

Niguel Shores - A History

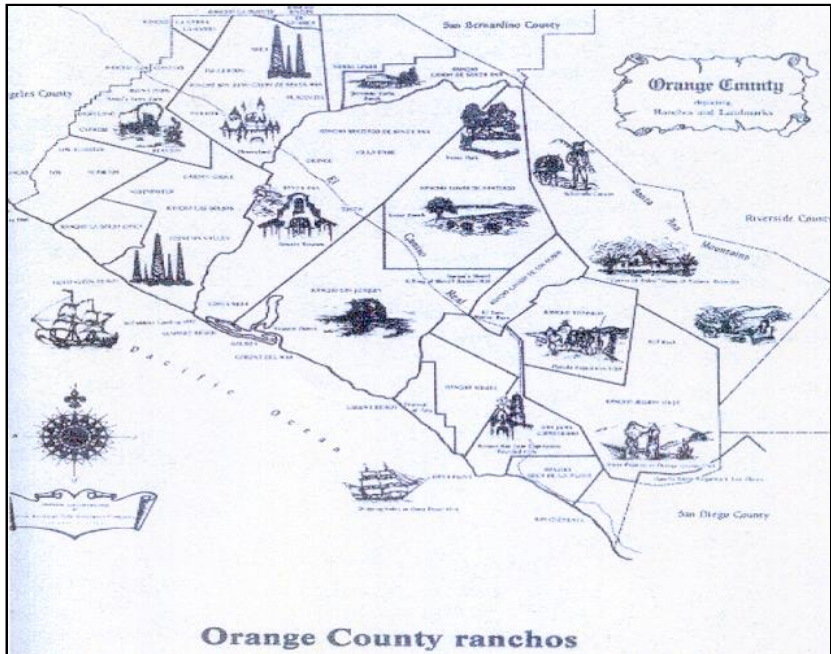
Historical Notes on the Monarch Beach Area (Formerly Laguna Niguel)

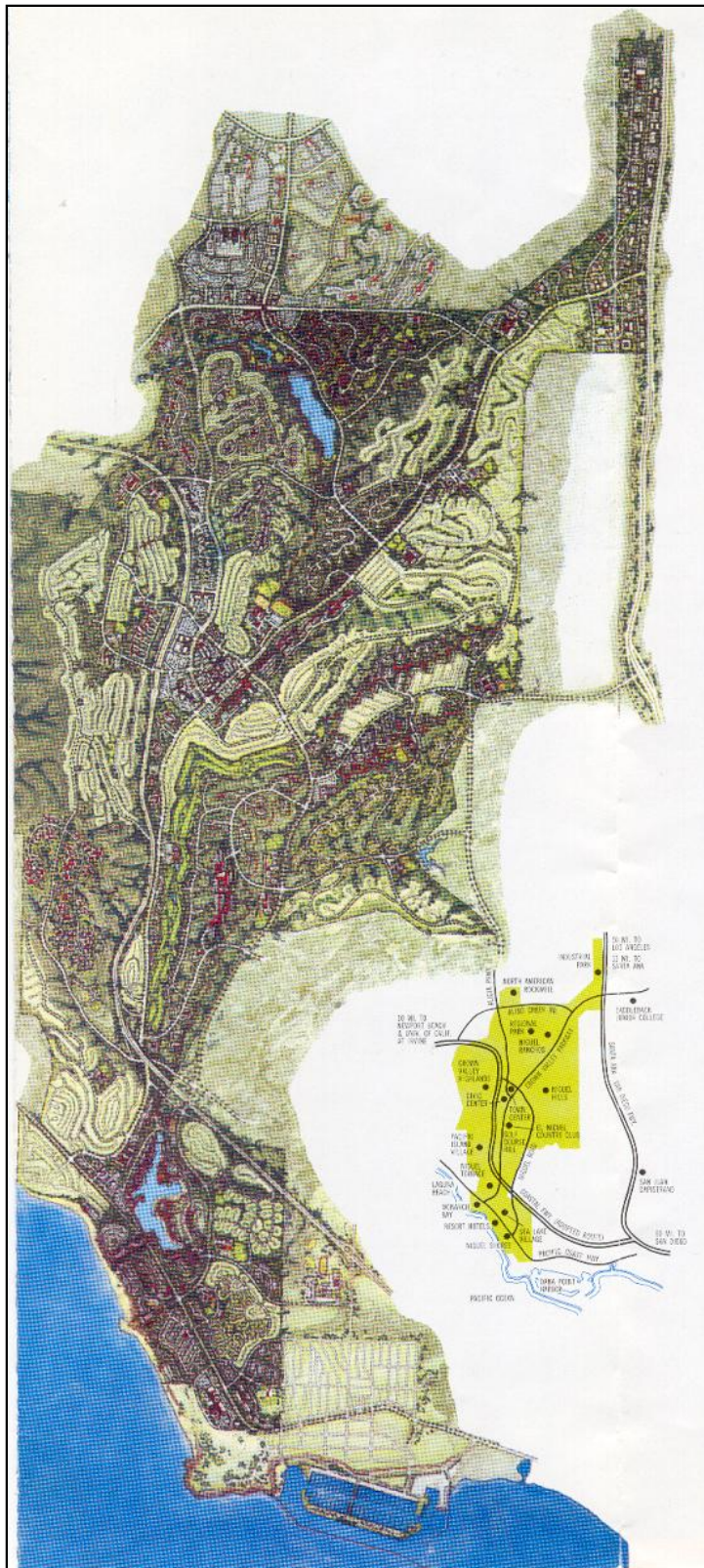
Niguel is a word with elusive original meanings but there is some agreement among scholars that it probably means “a large spring,” originally spelled Niguili. Native Americans lived in this area along the natural waterways of Salt Creek and Aliso Creek. They were hunter-gatherers who lived on fruits and seeds and seafood from the shore areas.

In 1769 the Spanish arrived in the immediate area and in 1776 established the mission at San Juan. A portion of the surrounding area was named Rancho Niguel after the Indian name. The area became an important cattle raising rancho associated with the mission and provided income for the mission as the hides and tallow were bought for the New England trade by ships passing along the coast. The hides, taken back to Boston and other ports, were made into leather and the tallow into soap and candles.

In 1821 the Spanish rule was replaced by that of Mexico and the Californios (California-born Mexicans). The missions were transformed into pueblos (or towns) and the Mexican government made hundreds of land grants to worthy citizens. In 1842 Rancho Niguel came under the ownership of Juan Avila and was known as “El Rancho Niguel de Los Alisos” comprising 13,316 acres. This was a period of self sufficient ranchos whose primary activity was raising cattle to export hides and tallow (the period of Richard Henry Dana’s classic tale “Two Years Before the Mast” –an account of the Boston merchants’ ships buying hides along the California coast).

In 1848 the United States annexed California and land claims were disputed for many years. During the Gold Rush, cattle from Rancho Niguel supplied beef and leather to the great influx of miners and accompanying businesses. Throughout the next decades other owners bought and divided the lands of the great ranchos. The arrival of the railroads in 1887





changed the character of the area. The combined dry-farming agriculture by an increasing number of tenant farmers and cattle raising continued with general improvements up until World War II. The many people who came to southern California because of the armed services and industry stayed or returned to the area and the great population boom began.

Monarch Beach Development

In 1954 the Daguerre family, descendant owners of the original Avila rancho, sold 7,200 acres to the Shumaker investors group and another 856 acres to George Capron, a former major-league baseball player. The latter property along the coast at the mouth of Salt Creek was known as the Capron Ranch. The financial company, Paine, Webber, Jackson and Curtis formed a partnership with Cabot, Cabot and Forbes, Inc. of Boston and purchased the Shumaker property of Rancho Niguel. This property stretched from the ocean to Highway 101—soon to become the San Diego Freeway. The property was called “Laguna Niguel” to promote identification with Laguna Beach and to retain the name “Niguel,” the Native American name for the area. The corporation was named Laguna Niguel Corporation and in April, 1959 shares went on sale on the Pacific Stock Exchange. Six thousand investors raised \$8.2 million. Gerald Blakeley, Jr. was

president and William Beck was executive vice-president. Victor Gruen and Associates created the master design in cooperation with the Orange County Planning Commission. The philosophy was that “families should have most of their economic needs and their social and cultural interests met by facilities within the community”.

Laguna Niguel was conceived as a complete planned community with all the needs of its residents within the master plan: commercial areas, schools, churches, roads, shopping, utilities, fire protection, recreation, parks, and an industrial base. The plan allowed for residential areas for various levels of income. The brochures promised “investment protectors” in a new town for a new life style.

The first building was a sales office at the eastern corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Crown Valley (the former Crown House Restaurant). The same year a few hundred feet of Crown Valley Parkway was constructed as well as the first houses in Monarch Bay. Street names were inspired by the chain of land ownership listing the King of Spain as the original landowner—a royalty theme was carried out with “Crown Valley Parkway,” “Monarch Bay,” “Coronation Drive,” etc.

The El Niguel Golf Course was created in 1962 and Crown Valley Parkway was completed from the coast to the freeway in 1964. Monarch Bay Plaza was opened as a shopping center with supermarket, bank, movie theater, medical and professional build-

ing, restaurant, gas station and small shops. At the time of the construction of Monarch Bay and Monarch Bay Plaza, the Laguna Niguel Corporation did not yet own the 865 acres along the coast south of the Plaza where Niguel Shores was to be built.

The El Niguel Golf Country Club golf course and

clubhouse were completed and opened in April 1963 as reported in the Annual Report of the Laguna Niguel Corporation for that year. Houses were being built along the fairways of the golf course and were all spoken for within three months of the offering. The report noted that *House and Garden* magazine would devote 40 pages to Laguna Niguel in its August 1964 issue, and lots in Monarch Bay and Terrace were mostly sold.



Niguel Shores

In 1965 the widow of George Capron, owner of the 865 acre strip at the mouth of Salt Creek, died and the land became available for purchase. The Laguna Niguel Corporation bought the land for \$10.5 million. Plans for the area included a man-made lake, resort hotel, town houses, an apartment complex and a village to draw tourists. The development was named Niguel Shores and approved by LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission). Niguel Shores was part of the Master Plan for the Laguna Niguel New Town.

The Articles of Incorporation for the Niguel Shores Community Association were filed with the California Secretary of State on November 6, 1969. An initial meeting of a Board of Directors was held March 6, 1970 at No. 3 Monarch Bay Plaza. W. H. Beck was elected temporary chairman, John J. Parks was Vice-President, Secretary was Brian Prentice and Treasurer, Donald B. Talcott. The Bylaws were adopted. The Board authorized the opening of a bank account and established the fiscal year as January 1 to December 31. They accepted the Declaration of Establishment of Protective Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions. They established an annual assessment at \$420 per lot then, because the trash disposal service was eliminated, reduced it to \$402.

On March 24, 1970 Richard B. Smith, Inc. filed a subdivision report on Tract No. 6935 in Niguel Shores, known as the Broadmoor Homes. These homes on Windjammer, Brigantine and Windlass were the first homes built



Niguel Shores—Ocean view homes and homesites, together with a prestigious condominium, will grace this rare beach frontage. Such development enhances values throughout Laguna Niguel.

in Niguel Shores. Other areas quickly followed with the Shores Garden Homes next, Atlantic Garden Homes, Sea Terrace Town Homes, Berkus Homes, and, across Selva, additional Sea Terrace Town Homes and, lastly, the Villas in 1977.

In July 1972 the Board of Directors entered into an agreement with AVCO Community Developers for the construction of a recreation center for Niguel Shores. Ground was broken later that year and, on June 13, 1973, the Niguel Shores Community Center was opened and dedicated.

Frank Mead, President of the Niguel Shores Community Association, wrote in the July 1974 *Seashore News* that “On Friday, June 14, 1974, at 1:30 p.m. the agreements and deeds transferring title to the Recreation Center, beach parking lot, streets and common areas were recorded and we became owners, through the Association, of all of the disputed territory.”



Original Community Center & pool completed in 1973

Niguel Shores was originally part of Laguna Niguel until the incorporation of Dana Point in 1989 when the Monarch Beach area voted to join Dana Point rather than Laguna Niguel. The area had been called the “Coastal Strip” until a vote was solicited of the local residents to choose a new name. They considered Monarch Bay, Salt Creek Beach and Monarch Beach and chose the latter.



Rear view of the new Niguel Shores office building – 2007

In 2006 plans were approved for a newly designed Community Center. The original office wing was demolished and a new office building was completed in May, 2007. A special assessment was passed in May, 2008 to further improve the Community Center by replacing the original Multi-purpose Room with a new building. Construction of the new ClubHouse began in January, 2009 and was completed in September of that



year with the dedication taking place on the 5th.

At the same time, the Beach Bluff Park was regraded and expanded with new turf, landscaping and furniture. The bluff parking lot, too, was improved with new retaining walls, resurfacing and landscaping, all completed in June, 2009. A new and expanded spa was installed as part of the general improvement of the Community Center and was officially opened for residents' use on December 30.



Expanded Beach Bluff Park - 2009



ClubHouse Lounge



New Spa - 2009

