



DANA POINT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

The News Drogher

Spring 2021

Mel and Helen Pierce Honored With Commemorative Plaque at Strands Vista Park

On Friday, March 5, the Society had an impromptu gathering with members of the Board of Directors to view our new plaque honoring Melvyn (Mel) and Helen Pierce. Joining us was their son, David Pierce, and his wife Elaine. The plaque has been placed in an area Mel and Helen frequented and Dave thinks he remembers a story that they may have met at Strands beach, long before it was the developed area it is now. We hope you all will take a walk along the bluff and view the remembrance of our Society's Patriarch and Matriarch. Pictured back row, L to R are Max Brown, Elizabeth Bamattre, Barbara Johannes, Keith Johannes, Judy Henderson, Sandie Iverson and Bob Minty. Seated are Dave and Elaine Pierce.



**Melvyn R. Pierce, 1923-2015 and Helen L. Pierce, 1925-2019, Patriarch & Matriarch of Dana Point.
We remember their lives, service and recalling history with the Dana Point Historical Society.**

Following the gathering, the Society received the a note from Dave Pierce:

On March 5th, my wife and I had the pleasure of attending a viewing of the plaque and bench, honoring my mother and father; Helen Pierce and Melvyn Pierce commemorating their time as Matriarch and Patriarch of Dana Point. As many of you know, dad moved here with his father in 1930 and immediately fell in love with everything that is Dana Point. Dad grew up enjoying the beach at the Strand and surfing the Strand and Killer Dana in the very early days. He would tell us stories of how much fun it was to have gatherings and BBQ's on the beach and the simple times of just having fun in the sun. One story that I recall was that my mom rented a room from dad's parents on Chula Vista when she worked at the Dana Point Hotel on Del Prado (soon to be razed) [Where Jack's Restaurant is now located --- Ed.] My dad, and some others went to the Strand for an evening get together and that's where the beginnings of their lifelong friendship and love began. So it is very appropriate and fitting that the bench is centered, overlooking the Strand. Throughout their time together, raising a family, owning a business, growing old and watching this town grow, they never lost their love for, or the romance of Dana Point!

Thank you so much, Dana Point Historical Society and the City of Dana Point and all others who may have been involved for honoring my parents with the incredible gift of the plaque on the perfect bench at the Strand's Park. Our family will be humbled each time we visit!

*Thanks again,
David Pierce on behalf of the Pierce family*

President's Message



We began our year with the online January 27th Annual Meeting. Grant Earl and Joel Bishop, who coordinated the meeting, reported that 73 people were online for voting or sent their ballots in advance of the meeting. Our special thanks to Eric Jessen, who presented his video, "Dana Point's OC Parks," and answered questions afterward. If you wish to view Eric's other videos about Orange County Parks, type his name and OC Parks into your browser and you can choose from a variety of articles and videos featuring 120 years of local history. His youtube videos can be found here:

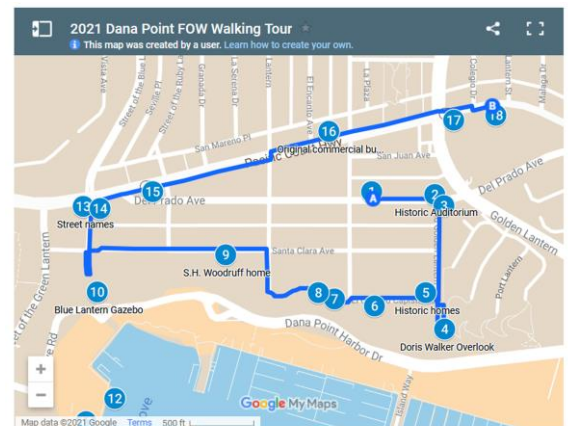
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzJmyMaiQFg&list=PLVx5QTvCAqzatDH2hv25BZ3p-6xOF78Bo>

Parks seem to be a theme in our activities this year. Our park bench plaque to honor Melvyn and Helen Pierce was approved by the City of Dana Point. Thanks to Robert Sedita, Director of General Services, our request to have the plaque installed on the center bench at Strands Vista Park was granted. Please visit their bench and enjoy the view!

In February, Toni Nelson, DPHS member and Capo Cares President, submitted an application to the City of Dana Point to have the Palisades Gazebo Park and Pines Park be designated as Doheny Historic Parks in Dana Point. Toni and I met with Brenda Wisneski and Johnathan Ciampa on February 17 to discuss the City granting the designation and we are awaiting its decision. The City has recently painted the Palisades Gazebo and the roses are blooming. Both parks are worth your visit. If you are interested in volunteering with a group that cares for the roses once a month, please contact capocares@gmail.com.



This year the Festival of Whales celebrated its 50th year with a hybrid program. Our thanks to Bob Minty, DPHS Program Chairman (pictured left, playing his concertina), for representing us as part of the Ocean



Institute's live activities and special thanks to Grant Earl for organizing our DPHS Virtual Historic Walking Map (pictured right) in time for the FOW. Go to danapointhistorical.org for more information on a smartphone tour or preview a virtual tour from home.

Speaking of our website, please join me in thanking Max Brown and Ross Teasley for our website's new look! When visiting the new web site, you will see the article on the Violet Lantern streetlight post recently removed for future restoration and placed in the Society's storage unit, which was overseen by Keith Johannes. Also note the website article stating that we are again offering two \$1,000 college scholarships named after two prominent women from our community's history --- Doris I. Walker and Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson. Please join Heidi Hyde and the Scholarship Committee with your donation to support this worthwhile cause. Our 2021 high school graduates need some good news.

Wishing you a healthy spring filled with safe outdoor activities!

Barbara Force Johannes

Historical Society's 2021 Scholarships

The Dana Point Historical Society's Scholarship Chair, Heidi Hyde, along with her committee, has informed the society that we will once again be giving out two \$1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors this year. Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions will again prevent us from holding our annual Fiesta Fundraiser Dinner this year.

The Society is seeking donations to help offset the cost of the scholarships, which we have been awarding for 20 years. Generous donors have already sent in donations for our two scholars. Mary Crowl, Paul and Susan Hinman, Lloyd & Charlotte Takahashi, Ruth Clark, and Barbara & Keith Johannes have already supported this year's program.

WE HAVE INCLUDED A SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE IN THIS NEWSLETTER. Please use this envelope if you would like to support the scholarship program, send in your dues if still unpaid, or both! The address for submitting scholarship donations is PO Box 544, Dana Point, CA 92629. **Also take a look at page six for a special opportunity for our scholarship donors!**

The scholarships are named after two prominent women from the history of our community. Doris I. Walker was a historian and the author of many books about local history as well as a founding member of the Dana Point Historical Society. Lucy Chavarrias-Saunderson was the matriarch of the El Patio Restaurant family. She went into the restaurant business in 1937. El Patio opened in 1951 and was the longest-running business in the City.

All graduating high school students who live in the City of Dana Point (92629 or 92624) and are planning to attend community college, university or trade school in the following year are eligible. Although scholastic achievement is considered, the award is based primarily on need, an interest in history and participation in community service.

Applications are available from your school's scholarship program or by clicking the link below. The deadline for submission is April 23, 2021.

<https://danapointhistorical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Dana-Point-Historical-Society-Scholarship-Application-revised-2021.pdf>

Richard Henry Dana Jr. in an Unexpected Place!



The City of Dana Point and its Arts & Culture Commission invited artists to participate in the City's Utility Box Public Art Program, an ongoing effort to beautify 13 utility boxes located throughout the City of Dana Point. The goals of the program are to use public art to contribute to the vitality and attractiveness of the city's streetscapes and bring art to unexpected places. One example is by artist Robert Fitzgerald, which features a likeness of Richard Henry Dana Jr. It sits at the corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Palisades Drive.



Dana Point's Legendary Lanterns

By Barbara Force Johannes

The February 11, 2021 removal of the last Dana Point Lantern Post still standing in its original location on Violet Lantern has prompted this review. For details about the removal see www.danapointhistorical.org.



Dana Point developer Sidney H. Woodruff wrote that it was the Dana Point Syndicate's "... intention to install the finest kind of improvements, such as pavements, sidewalks, curbs, ornamental lights, vitrified sewers, castiron water pipes, high-pressure fire hydrants, etc., and everything that will make the City Beautiful and perfectly appointed ..." Of these improvements, Woodruff's "ornamental" lantern streetlights continue to attract attention. In addition to Woodruff, several other early investors in Dana Point have been credited with naming the Streets of the Green, Blue, Ruby, Amber, Violet, Golden, Silver, Copper and Crystal Lantern. Who were these other people?

Documents in our archives inform us that the San Juan Point Corporation was the first developer to break ground in Dana Point in 1923-24 with the Scenic Inn and the bluff-top scenic trail. The officers were Dr. J.L. Beebe, P.H. Krick, Joe Skidmore and Anna G. Walters. The corporation disbanded in late 1924. In 1925, Anna Walters advertised as a Tract Manager of Dana Point through the real estate firm of Merrick & Ruddick Inc. She represented her own properties and those of others who remained invested here. Walters would also continue the development's theme, as mentioned in a *Los Angeles Times* article on September 6 of that year, with the observation that the area was "Visited by Historic Author on Voyage in Year 1835" and that "Historic Dana Point has fallen before the march of progress, it has been subdivided for the homeseeker, and is to be formally opened to the public on Labor Day."

A comparison of tract map 768 between June 1925 and September 1925 shows the street name changes that were first made that summer. What was Hillcrest Drive was renamed Street of the Blue Lantern, Juanita Drive became Ruby Lantern and Park Drive became Amber Lantern. Walters newly built home is shown in the same 1925, *Los Angeles Times*, located on a street in Tract 573 that became the Street of the Green Lantern. The arrival of Woodruff and his investors in Dana Point in 1925 also adds to the confusion of the street names. Dr. Beebe and his wife, H. Eva Beebe, of the failed San Juan Point Corporation mentioned above, continued to own properties in Dana Point. They would also invest in Woodruff's 1930 Dana Point Inn. In 1980, Orange County *Legacy* magazine credits Mrs. Beebe for naming the lantern streets, although she was only one of many people who contributed to the concept. In addition, a developer from the 1920s, Alice Snell Moyer, is also credited with helping to name the lantern streets. This fact was discovered as a written notation inside a Woodruff real estate sales album that was donated to the Dana Point Historical Society.

On April 3, 1927, a *Los Angeles Times* article announced the opening of one of the first buildings to be built in Dana Point --- a new service station designed by Fay R. Spangler for Anna G. Walters, on the corner of the Street of the Blue Lantern and the new Roosevelt Highway. The lessee was Carroll Lynch, who operated the station. Within four years, Mrs. Walters owned both a home and a commercial building, each on a lantern street, and she would continue to reside here until her untimely death in 1932 at age 59, when her daughter and son-in-law would inherit her estate. It is no wonder she is associated with the lantern streets. Yet, in a recent telephone call I had with Carolyn King, Woodruff's step-granddaughter, Carolyn noted how amazing it was that Woodruff's lantern streetlights were installed throughout Dana Point with underground wiring, an innovation for the time. She also emphasized Woodruff's eye for detail, which included specific street landscaping that was coordinated with the color-named lantern streets.

Why were so many people credited with the naming of the lantern streets when the streetlights were installed from circa 1927-1929 by Woodruff's Dana Point Syndicate as part of his nautically themed development?

Was it due to early investors' admiration of the unique ship lanterns because they evoked Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s description of this harbor as the "... most romantic spot on the California coast"?

There are several colorful legends associated with the lantern streets and occasionally the Historical Society is asked to settle a bet or answer a question about them. These theories are found and debunked on social media. One internet report on Dana Point lanterns reads: "The streets are named after different colored lanterns—Street of the Violet Lantern, Blue Lantern, etc.—because colored lanterns were used by ships 200 years ago to advertise their fares when in the Dana Point natural harbor." There is no factual basis for this belief. During Richard Henry Dana's era, as chronicled in his best seller, the ships carried all sorts of manufactured and finished goods from Boston to trade for western cowhides, but the products were not color-coded to ships lanterns. Another theory is that the colors were inspired from ships' navigational lights used in the United States as early as 1838. It is possible, but doubtful, since navigational lights are only red, green and white. One online contributor, writing on *Tripadvisor*, was not as kind when writing, "The 'Street of the Whatever Lantern' was a marketing gimmick, meant to seem nautical, by Sidney Woodruff, the master planner behind what is now Dana Point. (Interestingly, Woodruff is also the guy who made the Hollywood(land) sign.)"

A January 16, 1927, *Los Angeles Times* article described the lanterns and lantern streets: "One of the interesting innovations at Dana Point is the unique system of lighting and naming the streets. The Roosevelt Highway, as the major-traffic artery of Dana Point, is crossed by a series of streets with streetlights of special design, each having a beautiful ship's lantern in various colors. The first is the Street of the Golden Lantern, and is entirely lighted by golden lanterns. The second is Street of the Green Lantern, and is lighted by green lanterns. Next is the street of the Amber Lantern, etc., and as the streets wind up to the hillcrests, giving brilliant colorful effect." It is a dramatic description, but the streets are not in order and one has to wonder if the reporter was even here or, if here, stayed to see the colored lanterns at night. Current research and historic photos show it was only a colored dome light at the top of the post, located at the lantern street corners where they intersected Roosevelt Highway. The lantern itself was an uncolored frosted glass, as replicated today on the corners of Pacific Coast Highway and Del Prado at the Streets of Blue, Ruby, Amber, Violet and Golden Lantern in the Lantern District.

There are at least eight original lanterns scattered throughout the gardens of private residences in the Lantern Village. Some of these original lanterns were initially sold by the county for scrap circa 1950, but then refurbished or stored by residents for later use. Judging from the remaining lantern post foundations along the curbs in the Lantern Village, the posts were simply sawed off at the base for easy removal, which could be why some original posts appear shorter than others.

In 1989, Gary Keller's *South Coast Lighting and Design* restored and rewired 15 original lanterns for the area on La Plaza. The lanterns had to meet current codes and the old glass was pulled out and new tempered safety glass was installed. Keller's company also reproduced 10 new lantern streetlights for the Lantern District in 2014-15. Over the years, several lanterns have been donated to the Historical Society, one of which was used as a template to replicate those 10 new lantern streetlights now on Del Prado and PCH. That lantern is on display in our museum along with a floor-to-ceiling wall photo of the "Lady and the Lantern" with the dome light visible at the top of the lamppost above the lantern.

Perhaps the best lantern reference appeared in the *Santa Ana Daily Register* on July 19, 1929, reporting on Governor Young appearing at the opening of the Roosevelt Highway in Dana Point the day before. "Following his address, Governor Young threw the switch of 400 ornamental lights illuminating the streets of Dana Point. The lights are unique in that they are made to resemble ships' lanterns." It must have been an impressive sight. Unfortunately, just three months later, on October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. The Great Depression and World War II would cause Dana Point's streetlights to dim and deteriorate, but some would be saved for restoration and reproduction as Dana Point's historic lantern streetlights. Yes, Woodruff was marketing our historic past to attract future residents to his seaside resort with unique streetlights designed as ships' lanterns, and we are still talking and writing about them today.

Consider visiting La Plaza one evening to admire the 15 original restored lantern streetlights and, for a moment, imagine 400 of those lanterns illuminating Dana Point in 1929.

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Membership

Welcome new members **Gretchen Augustyn** and the **Shauna & Mike Killebrew family!**

We have once again enclosed an envelope for those of you who have yet to pay your 2021 dues. You may also use the envelope to donate to our annual high school scholarship fund.

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

Marsha LaRusso

Scholarship Raffle Drawing!

As many of you know, our high school scholarship program is normally supported by our Fiesta Dinner, which typically occurs in June. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have once again had to cancel the dinner event. To thank you for donating to the 2021 Scholarship fund in support of two deserving high school graduates, the Society thought it would be fun to have a raffle drawing, somewhat similar to what we would have at our annual dinner.

To that end, we will provide one raffle ticket for each \$25 donated to the Society for the scholarship program. So, for instance, if someone gives \$50, two raffle tickets with their name will be put into the raffle ticket bin. When the scholarships are awarded, we will draw names from the bin and inform the winners of their prizes. Prizes include whale-watching trips, gift certificates for restaurants, Baby Beach tiles, as well as other gifts from local businesses and items such as T-shirts, caps and mugs. We hope you will use the enclosed envelope to give to our scholarship fund, which is so important for those high school graduates who win our awards.