



The Historian

Preserving Today for Tomorrow

Volume 4 Number 1

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What's Missing! *

By 1895 Lewis Moulton had acquired all of what was old Rancho Niguel, Juan Avila's original Mexican land grant made in 1842. He continued acquiring land until the original 19,000-acre ranch grew to nearly 22,000 acres in the early 1900s.

This area encompassed present-day Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Aliso Viejo and Laguna Hills. *Picture 1* shows a family, probably on their way to market or church or the village of Aliso City (El Toro).

Picture 2 shows cowboys herding cattle that roamed the hills of the Moulton Ranch.

Lewis Moulton died in 1938 at the age of 84. His widow, Nellie Gail Moulton, sold 3,000 acres to Ross Cortese in 1962 for the development of Leisure World. She then lived in Leisure World until her death in 1972.

The caption on *Picture 3* taken in 1964 stated that "the tranquil sheep meadow would be replaced by a busy community having an eventual population of 30,000." In the back-



Picture 1 - The Moulton Ranch Courtesy First American Title Company

ground is Clubhouse I. The picture was probably taken from what is now the Valencia Shopping Center on Paseo de Valencia.

Continued on Page 3



Picture 2 - Riding the Range on the Moulton Ranch.



Picture 3 - Sheep Meadow adjacent to Clubhouse I.

* See page 11 for more information.

MUSINGS

Honoree of the Month

Our congratulations to **Art Yanes**, our Laguna Woods Honoree for January, 2010.

Las Palmas and The Regency, both part of **Vintage Senior Living**, are once again funding the Honoree of the Month ceremonies.

We are grateful to the **Video Club**, whose members videotape the ceremony. Inga Futtrup is the photographer at **Images by Dwayne** who so expertly captures the images of our honorees.

Annual Dinner - Save the Date

Scheduled for Sunday, May 2, 2010, the Society's Annual Dinner will be a gala event to celebrate the 50th Birthday of the El Toro Water District. An invitation will be included in the next issue of *The Historian*.

Correction

In the "Background" portion of last month's *Historian* George McInnis wrote about a parcel of land near the Tustin lighter-than-air U.S. Naval facility. He inferred that this was the source of the land used for Leisure World Laguna Hills. However, as stated in our September 2009 issue, Cortese purchased about 2,775 acres of grazing land on the Moulton Ranch from Nellie Gale Moulton for less than \$2,200 per acre. Twenty-two hundred acres were used for the Leisure World project.



Bob Ring

Pictures from the Early Days

The Orange County Library has selected 176 pictures from the Historical Society's Archives for their web site. Both the Library and the Society would like any information you have about these picture. To view and comment on each of the pictures:

1. Go to www.flickr.com
2. On the upper right hand corner of the page, click "Sign In"
3. Login: Username: histimages. Password: library
4. Click the link that says, "Your Photostream"
5. You will see 10 pages of images. Click on the word "comments" just below each photo to either comment on or enlarge the image.

Check the address label on the back page.

If it says, "Please Renew 2010 Membership", please support the Historical Society by mailing your dues to:

P.O. Box 2220
Laguna Hills, CA 92654

\$300 - Patron
\$100 - Sponsor
\$50 - Friend
\$25 - Contributor
\$15 - Regular



Picture 4 - Aerial view of Clubhouse II, taken in 1966, with swimming pool at left, tennis courts at right, and 18-hole golf course. The golf course was expanded to 27 holes in 1969. In 2001 the tennis courts were converted to paddle tennis courts.

Picture 5 - Medical Center

The nine-acre site for Saddleback Community Hospital, adjacent to the former Laguna Hills Medical Center (denoted by A), was donated by GRF in September, 1970. The Medical Center opened in January, 1965. In October, 1988, it was demolished and the land was paved in order to meet the needs for additional parking at the hospital. Beverly Manor (B), now Country Villa Laguna Hills, is shown in the lower portion of the picture.

Picture 6 - Alpha Beta Center

Early residents had some problems, because the nearest store was at the railroad tracks at the end of Old El Toro Road (¼ mile east of Muirlands). It was a very small country store and ill equipped to handle the additional business created by Leisure World move-ins. This had been anticipated, and contracts had been let to build the first commercial shopping center, to be known as Alpha Beta Center. It opened March 17, 1965 just over six months after the first residents moved in.

At the grand opening, the President of Alpha Beta stated, "I don't need parking stalls, I need bicycle racks." More than 150 bicycles were piled all over the lot and a guard was brought in to watch over them. The next morning more bicycle racks were delivered, thereby eliminating a minor crisis. The Alpha Beta Center also contained a barber and beauty shop, dry cleaner, liquor store and donut shop. This center was replaced by what is now the Nordstrom Rack building.

Picture 7 - Manning's

In 1967 Manning's Coffee Shop and Cafeteria was opened, much to everyone's pleasure, as this became the first eating establishment adjacent to Leisure World. Later, Delany's was built next to Manning's to provide a second place for dining. Now the community was taking on the look that Mr. Cortese envisioned when he began the project. There were two gas stations with repair facilities, two churches underway, a market with small shops, a bank under construction, a savings and loan, a fire station under construction and more facilities being planned.

In 2004, Delaney's was replaced by the Laguna Hills City Hall.



Picture 5 - Laguna Hills Medical Center closed in 1988.



Picture 6 - Alpha Beta Center in Laguna Hills Mall in 1966.

Courtesy Orange County Archives 086



Picture 7 - Manning's Cafeteria and Coffee Shop and Don Quixote's Restaurant in 1967.



Picture 8 - 1976 Bicentennial Parade—the Aquadettes' Float.

Picture 8 - 1976 Parade

The Aquadettes entered a float in Leisure World's 1976 Bicentennial Parade. The first Aquadette show was presented in 1965 by a small group of women swimming together. The August shows have remained a tradition and have grown more elaborate each year.

Picture 9 - Fitness

Springtime exercise in the shade of the ancient Sycamore tree next to Aliso Creek, a favorite activity of many early residents in the late '60s, is now augmented by the more accessible exercise classes in the mini-gym. The exercise rooms received generous offerings from many clubs—stationary bicycles, treadmills, weights and other needed equipment for the physical fitness of residents.



Picture 9 - Many studies have shown the importance of exercise.

Picture 10 - Riding

The El Rancho Cortese Stables, operating under its new name, Leisure World Stables, Laguna Hills, staged its grand opening in September, 1965. Features of the stables at that time were stalls for forty-five horses and a 242-foot diameter riding ring. The Bridle Trail still starts at the stables and ends at Aliso Creek.

Picture 11 - Wood Shop

When the floor space for the new Clubhouse IV Wood Shop was available, the shop supervisors went to work with the layout of the machinery and placing of other equipment. The supervisors worked long hours to get the existing machinery from Clubhouse I and new equipment installed in Clubhouse IV during May, 1973.



Picture 10 - Riders enjoyed the 150 acres of open space now occupied by the Home Depot Shopping Center in 1996 and Aliso Viejo Golf Course in 1999.



Picture 11 - The wood shop in Clubhouse I.

Picture 12 - Bridge Room

The final plan for Clubhouse IV called for Building E to contain the Bridge Room with its roof to be used as a sun deck adjacent to the pool. Sixty permanent tables were provided for bridge players. Over the years the Bridge Room proved difficult to maintain and its popularity caused parking problems. The Bridge Room became a part of Clubhouse VII when it opened in 2006.

Picture 13 - Carillon Clubhouse I

When Clubhouse I was built in 1963 a 24-bell carillon was installed in the small tower on the roof. It could be manually operated or could be set to chime on the hour and half hour. Below the bells was a plaque bearing the crest of the Cortese family. In 1989 the Clock Tower was rebuilt. Residents donated the money to replace the carillon as part of Leisure World's 25th Anniversary celebration.

Picture 14 - Rob Merritt & George Phelps

Channel 6 News Director Rob Merritt, a telecommunications student at California State University, Fullerton, started his career as a volunteer intern in January, 1969. George Phelps joined TV-6 eight months later as programming director. George took most of the aerial photographs that are displayed in the community. He retired from TV-6 in 1996 and is now president of Ace Aerial Photography.

Rob Merritt continues to be one of the outstanding news directors in Southern California.



Picture 12 - The Bridge Room in Clubhouse IV opened in 1973.



Picture 13 - The Clubhouse I Clock Tower was rebuilt in 1989.



Picture 15 - Carolyn Wood, TV-6 coordinator from 1970 until she retired in 1991, is active as President of the Laguna Canyon Conservancy.



Picture 14 - Rob Merritt (left) sets zoom camera before boarding plane with George Phelps to take aerial photos of the community in 1977.

Courtesy Laguna Beach News Post



Picture 16 - The library was originally located in Clubhouse II.



Picture 17 - In 1969 the Snack Shop became the Library's new home.



Picture 18 - Aerial view of Clubhouse I (A) in the left background, at the right is the Sales Building (B) which later became the Administration Building. In front of the Administration Building is the Snack Shop (C) which housed Security and then in 1969 became the Library's second home. In 1975 the Snack Shop was demolished to make room for the Library's Building. In 1999 the Historical Society was built adjacent to the Library.

Picture 16, 17 & 18 - The Library

From the beginning this community felt the need for a library. The Panhellenic Club, comprised of alumni of Greek letter sororities, was one of the earliest clubs to organize in Leisure World. In 1966, its president cited the need for a club project and suggested a library within Leisure World as a worthwhile project. In spite of limited funds, the club's membership enthusiastically approved the project.

Golden Rain Foundation (GRF) provided a small room in the courtyard between the Clubhouse II and the pool. About 1,000 books donated by residents formed the nucleus of the library.

The *Leisure World News* published an appeal for workers and book donations. Residents who were trained librarians volunteered. Books came in bags, boxes and some cartons right off the moving vans. Hard work by members of the club and other volunteers enabled the library to open on May 9, 1966, with over 3,000 books on the shelves.

The library now had space, books and volunteers but no money. GRF provided a monthly contribution for books and the Panhellenic Club gave financial support. By 1968, they outgrew their quarters. GRF stepped in and helped move the library to a rejuvenated old Snack Shop behind the administration building. Security moved elsewhere in the community.

Many hours of hard work enabled the new quarters to open on May 5, 1969. By 1974, this second location was far from satisfactory. If Panhellenic and all the other library volunteers were to truly serve the community, a permanent building was a necessity.

Another appeal late in 1975 to GRF resulted in an appropriation of \$265,000 to construct a building for the library. Money for the library came from both the GRF Facilities Fund and from the new manor contributions to this fund.

While the building was under construction the library was housed in two trailers. The new library had no money for shelving. Within six weeks, clubs and individuals had contributed more than \$18,000 for the necessary furnishings and equipment.

Today the Village Library houses nearly 22,000 books, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, CDs, DVDs and books on tape.

The library's pioneer directors were Catherine Wright, Irma Franklin and Virginia Halley. Today more than 120 volunteers keep the library humming.

Picture 19 - The Towers

On April 21, 1974 a helicopter lifted a 4,000-pound St. John’s Bread (carob) tree to the Towers’ roof at the “topping out” ceremony celebrating completion of the frame for the 311 condominiums in the twin 14-story buildings.

The act is symbolic of a centuries-old ritual that can be traced to the ancient Scandinavian religious practice of placing a tree on the top of a new building to appease the tree-dwelling spirits of their ancestors who had been displaced.

San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto spoke at the event attended by some 3,000 people. The Towers opened on November 7, 1974. Today, a non-religious but formal ceremony is often held to commemorate this milestone in the construction of a building.



Picture 19 - About 3,000 watched a helicopter place a tree on the Rossmoor Towers’ roof during the “topping off” ceremony. Courtesy of Laguna Beach News Post

Picture 20 - 1996 Fiber Optic Cable Television Installation

In January 1995, GRF agreed to rebuild Leisure World's cable TV system as a direct result of a 1994 mandate from the County of Orange to either update the system or lose the franchise. The improvements expanded the channel capacity from 36 to 80 analog channels.

The original installation estimate was based on \$900 to \$1000 per manor—\$12 million. The actual cost was about \$16 million. The trenching itself exceeded budget by \$420,000 because of additional costs related to locating underground utility and irrigation lines, which were not properly mapped by utility companies or Leisure World's developer. Also during trenching, GRF authorized the replacement of resident’s plants damaged during the operation.

The upgraded system was activated on April 1, 1999. Exactly five years later high speed Internet was operational. Digital TV was introduced in the Summer of 2006.



Picture 20 - In 1996, trenches were dug throughout the community so that fiber optic cable could be connected from the Head-End Building on Campo Verde to more than 2,550 buildings in Leisure World.



Picture 21 - A glimpse at the raging waters of Aliso Creek in 1971.



Picture 22 - Sandbags were used in an attempt to minimize water damage. Ultimately 24 inch high concrete block walls were installed to protect homes from future flood damage.



Figure 23 - Lake Leonard named for Leonard Dueker, V. P. Rossmoor Sanitation utility.

Picture 21 - Winter Rains & Aliso Creek

Aliso Creek flows 19 miles from its headwaters in the Santa Ana Mountains, in a south-westerly direction to the Pacific Ocean about 1.5 miles south of Laguna Beach. Prior to Leisure World, the creek supplied all the Moulton Ranch drinking water. Like most creeks in Orange County, it is usually dry during the summer and fall months.

When Rossmoor Corporation purchased the property it was aware that the natural creek which crossed the property would have to remain for the purpose of handling flood waters. Rossmoor elected to improve the 16-acre area so that it could be used as a park during those periods of the year when drainage was not a problem.

It was understood that there would be years when an extraordinary amount of rain could flood the creek and cause considerable damage. The problems have been reduced during the last 20 years by Leisure World's installation of concrete channels and riprap—a permanent, erosion-resistant layer made of stones intended to protect soil from erosion in areas of concentrated runoff.

During the last decade the focus of the tributary cities has been to control erosion and runoff and eliminate the pollution which the creek carries to the ocean.

Picture 22 - 1997 El Nino

On December 6, 1997, more than seven inches of rain fell in a few hours and caused: three-story building garages to flood hip-deep in water; clogged drains; downed trees and directional signs; flooded streets and caused Aliso Creek to rise well above its banks.

A debris-clogged drain located in cul-de-sac 67, across from Clubhouse III, caused water to accumulate to nearly six feet, and crews had to bring in heavy equipment to remove an oil drain pan that blocked the storm drain grate.

About 450 manors had storm-related damage. Twenty resident vehicles were destroyed when clogged drains caused flooding in a three-story building garage near Clubhouse IV.

A 40-foot section of a boundary wall at Gate 14, which had been in the process of being repaired, collapsed. Clubhouse IV's Bridge Room was flooded by the overflow of the natural drain that runs alongside the 6th tee of the golf course.

Picture 23 - 1964 Lake Leonard

Lake Leonard was an environmental test lake located at the water recycling plant adjacent to the 18-hole golf course. Several lakes constructed and maintained by the privately-owned Rossmoor Sanitation, predecessor to El Toro Water District, to perform water quality analysis and to cultivate fish species (trout, bass, etc.) in effluent water. When grown the species were transported to Leisure World, Mesa, Arizona.

Picture 24 & 25 - 1967 Plane Crash

Two Marine Corps Skyhawk jet bombers collided in a blinding rainstorm on January 22nd and crashed into two adjacent two-story buildings on Avenida Sevilla, killing five persons and injuring four.

Four Leisure World residents died and three others were injured. One of the pilots was killed when he ejected and parachuted from 400 feet, only to smash against a stucco wall when high winds whipped his chute. The second pilot escaped with minor injuries.

The two pilots were part of a 10-plane, New York-based reserve unit bound for El Toro Marine Corps Air Station when they collided. One of the aircraft's radios was not set up for communications with El Toro's control tower. The pilot of the second craft was attempting to lead it down through driving rain when the collision occurred.

Debris from the sky tore through the roof of 272 Avenida Sevilla and smashed through the side of the adjacent building at 281 Avenida Carmel. Both buildings broke into flames as fiery fuel spewed over a 300-foot area. Shock waves from the twin crashes broke nearby windows and sent scores of frightened residents pouring into the streets.

Picture 26 - 1993 Laguna Beach Fires

An arson brush fire in Laguna Beach in 1993 consumed 16,000 acres and destroyed 366 homes and damaged another 75. Twelve injuries were reported. The fire started on October 27, 1993 in Laguna Canyon. It spread when embers jumped a firebreak into Laguna Beach and Emerald Bay. The fire was contained four days later on October 31st.

A second fire burned in Laguna Canyon in 2002, blackening 83 acres. The fire started on June 26th and was contained the same day. No homes were destroyed and no injuries were reported. The fire was caused by a landscaping accident.



Picture 24 & 25 - Twisted metal and flames that fell from the sky tore through the roof of Building 272 and the side of Building 281. One of the engines is still buried in the ground near Building 272.
 Courtesy Orange County Register



Picture 26 - Flames from the October 27, 1993 inferno that swept through Laguna Canyon were visible from Via La Mesa (Gate 9).

Picture 27 & 28 - 2004 Gate 14 Slope Failure

In January 1997, cracks were discovered on Calle Sonora, just outside Gate 14. The contractor who was building The Home Depot Center applied sealant to the fissures and sink holes that had developed in the road. On November 27, 2003, the Leisure World brick monument sign at Gate 14 split. A portion of the wrought iron fence tumbled and the roadway cracked due to the slippage of the adjacent slope on the Home Depot Center property.



Picture 27 & 28 - Home Depot slope failure in November 2003.



On March 1, 2004, the *Leisure World News* reported that the slope between Calle Sonora and the Center, which had been noticeably failing since November 2003, had moved again during recent rains, but was still holding. A geotechnical firm hired by GRF had installed movement measuring devices buried 80 feet in the hill. These devices had recorded no shift in Calle Sonora, but the surface of the road continued to crack. During this time geotechnical engineers, independently engaged by Home Depot and GRF, concluded that the grading of the hillside needed to create the level Center property and the vibrations of heavy earth-moving equipment probably precipitated the failure.

In response to the slope activity, crews unearthed telephone and cable TV lines to prevent breakage, and El Toro Water District set up emergency pumps and hoses to divert sewage in case of major slippage. GRF installed more than 520 feet of chain link fence to keep residents out of the impacted area.

GRF, as it had done for more than 12 years, continued its exhaustive efforts to gain permission from the adjacent Laguna Audubon community for construction of an emergency egress into their community. That permission was not granted until March 2007. The previous emergency exit from Gate 14 had been through the vacant fields which became the Aliso Viejo Golf Course.

As extensive monitoring continued, the geotechnical firm hired by GRF reported greater than normal movement in the part of the roadway closest to the slope. On October 18, 2005, the slope repairs, funded by and executed under the supervision of Home Depot, began. Repairs to the slope were completed in 2006 and an emergency exit gate and egress into Laguna Audubon was also completed in August 2007.

Picture 29, 30 & 31 (page 11) - The Globe

In 1963, the Rossmoor Corporation erected the Globe near where the Laguna Hills City Hall is now located. It rotated slowly above a fountain illuminated at night by colored floodlights.

In the early 1970s the Globe was moved to a lot near Ridge Route and Moulton Parkway because of construction of the Laguna Hills Shopping Mall.

Later, the Globe was moved to a parking lot behind St. George's Episcopal Church on Avenida



Figure 29 - In 1964, the visitors center and the Globe were located in a tiny sylvan dale in a dip on El Toro Road, just a stone's throw from what was then called Camino Real which was eventually replaced by the San Diego Freeway.

de la Carlota. In 1982, Rossmoor wanted to rid itself of the Globe because all of the homes had been sold. Both GRF and the Historical Society rejected offers to acquire the Globe. Eventually, Rossmoor conveyed the Globe and the land on which it was then located to County of Orange, thus saving it from demolition.

In 1991, the Globe became part of the City of Laguna Hills. Laguna Hills sent a letter to the Historical Society in 2001 stating that Laguna Hills no longer wanted the Globe and unless the Society was interested in moving it, they would dismantle it.

The Society's Board sponsored a fundraising drive which raised \$71,000 and made it possible to move the Globe to Clubhouse VII on February 12, 2002.

In 2005, RRLH Inc., whose principal is Ross Cortese's daughter, Heidi Cortese, sued GRF and Professional Community Management Inc. in U.S. District Court over trademark infringement in association with the Globe and other icons.

Leisure World was renamed Laguna Woods Village on March 17, 2006. On May 16, 2007 the Globe was dismantled as the result of the settlement agreement with RRLH.

*** *What's Missing?***

Your Pictures of this Community

Bring your historical pictures to the Historical Society. You can either write a description of each picture or make an appointment to dictate the information to Bob Ring. Within 30 days, we will scan and return your pictures together with a CD containing the scanned images.



Picture 30 - In February 2002, workers prepared to move the Globe from Avenida de la Carlota to Moulton Parkway, next to Clubhouse VII.



Picture 31 - Workman cut along the center of the Globe. Both halves, each weighing about one ton, were lifted to the parking lot. The next day the halves were cut up so that the steel could be recycled.



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Picture Edition



The first Historical Society office, about 8 x 10 feet, was in the old Administration Building, adjacent to Clubhouse I and the Library.

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Editor - Bob Ring

Opinions expressed by authors in *The Historian* do not necessarily reflect those of the Historical Society of Laguna Woods.