

Laguna Beach Historical Society

Murphy-Smith Bungalow
278 Ocean Avenue
Laguna Beach CA 92651
949-497-6834



Laguna Life

The Laguna Beach Historical Society Newsletter: March 2010

Please attend Historical Society Program to be held at
Laguna Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue
Monday, March 15th – from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.
Architectural Modernism in Laguna Beach
by Designer and Architectural Historian Ted Wells

Ted Wells designed the innovative “Rust House” near the hospital, and is not only a talented designer but also an architectural historian and former president of the Southern California Society of Architectural Historians.

Laguna architecture of the 1960s and 70s has become an important part of our city’s character, even though these buildings have yet to be officially recognized in our historic resource inventory. Wells sees this architecture as expression of a modern approach to design, employing new materials, methods, and innovations in form and siting in relation to the environment.

Laguna Beach has been a proving ground for creative architects such as Lamont Langworthy, Chris Abel, and Fred Briggs, who produced important examples of this modern aesthetic

Wells will discuss the significance of this modern architecture and will present worthy local examples, focusing on the Laguna Beach Library by Briggs, as well as groundbreaking work by other architects whose work in Laguna Beach is often under-appreciated by historians and the public.

Wells predicts the eventual widespread appreciation of modern architecture of the late 1960s and 70s, and that Laguna Beach has a unique place within the legacy of the development of later 20th century modernism in Southern California.



Orange County Library Laguna Beach Branch
Designed by Fred Briggs
Photo courtesy of Sharon Briggs



Mormon School House at El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon Road
Merle Ramsey Photograph Collection



Mormon School as Catholic Church on Aliso Street (now Catalina Street)- Tom Pulley Postcard Collection



Through Street at Legion Street

Edna Kleitsch wife of Joseph Kleitsch at the Kleitsch Academy was the former Mormon School House (at left); replaced with The Little Church by the Sea. Photographs courtesy of Marilyn Ghere

The Mormon school house was built in 1888 near the corner of El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon Road. It was abandoned and in 1893 was moved to near the corner of Canyon Acres Drive and Laguna Canyon Road and became the Laguna Beach grammar school. In 1908, the school district built a new two-room school house on Park Avenue (now Legion Hall), and the former Mormon school house was bought by Kate and Joseph Yoch and moved to Catalina Street (then called Aliso Street) between Park and Legion where they donated two lots and the building to make the first Catholic Church in town. It was originally named St. Joseph's, but changed to St. Catherine's quite some time before the new Catholic Church was built on Temple Terrace. Then in 1931, the former Mormon school house was bought and moved to 588 Through Street by artist Joseph and Edna Kleitsch to be used as a painting academy. Then purchased in 1952 it was replaced by the Little Church by the Sea with the groundbreaking taking place November 1953.

Loan Historic Printed Materials & Photos to Historical Society to Scan & be Returned



Broad View Villa or Pyne Castle
Tom Pulley Postcard Collection



Pyne Castle built by Walter E. Pyne
Merle Ramsey Photograph Collection

PYNE CASTLE

According to Karen Wilson Turnbull, in her book 1987 book "Cottages and Castles of Laguna," "The foremost Norman style estate in Laguna is what is now known as Pyne Castle. Originally called Broad View Villa, this 62- room castle was built by Walter E. Pyne. He was originally the owner of a piano company who owned some land in Olive. The land was rich in oil and he soon became a millionaire, earning about \$1,000 a day."

Merle and Mabel Ramsey provide details in their 1967 book "Pioneer Days of Laguna Beach," and their 1976 book "The First 100 Years in Laguna Beach 1876 - 1976" as in the following excerpts:

Walter Pyne came to Los Angeles as a boy of 18. He later became a guitar player on the passenger ship Yale that plied between San Pedro and San Francisco. In the early 1900s he was the owner of the Pyne Piano Company in Santa Ana... selling "the player piano," the piano that played with a paper roll. Estel [Walter or Walter Estel] had the exclusive agency for Orange County.

Walter Estel Pyne was considered a "loner." Mr. Pyne was married once for three months. It was reported that his wife returned to Colorado and never came back.

[Pyne] decided to invest in the going thing of the day. That of orange land, upon which he planted to the golden fruit. His choice of land was in the Santa Ana Canyon near the Olinda and Richfield territory... [where later] oil was being discovered in the district of Yorba Linda and Richfield.

He began to search for property to build the mansion upon, and soon chose Laguna Beach, California. This was about the middle of the second decade. It is said he purchased about 100 lots near the north side of the village.

[It] took seven years in the building of the huge structure containing 12 bedrooms. ... the beginning of the construction, [was] February, 1927.

Mr. Pyne lived in Laguna Beach for 23 years and died on July 22, 1945, of cancer.

Make Suggestions for Historical Society Future Programs

Laguna Beach Historical Society Board of Directors

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Remember the Laguna Beach Historical Society in Your Planned Giving

President's Message by Vern Spitaleri

Please attend the Historical Society Program which is of course free and will be held at Laguna Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue

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Architectural Modernism in Laguna Beach

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May is Heritage Month in Laguna Beach; mark your calendar for our program Monday, May 17th. It will be the History of St. Mary's Episcopal Church by Starr Helms.

Longtime Board Member Ed Perry passed away. Ed was very reliable and diligent. Ed will be missed. The Historical Society received donations in honor of Ed Perry \$125 from Michael Townsend and \$100 from Beverly Schnabel & Elizabeth Perris.

If you haven't visited the Murphy-Smith Bungalow recently, come and see the new displays which are organized by volunteer Karen Smith. In addition to the displays, the closet now includes 1920s period clothing which Karen wears when she volunteers on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

We profoundly thank the Caduceus Medical Group at for their very generous grant donation to the Laguna Beach Historical Society of \$1,000. It is most appreciated.

Help! We are looking for a volunteer web master. We also ask you to remember the Laguna Beach Historical Society in your planned giving.

View historic photographs at www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com. Viewers are invited to leave comments to help the Society better identify or date the photographs. At the web site, prints can also be purchase; for example an 8" by 10" glossy for \$6.97 plus tax and shipping. Send questions on photographs or Laguna Beach history to info@LagunaHistory.org.

Step back into 1920s Laguna by visiting the Laguna Beach Historical Society Murphy-Smith Bungalow, located at 278 Ocean Avenue, which is opened to the public at no-charge every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed to greet visitors to the Murphy-Smith Bungalow and should call 939-7257.

Those interested in supporting and joining the Laguna Beach Historical Society should send \$15 per individual, \$25 per household or \$50 per business/organization to 278 Ocean Avenue, Laguna Beach CA 92651. The Laguna Beach Historical Society is a section 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tax ID #33-0519882.

If your Dues are due (see label) Send \$15 per person, \$25 per household or \$50 per business or organization to Laguna Beach Historical Society, 278 Ocean Avenue, Laguna Beach CA 92651

Name _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

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View Laguna Photos at www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com