



DANA POINT  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

# The News Drogher

Summer 2021

## DPHS Awards Scholarships to Local High School Students

The Dana Point Historical Society's Scholarship Committee (Heidi Hyde, Chair, and Judy Brandmeier, Judy Henderson, Susan Hinman and Fay Kristjanson) has chosen two graduating high school seniors to receive \$1,000 scholarships this year. The scholarships are named after two prominent women from the history of our community.



The Doris I. Walker scholarship will be awarded to **Grace Lisle** (left) of Dana Hills High School. With a GPA of 4.0, Grace served on the yearbook staff for four years and, as a senior, was the editor-in-chief, supervising a staff of 12. She volunteers at the Shea (therapeutic riding) Center in San Juan Capistrano and also served on the Dana Hills tennis team and honor guard. Grace will be attending Saddleback College in its Film and Television Program before transferring to a four-year college.

The Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson scholarship will be given to **Derek Chen** (right) of San Clemente High School. Derek is an AP/Honors student. While maintaining a GPA above 4.0, he served on the Dana Point Youth Board for four years, played for the Varsity Rugby Club and worked part-time as a park aide at Doheny State Park. He was appointed to the *No Place for Hate* committee, which promotes equality and anti-discriminatory practices in school activities. Derek has been accepted into the nursing program at CSU Long Beach and plans to become a nurse anesthesiologist.



Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the Society will have to forgo its usual picnic celebration until next year. However, generous donors have already sent in donations for our scholarship program. The Society would like to thank **Elizabeth & Bill Bamattre, Regina Barnes, Paula & Bob Becker, Brad & Judy Brandmeier, Patricia Cameron, Mary Crowl, Joseph & Eleanor Dunn, Judy Henderson, Paul & Susan Hinman, Nancy Jenkins, Barbara & Keith Johannes, David & Fay Kristjanson, Marsha & Richard LaRusso, Diane Lewis, George & Barbara Miller, Gary & Stella Prenovost, Dan Snipes and Terry & Lee Walsh** for their generous contributions. Each scholarship donation received by June 1, had the donor's name entered into our scholarship raffle.

Additionally, supportive local patrons have contributed raffle prizes for our virtual drawing, which normally would have taken place at the scholarship picnic. Many thanks go to **Captain Dave's Dolphin & Whale Watching Safari (free tickets), Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching (free tickets), Casanova Ristorante (gift certificate), Harbor Grill (gift certificate), Mission San Juan Capistrano (gift bag & family membership) and Coffee Importers/The Scoop Deck (gift certificates).**

Winners of the raffle are Bill & Elizabeth Bamattre, Regina Barnes, Brad & Judy Brandmeier, Patricia Cameron, Mary Crowl, Marsha & Richard LaRusso and Terry & Lee Walsh.

## President's Message



Our summer 2021 “Coming Out Party” is scheduled for Wednesday, June 23, at 1:30 p.m. at the Aliso Viejo Ranch. This will be our first live event offered to members since our February 2020 Presidents’ Day Weekend Tour of Mission San Juan Capistrano.

Aliso Viejo City Manager David Doyle has extended an invitation for us to visit the last unused parcel of the Moulton family ranch. The site is a \$15.5 million project on 7.7 acres that includes restored 1890s buildings, its new 8,000-square-foot Red Barn venue on a former barn site and a newly planted orchard.

An aquaponic farming system demonstrates how to raise vegetables from fishponds where both the fish and plants are harvested and donated for charitable food distribution. The Red Barn features historic exhibits from the Moulton Museum and original artifacts from the Moulton family.

How does the Moulton Ranch (originally the Moulton-Daguerre Ranch) relate to Dana Point history? It may surprise you to know some land in our city was originally located there. Lewis F. Moulton and

Jean Pierre Daguerre were business partners who purchased the land for the Moulton-Daguerre Ranch in 1895 to graze sheep and cattle. Daguerre died in 1911 when his horse, startled by an automobile, overturned his carriage. When Moulton passed away in 1938, his wife, Nellie Gail Moulton, continued to manage the ranch until 1950. After that, the Moulton and Daguerre daughters continued ranching until the Daguerre family retired from ranching. The Daguerre daughters received their family’s approximate one-third share of over 7,000 acres; the Moulton daughters received the Moulton share of over 14,000 acres, and Nellie Gail retained some original land. In 1954, the Daguerre daughters sold 7,108 acres to the Eugene Shumaker investors group, which would later become Laguna Niguel. They also sold another 856 acres to George Capron, a former major-league baseball player. The Capron Ranch was a coastal strip of land starting at the mouth of Salt Creek and extending inland as far as Dana Point’s northern-most boundary. In 1965, when George Capron’s widow died, the land became available. The Laguna Niguel Corporation bought the land for \$10.5 million. The development was named Niguel Shores and approved by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). When the incorporation vote for the City of Dana Point occurred on June 8, 1988, Monarch Beach (which included Niguel Shores and was located then in what was Laguna Niguel) voted to become part of Dana Point. Incorporation won by a nearly 4-1 margin, a result of 13 public hearings and two elections. In October, a judge ruled that Dana Point could keep the land previously owned by Laguna Niguel.

On a personal note, when we bought our home in 1969 there was still a ranch wagon remaining on the Capron Ranch behind our back fence. We watched as the wagon disappeared, wheel-by-wheel and board-by-board until it was completely gone. We often wonder if and where it was re-assembled.



*Approximate boundaries of Moulton Ranch prior to 1935. Courtesy of Orange County Register.*



This photo (above) of a William Griffith plein air painting is featured in historian Eric Jessen's online presentation of Orange County Parks in the City of Dana Point. In the distance, the painting depicts two large white barns with gray roofs on the Moulton-Daguerre Ranch, overlooking Salt Creek just inland of today's PCH and below Crown Valley Parkway in what is now Monarch Beach. Eric describes the small 7" x 9" painting as extremely obscure, undated and untitled. It was discovered, and the location immediately recognized by Eric, in the Fallbrook home of Griffith's grandson. When Eric's friend, Michael D. Feddersen, bought the grandson's entire remaining collection of Griffith's work, he had this digital replica of the ca. 1920s painting made as a present to Eric.

Please RSVP to attend the City of Aliso Viejo's Ranch tour on Wednesday, June 23, at 1:30 p.m. at [events@DanaPointHistorical.org](mailto:events@DanaPointHistorical.org) or 949-248-8121. The City of Aliso Viejo would like to know the number attending in advance to prepare for the tour. I really look forward to seeing you there with a hat and comfortable shoes.

My sincere thanks to our donors who generously contributed to fund the Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson and Doris I. Walker scholarships and to our local businesses which contributed prizes for our raffle drawing. Special thanks go to our Scholarship Committee who evaluated the applications. It was my honor to present Grace Lisle her scholarship at the Dana Hills High School Senior Awards.

*Barbara Force Johannes*

# Double Blessings in Capistrano Beach

*DPHS and Capo Cares seek historic plaques to honor two historic Doheny-era parks*

By Toni Nelson, guest author

Visitors to Capistrano Beach seldom fail to take in the breathtaking coastal vistas from two of the area's most beautiful landmarks --- Pines Park and Palisades Gazebo Park. They may not be aware that they are also treasured historic sites, testaments to the contributions of the iconic Doheny family who were responsible for the development of this scenic coastal community almost a century ago.

The Capistrano Beach Company was established in 1926 by Edward "Ned" L. Doheny Jr. along with Clark and Warren Smith, the twin brothers of his wife, Lucy. They purchased 1,000 acres of palisades and beach to the west of Ole Hanson's "Spanish Village by the Sea" (now San Clemente) and commenced construction of a coastal development graced by 28 red-tile roofed Spanish colonial homes, 21 of which survive today, prized locally as "Doheny Houses."

Despite Ned Doheny's tragic death in 1929, Edward L. Doheny Sr. and his wife Estelle continued the development for many years, but by 1946 almost all of the Capistrano Beach properties owned by the family had been sold. In 1931, following Ned's death, the Doheny family gifted 41 acres to the State of California in memory of their son, where the family name lives on at Doheny State Beach, visible from both landmark parks. While the development was briefly renamed "Doheny Park" in 1931, the name chosen by Ned, *Capistrano Beach*, was restored in 1948.



*Sunset view from Palisades, Capo Cares 2019*



*Bowl Gardens above Capistrano Beach Club and pier circa 1930, Gertie and Allan Seymour Costeno Collection*

The stone viewing outlook at Pines Park, along with a portion of the retaining walls supporting an original serpentine trail, are still visible today along the eastern bluff of the lower "bowl" area of the park, once known as "Bowl Gardens." An original elevated viewing gazebo surrounded by white roses, a wooden walking path, staircase and other attractive landscaping sadly succumbed to decades of wood rot and neglect, and was razed by Orange County in the 1960s. Today, the formerly lovely Bowl Gardens consists of a flat, barren, undeveloped plot with an enviable panoramic view. The area is fenced off for safety reasons, but is often infiltrated by squirrels and rabbits, and sometimes local kids who breach the fence to ride bikes or race remote-controlled cars across the dirt lot. In 2017, The Architectural Guild of South Orange County kindly donated an intriguing conceptual design to community group Capo Cares. It featured a bridge across the ravine, viewing decks and a restored walking path. Advocates still hope to see this valuable unused property redeveloped one day, restored to the intended public use envisioned by the Doheny family in the 1920s. The remaining areas of Pines Park --- the central viewing area above the bowl and the lower children's playground, have changed significantly over the decades, benefiting first from the watchful stewardship of local residents and the Capistrano Bay Parks and Recreation District and, after 1989, by the City of Dana Point. In 1991, the city added modern playground equipment and later provided many landscaping improvements and some public art.

**Pines Park** was planned and constructed as a community park for the use and leisure of palisades residents. The developers partially filled a craggy coastal canyon to the west of Doheny House #1, which still stands, lovingly restored, at the intersection of Camino de Estrella (named for Estelle Doheny) and Camino Capistrano. The park, once known as "Pines Bluff Park," or "Doheny Pines Park," was located directly above the focal point of the 1920's Doheny development: the stately Capistrano Beach Club, which was lost to history in the 1970s. Recent erosion has unearthed remnants of the old club. Concrete chunks of the original pool and deck, plus fragments of roofing tiles have surfaced from the sand at the now county-owned Capistrano Beach Park, just west of four remaining Doheny Houses on Beach Road.



*Remnants of stone path along eastern bluff, Capo Cares, 2021*

The iconic “climbing tree,” which bends and twists its way along the eastern lawn, was saved by long-term resident Hank Thomas in the early 1970s when he noticed the roots emerging from the ground as the tree leaned precariously. Placing a concrete slab and a wooden post under the offending branch allowed the old tree to ramble and grow, creating a delightful climbing enticement to small children.



*Pines Park climbing tree, Capo Cares 2021*

A fourth segment of Pines Park today consists of two viewing benches on a narrow ledge above a steep canyon parcel at the eastern end of the park. Transferred to the Capistrano Bay Parks and Recreation District in 1978, and sold multiple times, the property was almost lost to



*Eastern viewing benches over steep canyon, Capo Cares, 2021*

a massive residential structure, until local residents appealed a city Planning Commission decision, demanding the protection of the scenic views promised to the community by the original Doheny developers. The city purchased the property from the developer for \$2.1 million in 2004, returning the parcel to the community as part of its beloved Pines Park.

Today, the park is a favorite spot for strolling, dog walking, picnicking, tree climbing and squirrel chasing, plus impromptu yoga and tai chi, and many private and public events. The magnificent pines, many of them decades old, bear witness to the park’s unique setting and its importance to the community’s past, present and future.

**Palisades Gazebo Park** is located above Pacific Coast Highway at the first crest of Palisades Drive, a steep road created by the Capistrano Beach Company in 1928 to provide access to the palisades development. This popular landmark consists of two lots on a natural landing along the bluff, a short walk from Pines Park. It overlooks Doheny and Capistrano beaches with panoramic views extending north to the Dana Point headlands, harbor and Catalina Island and south to the San Clemente pier.



*View of the Palisades Gazebo looking toward the Headlands, Dana Point Historical Society, circa 1930*

The original gazebo (restored and dedicated by the Capistrano Bay Parks and Recreation District in 1978), three original lamp posts (still in

working condition) and several vintage concrete benches still exist on the site. At one time, identical lamp posts lined the seaward side of Palisades Drive, but have since been lost to history. One remaining lamp stands outside Doheny House #1 on Camino Capistrano, and several more dot the median along the Estrella Mall, silent sentinels to the area’s rich past. Beautiful rose gardens were added in the late 1970s by designer James T. Jesser, who oversaw the renovation. According to an article in the May 1978 issue of *Sunset* magazine, he took special care to choose rose species that would have graced the gardens during the Doheny era. Today, the newly formed community group, the *Gazebo Gardeners*, provides regular pruning and rose care. This small but beautiful ocean view park is popular as a daily viewing spot for local residents and visitors; a small but charming wedding venue, and often, a welcome respite for those who walk up from the beach to their homes in the palisades.



*Palisades Gazebo Park in bloom, Capo Cares, spring 2020*

Both Pines and Palisades Gazebo Parks truly have a significant place in the rich and interesting history of Capistrano Beach. Both stand as testaments to the dreams of the son of an oil tycoon and the entire Doheny family --- a family that left a lasting imprint on Southern California, generously gifting not only Doheny State Park, but two priceless public spaces with panoramic views that will be enjoyed by the community and its visitors, hopefully for centuries to come.

Community advocacy group Capo Cares, with the support of the Dana Point Historical Society, is currently seeking the placement of plaques to recognize the historic significance of Pines Park and Palisades Gazebo Park for the people of Capistrano Beach, the larger community of Dana Point and the County of Orange.

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**Upcoming events:**

**June 23** Aliso Viejo Ranch Tour      **June 27** Booth at Heritage Museum      **August 22** Booth at Redo Market

## Membership

Welcome new members **Gary Keller, Jennifer LaCharite and Angela Swanton!**

As a reminder, the annual dues are due every January. The membership categories are:

Individual	\$25 annual
Family	\$30 annual
Business	\$50 annual
Patron	\$100 annual
Life	\$500 lifetime

**All contributions are tax deductible as the Historical Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.**

Thank you again for your support of the Dana Point Historical Society --- active since 1987!

Questions? Contact me at [rmlarusso@msn.com](mailto:rmlarusso@msn.com)

*Marsha LaRusso*

## Founders Day Honorees Announced



Donna, pictured left and Gisele, right. Photo by Emily J. Davis for *Orange Coast* magazine.

The Dana Point Historical Society has chosen Donna Kalez of Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching and Gisele Anderson of Captain Dave's Dolphin & Whale Watching Safari

as its 2021 Founders Day honorees. As co-directors, Donna and Gisele lead the application process to have Dana Point recognized as the first Whale Heritage Site in the Americas by the World Cetacean Alliance.

Look for a future announcement from the Society for an autumn reception to honor them.