



LAGUNA  
BEACH  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



# *Laguna Beach Historical Society*

*presents*

## *The Christmas Happening, 1970, by Neil Purcell*

**April 7, 7:30PM, LAGUNA BEACH CITY HALL**

Locals can view the program live on Cox Cable **852**

Neil Purcell spent about thirty years with the Laguna Beach Police Department until his retirement as Chief of Police in 1997.

Chief Purcell implemented policing techniques that were designed to connect the community to the officers including foot, bike, and beach patrols. He also worked to ensure fair treatment of gays by police.



Photo by Mark Chamberlain



Police Chief Neil Purcell

On Christmas day, 1970, approximately 25,000 young people gathered in the canyon for an event that was advertised as a one-day event. Many of the participants stayed while organizers helped to provide food for them.

The Christmas Happening came to an end after three days. Chief Purcell will discuss the activity leading up to the event as well as the aftermath.

All are welcome to our program and we hope participants of the Christmas Happening will come to the presentation to share their memories.

### Fast Facts: Main Beach, Boardwalk, Laguna's Window-to-the-Sea

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- The beach was always a public area but many businesses were built through the years on Coast Blvd at Main Beach.
- The first boardwalk was built in the late 1800s by the cottage owners in the area.
- The desire to open a Window-to-the-Sea at Main Beach persisted for many years. The city's first bond election to purchase the land failed in 1956 but finally passed on the third attempt in 1968.
- The new Main Beach Park was dedicated in 1974. The Window-to-the-Sea has now become one of the most picturesque spots in the world. :)
- The Laguna Beach Historical Society has NEW FOOTAGE obtained from the Laguna Beach Lifeguards showing demolition and construction of the park. Search on YouTube for "1974 Main Beach Development" or peruse our YouTube channel, "Laguna Beach History", for more videos including many of our past programs.



Laguna's Main Beach – 1930s



Cottages torn down 1968



Laguna's current Window-to-the-Sea

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

A fun exercise I enjoy is to make a reasonable estimate of the date from a random Laguna Beach historical photograph. This photo has several clues. It appears to be a parade going through the downtown area near the corner of Forest Ave and Park Ave.



Our picturesque village encouraged a drove of artists to come settle and ply their trade in the early 20th century. The peak of the influx was in the 1920s and early 1930s. There is a small banner on a street light advertising the Festival of the Arts that began in 1932 by the Laguna Art Association.

The Hollywoodland-style Temple Hills sign in the hills went up in 1924. However, it is difficult to document when the sign came down; it apparently was visible for several decades. (There is now just an "L" on the hill further to the right.)

One major clue is that running boards began disappearing from automobiles in the mid-1930s. Since all of the cars here have running boards, it is safe to say that this photo would be from the early 1930s.

The Rankin drugstore and neighboring Laguna Market coexisted for several decades. J.W. Rankin purchased the drugstore in 1921. Laguna Market opened in 1933.

Fashion experts may tell us that the policeman with the necktie and knee-high boots talking to the hooded little boy would be typical garb in the 1930s depression era.

Armed with all this evidence, I would guess the picture was taken between 1932-1935. What is your take on this picture? We invite you to come to the Murphy Smith bungalow and possibly get your input on this and more photos. We'd also love to show you the upgrades going on – especially our new floors!

*Gregg DeNicola MD*

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**Thank you for your support!**

**A special thank you to Clark Collins of Collins Design and Development for providing materials and arranging for our new kitchen and bathroom floors!**



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.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

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