

LAGUNA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

In This Newsletter

Announcing our upcoming program about Laguna homesteader Joe Thurston by Phil Brigandi on November 24, 7:30PM Laguna Beach City Hall

Fast Facts about Joe Thurston

Phil Brigandi will add to this list at his presentation!

Message from our president

Gregg DeNicola MD discusses the history of our Eucalyptus trees.

Thank you to our members for your support!

If you are not a member yet, would you consider supporting the Laguna Beach Historical Society? See page 5 for more information.

2016 Statements

Enclosed to help you decide the level of support you would like to give to us. THANK YOU!



Thurston Ranch, 1890s - courtesy First American Corporation

NEXT PROGRAM: November 24, 7:30PM, LAGUNA BEACH CITY HALL

Locals can view live on Cox Cable **30** or **852**

Joe Thurston's "Early Days in Laguna Beach"

Phil Brigandi will discuss the Thurston family members who were the first permanent settlers in South Laguna, arriving in Aliso Canyon in 1871. Their three-year-old son, Joseph, lived in Laguna for most of the rest of his long life, dying in 1957 at age 89. His recollections, written in the 1930s and 1940s, are a valuable source of local lore. But his book, *Early Days in Laguna Beach* (1947) also presents a stark view of his



Joseph Thurston in his vegetable wagon

**PIONEER RESIDENT WRITES
OF LAGUNA'S EARLY DAYS**



**Fast Facts from Joe
Thurston's "Laguna
Beach of Early Days"**

- The Thurston Family arrived at the homestead in Aliso Canyon in November 1871 when Joe was three years old.
- Joe Thurston was known for selling produce grown on his property including watermelon, cucumber, lima beans, and potatoes.
- Along with partners, Joe Thurston purchased and developed land above The Village and named the area "Temple Hills" because he was inspired by the area's physical and spiritual strength.

childhood that was resented even by some members of his own family.

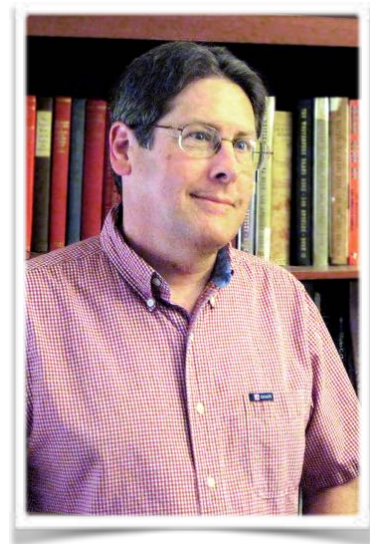
Orange County Historian, author, and activist Phil Brigandi will discuss Thurston, his family, his book, and his other writings and the controversy they created.



Joe and Marie Thurston's wedding, 1921 - courtesy First American Corp



Phil Brigandi has been researching and writing local history for 40 years now and is the author of more than two dozen books and hundreds of articles. He served as Orange County Archivist from 2003-2008, and has long been active with the Orange County Historical Society.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

While perusing photos from our archives, I noted the many eucalyptus trees that were so prevalent decades ago. It seems we have a love/hate relationship with the Australian native “gum tree.”



Coast Road near the old hotel
(now Hotel Laguna)

Originally planted by our homesteading forefathers in order to comply with the Timber Culture Act of 1873 and allow the "improvement" of the land they would be granted, the trees grew quickly and thrived in Laguna's climate. Soon most of Laguna was full of the gum trees.

Old photos of Sleepy Hollow show groves of eucalyptuses planted by our first postmaster Nick Isch on land owned by his brother-in-law Joe Yoch. We've been told that many plantings were done not just to comply with the Homestead Act, but also to just try to make Laguna more beautiful.

However, the oils in the trees are very flammable, and would lite like torches when a fire broke out. Moreover, in 1938, the canyon was flooded by heavy rains and two homes were lost to falling eucalyptus trees. Numerous eucalyptuses fell because the water undercut their banks and loosened their roots. Many shop owners felt they were messy and the branches would sometimes fall without warning on unsuspecting shoppers.

In time, the eucalyptuses became more scarce. Proving history repeats itself, there is another eucalyptus controversy reported by the local papers this summer. The school district rescinded an earlier decision to remove 28 eucalyptus trees surrounding the high school that were planted along the slope last fall. Neighbors had complained that they were a fire hazard and could block coveted views as they grow. The city will continue to address the issue.

To be clear, the Historical Society has no position on eucalyptus trees. We do relish studying their place in our history. We invite you to come visit us at the Murphy Smith Bungalow and chat with our docents about them. Look at some of the photos. Then walk to Madison Square and enjoy the “Eucalyptus Bench” by the late Julia Klemek. It's a great place to take a load off and enjoy a quick link to our past.

Gregg DeNicola MD



Gum Tree Grove at Top of the World First American Title

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FOR YOUR SUPPORT!***

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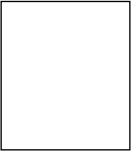
Thank you for your support!

LAGUNA BEACH THEATRE DISPLAY AT THE MURPHY-SMITH BUNGALOW

Our own Jane Janz has gathered information through the years about the old theaters in Laguna Beach and has created a poster series that accurately describes the history of our three theaters (1, 2a, 2b, 3!) Come to the bungalow on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1-4PM to see this wonderful temporary display.



Laguna Beach Historical Society
278 Ocean Ave
Laguna Beach, CA 92651



SPECIAL NOTE TO OUR LOYAL MEMBERS

We couldn't keep up the bungalow, have our programs, or send out this newsletter without your support. **Thank you!** Be sure to check page 5 of this newsletter for our 2015 membership categories – see more details on our website. We hope to see you at the next program on Tuesday, November 24, 7:30PM at City Hall.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

**We would be honored if you would follow us on
Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.**

**Visit our website lagunabeachhistory.org
Contact us at lagunabeachhistory@gmail.com**

