Open Air & Light
Art in Laguna Beach, 1906–1941

An exhibit in the
UC Irvine Langson Library
Muriel Ansley Reynolds
Exhibit Gallery

October 2013 - April 2014
Welcome to the UC Irvine Libraries’ fall exhibit, *Open Air & Light: Art in Laguna Beach 1906-1941*.

*Open Air & Light* explores the rich early history of Laguna’s development into an art colony and how broad support from the community played a significant role in its evolution. On display are archival and manuscript collections from the Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives. Images of paintings and other archival material in the exhibit are courtesy of the Bowers Museum, The Irvine Museum, the Laguna Art Museum, the Laguna Beach Historical Society, and the Peter and Gail Ochs Collection. Special thanks to the Isaac and Bettie Frazee family for their donation of the Frazee Family Papers to the Libraries as a result of this exhibit.

We are delighted to have James Irvine Swinden, President of The Irvine Museum, as the speaker for our opening event on October 23, 2013.

I hope you enjoy the exhibit and return to view others in the future.

Lorelei Tanji  
University Librarian
EARLY LAGUNA BEACH

Laguna Beach has one of the most beautiful shorelines in California, if not the world. It is situated on a large sandy cove that is surrounded to the north and south by high bluffs of immense beauty, and to the east by striking hills with canyons between. All of that is complemented by the unique light in Laguna, a light that enhances the scenery tremendously. The landscape painters who first came here, starting at the turn of the century, felt that they had found paradise as it was a perfect environment for impressionist painting.

In the early days, Laguna Beach was not as accessible as most of the other beach towns along the coast. Consequently, the population grew more slowly than in other coastal communities. The first destination for tourists were the “tent cities” that sprang up along the beaches. In particular, tourists from Santa Ana and Riverside came to escape the summer heat.

Joseph Yoch was the first man of some wealth to move to Laguna, which he did with his wife Kate Isch Yoch and their family in 1888. He opened the Hotel Laguna in the late 1890s. In 1900, a relatively small wooden structure was built near the hotel for evening entertainment, primarily for those staying in the tent cities on Main Beach. The structure became the town’s only multipurpose room, acting as a pavilion for dances, a town hall for events, as well as a church on Sundays.

The Yochs were supporters of the early impressionist artists in Laguna and opened their hotel to exhibitions. By 1906, the Breakers boarding house was established and was the site of early exhibits by William Swift Daniel, Norman St. Clair, and Gardner Symons.

This exhibit documents the history of Laguna Beach as an arts colony through archival and manuscript collections, primarily from the UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives Department. Images of paintings and other archival material in the exhibition are courtesy of The Irvine Museum, the Laguna Art Museum, the Bowers Museum, the Peter and Gail Ochs Collection, and the Laguna Beach Historical Society.
1. Isaac Frazee as a Young Man, 1878.
   b. “A ‘Memory Sketch’ of Frazee’s Camp in 1878.” Isaac Frazee, artist. This watercolor sketch was done 60 years later by Frazee, in 1938. Image courtesy of the Bowers Museum.

   J.R. Thurston was from one of the first important pioneer families of Laguna. In his book, Thurston writes that Frazee “came here and made a slight sketch of the coast line in 1877, before there was a soul living at the beach or a shack had been built to mar the landscape.”

2. Isaac Jenkinson Frazee.
The First Artist in Laguna?

The earliest known sketch by an artist in Laguna was a watercolor done by Isaac Jenkinson Frazee (1858-1942) in 1878, when he camped on what is now Main Beach in Laguna. However, the artist who claims to have “discovered” Laguna Beach was Norman St. Clair (1865-1915), who may have come to Laguna Beach as early as 1900, but is often described by others as painting in Laguna starting in 1903.

Isaac Frazee was an open-minded, free spirit who was an artist, poet, music composer, nature lover, anthropologist, philosopher and architect. Born in Indiana, Frazee came to Southern California with his family in 1873 when he was 15. While on a horseback trip through Laguna in August 1878 he camped on the beach for two days. Frazee made a sketch of his camp site, and later completed a large painting based on it.

Newspaper accounts place Norman St. Clair in Laguna Beach, sketching and painting in the summers of 1903, 1906 and 1907. St. Clair encouraged Granville Redmond to come to Laguna and they painted together in 1903. In 1906, St. Clair held an exhibit at the Hotel Laguna. He had an exhibit of his Laguna art in San Francisco, which inspired other artists to come to Laguna, as well.


   Norman St. Clair (1863-1912) was born in Birmingham, England. He studied architecture there and practiced only briefly before coming to America. He practiced architecture in several cities in the U.S., including Boston, Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Self-taught as an artist, St. Clair had considerable talent.

   b. “Main Beach in Laguna with pier.”
   c. “The Arch Beach Road.”
   d. “Main Beach in Laguna, with Laguna Hotel (center).”
   e. “Dirt road in Laguna.”
5. **Getting to the Laguna in 1906.**

Hearing stories of the beauty of Laguna Beach, Norman St. Clair traveled by stagecoach to El Toro in Tustin and then to Laguna by wagon and a team of horses. That wagon was the only way to get to Laguna Beach at that time.

a. *Laguna Hotel and the wagon from Laguna to El Toro, ca. 1890s.* UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

b. "*En Route to El Toro from Laguna Beach, California.*" Postcard. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. McPherson Postcard Collection [MS-R007].
Early Laguna Beach Artists


William Lees Judson was born in Manchester, England. He studied for three years at the Academie Julian in Paris under Lefebvre and Boulanger. Judson was a professor of art at USC. He painted in Laguna prior to 1907, and brought his first art class from USC to Laguna Beach in 1916. Judson then presented his students’ work in an exhibition at the “Old Pavilion” in Laguna.


Granville Redmond attended the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley, California. As early as 1903, Redmond painted in Laguna Beach with Norman St. Clair and Elmer Wachtel. All three artists showed Laguna pieces in at an exhibition in San Francisco in 1904. Redmond’s painting style was similar to the French impressionist pointillism style. He is known for his landscapes, especially those with poppies.


George Gardner Symons was born in Chicago. Symons was a commercial artist in Chicago and was a close, lifelong friend of William Wendt. Symons and Wendt were two of the earliest artists to reside in Laguna Beach. A gifted, technically skilled painter, Symons was best known for his snow covered landscapes done in the East, but his coastal Laguna landscapes are also highly regarded.
   


William Wendt was born in Bentzen, Prussia. In 1906, he settled in Los Angeles. With his friend, the painter Gardner Symons, Wendt visited Laguna in 1905 and the two spent about four months sketching in Laguna. In 1906, Wendt bought two lots in Laguna Beach. He built a studio and moved there in 1918. He became one of the most famous of the Laguna impressionist painters. His technique, composition, and strong colors set him apart from many other artists of that era.

   

William Swift Daniel was born in San Francisco. He moved to Los Angeles in 1905 and was in Laguna Beach in 1906. Daniel painted in oil and watercolor. From 1911, he ran an art gallery buying and selling Southern California art. The gallery was open for at least five years.

12. **Conway Griffith** (1863-1924).
   
a. “[Unknown title].” Conway Griffith, artist. [Date unknown.]


Conway Griffith was born in Springfield, Ohio. In 1906 he moved permanently to Laguna Beach, where he stayed until his death in 1924. In 1908, Conway Griffith was the first artist to become a full-time resident in Laguna Beach. He was best known as a landscape artist and for his marine paintings.


Jack Wilkinson Smith apprenticed to artist George Gardner Symons in Chicago. In 1906, Smith came to Los Angeles. He was active in the Laguna Beach Art Association, although his home and studio were in Alhambra. He painted a variety of subjects, but was best known for his seascapes and landscapes.


Guy Rose was born in San Gabriel, California. He was strongly influenced by the French impressionists, having met Monet and having lived and painted in Giverny. Rose returned to California in 1914. He embarked on an intense ten year period of painting along the California coast, including in Laguna, before he was partially paralyzed by a stroke. Over this time he transferred his French impressionistic style into a unique California style of impressionism.
The First Gallery and
the Founding of the Laguna Beach Art Association

The population of Laguna in 1918 was about 300, and there were about thirty or forty artists living in
Laguna during some portion of the year.

The artists started discussing the need for a permanent gallery, and Edgar Payne had the idea of
transforming the old town hall building into a gallery. The town hall was set in a eucalyptus grove across
from the general store and post office, next door to the Hotel Laguna.

The first exhibition in the Art Gallery opened on July 27, 1918. It was an immediate success, with 300
signing the guest book on opening day and over 2,000 people signing in just the first month. The
artists met at the Payne’s house on August 20th and decided to form an association “to advance the
knowledge of and interest in Art and to create a spirit of co-operation and fellowship between the
arts and the public by every appropriate means.” There were 150 charter members, 35 of whom were
artists.


courtesy of the Laguna Beach Historical Society.

Special Collections & Archives. Edward W. Cochems Photographs [MS-R016].

  c. “Interior of the Art Gallery, with the Initial Show.” Photographer unknown, 1918. Image
courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.

In addition to the exhibitions, the Art Gallery became a social center for Laguna. It had
regular exhibitions and Saturday night receptions with local artists leading discussions, as
well as music recitals, plays and dramatic presentations, and educational lectures.

15. Articles of Incorporation of the Laguna Beach Art Association. April 1, 1920. Image courtesy of
the Laguna Art Museum.

   The Association’s objectives were: (1) to maintain a permanent art gallery; (2) to advance the
knowledge of and interest in art; and (3) to create a spirit of cooperation and fellowship between
painter and public.

courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.


18. Edgar Payne, First Laguna Beach Art Association President, 1918-1920.


Edgar Payne (1883-1947) was the first President of the Laguna Beach Art Association from 1918-1920. During this period, he helped to establish many of the Association’s long-standing traditions and policies. In 1919, a year after the Articles of Incorporation were written, the Association became a chapter of the American Federation of the Arts. The Association quickly became regionally and nationally known, as did many of the Laguna artists.


Edgar Payne’s Composition of Outdoor Painting is about the composition and design of landscape painting. Payne was, and remains, tremendously influential on landscape painters, especially in the West. His book has remained in print since the first printing in 1941. It is considered an essential book for those learning to paint landscapes.

20. Paintings by Edgar Payne.


21. **Anna Hills, Laguna Beach Art Association President, 1922-1925 and 1927-1930.**


   Anna Hills (1882-1930) settled in Laguna Beach in 1913. She was active in the Association from the beginning, and was elected President in 1922 and again in 1927. During her terms, the Association gained both national and international importance, and delegates were sent to the American Federation of the Arts convention in St. Louis. As the importance of the Gallery increased, the Association outgrew it. An effort to locate a new, larger, and more permanent gallery space resulted in the Association acquiring land on the corner of Cliff Drive and Pacific Coast Highway (then called the Boulevard). The new gallery opened on February 16, 1929.

22. **Frank Cuprien, Laguna Beach Art Association President, 1921-1922.**


   Frank Cuprien (1871-1948) moved to Laguna permanently in 1914, where he built his studio, “The Viking Studio,” on a bluff overlooking the ocean at the base of Bluebird Canyon. As President of the Laguna Beach Art Association, he was responsible for the continuance of the annual summer pageant and urged the Laguna Players and the Chamber of Commerce to make the pageant a joint effort. Upon his death in 1948, Cuprien bequeathed his estate to the Association.

a. “W.A. Griffith.” [Photographer unknown], [Date unknown]. UCI Libraries Special Collections and Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

b. “Note from W. G. Mitchell, Manager, the Irvine Company to W. A Griffith granting him permission to paint and sketch on the property of the San Joaquin Rancho.” Image courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.


William A. Griffith (1866-1940) moved to Laguna Beach in 1920. The most important accomplishment of his first term was the establishment of the annual summer pageant, which by 1932 had grown into the Pageant of the Masters. In his second term, he was involved in organizing the Junior Art Association in local schools. Artist members of the Association made weekly trips to local schools to review student work. In June 1926, he and Frank Cuprien visited architect Myron Hunt in Los Angeles to approve the final plans for the new Art Gallery that opened in 1929.

24. Isaac Frazee’s Paint Box. UCI Libraries Special Collections and Archives. Isaac Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].


a. Publicity Brochure for Simmons Arch Beach Tavern (1927). UCI Libraries Special Collections and Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

b. “Laguna Beach, California.” Collection of postcards whose cover promotes the arts colony. c. 1930. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. McPherson Postcard Collection [MS-R007].


The Chamber of Commerce was created about 1917, and soon thereafter decided to market Laguna Beach as an arts colony, which it was rapidly becoming. This example of a publicity brochure for Simmons Arch Beach Tavern, uses the arts colony as a theme throughout.
26. **Laguna Beach Art Association Community Outreach.**


   b. “George Brandriff’s painting class, Laguna Beach.” [Unknown photographer], c.1933. Image courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.


   The Laguna Beach Art Association had an early commitment to community outreach, especially during the tenures of William Griffith and Anna Hills as President. Thomas L. Hunt, George Brandriff and Virginia Woolley were among the most active teachers. The Association also had a gallery at St Ann’s Inn with rotating exhibitions of Laguna Beach artists’ work.
Toward the Development of a New Art Gallery

After the opening of the Laguna Art Gallery in 1918, it became apparent that the Association would quickly outgrow the existing space and a new, larger, more permanent space for a gallery would be needed. Efforts at fund raising began in particular during the periods of strong leadership provided by William Griffith and Anna Hills. A committee was formed to locate a lot, and H.G. Heisler, the developer of Laguna Cliffs, agreed in June 1923 to sell a lot on the corner of Cliff Drive and what became the Coast Highway.

As early as 1921 the Association had accepted architectural plans from noted Los Angeles architects Myron Hunt and C.C. Chambers, but the deed for the lot was not finalized until 1925 and the ground-breaking didn’t occur until August 25, 1928. The official opening of the new Gallery was on February 16, 1929.

The total cost of the building came to about $20,000. One of the first fund-raising efforts was the Peace Pipe Pageant of 1921, organized and directed by Association member Isaac Frazee.


   b. Souvenir Program of Second Annual Peace-Pipe Pageant. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   c. “Frazee Castle in Moosa Canyon, San Diego.” Photographer unknown. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   The 1921 Pageant Play in Laguna was based on the play originally done in 1915 and 1916 at the Frazee Castle home in Moosa Canyon near Escondido in San Diego County. The play was very well received and often hundreds would attend the free outdoor events, among them John Muir.


   Isaac and Bettie Frazee began spending winters in Laguna in 1921. Isaac donated his pageant script and his experience as a fundraiser to the Laguna Beach Art Association. Isaac directed and starred in the play. Over 100 people, including artists, musicians, and other Laguna residents, participated in the production. Edgar and Elsie Payne created the logo and poster. A full page of the July 22, 1921 issue of *Laguna Life,* the local paper, was devoted to promoting the pageant and describing who was involved in the production. The 1921 production also featured Shakespearian actress Virginia Calhoun, who had also written, produced and starred in the first dramatic production of Ramona. She added a great deal to the production. In her *Laguna Life* article Calhoun writes of the “deeper meanings and dramatic powers” of the pageant play.
29. **The 1927 Kitshi Manido Indian Pageant-play.**

   a. “The official complete copy of Kitshi Manido Indian Pageant-play.” Laguna Beach, August 1927.” UCI Irvine Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   b. Flyer promoting “the annual production of the Indian Classic Pageant by Mr. Isaac J. Frazee.” August 12-31, 1927, each evening at 8:30pm. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   c. “Isaac and Bettie Frazee.” Photographer unknown. c. 1930s. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   In 1927, Isaac and Bettie Frazee moved permanently to Laguna Beach. The Indian pageant play was revived in 1927 for additional fundraising. It was a true “passion play,” not designed to entertain with a story, but to transform the audience spiritually. In many ways, it was the forerunner of the Festival of the Arts and the Pageant of the Masters.

30. **Laguna Beach Art Association “Anniversary Exhibition.”** 1923. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

   The fifth anniversary exhibit, also known as the Anniversary Exhibition, took place in August, 1923. This pamphlet describes the founding of the association, fund raising, and the plans for the building of a new gallery.

31. **Fundraising toward the opening of the New Art Gallery in 1929.**

   a. Laguna Beach Art Association Membership Card, 1929. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

   b. Letter from Anna A. Hills, President of the Laguna Beach Art Association, to the membership, July 7, 1928. Image courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.

   The letter describes the variety of Laguna Beach Art Association fundraising efforts for the new gallery. Those strategies included arranging an interest-free loan, asking for individual donations, offering lifetime and sustaining membership options, and selling paintings contributed by Association artists.
32. “List of art donated by Laguna Beach Art Association artists and members for fundraising for the new gallery.” Image courtesy of the Laguna Art Museum.

By July, 1928, Association artists and members had given paintings valued at more than $15,000. Those that had sold made it possible to add $5,000 to the fund. In 1927, a successful fundraising event occurred at St. Ann's Inn in Santa Ana where major donations to the building fund were rewarded with gifts of paintings. In one hour nearly $4,400 was raised.

33. Plans for New Gallery.


The plans for the new gallery had been accepted by the Laguna Beach Art Association as early as 1921. However, by the time that groundbreaking occurred on August 25, 1929, there had been some changes in the plans to save money. In the rendering of the building as originally envisioned, note the Spanish style architecture, including a red tile roof. A beautiful Spanish doorway, a charming balcony with a red tile roof, a garden wall with beautiful gates all had to be left off for lack of funds.

34. The New Gallery Opened February 16, 1929.


The program (Anna Hills’ personal copy) commemorated the first anniversary of the opening of the New Art Gallery on February 16, 1929.

35. Inside the New Art Gallery, 1929.


The New Art Gallery had much improved space, lighting and size from the first gallery. The first exhibit in the new gallery also had room for sculpture.


A full-page celebration of the new art gallery, includes a collage of photographs of several significant Laguna artists as well as photographs of the new gallery.
The Pageant and the Festival of the Arts

Shortly after the new gallery opened, the Great Depression hit and, although Laguna survived better than most towns, the downturn had an impact on the Laguna Beach Art Association and the new gallery. Most of the funds that kept the Association going through the early 1930s were generated by auctions of donated paintings. Through the second half of the 1930s, money was generated by the annual, week-long Festival of the Arts.

At the Association meeting of April 11, 1932, Sumner Crosby, editor of the South Coast News newspaper, proposed a “Festival of the Arts,” which he described as an “intellectual carnival.” The Association formed a committee to work on the idea that was to be a joint effort of the Chamber of Commerce and the Association. Holding pageants and festivals to attract tourists and visitors to a town was popular in numerous Southern California cities. Laguna had held several before the 1932 proposal. One of the first was the Peace Pipe Pageant, sponsored by the Association in 1921 and 1927.


38. Promotional Postcards of Photographs of the Pageant-Play, 1921. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

   a. “Come back! Come back! Wawona, my love, thy chief is here.” Act I.
   b. “Store this message in thy heart.” Act I.
   c. “Out of the cycle of service the gods bestow their gifts.” End of vision Prelude Act I.
   d. “Help me to fill my land with peace smoke.” End of Act II.

   Postcards with photographs of the passion play as it was performed in 1921 in the area known as Sleepy Hollow in Laguna Beach.


   A map of Laguna Beach, by Laguna artist Roxoli Seabury (1874-1960), highlighting the homes and studios of artists who lived there, as well as other cultural centers of Laguna.
Throughout the 1930s, the Festival of the Arts grew in popularity, and it was often moved to accommodate the growing crowds. The increasing attendance as well as profits argued for securing larger and more permanent grounds for the event. In the Spring of 1941, Irvine Ranch land in Laguna Canyon was acquired, and a permanent, open-air amphitheater was constructed for the Pageant. The 10th Annual Festival of the Arts and Pageant of the Masters, July 30 – August 10, 1941, was the first in the new Irvine Bowl.

Festival of Arts programs. UC Libraries Irvine Special Collections. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

d. “8th Annual Festival of arts and the pageant of the masters.” July 28 to August 6, 1939.
e. “10th Annual festival of arts and pageant of the masters.” July 30 to August 10, 1941.
Legacy of the Laguna Impressionist Artists

The 1930s also saw a widening division between the impressionists (or plein-air) painters and the advocates for modernism. Also, more of the Association members lived outside of Laguna. By 1929, there were 700 members in comparison to 150 in 1918. The election of officers started to become very political, and the artists in the exhibitions varied between modernists and impressionists depending on who was the President and who was on the exhibit jury. However, there continued to be interest in the impressionist artists that had worked in Laguna Beach. Today, all of the museums in Orange County have representative collections of the great California impressionists. The work of the Laguna Art Museum and The Irvine Museum, in particular, have helped to revive current interest in these artists, and exhibitions of the California impressionists continue throughout Southern California and around the world.

42. Joseph Kleitsch (1886-1931).

   Joseph Kleitsch, born in Hungary, was a master of color as a painter, and by all accounts he had a warm, friendly personality. After spending time in Mexico, he came to Chicago where he made a name for himself as a portraitist. In 1920, he came to Southern California, and for the last ten years of his life he lived in Laguna Beach, while making painting trips to other parts of California and to Europe. He was a very involved member of the Laguna arts community, establishing the Kleitsch Academy in Laguna.


   Clarence Hinkle spent years in Holland and France studying art in museums and art schools. He returned to America in 1912, opening a studio in San Francisco where he stayed until 1917. He then moved to Los Angeles, where he taught art, including at the Chouinard Art School. He moved to Laguna Beach in 1931. His painting style was considered modernist initially. He never really changed his style, but various trends and movements in art changed around him.
44. Karl Yens (1868-1945).

- “Karl Yens.” UCI Libraries Special Collections. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].
- “America the Beautiful.” Karl Yens, artist. 1918. Image courtesy of The Irvine Museum.
- 1936 Xmas card from Karl and Elsie Yens. UCI Libraries Special Collections. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

Karl Yens was born in Germany, and studied art in Berlin and Paris. He was apprenticed as a mural painter. He moved to New York City in 1900, then in 1907 he came to California. Yens lived in Los Angeles and Pasadena until 1918, when he moved to Laguna Beach. By this time, he had evolved into a landscape painter, although his abilities as a portrait painter were equally impressive.

45. Frank Cuprien (1871-1948).

- “An Evening Symphony.” Frank Cuprien, artist. [Date unknown]. Image courtesy of The Irvine Museum.

Frank Cuprien was a master of the Laguna Beach seascape, and the light and color of waves of many of his paintings was exceptional. An early contributor to the Laguna Beach Art Association, Cuprien was also very active in any number of community organization.


William Wendt was honored with a retrospective exhibition of 24 of his paintings at the Los Angeles Museum, February 14 – March 12, 1939. William A. Griffith wrote the forward, calling him “a master of landscape painting. In the presence of nature he feels a reverence for the Creator and expresses it in his work.”
Isaac and Bettie Frazee

Isaac Frazee was a relatively minor painter, in comparison with some of the major California impressionist painters who lived or worked in Laguna Beach during this period. However, Isaac and Bettie Frazee made significant, important and long lasting contributions to the Laguna art colony. Their story is less known than some of the others in this exhibition. The recent accession of the Frazee Family Papers by the UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives allows us to share some details of their lives, and their many talents and contributions. Isaac Frazee was an open-minded, free spirit. He influenced many aspects of the development of artistic and cultural life in Southern California. Isaac and Bettie raised seven children in a relatively isolated area of northern San Diego County, and were married for fifty-seven years. Isaac made the children storybooks and toys, he taught them to be creative and to love nature. Their talented children went on to lead successful lives. Isaac gave Bettie a flower every day of their married life together, and Bettie wore her wedding dress on their anniversary every year. They both lived full and productive lives. This case explores some of the lesser known aspects of their life together.

47. “Sketch of Woreland Castle, the Frazee Family Home in Moosa Canyon near Escondido.” Isaac Frazee, artist. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers. [MS-R022].

A sketch by Isaac of how he envisioned the castle before it was built. The design was based on the Scottish castle of his ancestors, one that he admired a great deal. In 1893, a Scottish stonemason stopped by the Moosa property and he stayed to help Isaac build the castle, which took two years.


Isaac painted a series of watercolors of his beloved Moosa Canyon.

49. Photographs of Woreland Castle in Moosa Canyon. Photographer unknown. Date unknown. UCI Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers. [MS-R022].

a. “William Wendt and Isaac Frazee in front of Woreland Castle.” Isaac was friends with many of the Laguna artists before moving to Laguna.

b. “Woreland Castle view from the river.”

c. “Pageant-Play amphitheater below the Woreland Castle.”

Isaac’s Kitschi-Manido pageant play was first performed on the Frazee Ranch in 1915 and 1916. The amphitheater and stage were built on a natural slope to the creek, and the castle was on the hill above the amphitheater.

The castle still exists in Moosa, but the house around it has been modernized and expanded considerably.

51. “Isaac and Bettie Frazee Celebrating Their 50th Wedding Anniversary in Laguna Beach.” Photographer unknown. Date unknown. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].


A memoir of preparing for the pageant play at the Frazee Castle. Gives the background for the writing of the pageant by Isaac Frazee and memories of how Bettie and her children prepared for the pageant.


Section of the “Dove Song”

53. “Letter from Laguna Beach Art Association to the Frazees, Sept. 19, 1921.” UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives Frazee Family Papers. [MS-R022].

The letter describes the decision of the Laguna Beach Art Association to thank the Frazees for the use of the Pageant Play and to give them a deed to a lot in Laguna so they might have a second home there. The Frazees moved permanently to Laguna in 1927.

54. “Letter from Laguna Beach Art Association to the Frazees, August 31, 1928.” UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Frazee Family Papers [MS-R022].

The letter describes the decision of the Laguna Beach Art Association (LBAA), at their 10th annual meeting, to give the Frazees honorary membership in the LBAA in thanks for the continued use of the Peace Pipe Pageant Play for fundraising.
Isaac wrote a column for the local paper describing the people and events in their neighborhood on Lombardy Lane. The neighborhood included a number of local Laguna Beach artists. The Frazees home became a meeting place for local artists. Bettie and Isaac were affectionately known as “Mother” and “Father” Frazee by everyone.

Mr. Frazee was also a poet and regularly wrote poems that were published in the local paper. Subjects of these poems included Laguna Beach and local Laguna Beach artists such as William Wendt and Anna Hills.
History of the Festival of the Arts and the Pageant of the Masters

During the August 11, 1932 meeting of the Laguna Beach Art Association, Sumner Crosby, the editor of the Laguna Beach newspaper the South Coast News, suggested the idea for a Festival of the Arts, which he described as an “intellectual carnival.” The Association was so enamored with the idea that they quickly formed a central committee of Sumner Crosby, John Hinchman and a Mr. Daas to explore further ideas and details for the festival that would be a joint effort of the Association and the Chamber of Commerce. Nine festivals/pageants were produced between 1932 and 1940.

The Pageant of the Masters became one of the most popular and successful features of the Festival of the Masters. It developed from the “Living Pictures” programs, staged by Lolita Perrine, who had presented similar programs in San Francisco before coming to Laguna.

The first Festival was held in 1932, and co-produced by the Laguna Beach Art Association and the Chamber of Commerce. Each evening had a different program, e.g. on Tuesday there was a tour of artists’ studios, on Wednesday was an evening of equestrians, on Thursday a garden tour and costume ball, and on Friday a drama on the beach. The Association did not produce any of the Festivals after the first in 1932, but many of the Association members played key roles in the Pageants. By 1934, the Festival had legally formed a separate organization of its own.

The Laguna artists made important contributions to the success of the Festival. Their individual booths and contributions to the art exhibitions were central, and artists ran several of the Festival’s most important components. Artist Roy Ropp was responsible for the Pageant of the Masters for several years. The Festival of the Arts gave a portion of its profits annually to the Laguna Beach Art Association.

The steadily increasing attendance and profits argued for the Festival locating and constructing a permanent facility, as the location had changed with some frequency. In the spring of 1941, land in Laguna Canyon was acquired from James Irvine and the Irvine Bowl was constructed in time for the tenth anniversary festival which was held July 30–August 10, 1941.

“There never had been a program where “still pictures” were offered in public, in a program where there’s absolutely no action and still hold the attention of the audience…I built up a program that had a certain human interest, something unusual that had possibilities.”

Roy Ropp - Director of the Pageant of the Masters

Part of the Festival schedule from the program, including an ad for an exhibit of “Prized Paintings by Millard Sheets” at the Fern Burford Galleries at the Hotel Laguna, evenings from August 13-20, 1932.


No author of this editorial is noted, but it probably was written by Sumner Crosby, Vice-President and Editor of the South Coast News.


   a. “View of the Stage from the Audience Side.”

   b. “View of the Audience Seating.”


   The fourth Festival of the Arts was held on Heisler Point, adjacent to the Art Gallery from June 29-July, 1935. The theme was the sea, the stage was a ship, and the Festival of the Arts Association staged a dramatic production on the cliffs overlooking Laguna Beach, in what is now the parking lot of the Las Brisas Restaurant. Unfortunately, the production was a financial disaster, and some felt that the Festival should be discontinued.


63. “The Pageant of the Masters Program, Sixth Annual Festival of the Arts.” July 30 to August 7, 1937. UCI Special Collections & Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

The Sixth Festival was dedicated to the “Spirit of Laguna Expressed in Beauty, Service, Hospitality, Friendliness, Recreation, The Arts, and Crafts. A Spirit that tends to elevate mankind and leads to the betterment of our city, which has grown from the dream village of long ago to one of the recognized art centers of the world.”
The Eighth Annual Festival honored the twentieth anniversary of the Laguna Beach Art Association. Some of the early, pioneer artists were celebrated. A short play on the early years of the art colony was presented. There was a booth that displayed historical artifacts from the early days of Laguna Beach.
Irvine Family Contributions to the Arts in Laguna Beach

The Irvine Family has made, and continues to make, significant contributions to the understanding, conservation and appreciation of art from the California Impressionist era. That commitment, especially through the efforts of The Irvine Museum, has been expanded to include the appreciation and conservation of the natural beauty of California. Some of the Irvine Family’s specific contributions to the arts in Laguna Beach include fundraising to pay off the debt for the new Art Gallery during the depression, efforts to locate a permanent site for the Festival of the Arts and the Pageant of the Masters, and the establishment of The Irvine Museum in 1992. A profound love of art has been at the core of these successful accomplishments of the last three generations of the Irvine Family. Athalie Richardson Irvine’s talents as a commercial artist, fashion designer and teacher were the seed from which these interests grew.

Joan Irvine Smith was born Athalie Anita Irvine on May 29, 1933. Her father James Harvey Irvine, Jr. was Vice President of the Irvine Company and owner of a Spanish-language Hollywood film magazine Cinelandia. His commitment to building relations with Latin America was central to the purpose of the magazine. The magazine was distributed in Mexico, Spain, Cuba and much of Latin America. Joan’s mother, Athalie Richardson Irvine, was a commercial artist, fashion designer and art instructor, and the many cover illustrations she did for Cinelandia display her considerable talent.

Irvine Cove, just south of Abalone Point, was a favorite place for James Harvey Irvine, Jr. and his family to vacation and to entertain. He had two small houses moved to the cliff above the beach, and both were painted green. The love of the beach was apparent to anyone who was a guest at the Cove, and the family often spent their summers there.

James Harvey Irvine was also supportive of the arts, and he participated in the effort in the mid-1930s to pay off the debt that the Laguna Beach Art Association had on the Laguna Art Gallery, which opened in 1929. In the fall of 1936, Mr. Irvine had offered to match every dollar donated by January 1, 1937 toward paying off the debt. He would match those donations, up to $2,000. That goal was achieved in late October 1936. In 1941, James Harvey Irvine negotiated a lease-option agreement with the City of Laguna Beach for the land for the Irvine Bowl and adjacent property, which has been the home of the Pageant of the Masters and the Festival of the Arts ever since.

The Irvine Museum opened in 1992, and it has remained committed to the appreciation of California Impressionist art, especially through the efforts of Joan Irvine Smith, James Irvine Swinden and Jean Stern.

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65. “James Irvine, Jr. (top row, left), Athalie Irvine (bottom row, second from left) and friends at Irvine Cove,” c. 1929.


   a. James Irvine, Jr. (Jase) and Athalie Irvine at the bathhouse at Irvine Cove, c. 1929.
   c. Guests at Fourth of July party at Irvine Cove, Date unknown.
   d. James Harvey Irvine at Irvine Cove, taking photographs at a Fourth of July party. Date unknown.
   e. The green house at Irvine Cove. Date unknown.
   f. The green house and the bathhouse at Irvine Cove. Date unknown.

68. “Art Gallery Out of Debt, Last Dollar Raised at Tea.” Article from the South Coast News October 20, 1936.

69. Publications by The Irvine Museum.


   The first book publication by The Irvine Museum, and a companion volume to the first exhibition in the museum.


   A PBS video project, The Irvine Museum and KOCE jointly produced and exhibition and an illustrated book to complement this video.


   One of the most popular exhibitions ever done at The Irvine Museum, was accompanied by this book


   An exhibition of the best of California Impressionism that traveled in Europe, it was the most ambitious and successful of the exhibitions to that date.
Then and Now: the First Art Gallery, Artist’s Studios and Homes in Laguna Beach

The Laguna art colony is an important part of the ongoing cultural history and shared values of the residents of the city of Laguna Beach. Many of the homes and studios of the artists from this era are still standing. In this case, we look at some of these structures, including the original Art Gallery, and describe what became of them. Photographs and maps show the locations of some of the important structures from this era, both then and now.


71. “The Old Gallery Was Moved to 561 Graceland Drive in Laguna Beach”
   b. “Graceland History: Memories of Elizabeth (Betty Schwankovsky) Duncan, the Daughter of Frederick Schwankovsky.” August 18, 1996. Image from the Laguna Art Museum.

72. “Frank Cuprien’s Viking Studio at 1619 Coast Blvd (now Pacific Coast Highway).”
   d. “Plaque at 1619 Coast Blvd, Laguna Beach.” 2013.

73. “Karl Yens Family Home and Studio at 2079 Coast Blvd (now Pacific Coast Highway).”
74. “Isaac and Bettie Frazee’s Home and Studio at 495 El Bosque, Laguna Beach.”

75. “Conway Griffith’s Home and Studio at 330 Cliff Drive, Laguna Beach.”
   a. “Conway Griffith’s Home and Studio at 330 Cliff Drive, Laguna Beach.” Date Unknown. Edward Cochems Photographer. UCI Libraries Special Collections & Archives. Don Meadows Papers [MS-R001].

76. “Edgar and Elsie Payne’s Cottage at 508 Glenneyre Street, Laguna Beach.”