

# Our History

The Malibou Lake Country Club was founded by Bertram Lackey and George Wilson as a 352-acre fishing and hunting preserve. The original club to which they belonged, the Conejo Rod and Gun Club (at Lake Canterbury, now Lake Sherwood) lost its lease and Lackey and Wilson were charged with finding a new site. One of the major factors in choosing this property was the rocky topography where the dam was envisioned. The old wagon path-way called Cornell Road off Ventura

Boulevard accessed the site. The raw land was a combination of Rancho Las Virgenes, a Spanish grazing concession and government land settled under the Homestead Act by a Mr. Mueller and others.

There were few roads in the mountains then. What would become the 101 Freeway was yet to become Ventura Boulevard. The extension of Pacific Coast Highway as well as Mulholland Highway were still years away.

Lackey and Wilson built a dam at the convergence of Medea Creek and Triunfo Creek that eventually filled our lake. Residential lot surveys were started in 1922 and work on the dam began in November 1922 and was completed five

**"Wealth was not to be a requisite for membership but an undisputed claim of true and genuine sportsmanship was to be demanded."**



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1922

Lackey and Wilson found 352 acres with the ideal topography to establish a fishing and hunting club. They describe it as "an underdeveloped wilderness.."

1924

The Malibou Lake Country Club is the first body of private citizens to endorse the LA County Belt Park Plan to preserve beaches, connect the Santa Monica Mountains with inland mountain ranges, and protect rivers within LA County



*left to right: Cornell Way is just a dirt road, The multi-purpose Cornell Post Office, The Club's Trading Post*

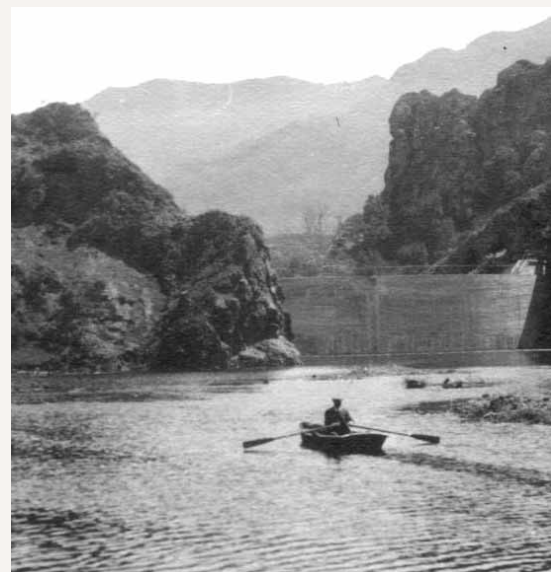
months later. A small pool of water was established for the stocking of bass. It was originally promoted as the largest dam in California built exclusively for pleasure purposes only. While the dam was completed in 1923, it didn't fill to capacity until April 1926. The cost was \$60,000.

On May 3, ground was broken for the \$85,000 clubhouse designed by the architectural/engineering firm of Russell and Alpaugh of Los Angeles. A huge native stone fireplace highlighted the lobby and split redwood logs were used for the exterior. The lobby, complete with a stage, was 55 feet x 75 feet; the dining room was 40 feet x 60 feet; a locker room and a billiard room provided a private refuge

from the women! There was a chef's kitchen and storage and 24 bedrooms with separate baths for visitors. This beautiful rustic clubhouse burned to the ground in 1936. There was also a trading post, stables, a barbecue pit, baseball diamond, a fleet of rowboats, a swimming beach and changing areas.

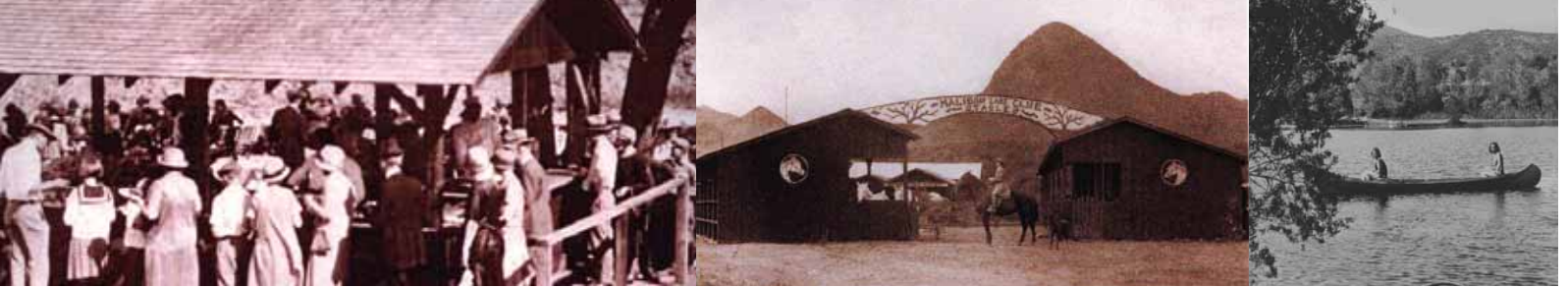
The club had a drawing for the still dry cabin sites in June 1923. Members exchanged sites among themselves: those who wanted waterfront sites swapped with those who preferred hillside sites. Private cabins were built by Archie Kellogg, Quincy Allison, the Bassetts, the Bowers and the Earls.

By December 1923 there were 500 members. The first



## 1926

While the dam was completed in 1923, it takes nearly 3 years and a late spring storm in April 1926 to fill the lake to capacity. Rowboats can only be used on the creeks until the lake fills.



1924 Welcome Barbeque "Win a Nag and a Meal for a Buck", Club Stables, Canoeing

Malibu Peak trail run (now Sugarloaf) was originated and a perpetual trophy for the best round-trip time was awarded to John Gast who won in 18 minutes, 8 seconds, allowing for a 10-minute rest at the top. There were 22 runners.

In January 1924 target ranges were set up to train for

competitive shooting. As a result of the Los Angeles Sportsmen's visit to the lake, the Malibu Angler's Society was established by Bertram Lackey who captained the team.

On February 24, 1924, the Malibou Lake Country Club was the first body of private citizens to endorse the Los



## 1924

Better described as a Grand Lodge, the original clubhouse has 24 bedrooms for visiting members. A huge native stone fireplace highlights the large lounge and split redwood logs are used for the exterior.



*The spacious and luxuriously appointed Lodge interior and Dining Hall. All burned to the ground in 1935.*

Angeles County Belt Park Plan proposed by the LA County Regional Planning Commission to preserve beaches, connect the Santa Monica Mountains with inland mountain ranges, and protect rivers within LA County. Several hundred trees were planted as part of an Arbor Day reforestation program originated by Dr. Gilbert Ray Owen. One symbolic Sequoia was planted in the Arbor. A mountain lion hunt was organized.

In September 1924, the membership of the Camp Fire Club of Los Angeles merged with MLCC; a separate lodge was to be constructed below the dam. This group included Cecil B. DeMille, Thomas Ince, Douglas Fairbanks and Jesse Laskey connected with the film industry; Samuel Rindge and Merritt Adamson of Rancho Malibu; and noted businessmen from throughout the Los Angeles area including the

Doheneys. The club hosted tennis playoffs, quarterhorse races, baseball, archery, and trapshooting. Practice sessions were held every Sunday morning for months so that MLCC could compete against the Arrowhead Club in a clay pigeon shoot.

Malibou Lake was based upon a grand tradition of social clubs with the interesting addition that people also lived there. While the clubhouse thrived, a premium was also placed upon amenities at the lake: a bathing beach complete with sand, diving boards and dressing rooms. In 1933, they created the island opposite the club dock. Now called the “Main Island,” it was originally called the “Marlene Isle” and was a central part of early social activities at the lake.

In 1911, the Auto Club was boosting “The Good Roads” campaign but it wasn’t until 1923 that plans were



## 1924

Our original rustic clubhouse is finished in 1924, but burns to the ground in 1936. Medea Creek is a large body of water along the club’s lawn area.

Four score and five years ago, Bertram Lackey and George Wilson brought forth upon these mountains, a country club dedicated to the proposition that only white Anglo Saxon Protestant men had the privilege and right to hunt, fish, build cabins and enjoy the scenery at Malibu Lake. In the 1920's it was relatively unheard of to have a hunting club that was not exclusive to whites. Original club documents reflect this, stating "Prospective members must be of Caucasian race. Hebrews are not eligible for membership." No need to spell out the restriction against women owning property. That was a given in 1922. Women had the right to vote but white males held onto their bastions of power in Sportsmen's Clubs across America. By the 1950's Malibu Lake had become more than a rich man's weekend retreat and the by-laws of the club were seriously out of date for the needs of the full time residents and members. In the 60's the by-laws were re-written to comply with California's 1959 Unruh Civil Rights Act prohibiting housing discrimination.

filed for the construction of Mulholland Highway. "Mountain Boulevard from Griffith Park to the Sea Will Rival Famous Riviera of France" wrote the LA Times in August 1923. The fastest route from downtown was through the San Fernando Valley taking about an hour and 45 minutes. It took 3 hours going through Santa Monica and Topanga.

By the fall of 1926, the lake had already changed hands. Demonstrating that the membership was already a rather rambunctious lot, 258 members of Malibu Lake Country Club got together and proceeded to buy out Lackey and Wilson for approximately \$250,000. By December 1926, the newly formed corporation of the Malibu Lake Mountain Club now held the property. This dynamic has not changed since 1926 – the majority of stockholders in this corporation are licensee members.

We are a corporation disguised as a community. Or perhaps we are a community disguised as a corporation.

Mountain Boulevard From Griffith Park to the Sea Will Rival Famous Riviera of France



1923-

The development of Mulholland Highway plans a route from Los Angeles to Malibu Lake by car.



1925

Cars line up to drive Mulholland when it first opens in Santa Monica.

## LAKE CLUB BOUGHT BY MEMBERS

Malibu Organization in Transaction Reported as Involving Sum of \$250,000

Members of the Malibu Lake Club, the sportsmen's rendezvous in the Santa Monica Mountains, thirty-five miles northwest of Los Angeles, have purchased the club and its holdings from the founder and owners, George J. Wilson and Bertram D. Lackey, for a consideration said to involve \$250,000.

The personnel of the syndicate committee responsible for closing the transaction includes, C. G. Lynch, Lois M. Hathaway, Harvey E. Peck, W. A. Bremer, Henry S. Peterson, John R. Dutcher, J. F. Earls, George F. Hildebrand, J. E. Hathaway, Dr. Edward Kellogg and G. E. Moreland. This same group will take over the management of the club today until a board of governors and other officials can be elected.

The Malibu Lake Club originated four years ago. Wilson and Lackey built a large concrete and steel dam on Malibu Creek, creating a lake with more than five miles of shoreline which, with the rustic clubhouse, stables, tennis courts, traps and num-

1926

Members buy out Wilson and Lackey. Malibu Lake Mountain Club incorporates.



## Lake Enchanto

The Malibou Lake Connection

The hills and canyons surrounding Malibou Lake and Lake Enchanto were inhabited by the Chumash for several thousand years. After Spanish colonization, they became part of Rancho Las Virgenes. In the early 20th century, the automobile manufacturer Harry Miller, famous for inventing the master carburetor, purchased the 65-acre Ranch as a weekend retreat. In 1926, Miller built the current stone ranch house, the look-out tower, and the aviary. During the Depression, Miller was forced to sell the property.

In the mid 1930s, the property was purchased by noted cinematographer **Arthur Edeson and Warren Shobert, both Malibou Lake residents**, who named the property “Shoson” (a combination of their names) and transformed it into a recreational park for children and adults. Arthur Edeson built his Malibou Lake home overlooking the dam on South Lakeshore in 1926 and lived there for 44 years. Edeson is credited with many films including “*Casablanca*,” “*The Maltese Falcon*,” “*All Quiet on the Western Front*,” “*Mutiny on the Bounty*.” It is believed he was responsible for choosing Malibou Lake as the location for the iconic scene of *Frankenstein* and the little girl beside the lake in the 1931 Boris Karloff classic “*Frankenstein*.”

“Shoson” was renamed Lake Enchanto when a dam was built on Triunfo Creek, creating a large lake for swimming, fishing and boating. Competition from larger amusement parks led to the decline of Lake Enchanto which closed around 1960. In 1976, Peter Strauss purchased the property after filming the mini-series “*Rich Man, Poor Man*” at Malibou Lake. In 1983 Strauss sold it to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The National Park Service purchased the ranch in 1987.



### 1933

Prohibition ends and by 1937 members are enjoying legalized booze at their parties in the newly rebuilt Malibou Lake Clubhouse.

### 1944

Artist and member Earl Corbaley (1923-53) creates a mural in the Clubhouse Poker Room featuring portraits of several Malibou Lake members. In 2007, member Carolyn MacLeod, a restoration artist, makes needed repairs to the brightly illustrated characters.

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# the 40's



'41 Pontiac Woody on PCH -In the 30's there are as few as 70 surfers in So Cal. By the 50's, there are 1,500.

World War II transformed America and especially California. Industries set up for war production had drawn millions of job-seeking immigrants during the early 40's. GI's returning from World War II saw Southern California as the place to achieve the American dream. Developers cleared orchards and farms in the San Fernando Valley and the Federal Highway Administration built freeways to connect the new homes to downtown. Hollywood films depicting an idyllic sun-filled landscape also fueled the desire to move west.

Malibu Lake was out of earshot of the freeways and out of view of commuters, tracts of ranch homes and shopping malls. It was a seemingly secret spot of tranquillity amidst the burgeoning population of Southern California. Members guarded that secrecy, removing highway signs that gave any directions to the lake; hoping to hide it from tourists, the 'Reven-ooers' and building inspectors who might discover the lake and spoil their free-wheeling and creative home-building lifestyle!

Some WWII veterans found the lake: Karl Gunn (Army) and Mary Gunn (Marines); Chuck Kundert (Marines - Pacific Theater); Nick Cici (Army - Europe and Africa); Ken Johnson (Army - Germany); Cal Peterson (Army-Air Corps CBI "Hump Pilots"- Burma, China, India).

Another generation of Malibu Lake members served: Marvin Gainer (Marines, Viet Nam); Tom Dickinson (U.S. Navy 1967-73, Viet Nam); Joe Luithly (Army - Viet Nam) Bruce Clemens (Army); Earl Haines (Marines).

AND NOW: Pat Martin's daughter: Second Lt. Casey Martin, US Army, Military Intelligence, 82nd Airborne. She is being deployed to Afghanistan in April. Chris Heeber's nephew, Kenneth is serving in Iraq.



## 1940's

WWII brings cars, factories, immigration and housing development to So California. "The Freeway is Forever" - Arroyo Seco Parkway opens in '41, Hollywood Fwy in '47.

## 1949

The Club's new Weed Cutter

## 1956

Paramount Ranch Raceway opens for two brief seasons and ends with a bad reputation for crashes.

# 1951-67

## The Reagan Years The "Honorary Mayor of Malibou Lake"



In May 1953, the club newsletter reported that "there will be an installation of Honorary Mayor Mr. Ronald Reagan at the May 2nd Dinner Dance."

These were dress-up formal affairs with

dinner and music by professionals such as Joe Lichter and his orchestra. The Reagans owned Yearling Row Ranch (now parkland at Lake Vista and Mulholland) and attended many club parties and had quite a few lake friends.

The following month the newsletter reported "His Honor, Ronald Reagan, Honorary Mayor of Malibou Lake, was a little late for dinner, because he was working, but we are all so

happy to know a movie star who is working these days that we didn't mind. Bill Richter introduced him and said that when he mentioned the position, Ronnie wanted to know what the duties were. Bill told him we didn't have any super markets, or babies to be kissed, but we could use a little help with the plumbing! Ronnie displayed his good sportsmanship as usual and still accepted! He told us that his secret ambition has always been to be an Honorary Mayor, and that he made one campaign promise...to do his best to see that we always retain our natural country beauty. Large applause greeted this, and was also a tribute to his lovely wife Nancy Davies.

"Then Dr. Huntington convulsed people with the announcement that His Honor would receive the same salary as the Board of Directors...absolutely nothing! The short ceremony over, dancing was enjoyed, and members told Mayor Reagan how much they admired his good citizenship qualities, which was a factor in his selection."



Ron and Nancy enjoying a trail ride through their Yearling Row Ranch along Mulholland and Lake Vista, now part of Malibu Creek State Park.

## 1960

New Clubhouse Pool. The August Club Bulletin says "Honorary Mayor Ronald Reagan came over to be present for the happy occasion."

## 1970

Governor Reagan and son Mike stop by to visit their friends Ruby and Frank Griffith at the lake when Frank is ill.