

**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: May 2010

Please attend Historical Society Program to be held at  
Laguna Beach City Hall Council Chambers, 505 Forest Avenue  
Monday, May 17th – from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.

## Early History of St. Mary's Episcopal Church

by Starr Helms



Starr Helms is originally from Nashville, Tennessee. She has lived in Orange County since 1990, and in Laguna Beach since 1995. In 2001, after 25 years with IBM, and 10 years of social work before that, she "retired," planning to spend more time painting. However, the last two years have been spent researching and writing two books about the early history of St. Mary's Church. Starr has been married to Bill Helms since 2005.

## **Percy Wise Clarkson**

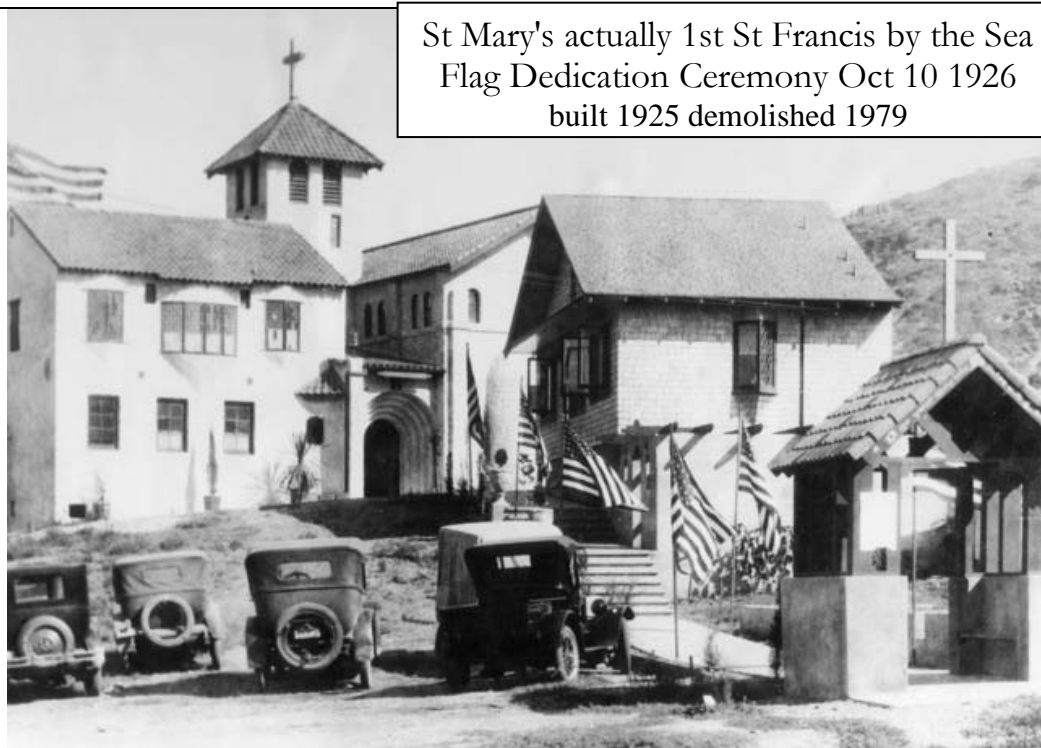
The May 17th slideshow presentation by Starr Helms, "The Chapel on the Hill," will be on the historic buildings of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. It will trace the 50 year history of the Episcopal chapel of St. Francis-by-the-Sea (and other buildings), from the time it was constructed in 1925 until it was demolished in 1979.

In those 50 years Percy Wise Clarkson, who founded the Episcopal congregation and built the church, left the Episcopal faith, and its name was changed to St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Clarkson later built a *second* church he named St. Francis by-the-Sea (the American Catholic Church) right next door to the first.

The presentation will address how the church came to be built by Clarkson, the story of its ownership and name change, what it looked like before it was torn down, and the reason it was.

The information in the presentation is from two years' research of the early history of the church, resulting in a recently-published 120-page book that includes over 100 photographs.

St Mary's actually 1st St Francis by the Sea  
 Flag Dedication Ceremony Oct 10 1926  
 built 1925 demolished 1979



St. Francis by the Sea  
 Cathedral built 1933

View Laguna Photos at [www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com](http://www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com)

## Laguna Beach Historical Society Board of Directors

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## Thanks to Historical Society Business / Organization Members City of Laguna Beach    Caduceus Medical Group

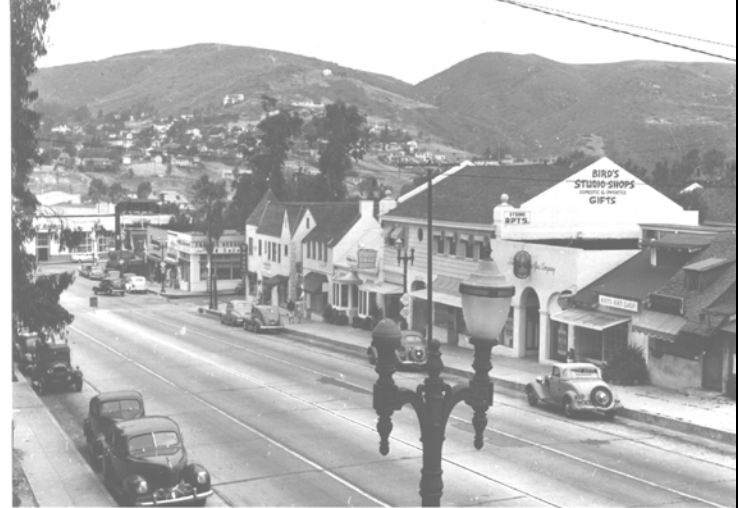
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 Stewarts Landscaping    The Stand Natural Foods Restaurant

Remember the Laguna Beach Historical Society in Your Planned Giving

# Heisler Building Across the Street from the Hotel Laguna



**Rawson's Pharmacy in the Heisler Building**  
Courtesy of Tom Pullev Postcard Collection



**Bird's Studio Shops Down the Street**  
from the Heisler Building

## Heisler Building NOT Tommy Bahama Building

A local paper recently had this "The Tommy Bahama building at the corner of Laguna Avenue and Coast Highway". This is the historic "Heisler Building" across the street from the Hotel Laguna where the Jolly Roger Restaurant was for many years. The building was shrouded in black recently until taken down revealing the restoration and a new paint job.

Heisler Building is listed in the Historic Resources Inventory which is online at the City's web site at [www.LagunaBeachCity.net](http://www.LagunaBeachCity.net), click "About the City" (while there enjoy the Historical Image Gallery and its past and present Historical Image Map), the Heisler Building is in the SOUTH COAST HIGHWAY #10 at <http://www.lagunabeachcity.net/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=2524>

The Heisler Building located at 400 South Coast Highway was built in 1931. The Inventory states: "Known as the Heisler Building for its original owner H.G. Heisler, this Provincial Revival influenced building has graced this corner of Laguna since 1931. The building is distinguished by a box plan with mansard roof and steep-pitched gables with a modified turret on the corner. Faced in stucco, and lined with double-hung windows on the second floor, the building contributes greatly to the village quality of downtown Laguna.

The building was designed to house two commercial units below and two apartments above. Beginning in 1935, Rawson's Drug Store occupied the corner portion of the building where the Jolly Roger is now located [1981]. Beginning about this same time, Dr. Conover, an osteopath, established his office here and remained for many years.

Howard Heisler, developer of the building, was an important real estate entrepreneur in the early days of Laguna. Along with L.C. McKnight he acquired most of the land which now comprises north Laguna from the Irvine Company and subdivided it in 1906 under the name Laguna Cliffs. This was the first tract in Laguna to have water directly piped to each lot, quite an achievement for its time.

This building on South Coast Highway is an important testimony to the memory of an important Laguna pioneer, H.G. Heisler."

Does anyone have a photo of Howard G. Heisler?

Does anyone know of this information from page 164 "Laguna Beach An Illustrated and Narrative History" by Roger W Jones "Virginia Tolerton said her father had a difficult time getting building approval for the Heisler Building because it was to be built over a known spring. As evidence supporting how well it was built, during the devastating March 11, 1933 Long Beach earthquake, the Heisler Building suffered no damage at all. However, the Hotel Laguna across the street had cracks in virtually every room and the tower fell."

# May is Heritage Month in Laguna Beach

Crystal Cove Historic District guided walk, 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. Meet at Los Trancos parking lot, located on the inland side of Coast Highway north of the city limits. No charge for tour; parking is \$15. For more information call (949) 497-7647.

May 15th Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon North Laguna Cottages guided walk by Carl Iverson.  
Meet at Madison Square & Garden Café, 320 N. Coast Hwy. No charge.

May 22nd Saturday, start at 10 a.m. or 2 p.m. Tour of remodeled Laguna Presbyterian Sanctuary.  
415 Forest Ave. Meet church docents at the north entrance (red door). No charge.

May 29th Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon. Historical Downtown Laguna, guided walk with Rick Gold  
Meet in front of Laguna Beach Library, 363 Gleneyre St. No charge.

## 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

Monday, May 17th – from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.

### Early History of St. Mary's Episcopal Church

by Starr Helms

May is Heritage Month in Laguna Beach, do enjoy the other programs noted above.

New at the Murphy-Smith Bungalow, we now have a computer with many resources articles and books in digital format which visitors can use to research Laguna Beach historical information. We thank Jim Dorf of Laguna Technologies for his time and skills setting up the computer.

There is a new Laguna Beach Sightseeing Catamaran Tour from Dana Point Harbor, Saturdays and Sundays from 12:00pm - 3:00pm that the Society recommends. See [www.danawharf.com](http://www.danawharf.com) for details.

View historic photographs at [www.Laguna-Historical-Society.smugmug.com](http://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](mailto: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.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_