

# Laguna Woods Globe

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## 60TH ANNIVERSARY



COURTESY OF PENNY E. SCHWARTZ

Artifacts and photos from the Moulton Ranch, which included the land that Laguna Woods Village was eventually built on, are on display at the Laguna Woods History Center.

## The birth of the Village

History Center exhibits show artifacts from the time the area was ranch land

**By Penny E. Schwartz**  
*Correspondent*

The land that Laguna Woods Village sits on has been home to Native Americans, Spanish settlers, Mexican land grant owners and

California pioneers in its long history.

Its origin story is told in the Laguna Woods History Center, which is celebrating the Village's 60th anniversary. A recent open house showcased the first

of three exhibits on the Village's backstory.

The first exhibit of the yearlong commemoration, unveiled at the celebration, focuses on the Moulton Ranch land that eventually became the Village.

The guest speaker at the event was Jared Mathis, great-grandson of Nellie Gail and Lewis Moulton, who talked about the family and its role in the history of the land the Village

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## EMERGENCIES

### Learn how your smartphone can save your life at disaster preparedness event

The Disaster Preparedness Task Force is holding a shelter-in-place event for Village residents, with guest speakers, informative handouts and more Friday, March 15, in the Performing Arts Center.

A presentation will provide guidance on using smartphones as powerful tools that can potentially save lives during emergencies.

The free event takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the auditorium.

Learn how to prepare yourself and help your neighbors in the event of a disaster. Hear from guests from VMS, the Amateur Radio Club and MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center.

Handouts will provide a list of necessary supplies, tips for safeguarding documents and contact in-

formation for companies that sell survival supplies. There will also be a chance to win door prizes, including survival kits, supplies and entertainment tickets.

A feature will be the emergency tech component, presented by Annie Wright, a Mac Learning Center instructor, who will focus on leveraging your smartphone for disaster preparedness.

In this age of digital connectivity, having the right knowledge and skills to use your smartphone effectively during emergencies is crucial. Whether it's navigating through natural disasters, medical emergencies or unforeseen crises, your smartphone can be your lifeline.

Here's what the presentation includes:

Tech guidance: Inval-

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# History

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is built on.

"The idea is to show what we started with, the raw land that was really raw," said History Center CEO Dean Dixon.

Artifacts displayed in the front cabinets of the center, which is next to the Village Library near Clubhouse 1, are drawn from the nearby Moulton Museum.

"They have never been displayed at the museum but have resided in their archives," Dixon said.

These are Moulton family photos and keepsakes from the clan of Orange County pioneers who homesteaded a sprawling 21,723 acres along the two-lane road that became the 5 Freeway in the 1950s.

The exhibit runs through April, to be followed by a three-month display on the construction of the Village, plus a final exhibit starting in September celebrating its 60 years of existence.

Nellie Gail Moulton was a teacher, artist, wife, mother and rancher who ran the Moulton Ranch from 1938 to 1950 and sold a parcel of land to Ross Cortese, who developed Leisure World (later renamed Laguna Woods Village). The "Nellie's Gallery" cabinet in the exhibit displays some of her paintings, memorabilia from her travels and household items.

One panel reproduces a quote from her 1966 journal: "And what more amazing, to look out of my Laguna Hills apartment bedroom window, as I've done now for two years, and view this ambitious Cortese housing development called 'Leisure World,' part and parcel of the land that used to be sheep country and here, properly, the Moulton Ranch."

She spent the last years of her life in one of the Village manors, Dixon said.

The land was originally home to the Acjachemen tribe, then belonged to Spain and then Mexico as part of a land grant named Rancho Niguel. It was purchased by the Moulton and Daguerre families in 1895.

In the early 1960s, Cortese purchased 3,600 acres from the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PENNY E. SCHWARTZ

The "Nellie's Gallery" cabinet in the Laguna Woods History Center exhibit displays some of Nellie Gail Moulton's paintings, memorabilia from her travels and household items. Moulton ran the Moulton Ranch from 1938 to 1950 and sold a parcel of land to Ross Cortese, who developed Leisure World, which later became Laguna Woods Village.

Moultons to build the second of his Leisure World properties. The first was in Seal Beach. His Laguna Woods development became the first retirement community in the world to be based on the principles of gerontology and the needs of an aging population.

Laguna Woods Village, as it was renamed in the early 2000s, opened its first units in 1964 and was built out in stages over the course of 18 years.

The Laguna Woods History Center is open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays and by appointment. Information is available at 949-206-0150 and at lagunawoodshistory.org.



"The idea is to show what we started with, the raw land that was really raw," says Dean Dixon, CEO of the Laguna Woods History Center.



Jared Mathis, great-grandson of Nellie Gail and Lewis Moulton, talked about the family and its role in the history of the land that Laguna Woods Village is built on.