death, became fascinated with the history of Laguna Beach and Orange County soon after his arrival in 1979, and he began a decade long research program that led to the amassing of an extensive personal library and collection of files on the history of the area.

In 1991, Ayotte, and others gathered to form a Laguna Beach Historical Society. Ayotte wrote the by-laws, undertook to secure formal establishment, and agreed to serve as Librarian/Archivist on the Board of Directors.

Ayotte, a graduate of the University of Michigan, held a law degree from Wayne State University in

Detroit and was a member of the Genessee County Bar. In Orange County, he was head Public Services Librarian at the Orange County Law Library, a position he held until poor health led to his retirement earlier this year.

Ayotte wrote several monographs and compiled numerous indices to research materials that are now part of the local history collection in the Laguna Beach Library.

Shortly before his death, Ayotte moved back to Michigan to stay with his family. He is survived by his parents, several brothers and sisters, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Before he left Orange County, Ayotte was honored by colleagues from different organizations to which he belonged. The Board of Directors of the Historical Society issued a proclamation in honor of his achievements in local history research, and the Orange County Bar Association issued a proclamation honoring him for his professional accomplishments.

Mayor Robert F. Gentry signed a City of Laguna Beach proclamation honoring Ayotte for his contribution to the community.

The loss of a friend and scholar like Richard Ayotte is a bitter blow to members of the Historical Society, but the fundamental research which he undertook will make study of the community's history that much easier for others.

## FEDERAL TAX EXEMPT STATUS GRANTED

Good news! We have received notice of preliminary determination of tax exempt status, and a final determination is expected later this year by the Internal Revenue Service. This means that contributions, gifts, bequests, etc. to the Society are now tax deductible for federal and gift tax purposes under sections 2055, 2106 and 2522 of the Internal Revenue Code. This is an important milestone in our development as an organization. If you have any questions, contact a member of the Board of Directors.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Anne Frank  
Vice-President: Jim Davison  
Secretary: David Wilson  
Treasurer: Pauline Buzan  
Librarian/Archivist: Judith Brunner.  
Directors:  
Judith Brunner  
Jane Janz  
Marguerite Stanton.

Thank you, Karen Turnbull (Publications/Newsletter)

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Laguna Beach Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1526  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

# LAGUNA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LAGUNA BEACH IS A SPECIAL PLACE, A TOWN UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN ORANGE COUNTY. COME LEARN ABOUT OUR CITY'S COLORFUL PAST.

THE LAGUNA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S PURPOSE IS TO ACCUMULATE, RECORD AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TOWN'S UNIQUE HISTORY.

IF YOU JOIN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, YOU CAN

- *LEARN THE INTERESTING BACKGROUND OF THIS UNUSUAL COMMUNITY.*
- *GET THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING LAGUNA HISTORY AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS*
- *RESEARCH A SPECIAL TOPIC IN THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN.*
- *HELP IDENTIFY AND SAVE LAGUNA'S HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS*
- *HELP BUILD A COLLECTION OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH MATERIALS AT THE LAGUNA BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY.*

WE'RE JUST BEGINNING. WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU JOIN AND HELP US WITH OUR PROJECTS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CALL ANNE FRANK (714) 494-2318

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I WISH TO JOIN THE LAGUNA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY. ENCLOSED IS MY MEMBERSHIP FEE (INDIVIDUAL \$15; COUPLE \$25; STUDENT \$5)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please return to Laguna Beach Historical Society, P.O. Box 1526, Laguna Beach, CA 92652.

THANK YOU!