

13,000  
BCE

Native American tribes live in the area:

- Tongva (Gabrieleño)
- Acjachemen (Juaneño)

1542  
CE

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo (1499-1543) claims *Nueva España* for Spain.

1769

Spain's Gaspar de Portolá (1716-1786) explores *Las Californias* from San Diego to Monterey. Creates El Camino Real connecting 21 missions and 2 Presidios.

1821

The Mexican War of Independence and 10 years of conflict ends the years of Spanish rule in Mexico, including Baja and Alta California.

1842

After Mexico gains her independence from Spain, many land grants are made by the Governors of California and most of Orange County is divided into parcels. Mexico issues a Land Grant to Juan Ávila which becomes known as *Rancho Niguel*.

1846

The Mexican-American War originally begins over the 1845 annexation of Texas. When the war ends in 1848, Mexico cedes the northern territories of Alta California and Santa Fe de Nuevo Mexico. The treaty adds 525,000 square miles to U.S. territory, including the land that makes up all or parts of present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Mexico acknowledges the loss of what becomes the State of Texas and accepts the Rio Grande as its northern border with the United States. The United States pays \$15 million.

1850

Californians first sought statehood in 1849 and, after much debate in the U.S. Congress arising out of the slavery issue, California enters the Union as a free, non-slavery state with the Compromise of 1850.

California becomes the 31st state on September 9, 1850.

1873

Juan Ávila retains ownership of Rancho Niguel until 1865, when the severe drought of 1863-64 forces him into bankruptcy. Some of the property is purchased by Don Juan Forster and is later passed on to his son, Marco Forster. Other smaller parcels are in bad repair and are sold off by Ávila descendants.

C.B. Rawson eventually buys most of the *Rancho Niguel* parcels and the name is changed to *Rawson Ranch* for a short time.

In 1895, the property is purchased by Lewis Moulton and his partner, Jean Pierre Daguerre.

1889

Orange County secedes from Los Angeles County. Until 1889, the two counties were one, and Los Angeles County stretched as far south as present-day San Clemente.

Orange County can trace its origins back to an 1869 scheme to create an Anaheim County out of the Los Angeles County's rural south. Secessionists argued that the long distances separating Anaheim from the county courthouse and administrative offices in Los Angeles justified the division. Wrote James Guinn, a local historian and longtime supporter of county division:

*A trip to the county seat and return required two days...travel over hot and dusty roads in the summer time... and through mud and mire in the winter time. Bridges there were none, and often during the rainy season, the rivers swollen to raging torrents cut off all communication with the metropolis for weeks at a time.*

1895

In February of 1895, Louis Moulton purchases Niguel Ranch (Rawson's 17,000 acres), and a few months later Jean Pierre Daguerre buys a one-third interest in it. From time to time, they acquire other bits of property not belonging to the original grant, until the ranch comprises 21,723 acres.

After  
1938

*Niguel Ranch* is commonly, but not officially, called *Moulton Ranch*.

1964

Ross Cortese's *Rossmoor Corp.* develops *Leisure World – Laguna Hills*.

1977

*Leisure World Historical Society of Laguna Hills* is established.



1999

*City of Laguna Woods* is incorporated as the 32<sup>nd</sup> city in Orange County.



2005

*City of Laguna Woods* is renamed *Laguna Woods Village* after the settlement of royalty litigation with the Cortese family.



2015

The *Historical Society* is renamed *Laguna Woods History Center*.