Publication of The Journal of San Diego History is underwritten by a major grant from the Quest for Truth Foundation, established by the late James G. Scripps. Additional support is provided by “The Journal of San Diego Fund” of the San Diego Foundation and private donors.

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Articles appearing in The Journal of San Diego History are abstracted and indexed in Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life.


Cover: Earliest known sketch from the perspective of Presidio Hill showing the presidio ruins, Mission Valley, the San Diego River emptying into San Diego Bay, Old Town, and Point Loma drawn by William Birch McMurtrie, artist on board the U.S. Steamer Active on the Pacific Coast Surveying Expedition in July 1856. The sketch was probably colorized by the young James Madison Alden, a second artist on board the Active. Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

Cover Design: Allen Wynar

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2508 Historic Decatur Road, Suite 200
San Diego, CA 92106

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Published quarterly by the San Diego History Center at 1649 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego, California 92101.

A $60.00 annual membership in the San Diego History Center includes subscription to The Journal of San Diego History and the SDHC Times. Back issues are available at www.sandiegohistory.org.

Articles and book reviews for publication consideration, as well as editorial correspondence, should be addressed to the Editors, The Journal of San Diego History, Department of History, University of San Diego, 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110.

All article submissions should be computer generated and double-spaced with endnotes, and follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript, plus an electronic copy, in MS Word or in rich text format (RTF).

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©2010 by the San Diego History Center
ISSN 0022-4383
Periodicals postage paid at San Diego, CA
Publication No. 331-870
(619) 232-6203
www.sandiegohistory.org

Note: For a change of address, please call (619) 232-6203 ext. 102 or email Jessica.Schmidt@sandiegohistory.org.
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Examining California’s First Palm Tree: The Serra Palm

By

Heidi Trent and Joey Seymour

‘Serra Palm, which dominates the scene at the beautiful “Kings Garden,” acknowledged by all historians to be the oldest tree in California known to have been planted by human hands, stimulates fancy to an extent equaled by few other landmarks on this coast.

Winifred Davidson, March 1944.¹

A misplaced item in the folder labeled “Pigeon Point Lighthouse” at the Bancroft Library, has sparked a renewed interest in a nearly forgotten San Diego landmark—the Serra Palm. In 1987 San Diego anthropologist Ron May had been reviewing materials in the Lighthouse file when he came across a unique sketch detailing the ruins of the Spanish presidio in San Diego. According to May, “The view is to the southwest. Over near what we now call Midway, is the Dutch windmill that I later identified as erected in 1856 to mill flour for dry farming up on Point Loma. The Point Loma Light House is also in the sketch, which dated about three years earlier.”² In the foreground of the sketch is a very detailed palm tree. While this specific tree does not depict the famed Serra Palm, the discovery of the drawing by William Birch McMurtrie, an artist...

Heidi Trent, Sonoma State University alumnus and current candidate for the Master of Arts degree in history at University of San Diego, most recently assisted with the reopening of the Serra Museum in Presidio Park. She is currently working on her Master’s thesis on California State Parks. Joey Seymour, author of San Diego’s Finest Athletes, University of San Diego alumnus, and part of the team that reopened the Serra Museum, wishes to thank Dr. Iris Engstrand and the San Diego History Center for the opportunity to work on this fascinating project as well as Carolina Colburn who assisted in the research and selection of the photos contained within this article.
assigned to sketch comprehensive views that could be utilized in survey charts in the mid-1800s, has invigorated a curiosity regarding the old tree. In February 2010, while preparing to reopen the Serra Museum to the public, a color version (the cover of this journal) was found in a dusty drawer. It is due to these remarkable finds that this article has come to fruition and through its words and photographs, examines the historical accounts of the Serra Palm, which, after a supposed life span of 188 years, was cut down in 1957.

In July 1769, Spanish missionaries and soldiers congregated on the site that would become known as Presidio Hill. In years to come, mystery and mythology would shroud the factual details and stories of those who founded the first European settlement in Alta California. One of those mysteries pertains to the Serra Palm, which was one of two Old Town Palms or Mission Palms as they were sometimes known. Ellen Saunders, in 1953, wrote, “California’s first Thanksgiving service was held July 1, 1769, in a Southland park; and during the ceremony the Golden State’s first palm tree was planted.” Controversy surrounds not only the notion that Father Junípero Serra was the one to plant the trees, but whether he in fact was present for the planting.

The lore of the Serra Palm began in 1769 with the reunion of the four branches of an expedition to Alta California organized by José de Galvez. “By the late eighteenth century … the threat of Russian expansion south from Alaska, an increase in funds from Spain, and the zeal of Serra’s missionaries combined to spark” a renewed interest in the lands north of Baja California. Sent overland and by sea to unite in San Diego during the summer of 1769, the military aspect of the expedition was led by Gaspar de Portolá and the religious arm by the Franciscan Father Junípero Serra. It is believed that as an act of celebration and thanksgiving for the safe reunion of the four groups, a blessing was offered on the site that is now Presi-
dio Hill. “The planting of two palms followed, the trees coming from dates Fr. Serra had brought from... [the] village of Loreto in Baja California.” Whether the famous palms were planted by Father Serra’s own hands or were accidentally dropped by a Spanish soldier may never be known. Nonetheless, the Serra Palm represents a symbol of the Spanish period in California.

By 1893, numerous palms stood at the foot of Presidio Hill and the site of the Serra Palm. During early 1893, one of these palms was moved to Chicago by rail for the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Organizers hoped the palm would be a perfect addition to the San Diego display. This particular tree was uprooted about a quarter of a mile from the site of the Serra Palm and even though considered by some to be the third of the Old Town Palms, was never actually one of them. Robert C. Bancroft, who witnessed the removal of the palm, described the process in an article from the San Diego Union dated March 1932, “I was present, on the spot, when the palm was moved... it was loaded on rollers and taken to the track at Old Town, where it was placed on two Santa Fe flat cars and transferred to the main tracks near the station downtown, on India street.” Bancroft goes on to claim, “Five years ago I met a man who had visited the horticultural gardens in Jackson Park, Chicago, and who told me that the San Diego palm was still living.” Despite this statement, it is believed that the palm did not survive the length of the Exposition. Notwithstanding, the risky feat of moving a full grown palm tree from sunny San Diego to windy, cold Chicago has only added to the folklore of the Old Town Palms.

In 1915, a fierce windstorm crippled the cow pasture that had developed around the Old Palm sent to Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. ©SDHC OP #12423-1379.

Old Town Palms surrounded by the Palm Dairy, 1910. ©SDHC #4708-2.
Town Palms and caused the smaller of the two to break apart. As Ellen Saunders noted, “For many years these trees were among San Diego’s most revered landmarks. When high winds in 1915 caused one of the Serra Palms to break, the public demanded that steps be taken to protect the remaining one.” That remaining tree would become known as simply the Serra Palm after this unfortunate wrath of Mother Nature.

By the mid-twentieth century, the Serra Palm, which was claimed to be over 150 years old, was being physically damaged by all manners of weather, animals, and humans. As early as 1869, concerned citizens of San Diego wanted to construct a protective fencing around the palms to guard them from being “bruised by runaways ... and burnt and chipped by
vagabonds.” On March 20, 1887, a protective fence was built. In 1929, a donation by Mrs. Winifred Murtha made it possible for the fencing that had been placed around the Serra Cross in 1913 to be moved to protect the lone Serra Palm. Despite the shielding provided by the fence, the palm tree still suffered damage caused by severe weather, in particular high winds. In 1941 cables were installed to help stabilize the aging palm.

On September 2, 1950, city officials and enthusiastic crowds gathered for a ceremony...
After the loss of one of the Old Palms in 1915, the lone standing tree was dubbed Serra Palm at this ceremony in 1917. ©SDHC #80: 8544.

First historical marker indicating significance of the Serra Palm, 1917. ©SDHC OP #419.
Serra Palm with Serra Museum in the background. ©SDHC #80: 8721.
Serra Palm postcard (front). Photo courtesy University of San Diego, Copley Library archives.
to honor the Serra Palm as well as those who died during the expedition that brought California’s first European settlers to San Diego. The plaque, which is still in place, reads “Serra Palm: Traditionally the earliest planted tree in California. Directly in the rear, beneath the brow of the hill, lie the dead of the sacred expedition of 1769. Burial place of our first unknown soldiers.”

The remaining tree stood over 80-feet tall. It was suffering from malnutrition caused mainly by lead poisoning. The lead caused the crown of the Serra Palm to tilt severely. From 1941 to 1957, there were several attempts to save the Serra Palm. According to a San Diego Union article dated September 23, 1952, “A Spanish musket ball at least 100 years old has been dug from the trunk of San Diego’s famous Father Serra Palm.” Upon further examination in 1957, six .44 caliber bullets were also found embedded in the old tree. Albert V. Mayrhofer, president of the California State Historical Association, stated his extreme displeasure at how the Old Town Palms had been treated, “The historic trees were shamefully neglected and abused for many years. They were gnawed by disrespectful horses, and fell victim to those thoughtless vandals who, for some inescrutable reason, never miss an opportunity to carve their own unimportant initials upon everything which the public is having preserved.”

The day arrived, June 6, 1957. At 9 a.m. John Nicholson, an employee of a local tree service firm, climbed to the peak of the once majestic Serra Palm, and according to the San Diego Tribune, “sawed through it with a curved crosscut saw, dropping the top section inside the heavy guy wires that had supported the tree for several years.”

The tree was cut in ten-foot sections and by 10:15 a.m., the last of the Old Palms, the one affectionately known as the Serra Palm, was no more. Parts
Efforts to save the Serra Palm take place, 1952. ©SDHC #S-3037.
John Nicholson climbs to the crown of Serra Palm to begin cutting it down, 1957. ©SDHC #S-3037.
Serra Palm loses its crown, 1957. ©SDHC UT #84_30258.9.
A commemorative plaque is placed on the site where the Serra Palm once stood, 1957. ©SDHC UT #84: 30258.10.

Early marker noting location of Serra Palm and indicating Serra Museum and Old Town, 1957. ©SDHC #S-3037-2.
Plaque still in place honoring the Serra Palm site on the corner of Taylor Street and Presidio Drive. Photo by Iris Engstrand.

State Registered Landmark No. 67 marking the site of the Serra Palm by the California Centennial Commission, September 2, 1950. Photo by Iris Engstrand.
of the tree were sent to local historical societies as well as to Balboa Park. Mother Rosalie Hill, founder of the San Diego College for Women, which merged with the College for Men to become the University of San Diego in 1972, was awarded a piece of the tree. Another notable recipient of a piece of the Serra Palm was the Serra Museum in Petra on the island of Mallorca in Spain, Serra’s birthplace.

In October 1972, Jerry MacMullen, former director of the Serra Museum, discussing the rapid growth of the Serra Palm from 1887 to 1957 noted, “When time—and those slobs with rifles—finally took care of the lone surviving tree a mere 10 or 15 years ago, it was at least twice as high as the ones in the photo of 1887, which brings up a disturbing question. From 1769 to 1887 is 118 years. Would a palm tree grow slowly for 118 years—and then sprout up like nobody’s business in the remaining 70-odd years of its life?” While the tree’s rapid growth in such a short span is an anomaly, MacMullen is actually questioning the legitimacy of the tree’s tie to Father Serra and the Spanish settlers. This is fair, due to the fact that in 1944 San Diego Union columnist Winifred Davidson noted that the Serra Palm was a date palm with the scientific name of Phoenix dactylifera, although some people believe that the Serra Palm was actually a Phoenix canariensis (Canary Island date palm).

The tree which Davidson identified as the Serra Palm can live as long as 200 years and is considered a medium sized palm tree. The Canary Island date palm has also been known to live up to 200 years (which still raises doubts), but is a much larger and solitary tree. Also, the voyage that brought Father Serra to Mexico (New Spain) and California in the mid-1700s, stopped for water and supplies in the Spanish controlled Canary Islands. A final discrepancy is that the date palm produces a sweet, juicy fruit, whereas the Canary Island date palm’s fruit is essentially inedible. This fact was noted of the Serra Palm.

Whether or not Junípero Serra or one of his fellow travelers planted the famed Serra Palm will remain unknown. What can be believed is that the Serra Palm represented what is most likely one of the oldest and first palm trees to be planted in California as well as a link to our Spanish past, significant historical elements of not only California’s history, but also United States history.
1. Winifred Davidson’s Personal Notes. San Diego History Center Archives. March 1944.
2. Ron May e-mail to Dr. Iris Engstrand, February 26, 2010.
6. Saunders, “A Living Monument Was Planted at Service Marking California’s First Thanksgiving.”
7. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
11. Saunders, “A Living Monument Was Planted at Service Marking California’s First Thanksgiving.”
12. Davidson’s Personal Notes.
14. Serra Palm Marker on the corner of Taylor Street and Presidio Drive in San Diego, California.
17. “Serra Palm Falls to Woodman’s Ax,” San Diego Tribune, June 6, 1957.
19. The palms were likely Phoenix dactylifera (date palm) because of the small diameter of the trunk and more sparse canopy. It is difficult to tell with complete accuracy because the color would definitely help to separate the two species. Based upon the growth rates of other palm species, both could have a life spanning nearly 200 years.
21. Letter from Winifred Davidson to Mr. R. Waite of San Quentin, CA, February 22, 1934.
The Globe Players in Balboa Park

By

Darlene Gould Davies

I acted in the first play at the Old Globe as a permanent theater in 1937 (after the closing of the Exposition of 1935-36). I was an actor in 1937-38, but I was also a stage manager, helped with sets and props—I lived at the theatre! Then when the Globe’s director was called up by the Navy, I was chosen to be producing director—a job which I did, basically, for the next 65 years...(though my title changed).

Craig Noel in 2005

Seventy-five years have passed since the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition in Balboa Park and the first appearance of the Globe Players in the newly built Old Globe Theatre. The Globe Players moved to San Diego from Chicago where they had performed edited versions of Shakespeare’s plays in an Elizabethan-themed “Merrie England” exhibit at the 1933-34 “Century of Progress Exposition” in Chicago. Word of their popularity reached San Diegans who were busily planning an exposition to open the next year. According to theatre critic Welton Jones, “the operators of the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego lured them to Balboa Park hoping to duplicate their success.”

Abbreviated Shakespeare productions fit nicely with a great array of attractions in Balboa Park. The purpose of the exposition was purely commercial—to market San Diego to the world as a tourist attraction and a place to do business. Performances of edited Shakespearean plays appealed to

The Globe Players performed edited versions of Shakespeare’s plays at the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition in Balboa Park. This postcard, signed by Rhys Williams, was collected as a souvenir. Courtesy of Michael Kelly.

Darlene Gould Davies has previously published articles on San Diego’s theatre history in The Journal of San Diego History. She is indebted to editors Dr. Molly McClain and Dr. Iris Engstrand, without whom this article would not have been written.
large numbers of people—a practical notion that introduced many people to theatre and Shakespeare for the first time in their lives. For the most part, it took little time to see plays, leaving plenty of leftover hours for viewing rocks and minerals; attending the Hollywood Motion Picture Hall of Fame, Gold Gulch Calaboose, and the Amusement Zone; enjoying symphony concerts; peeking at the Zoro Garden nudist colony; and sampling all kinds of food. People could opt to see multiple plays in one day. It was envisioned that upon entering the fairgrounds within the park, families would spend entire days and evenings at the Exposition. That is exactly what happened.

The founder of the Globe Players was Thomas Wood (“T.W.”) Stevens (1895-1984), an artist, teacher, author, and theatre director. He founded the Department of Drama at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (Carnegie Mellon University), remaining there from 1913-25, and co-founded the Goodman Memorial Theatre in Chicago.4 Director Theodore Viehman described him as “a quiet and efficient organizer” and an all-round artist: “He was a complete regisseur, for he was eminently equipped as painter, etcher, colorist, and he had a far-reaching knowledge of historic periods in costume, furniture, decoration, and architecture.”5 He was not, however, an actor’s director. Those who worked with him described their frustration “at not having a firm guiding hand from T.W.” According to one student, he had a sink-or-swim attitude: “He had unwavering faith in the actors whom he had chosen. He assumed they were trained for their jobs...He was convinced that each individual had something to say and to contribute and, given the right conditions and material, he would eventually say it.”6

In 1919, Stevens recruited Ben Iden Payne (1881-1976), an English actor, director, and teacher in the drama program. Payne made his stage debut in England at age seventeen and went on to pioneer the repertory theatre movement in Britain and, later, the United States. In 1913, he established the Fine Arts Theatre in Chicago, where he met Stevens for the first time. Payne explained that he accepted a position at the Carnegie Institute because “for some time I had felt that the changing conditions in the theatre had created the need for definite training of actors rather than the old haphazard way of drifting or forcing one’s way onto the stage without preparation.”7
At the Carnegie Institute, Payne “developed what he considered his chief contribution to theatre: the method of producing Shakespeare’s plays on an approximation of an Elizabethan stage.” He attributed it to his “brief association with that eccentric genius William Poel, founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society” and later wrote about his experiences in *A Life in the Wooden O: Memoirs of the Theatre* (1977). In 1934, Payne took a leave from the university to direct and act at the Goodman Theatre with his former colleague Stevens.

Together, Stevens and Payne planned a Shakespeare project for Chicago’s Century of Progress Exposition, where a theatre was built for Stevens in the fair’s “English Village,” also known as “Merrie England.” There, the Globe Players performed shortened versions of Shakespeare’s plays. Stevens and Payne “edited the cutting of the plays, streamlining each play into a forty minute playing unit, without intermission.” *San Diego Union* arts writer Dave McIntyre wrote, “In spite of horrified outcries from the more hidebound academicians, the resulting productions enjoyed enthusiastic popular success.”

Shakespeare’s plays came to life under Stevens and Payne with performances that were “expertly directed, briskly paced, intelligently read, well phrased,” according to a contemporary. By the end of the Century of Progress Exposition, the company had put on 1,001 performances of Shakespeare’s most popular plays before audiences totaling 400,000.

San Diego planners wanted to replicate that success in Balboa Park. McIntyre wrote, “Encouraged by the offer of enough space to erect a reasonably accurate replica of Shakespeare’s own theater...Stevens agreed to repeat the project here. And that’s how the Old Globe was born.” Payne edited and arranged many of the plays and was involved in direction. He later returned to the Globe to direct
the first production of the National Shakespeare Festival, *Twelfth Night*, in 1949. According to McIntyre, “His judgment was certainly a key factor in their success. And anyone who remembers the long lines that gathered for every performance during the fair can testify to their appeal. In truth, it is no exaggeration to mark those offerings as the root of much of the vital interest in Shakespeare that continues to this day.”

Groundbreaking for San Diego’s Globe Theatre replica took place on April 28, 1935. Although the new theatre was not finished when the Old Globe Players arrived, it was soon done, opening on May 29. The replica, as promised, was faithfully based on Shakespeare’s fabled Globe Theatre in England. That meant that, in the beginning, it had no roof and audiences endured uncomfortably hot weather conditions. Nevertheless, the plays, the talent, and the setting provided a mix that was irresistible to the public.

Joe A. Callaway, a member of the 1935 Globe acting company, later wrote about that first year. He maintained fond memories and eagerly shared them. Callaway’s recollections provide direct links to that historically significant time. He recalled the history of the founding of The Old Globe Company of Equity Players in 1934 and its development into the financial and artistic hit of the Century of Progress Exposition. Callaway cited glowing critical reviews at the time, including one that described the company as, “Blazingly successful in both quality and box office.” Another reported, “1,000 successful performances of Shakespeare in one playhouse for a half million people is the most important dramatic item ever written.” Thanks to Callaway’s recollections, it is known that, at the close of the Century of Progress Exposition engagement, a winter season followed at Chicago’s Studebaker Theatre featuring a full length version of *King Lear*, that critic Lloyd Lewis described as “the greatest in living memory.”
Actress Irene Tedrow described her time with the Old Globe Players to writer and actress Roberta Ridgely. “It was a wonderful learning experience,” the former recalled, “Nine of us were from Carnegie Tech, where Stevens headed the drama department, the first in the country to give a degree in drama. We all had worked with Payne there. It was he who put our company together.”18 Payne had many contacts, as he had taught at other institutions besides the Carnegie Institute, and he was able to recruit additional players, for instance, Bertram Tanswell. According to Tedrow, “Payne, not Stevens, was the real director of the Globe Players. And he was such an authority. He could tell you how to read the lines and how to interpret them, and how to speak in verse. A great teacher as well as a great director. After the 1934 Century of Progress, we toured the Midwest. Then we returned to Chicago and played in a downtown theatre.”19

The company arrived in San Diego in May 1935. According to Callaway, “Most of the plays were given in abbreviated versions, with unessential parts eliminated without weakening the structure. They held the audience’s interest closely by presenting the essence of the plays in less than an hour. Intermissions, scene changes, and curtain waits were eliminated so that the condensed versions were paced with cinema-like speed. There were marathon performances each day.”20 Walter Kerr, the influential New York Times critic, wrote: “Correct any impression that Stevens was in any way ‘amateur.’ It was one of the most vigorous and accomplished young acting companies I ever saw.”21

According to the Old Globe’s production history, the following eight plays were presented in the first year: Julius Caesar, The Taming of the Shrew, Hamlet, Much Ado About Nothing, The Comedy of Errors (full length), The Winter’s Tale, As You Like it, Macbeth, A Midsummer’s Night Dream, All’s Well That Ends Well, Twelfth Night, Dr. Faustus, and The Merry Wives of Windsor.22 Nevertheless, additional productions were in the final repertoire.

There seems to have been very little theatre activity in Los Angeles at the time,
so the movie colony adopted the Globe. Callaway remembered that movie stars like Jimmy Cagney, Mae West, and Boris Karloff came to shows, with Karloff boasting he had seen thirty-six performances. 23

Callaway’s name appears repeatedly in a printed program for Globe Theatre productions dated 1935. The program lists eight productions with their casts, but the repertoire was larger than eight. A few of the popular players were Irene Tedrow, Bertram Tanswell, Carl Benton Reid, Jack Woolley (later known as Jackson Woolley), Elsie Dvorak, Joe A. Callaway, Jackson Perkins, Martha Ellen Scott, and Rhys Williams. While not all actors appeared in every production, a majority performed in most of them.24

The fact that the group was already a functioning unit made it easier to adjust to the rapidly changing and uneven circumstances of the early days of the Exposition. It was a true repertory company in ensemble mode, young and nimble, ready to rapidly change from one humorous character in a comedy to a lead in a tragedy, then to an entirely different part in a third production, lickety-split, all within a few hours’ time.25 Accounts differ as to the length of the plays, with various sources citing performance times from 36 to 50 minutes, as well as full length. San Diego historian Richard Amero refers to one-hour versions of Shakespeare and suggests that there were five, maybe six, plays presented each day.26 Even in abbreviated format, actors and staff must have worked furiously to provide so much entertainment.

Callaway fondly recalled artistic director and producer Craig Noel who became the guiding inspiration at the Globe for more than seven decades. During breaks, actors would walk across Cabrillo bridge for tea and a visit with Noel, a stage-struck young man working at the soda fountain at Bakker’s Drug Store at Fifth and Laurel Streets. Callaway wrote, “Even if they had read the tea leaves at the bottom of the
cups, none would have predicted that this brilliant fellow would later be largely responsible for the preservation and expansion of the durable Old Globe.”

Noel graduated from high school in 1934 with a great love of the words of Shakespeare. His high school drama teacher—Margery Davis, a former professional actor—had encouraged him in his acting endeavors and he had memorized Shakespearean soliloquies and performed them in contests while still in high school. He had auditioned for Stevens to be a part of the Globe Theatre performances, but was not selected. He recalled that his choice of Antony’s oration from Julius Caesar was an “unwise choice for a scrawny little kid.” Nevertheless, Noel stayed near the Globe, taking various jobs in Balboa Park during the Exposition. One job involved working the check stand: checking coats, cameras, packages, and the like. Between shifts, he rushed over to the Globe to see a Shakespeare production. He loved the shows and thought the actors were wonderful, mentioning, in particular, Jackson Perkins, Irene Tedrow, Carl Benton Reid, and Martha Scott.

Noel wrote of the Globe Theatre: “I found the acting very rapid and intense, but what impressed me was the thrust stage. I had never seen anything like it.” He was referring to Payne’s use of “a modified Elizabethan staging for Shakespeare plays rather than the Victorian proscenium staging common at the time.”

While the new theatre in Balboa Park conformed well to the original Old Globe, the positioning was faulty. Noel explained, “Because of San Diego’s wonderful climate, exposition officials decided they could follow the original Old Globe plan of an open-air building with no roof…Unfortunately, the stage had been placed so that the late afternoon sun shone right in the eyes of the audiences.”

As the afternoon sun was blinds, and hot, a trial canvas was put on top of the “Wooden O.” Finally, a permanent roof was attached that not only took care of the sun glare during shows, but also cut down on the

I first became familiar with the Old Globe Theatre when I attended a talk given by Craig Noel. As a graduate directing student, I was absolutely taken by what Mr. Noel had to say, not only about the world of professional theatre, but specifically about his theatre and his town, San Diego. I liked his calm, unassuming manner and his description of his theatre and the people it attracted.


The program for Julius Caesar and The Taming of the Shrew performed at the Old Globe Theatre at the California Pacific International Exposition, 1935. Lowell Davies Papers, Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University.
Charlotte Erwine Albrecht, a long-time San Diegan, described the Exposition as “kind of thrown together in the beginning. Buildings and amenities were only partially completed.” She clearly remembered seeing the Globe Shakespeare productions when she was thirteen years old. Her large family frequently attended the fair and showed great enthusiasm for both the Globe performances and symphony concerts in the Ford Bowl, often referred to as the Starlight Bowl. They spent an entire day and evening every time they visited. She said, “There was so much to do. The first thing we did after we entered the fair was hurry to the food and beverage building, where free sticks of gum were given to visitors. We all watched one of the Shakespeare productions, which probably cost no more than 25 cents at the time. Then, we rushed from the Globe to other attractions.” Albrecht remembered the Globe stage productions as being very well done: “So immediate. My parents were very impressed. The stage was fabulous.” She experienced the Wooden O while it was still open on top and, later, attended when there was a roof. She estimates that she saw most of the plays, if not all of them, and characterized the experience as “life changing.” She added, “We also loved the festivities on the green, with old English style dancing. There was a little girl who played a recorder, and these goofy guys dressed in old English garb who were jesters. There was lots of merriment and laughter.”

San Diego’s Globe Players were mentioned in a Time Magazine article entitled, “California: Miracle of 1935.” The article described the California Pacific Exposition: “Under the soft glow of colored lights playing on bowers of palm and eucalyptus trees, a comfortable but by no means spectacular crowd of 25,000 began to see the fair sights in earnest.” They included, “the ‘Gold Gulch Mining Camp,’ complete with an old-time saloon, ogling dance hall gals and some bearded characters in hickory shirts splashing in a muddy wallow with pans. Tabloid versions of Shakespearean drama were playing at ‘Shakespeare’s Old Globe Theatre,’ an old-time Chicago attraction.” Perhaps the word “tabloid” referred to the fact that most of the Shakespeare plays were heavily edited and abbreviated.

When it was decided to extend the Exposition into 1936, the Globe Players performed for only a short time in San Diego before leaving early in 1936 to play at an exposition in Texas. The Fortune Players replaced them and continued to perform Shakespeare’s work. Ridgely noted, “It was always the éclat of the Globe Players that San Diegans liked to recall in connection with the Expo years.”

In 1997, Dr. Homer and Mrs. Betty Peabody gathered written memories of the Exposition in a softbound, unpublished book entitled “Tapestry of Time.”
The Globe Players gathered around the character of Queen Elizabeth I, played by Martha Scott, 1935-36. From left to right, standing: Jack Woolley, Bertram Tanswell, Robert Galbraith, Austin Coghlan, and Kendall Power. From left to right, seated: Martha Scott, Elizabeth Sowersby, and Elsie Dvorak. Old Globe Theatre Photograph Collection, Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University.
Lewis W. Fry recalled, “It was a wonderful world inside those gates. One place that made a difference in my life was the Old Globe Theatre where actors performed short Shakespearean excerpts both inside the replica of the famous Globe on the Thames and outside in a bench-rimmed circle on the grass. I watched them over and over. Though I never took a Shakespeare literature class in school, those little plays gave me a real appreciation of the drama and I enjoyed Globe Shakespeare Festival productions starting with the first one in 1949 and was a Globe member for years.”37 Dr. Sue Earnest wrote, “I remember the agile dancers on the green by the Globe Theatre presided over by Queen Elizabeth. They danced with youthful abandon. The trumpet was sounded, Queen Eliz-

abeth waved her fan and a page barked sharply ‘Curtain time!’ The sharply cut versions of Shakespeare were beautifully done and lasted about an hour.”38 Ellen Revelle Eckis said, “We loved the performances of stream-lined Shakespeare, and Queen Elizabeth appearing to watch the lively English dances outdoors.”39

World fairs like the ones in Chicago, San Diego and Dallas offered valuable training for ambitious actors in early periods of their careers. MacDonald Carey, a member of the Globe Players in Texas, later achieved fame as a film and television performer.40 Noted actor and director Sam Wanamaker, meanwhile, performed Shakespeare at the 1936-37 summertime Great Lakes World Fair in Cleveland, Ohio. This experience may have provided the seeds of his enormous efforts to reconstruct the original Globe Theatre in London later in his life.41

Many founding members of the Globe Players led successful acting careers, including Joe Callaway. His stage and
Carl Benton Reid was another one of the actors who graduated from Carnegie Tech drama department, and was recruited by Stevens to act with the Globe Players in Chicago and then in San Diego. That was the beginning of Reid's long and multi-faceted career on stage, in film, and on television. He was acclaimed in the role of Oscar Hubbard in the 1939 Broadway production of *The Little Foxes*, a role he repeated in the movie starring Bette Davis. He acted in Shakespeare productions on Broadway and performed in the original production of Eugene O'Neil's *The Iceman Cometh*. Reid's filmography lists thirty movies, including *The Great Caruso*, *The Ugly American*, *Pork Chop Hill*, and *Wichita*. He is best remembered for his presence as “the man” in the 1965 TV series “Amos Burke—Secret Agent,” which was only one of many TV appearances.

Martha Scott, another Globe Player, was the original Emily Webb in *Our Town* on Broadway in 1938. She recreated the role for the 1940 film, winning an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. She appeared in many movies, includ-
The Globe Players in Balboa Park


Other working actors included Bertram Tanswell, who acted the part of Rich Oberon in *Summerspell* (1983) and directed plays, and the remarkable Irene Tedrow, veteran of dozens of television shows and films.48 The latter performed in several Broadway performances of Shakespeare plays in the late 1930s and the Broadway revival of *Our Town* (1969). She returned to theater later in life to deliver a burnished performance in the Old Globe production of *Foxfire* (1985).49

Jackson Woolley, a native of Pittsburgh, continued to act and direct. He returned to the Old Globe to play Malvolio in B. Iden Payne’s 1949 production of *Twelfth Night*. Noel discussed that production, among others, in a conversation with Ted Bardacke in 1969. He said that in the summer of 1949, most of the actors were students, with the exception of Donna Woodruff and Jackson Woolley who “were able to enhance the productions.”50 In the 1950s, Woolley directed several shows at the Globe. He and his wife Ellamarie Woolley became regionally notable visual artists, and their enamel on copper work remains highly collectible.51

Stevens continued his dynamic career. After his work with the Globe Players, he directed and taught at many different drama centers, from small theatres in St. Louis and Detroit to The Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto, California. In 1941, he accepted the position of Head of the Department of Dramatic Arts at the University of Arizona. He also did an incredible amount of writing. He penned plays for stage; wrote and directed twenty-two dramatic pageants, including *The Pageant of the Italian Renaissance* (1909); published his poetry in *Harper’s Magazine*; and composed novels. According to White, his most important literary contribution was his textbook on the history of the theatre, *The Theatre from Athens to Broadway* (1932).52 Particularly interesting are his arrangements of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *As You Like It* for the Globe Theatre. According to actress Mary Doyle, “No one in his generation did more to popularize Shakespeare than Thomas Wood Stevens.”53

Payne, meanwhile, continued his career in educational theatre. In 1935, he returned to England to become the director of the Stratford-on-Avon Shake-
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In 1942, after directing in the United States for the British Ministry of Information and two years later, he directed several plays for the New York Theatre Guild. In 1946, he took a position at the University of Texas at Austin where he remained for the rest of his career, first as Guest Professor of Drama and, later, as department chair. He held guest summer positions at a number of schools and summer theatres, including Shakespeare festivals in San Diego and Ashland, Oregon, and won many awards. In 1976, Queen Elizabeth II made him an Honorary Officer of the British Empire and the University of Texas approved the establishment of a 500-seat theater to be named after him.54

Stevens and Payne, along with the Globe Players, laid the foundation of San Diego’s Globe Theatre. Their work was carried on by many devoted people of the theatre, none more determinedly, or for so long, than Craig Noel. The stage-struck young actor who longingly gazed at the Globe stage in 1935 provided the thread of continuity over seventy-five years. While the years of World War II were disruptive and there were stumbles along the way, he never dropped the torch handed to him by Stevens, Payne, and actors like Callaway. Let Balboa Park’s California Pacific International Exposition and San Diego’s Globe Theatre share a birthday cake this year. Seventy-five years young.
NOTES


6. Ibid., 311.


12. McIntryre, “Barrymore Story Kindles Memories of Drama Veteran.”


17. Ibid.


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


25. Author conversations with Craig Noel over past two decades.


30. Rhoades, “Payne, Ben Iden.”
32. Ridgely, “The Dream in the Park.”
35. Ridgely, “The Dream in the Park.”
36. Dr. Homer and Betty Peabody, eds., “Tapestry of Time,” unpublished manuscript, 1997, 63. This bound collection of stories is available for loan from the Friends of Balboa Park office.
37. Ibid, 63.
38. Ibid, 18.
39. Ibid, 32.
45. Diane Sinor and Lianne Bower, interviewed by author, 2010. The painting of Callaway was identified and located by Diane Sinor, Roberta Wells-Famula, and Robert Drake.
Landscape architect Samuel H. Parsons, Jr. noted with enthusiasm the growth of trees and shrubs in City Park when he returned to San Diego in 1910. Five years had elapsed since his New York firm had submitted a comprehensive master plan for the layout of the 1,400 acres set aside as a park in 1868, but mostly left in a natural state for the next few decades. Parsons had returned to San Diego because the city had decided to host an international exposition in 1915. He was hired this time to assess progress on City Park’s master plan and to suggest improvements in all of San Diego’s parks. He thought San Diego had made good progress in engineering roads and otherwise fulfilling the landscape plan of City Park. His formal report to the park commissioners, submitted June 28, 1910, includes a description of trees and other plantings in the park. By the time Parsons wrote this report, City Park had been in existence for forty-two years and was estimated to contain about 20,000 healthy trees and shrubs. The park commission kept careful records of 2,357 shrubs and vines planted in 1909, but earlier landscape records are sketchy.

In 1902, Parsons had suggested that the mesas be left open to preserve the stunning views stretching from the mountains to the ocean. “Overplanting is a common mistake everywhere,” he said, “A park is too often perverted to a sort of botanical garden, where a heterogeneous lot of plants are gathered together and massed in a haphazard fashion.” He was trying to help San Diegans understand the difference between a park and botanical garden and perhaps obliquely commenting on the hodgepodge of homegrown efforts to develop the park before 1910.

Good Intentions and Dead Trees

Contemporary newspapers contain accounts of the sporadic public and private efforts to enhance City Park. Some of these initiatives made successful and long-lasting improvement to park lands, while other projects were missteps. When volunteers planted small areas of the park, the plant choices were sometimes inappropriate and maintenance poor. Lack of water was a third strike against the success of these efforts. In a few years, trees were too often dead or ailing. These failures undoubtedly contributed to public apathy about...
park improvement. Efforts to beautify the large and barren expanse of City Park looked futile.

George W. Marston was among a group of twelve prominent citizens who, in 1884, petitioned the City Trustees for permission to plant and maintain a number of trees on the tract known as the City Park Reservation. The expense was to be defrayed by private donations. He said, “We propose to set out this present season, an avenue of eucalyptus trees alongside one of the roads leading over the mesa and continue such improvements whenever there are sufficient funds.”

The next year, the Ladies Annex of the Chamber of Commerce resolved to apply to the city for ten acres to plant shade trees and flowers to create a family-friendly location. It would be improved with booths or other buildings suitable for recreation, thus forming the nucleus for other park improvements. Individuals donated trees, sometimes in complete disregard for their suitability. The sugar maple, helpfully brought back from upper New York State, could not have lasted long.

The 700 trees and shrubs planted in “Annex Park” running along Sixth Avenue from Juniper to Palm Streets suffered from the lack of water. The Union editorialized on an impasse that threatened to doom the trees. The city had contracted for irrigation pipes, but had not paid to get the work started. In the interim, nearby hydrants had been tapped for irrigation water, but the water company had barred further use of the hydrants. The editorial stated, “If the company will allow water to be used until the pipes can be put in, the 700 trees can be saved; otherwise they will die. The water company is not in good humor but it can hardly be believed that the company will refuse a favor as the Ladies Annex have requested. Even a water company should not show bad temper to ladies.” After this admonition, the water company relented and agreed to supply water until the city pipes were installed.

Balboa Park 6th and Date, January 1906. ©SDHC #105.
Water did not equal salvation for this attempt at park improvement, however. A Ladies Annex report in 1891 stated:

The ten-acre tract in the southwest corner of the city park [Annex Park] is being depredated by the rowdy boys of upper Sixth Street . . . . They have partially destroyed the vine house, hacked the benches and broken the shrubs. What is worse, there are adults not over scrupulous in staking their horses or other animals out on the tract under cover of darkness. These creatures have done more damage than the boys. Nipped shrubs and trees show where they have grazed.  

In 1888, Dr. J.P. LaFevre, a practicing physician, organized thirty San Diegans into a tree-planting club. Each member contributed one dollar per month to plant eucalyptus trees in the western areas of the park. Many of these trees succumbed to drought within the next ten years.

After 1890, businessman and philanthropist Bryant Howard undertook one of the largest and most intelligent planting efforts in the park, although his occupation of park land was controversial. Under a provision that allowed park land to be used for charitable and educational purposes, Howard successfully petitioned the City for a grant of 100 acres to establish an orphan boys home and training center. The Women's Home Association piggybacked onto the Howard petition and five acres was added to build a home for indigent women. No one in San Diego was of a more charitable mind that George W. Marston, but he spoke out against this grant, calling it a dangerous precedent. For Marston, Kate Ses-
sions, and others, such ad hoc assignments of land reinforced the need for a comprehensive City Park plan.

Bryant Howard spent $12,000 to build a turreted Queen Anne-style building of four stories northeast of the Russ School. A refuge for homeless and abused women was also constructed. The surrounding acres of the “charities tract” were cleared of brush and the debris that had accumulated after many years of unregulated dumping. The land was plowed and richly fertilized. The whole tract was laid with water pipe. More than 10,000 trees, suitable for San Diego, were planted, including varieties of eucalyptus, cypress, pepper, grevillea, and several varieties of acacia and pine. These trees were carefully watered and cultivated and showed healthy growth. Winding drives were made. In a year or two, promised a newspaper account, “our citizens will have a beautiful park half as large as the cultivated portion of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and much more sightly—all without being taxed a single dollar towards its accomplishment.” If the city furnished water, Howard promised to construct a series of small lakes with miniature waterfalls in the deep canyon at the upper portion of the tract. “Such a flow and exhibit of water would be of more value to the city than almost any other improvement,” asserted the San Diego Union.

Months later, Howard’s charities tract received more newspaper coverage. Kate Sessions wrote in her gardening column about the double row of 100 Australian rubber trees, also called Morton Bay figs, planted in the charities tract, believing it to be the only long avenue of the trees in California. Agaves, date palm, and fig trees filled out the corners of the cultivated area and citrus and pomegranates had been planted. By the next summer, thousands of guava
bushes and an additional 1,000 lemon and orange trees were taking root. All this verdant growth, visible near the south boundary of the park, was seen by the San Diego Union as a convincing reply to the skeptics who wondered if anything would grow on the dusty chaparral hills of City Park. By 1893 it was estimated that 15,000 trees populated “Howard’s forest,” some more than 30-feet tall.

Kate Sessions’ experimental garden and nursery provided another demonstration of the park’s horticultural possibilities. In February 1892, the city adopted an ordinance granting Sessions the use of 36 acres of City Park. Her lease was at the opposite end of City Park from the Howard tract, near the intersection of Upas Street and Sixth Avenue. Lease terms required her to plant 100 trees per year in City Park and to furnish 300 trees annually to the city for planting elsewhere. She carried out the single most sustained planting program in the park, making annual additions to the tree count for more than a decade.

While her tree selections were appropriate for San Diego, they also were eclectic and, in some instances, experimental. Parsons respected Sessions as he got to know her, but was undoubtedly referring to some of her plantings when he expressed concern about the grounds taking on the look of a “botanical garden” rather than a city park, and when he called the tree plantings near the corner of Sixth and Upas “gloomy.” Still, the Monterey cypress, cork oaks, camphor trees, Torrey pines, peppers, palms, and varied acacias and eucalyptus undoubtedly improved the appearance of the park tremendously.

Sessions’ ten-acre flower field in her nursery had the most transformative effect on the park. It became the place for Sunday outings, providing an attraction that brought San Diegans into the park and illustrated the magnetism of skillfully cultivated public gardens.

One other area provided an admirable demonstration site for park improve-
A group of Golden Hill neighbors began to nurture plantings on the southeast corner of City Park after seeing the green promise of Annex Park and the Howard tract. The conscientious homeowners in this upscale neighborhood maintained and expanded plantings of trees and shrubs, creating one of City Park’s most attractive areas near the intersection of 25th and A Streets, complete with a playground and the first golf course in the park.25

The appearance of the park was influenced by the general enthusiasm for tree planting that swept San Diego in 1892.26 Many residents attended public meetings and the newspapers published long articles on the benefits of tree planting, along with suggestions of species to plant and instructions on placement and care. An organization to conduct an aggressive campaign of tree planting was formed and the Mayor suggested that Torrey pines be propagated for planting in City Park. He had recently visited the groves near La Jolla and worried that the Torrey pines were looking poorly and could be destroyed by fire. The Council appropriated $30-35 for the purposes of collecting seeds and creating a tract of Torrey pines in City Park.27

Unfortunately, the financial panic of 1893 struck before the public’s new interest in tree planting could translate into significant action. San Diego was severely affected by this national economic downturn. Attention to city beautification and park development plummeted as resources shrunk. Bryant Howard’s fate is illustrative. He and his silent partners were financially ruined when the Consolidated Bank failed. Their ability to support the charity they had established and to maintain the trees and grounds of the City Park charities tract abruptly ended.28

There had been six concentrated efforts to improve areas within City Park during the nineteenth century: George Marston’s privately donated avenue of eucalyptus trees; Dr. LaFevre’s tree planting club; the Auxiliary park strip; Bryant
Howard’s charity tract; the Kate Sessions nursery grounds and tree plantings; and the Golden Hill area. The combined size of these improved areas was less than 200 acres—a fraction of the total 1,400 acres set aside for City Park. Worse, many of the plantings within the park were in trouble. The arid 1890s saw seven consecutive years of minimal rain. Zeal for new plantings drained away as people observed that even established trees were suffering from drought and disease. About two-thirds of the Ladies Annex plants died, along with many trees in the Howard tract and those on the west side of the Golden Hill improvements. Still, the city of San Diego wrestled with water issues, had no plan for park development or maintenance and remained parsimonious in its allocations for work at the park. The city even removed Howard tract water pipes for reuse in La Jolla. The Los Angeles Times commented that San Diego “does nothing whatever with its park...which with comparatively small expense, could be made one of the most beautiful places in California.”

Threat and Defeatism

The absence of park development led to recurring demands to sell park land for real estate development and invited a variety of intrusive land uses. San Diego’s first school was built in the park, as was Howard’s industrial training school for orphan boys and the women’s home. Park canyons became an unofficial city dump. The park was home to a variety of enterprises: city machine shops; a gunpowder magazine and militia target ranges; the animal pound for stray cattle and horses; buildings, wells and reservoirs belonging to the water department; shooting ranges for local gun clubs; and a quarantine house for those infected with smallpox and other communicable diseases (called the “pest house”). A mayor of the period took note of the numerous squatters who had made park land their own. Another account mentions the homeless Professor LeBatt who occupied a cave in the park. In addition to all the newer uses of park land, there remained one Indian village near 8th and Date Streets.

Some ideas for park use were resisted. An observatory, county fairgrounds, and a customs house were proposed, but not placed in the park. A request for 60 acres of park land to grow tobacco was vigorously condemned by a park commissioner as a desecration. A request to use park land for manure storage was sidelined by the City Council. Neighbors on the southwest boundary of the park successfully resisted the creation of a “milk ranch” in the park. Other residents objected to the placement of a fire engine in the park near their houses. In 1886, the U.S. Army proposed exchanging its downtown barracks location for a piece of City Park land. Twelve years later, the U.S. Army declined the mayor’s offer of the park as a military camp for the mobilization of thousands of troops headed to the Philippines during the Spanish American War.

San Diego found it difficult to get a park improvement plan off the ground. City Council leadership was lacking and while pronouncements by newly elected mayors tended to favor park preservation, none successfully implemented a park development plan. From time to time local newspapers editorialized along the lines of the San Diego Union in 1884: permanently improving the park is one suggestion “that should meet the unqualified approval and support of all who have an interest in San Diego.” Yet, citizens who tried to move their elected officials to action on
the park encountered a stone wall. One park proponent harshly criticized the “gas bags” on the City Council who continued to resist City Park expenditures.42

With no park development plan in place thirty years after the park was established, some began to view City Park as more a liability than an asset. As a counter to the growing pessimism about park development, Sessions stepped in to put forth the first overall plan for City Park improvement in 1898. She proposed planting the barren canyon slopes with bougainvillea, California poppies, and morning glory vines, each to be located where they would grow most successfully. Level areas of the park would get a mixture of palms, bamboo, and eucalyptus. She argued that the park lands could be made colorful and more wooded with little expense. She fully recognized that her idea was no substitute for professional park planning, but she offered the city an economical means of doing something to improve the park. To add credibility to her effort, she made public her correspondence with New York City park planner, Frederick Law Olmsted, and suggested him as a landscape designer for City Park.43

Sessions’ effort went nowhere with city officials and did not stave off City Park critics. At the end of 1898 horticulturist George P. Hall wrote a dark assessment, lamenting the dying trees and absence of anything attractive in the vast expanse of park lands.44

There is probably no city, big or little, in the United States so park-cursed as San Diego is with its huge 1,400-acre scab, a miserable unsightly desert, a stricture upon the growth of the city, one of the greatest drawbacks San Diego has, but it is as sacred as a white elephant, and appears to be consecrated to disuse for all time.45
Hall’s statement was a low point in the public perception of City Park development. Such stark and defeatist appraisals refueled the determination of Sessions, Marston, and a few other prominent citizens to save the park from its critics and the perpetual lethargy of city officials. These boosters realized that the hope of City Park’s preservation resided in a comprehensive and unassailably professional plan for park development. The plan would have to be created by a landscape architect with impeccable credentials and proven experience with large urban parks. Once a formal plan for every acre of City Park existed, park boosters would have an effective weapon against those inclined to continue nibbling away at park land for other uses.

Seizing the Initiative

In 1899, park improvement became a concern for the Chamber of Commerce. An entire monthly meeting was devoted to presentations about City Park. One speaker recounted all past efforts to improve the park. Sessions presented a paper on the “artistic possibilities” of the park through low-cost improvements, a refinement of her earlier park planting ideas. The Chamber of Commerce agreed to approach the City Council with a proposal for action on the improvement of City Park.46 With this resolution, the fate of City Park began to look up. A subtle realignment of political power was underway.

After two more frustrating years of delay on park development with the City Council stalling and pleading poverty, the Chamber of Commerce took a decisive step to fill the vacuum of city leadership. The Chamber created its own Park Improvement Committee. Julius Wangenheim, a prominent businessman, led the cause, urged on by Marston and Kate Sessions.47 The dithering and penury of
city government would no longer act as a bar to park planning—the Chamber of Commerce had taken matters into its own hands. The new committee would move forward with the help of Marston’s deep and generous pockets, a subscription campaign, and a legacy left for park improvement.\textsuperscript{48} Although no longer looking to the city for leadership, the Chamber understood that city approval would be necessary for any changes in the park.

The Chamber’s Park Improvement Committee moved into overdrive when it hired the accomplished and energetic Mary B. Coulston as its secretary and publicist. A classic example of the right person at the right time, Coulston had been the editor of \textit{Garden and Forest}, a publication created by botanist Charles Sprague Sargent of Harvard University and the Arnold Arboretum. While \textit{Garden and Forest} ceased publication in 1897, it is still read today for the quality of its writing on landscape design and preservation, national and urban park development in the United States and internationally, scientific forestry, and the conservation of forest resources. The best and the brightest wrote for the publication. Coulston worked closely with these contributors, growing in knowledge and connecting to the wider world of horticulture and landscape architecture. When financial problems forced the magazine out of existence, she enrolled in the top horticultural program of the day at Cornell University. She later moved to northern California and became acquainted with Kate Sessions.\textsuperscript{49}

Coulston fully understood the need to “sell” the San Diego public on the benefits of park improvement so that the City Council could, in turn, be forced to act. Her public relations campaign combined aesthetic arguments with the practical benefits of drawing tourists and new residents and businesses, thereby increasing the tax base. Coulston offered a broader view while skillfully targeting local sensibilities. She spoke before every group that would have her and published long
but interesting articles in the San Diego newspapers. She covered every conceivable aspect of public parks generally and City Park particularly. She responded to critics by tactfully refuting negative points made in editorials and letters to the editor. She rebutted naysayers with descriptions of the bad initial reaction many New Yorkers had to the creation of Central Park. When the San Diego Sun editorialized that hiring an outside landscape designer was a waste of money when locals could easily do all the work, Coulston masterfully distinguished park planning from park development, conceding that locals could certainly do the work of developing the park once a plan was in hand.50

With sensible, poetic and persuasive writing, Coulston helped the citizens of San Diego think differently about their public park land. Many people were working for the park, but “probably no other person gave so much of the best that was in them as did Mrs. Coulston,” according to historian William Smythe. “She was of a sincere and intense nature and threw herself into the work with a joyful abandon.”51 She also urged the appointment of Parsons as the landscape architect for City Park. She knew him from her Garden and Forest work and arranged for Marston to meet him during a business trip to New York City. The meeting went well and Parsons was hired.52 Coulston immediately began introducing San Diegans to Parsons through biographical articles and discussions of his prior park planning work. She whipped up a great deal of excitement about his arrival in town.

Druids, Woodmen and Arbor Day at City Park

Just before Parsons was hired in 1902, the Chamber’s Park Improvement Committee received what must have been a tempting offer. E.W. Scripps, the newspaper tycoon who had successfully planted hundreds of acres on his Miramar Ranch
with trees, offered to donate enough saplings to create a forest across all of City Park. It is unclear as to why this offer was not taken up. Had it come a few years earlier, City Park might have become a dense urban forest. The most likely explanation is that the Chamber of Commerce wanted to leave park planning in the hands of the expert they were finally bringing to San Diego. Parsons announced early on that he wished to preserve much of the natural look of the park, using trees at entrances to mark the park boundaries and to accent landscape features and frame views. His landscape design principles did not mesh with those of Scripps, though Parsons expressed admiration for the Miramar Ranch when Sessions and Coulston took him there to view examples of mature San Diego trees. Scripps never understood why his offer was refused and complained in 1910 that the park remained an under-planted and barren “blemish” when it could have been thick with his donated trees.

After a few years of drought relief and the hiring of a landscape architect, tree planting in City Park resumed after 1902, but with the understanding that Parsons would be consulted on the species and locations of trees. Sessions and Coulston produced two spectacular planting events to bring citizens into City Park and to generate favorable publicity and momentum for park improvement.

In 1903, San Diego’s big July 4 celebration featured international boat races, fireworks, a lighted flag on Fifth Avenue created by red, white and blue incandescent bulbs, a formal ball, and a massive tree planting in Balboa Park by various fraternal groups from around the state, including Elks, the Ancient Order of Druids, and the Foresters and Woodmen of the World. Parsons supplied a map showing where the trees should be placed while Coulston did her usual good job of stirring public interest. On the day, however, delays in the arrival of some trainloads of fraternal brothers and a party atmosphere disrupted Coulston’s
well-crafted organizational plans. Holes for 1,000 trees had been prepared, but only about 600 trees were planted that day.\textsuperscript{58}

On Saint Patrick’s Day, 1904, San Diego celebrated Arbor Day for the first time. With Sessions helping to organize the planting, Coulston put together a winning community event that brought 3,500 school children to City Park, with representatives of classes and schools planting 60 pine and cypress trees. Coulston solicited messages from Governor Pardee and President Theodore Roosevelt to be read to the children, thereby insuring avid press interest.\textsuperscript{59} This happy event helped to distract attention from a minor flap that had hit the papers the month before when a stand of healthy palm trees in the former Howard tract were cut down to make way for a road specified in Parsons’ park plan.\textsuperscript{60}

Between these two events, local attention to tree planting was further concentrated by the visit of Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester of the United States. His trip to California and invitation to visit San Diego were publicized for months in the local papers. Pinchot came in September 1903. He was driven through City Park to see its “forest possibilities” and delivered an address sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce to a large number of citizens.\textsuperscript{61} This highly placed contact paid off three years later when the federal Bureau of Forestry provided 1,000 trees for City Park.

Conclusion

The two community events—July 4th and Arbor Day—were the last mass tree planting endeavors undertaken by private groups in City Park before 1910. The plan of the Chamber of Commerce to force the city into taking responsibility for
park improvement was working. Very gradually, the city’s years of benign neglect were replaced by governmental actions that improved and developed the park.

In April 1903 the City Council authorized the Board of Public Works to start park improvements, such as road building, irrigation pipes, and planting. Discussions of a bond issue to fund park improvements began. In September 1903, the city outlawed shooting in the park and began to systematically enforce state laws prohibiting the digging of roots and extraction of sand from public parks. Good progress was reported on the park water piping system by 1905. The same year the electorate voted to amend the city charter to set aside a small percentage of property taxes to create a fund for park development. A 1907 city ordinance prohibited dumping in City Park. By 1908, ten miles of roads had been completed in the park. In 1909 the first arrest for sleeping in the park was made. The “pest house,” shooting ranges, and other occupants were evicted from park land. Most importantly, on April 17, 1905, the City of San Diego appointed its first Board of Park Commissioners with Marston as president. The private Chamber of Commerce Park Improvement Committee handed over work on the park to city supervision.

Over the next few years, tree planting in the park continued according to Parsons’ landscaping plans, in lots of 200 to 14,000 trees at a time. When Parsons saw City Park in 1910 after a five-year absence, he was bowled over by the rapid growth of vegetation in the San Diego climate. “I have never seen anything like it,” he wrote. Although he had visited many parks in the United States and Europe, the rapid transformation of San Diego’s City Park was “a revelation.”

San Diegans had experienced their own revelation regarding City Park. They had witnessed the success of a determined few to preserve park land for public uses. They had seen private action, however halting, successfully move the park toward improvement and beautification. By 1905 when Parsons made his last submissions on the park, every acre of the barren and hopeless “scab” of park land had come under the umbrella of a comprehensive plan, the details of which were unfolding before the public eye. In 1910, as San Diego began to plan for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915, City Park became Balboa Park. Its vast landscape had survived to defy its harshest critics and was poised to become the urban treasure San Diegans know today.

NOTES

2. “Commissioners Asked for a Budget of $50,000 and More Trees Strongly Urged by Park Board,” San Diego Sun, January 26, 1910, 2.
5. The actual size of the plot set aside for “Annex Park” was 13.9 acres.
7. A Mrs. Watkins brought “Annex Park” trees back from her trip to New York, apparently without thought as to how a sugar maple and horse chestnut would fare in the San Diego climate. [Mrs. Watkins Donation], San Diego Union, April 16, 1890, 6:2.
The Trees of Balboa Park: 1910

Annex Park,” San Diego Union, April 15, 1890, 4:2.
12. It was later revealed that Bryant Howard was the public face of a charitable effort funded by O.S. Witherby who did not want his philanthropy recognized until after his death. “The Howard Tract; Sensational Testimony,” San Diego Union, June 30, 1894, 5:3. Howard was among the most prominent men in the early history of San Diego, having at one time owned the San Diego Union and served as president of Consolidated National Bank. He died in 1901. The interest of his wife, Medora H. Howard, in the welfare of children was cited as a reason for the family’s charitable work. “Mrs. Howard City Pioneer is Dead,” San Diego Union, June [n.d.], 1916. Cited from a typed copy in the Biographical Files, SDHC Library and Archives.
14. After Howard and his silent partners in the charitable endeavor, O.S. Witherby and E.W. Morse, lost all their money in the Consolidated Bank failure, the children’s home could not be maintained and the building and tract of land reverted to the City of San Diego in 1896. One year later and just 10 days after the City had insured the property, the building burned. No fire hydrants were located within a mile of the structure. “San Diego County,” Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1897, 11.
20. “City Parks, Public Grounds Comprising Over 1,400 Acres,” San Diego Union, January 1, 1893, 16:6. Later in the year, a financial panic wiped out Howard’s bank and the charities fund. He and his silent charitable partners were unable to maintain the boys home. In 1896 the Howard tract reverted to the city and in May 1897, the large Queen Anne building suffered a devastating fire. Showley, Balboa Park: A Millennium History, 21. Some sources report that the Women’s Home burned, but that building remained in the park until the 1950s.
22. Parsons claimed the Grevillea, Blackwood Acacias, Monterey Pines, and Monterey Cypress had proven to be brittle and messy and their shapes did not harmonize with the character of the park. Not only should no more of them be planted, he said, but those in the park should be “eliminated.” Samuel B. Parsons, “[Report] To the Board of Park Commissioners, June 30, 1910, reprinted in “Make City Park Paradise of South, Urges Scenic Artist,” San Diego Union, July 5, 1910, II-9:1-2.
25. Not to be mistaken for the manicured turf of a contemporary links, the Golden Hill golf course had dirt fairways with poured oil “greens” around each of the nine holes. Montes, “San Diego’s City Park, 1868-1902,” 48.
29. “Maintenance for Park Trees,” San Diego Union, September 18, 1897, 2:3. The Street Improvement
Committee recommended an investigation and report on the necessity of spraying trees in the park infested with insect pests and to trim trees and shrubbery and for the Board of Public Works to water trees on upper 5th Street, in the Howard tract, and in the Ladies Annex park. A request for funds to do this work was subsequently submitted, but not fully funded.


31. When the Board of Public Works requested $100 to give trees in the Howard tract needed care, the Council reluctantly complied, but with half the amount requested. “Charter Amendment; City Council Disposes of Important Business,” San Diego Union, October 4, 1898, 3:1.


35. In one egregious example, a contractor was reportedly dumping at least 20 wagonloads of garbage daily in a ravine just above Ivy Street in City Park. “Contractor Dumping,” San Diego Union, December 13, 1887, 5:5-6.


38. Presumably, this meant a dairy with a herd of cows. “Board of City Trustees,” San Diego Sun, April 14, 1882, 4:3.


40. “San Diego County,” Los Angeles Times, May 19, 1898, 11. This offer may have been a San Diego effort to promote its climate at San Francisco’s expense. Soldiers complained bitterly about the cold wind and fog at San Francisco’s Presidio Army base where they lived in tents before shipping out to the Philippine Islands.


42. “San Diego County,” Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1895, 11.

43. Sessions had been making the public case for hiring a professional landscape architect for the park since at least 1891. “Kate Sessions Writes Letter About Park Improvement,” San Diego Union, May 27, 1891, 2:1.

44. George P. Hall served as county agriculture commissioner, developed expertise in citrus culture and eventually an advisor to the Little Landers colony at San Ysidro.

45. “Geo. P. Hall’s Views,” San Diego Union, December 23, 1898, 2:3-4. It is possible that Hall was disgruntled by an 1893 refusal of the City to grant a request for 7.4 acres of park land made by the San Diego Agricultural Society for a county fair and further irritated by Mayor D.C. Reed’s high flown declaration that the 1,400 acres of park land “should for all time remain intact . . . and be as sacred as Holy Writ.” Showley, Balboa Park: A Millennium History, 23.

46. “San Diego County,” Los Angeles Times, September 2, 1899, 15.

47. Showley, Balboa Park: A Millennium History, 23; Elizabeth C. MacPhail, Kate Sessions Pioneer Horticulturist (San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1976), 68.


49. Alice Eastwood, Sessions’ friend at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, may
have been the intermediary. Coulston’s life was cut short in July 1904 when she did not survive surgery for a blocked intestine. She was attending a summer course at UC Berkeley to complete her horticultural degree begun at Cornell. “Her service is not as well known to horticulture as it should be,” eulogized a former co-worker. “The Late Mrs. Coulston,” American Garden, August 6, 1904, 514. Her friends and employers in San Diego were devastated by the loss. Kate Sessions buried Coulston’s ashes in City Park.

50. “Editorial: As to Park Plans,” San Diego Sun, Oct. 3, 1902; The Mary B. Coulston Scrapbooks at the San Diego History Center Archives collect her prodigious output. She wrote on the history of urban public parks, parks and good citizenship, the value of natural landscapes, parks as important artistic works and parks as places for young people to study botany. She described possible park adornments and uses, including cactus gardens, water features, music concerts, native plant preservation.


54. Parsons is identified with the picturesque style of landscape design originated in England by Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716 – 1783) and reflected in the Central Park work of Frederick Law Olmstead. The style moved away from formal rectangle and diagonal shapes in favor of naturalistic curvilinear landscapes; “Mr. Parsons’ Trip to Miramar,” San Diego Union, January 3, 1903. The author thanks Molly McClain for this reference.

55. “One thousand acres of pine trees could be growing now in the park without a dollar of expenditure,” Scripps scolded the Park Commission. In opposition to Parson’s plan, Scripps suggested that “the whole of the San Diego park lands be planted” to create “a large forest growth of trees in the park.” Otherwise, it appeared that the barren land of City Park would remain “a blemish.” E.W. Scripps to San Diego Park Commission, March 12, 1910, Scrapbook on Balboa Park, California Room, San Diego Public Library.


63. Smythe, The History of San Diego, 1542-1908, 621.


The Origins of Balboa Park: A Prelude to the 1915 Exposition

By

Iris Engstrand

A significant key to San Diego’s development has been its Spanish legal heritage—not because of its mission, presidio, or ranchos, but because of its pueblo lands. When San Diego’s Chamber of Commerce was formed by a small group of citizens in January 1870, it could point with pride to some eleven square leagues or 47,324 acres of municipally-owned lands—its inheritance from Spain’s practice of preserving ample lands for city purposes and the common benefit of all settlers. Fortunately, certain Old Town residents and the Chamber’s first treasurer, Alonzo Horton, promoter of San Diego’s New Town, knew what they had. With a farsightedness hardly equaled by today’s most ardent planners, they set aside 1,400 acres for a public park.

San Diego Becomes a Pueblo

San Diego was established as a military post in May 1769 and as a mission on July 16, 1769. It received official status as a presidio on January 1, 1774, and the mission was moved six miles inland in December of that year. San Diego remained a part of the Spanish empire until Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. It replaced Monterey as the Mexican capital of the combined provinces of Baja and Alta California from 1825 to 1833, when those from the northern area renewed their efforts to regain their former status. San Diegans fought to keep the capital in the south, but as political fortunes vacillated between centralists and federalists...

Iris Engstrand, co-editor of The Journal of San Diego History and professor of history at the University of San Diego, is a member of the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership 2015 Committee. Although the story of Balboa Park’s early days is well known by local San Diegans, it is appropriate to review the Hispanic origins of the park beginning with San Diego’s pueblo lands in order to put the 1915 Exposition into historical perspective.
Map of San Diego's Pueblo Lands, 1874. ©SDHC Research Archives.
San Diego resident Pío Pico and others supported southern Californian Carlos Carrillo for governor, and Pico himself actually served twenty days in the post in 1832. Nevertheless, the southern group lost. When Brigadier General José Figueroa arrived as governor of California in January 1833, the capital was officially returned to Monterey. Residents of San Diego—then numbering 432—appealed to the legislature assembled there that San Diego be granted official pueblo or town status, complete with municipal officers.

Approval of a new civilian government was granted on June 4, 1834, and put into effect on January 1, 1835. Elected officials were Juan María Osuna, first alcalde (mayor); Juan Bautista Alvarado and Juan María Marrón, councilmen, and Henry Delano Fitch, city attorney. They were installed by presidio commandant Santiago Argüello who agreed to supply Osuna with an inventory of documents in the archives of San Diego. Henry Fitch, who had married Josefa Carrillo of the prominent Carrillo family, drew the map outlining the lands that belonged to the newly formed Pueblo. According to the Laws of the Indies, pueblos were generally allotted 4 square leagues or approximately 17,740 acres. Fitch’s boundaries extended well beyond that, including today’s Torrey Pines reserve, but no government official challenged his accuracy.

**Horton’s Addition**

Alonzo Horton, who arrived by steamship from San Francisco on April 15, 1867, made his famous downtown land purchase of 960 acres the next month on May 10. He first talked about the idea of a public park later that year when he asked trustees Joseph S. Manasses, Thomas H. Bush and Ephraim Morse to consider two 160-acre
Origins of Balboa Park

tracts as park sites. Some thought a 320-acre park more than sufficient for a town of 2,310 people. Later, when Morse, along with Horton, actually looked at the vacant, brush-covered land and realized that the city had some 40,000 acres (190 km²) available, they agreed that they should reserve nine tracts or 1,440 acres (5.7 km²). Morse suggested the land bounded by Sixth, 28th, Ash and Upas.7

Before the final resolution was passed by new trustees, José Guadalupe Estudillo, Marcus Schiller, and Joshua Sloane in May 1868, 40 acres to the south (lot 1144) between Ash and Date were sold to Isabella Carruthers, wife of Mannassee’s lumberyard manager Matthew Carruthers, for $175 on February 13, 1868.8 Strenuous attempts were made to reduce the amount of park land, but trustees Estudillo, Bush, and Morse, joined by James McCoy and Matthew Sherman, requested that the state legislature approve the transfer of nine lots east of Horton’s Addition to be set aside for park purposes. According to Neal Harlow, “on August 29, 1868, a newly elected board reserved lots 1129, 1130, 1131, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1142, 1143, and what was left of 1144.”9

The California legislature confirmed the plan effective February 4, 1870, the properties to be held in trust forever for “a free and public park... and for no other or different purpose.”10 As Roger Showley pointed out, “Unlike New York, which bought $5 million worth of land in the 1850s on which to build Central Park, San Diego got what at first was called “City Park” for free.”11

City Park As Open Space

The final amended federal survey of San Diego’s pueblo grant was not completed until 1872, but the 47,324 acres of the Fitch survey was confirmed by the United States in 1874.12 Eighteen years later, in 1890, 83 percent of the land was gone, having been conveyed by the city to private interests. The park (a portion of the 8,000 acres still owned by the city) remained a wilderness area covered by dense chaparral and a few patches of yellow, white and blue flowers of wild adenostema, sagebrush, Spanish violets, shooting stars,
Map showing City Park, 1870. The Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

Cabrillo Canyon looking south toward downtown, ca. 1910. ©SDHC #1560.
Balboa Park open land before development, ca. 1911. ©SDHC #91: 18564-2552.

Balboa Park undeveloped land before Exposition groundbreaking, ca. 1912. ©SDHC OP #10614.
mimulas and white popcorn.\textsuperscript{13} From 1868 to 1889 the park essentially remained as unoccupied open space although certain inroads were made. A water company was organized in 1873 that drilled a well at Palm Canyon and tapped into a subterranean stream to produce 54,000 gallons of water per hour. Two reservoirs were constructed and an animal pound was located in Palm Canyon to house stray horses and cattle that were caught wandering through city streets. Some building included Russ High School (later San Diego High School) and an orphanage.

According to local historian Gregory E. Montes, contemporary accounts of those involved in park development indicate that Ephraim W. Morse was apparently the most important person and, in fact, could be named as the founder of City Park, although the roles of the other key figures cannot be totally verified nor discounted. Morse, a native of Massachusetts, left Boston in 1849 for the California gold mines and came to San Diego in 1850. In addition to his service as a City Trustee in 1866-68, he was a merchant and realtor, helping to arrange the Horton land sale.\textsuperscript{14}

Early park benefactor George W. Marston wrote “... it was Morse’s brain and heart that conceived the park” and to counteract the claim by some that Alonzo Horton was the actual founder, Marston wrote that “Morse was much more interested in plants and gardening than was Horton. Morse later gave equal if not superior credit to Horton in the park founding even though others said that Morse had been the main proponent.”\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, all those involved in the park’s establishment, including Horton, Estudillo, and the others, deserve credit for having the foresight to set aside 1,400 acres as a public park.

Efforts were made to plant flowers and trees but little was well organized until Kate Sessions, often referred to as the “Mother of Balboa Park,” leased 30 acres of the park land in the
area of Sixth and Upas. She agreed to plant 100 trees each year in lieu of rent.

By the turn of the century, city pioneers such as George Marston, Julius Wangelheim, G. Aubrey Davidson, and others including Mary Coulston, former editor of Garden and Forest magazine, proposed a number of plans for park development. These would culminate in a concentrated effort to have as beautiful a park as possible, and provided the opportunity for San Diego to host the Panama-California Exposition in 1915-1916.

NOTES


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.


8. Showley, A Millennium History, 17. This property is now the site of the El Cortez Apartment Hotel on an area known as Cortez Hill.


10. Harlow, Pueblo Lands, 47, citing City Park, the Trustees action, Proceedings, Feb. 15, 1868, Aug. 29, 1868. Legislative approval, California Statutes, 18th sess., 1869-1870, 92: 49.


In Memoriam

Ramón Eduardo Ruiz

1921-2010

Professor Ramón Ruiz, a member of The Journal of San Diego History’s Board of Editors for over 30 years and a well-known historian, died at his home in Rancho Santa Fe on July 6, 2010, at the age of 88. Ruiz, an emeritus professor of history at UC San Diego, was the author of 15 books, including *Triumphs and Tragedy: A History of the Mexican People* (1993) and *The Great Rebellion: Mexico 1905-1924* (1980).

Professor Ruiz served in the Army Air Force as a B-29 pilot in World War II. His experiences were featured on the KPBS television program “San Diego’s DNA: Military Roots,” in June 2009. His wartime service convinced Ramón that all Americans, regardless of background, deserved to be treated fairly and justly.

Following the war, Ruiz earned his BA degree from San Diego State College in 1947, his MA degree from Claremont Graduate University in 1948, and his PhD in history from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1954. He taught history at the University of Oregon, Southern Methodist University and Smith College before becoming a founding member of the history faculty at UCSD. He was awarded the prestigious National Humanities Medal by President Clinton in 1998.

Ruiz, the son of Mexican immigrants, was born in Pacific Beach and brought up in La Jolla where his father owned a nursery. Ramón worked for a time at Kate Sessions nursery while his interest in Mexican history was fostered by his father, who left Mexico during the 1910 revolution. The Ruiz family were very proud of their Mexican heritage and maintained a love for Mexican culture and cuisine. Ramón’s final book “Mexico: Why a Few are Rich and the People are Poor,” will be published later this year.

Natalia, Ramón’s wife of 62 years, died in 2006. Their daughter, Olivia Ruiz, is a professor at the Colegio de La Frontera Norte in Baja California. Ramón is also survived by daughter Maura Parkinson and two grandsons.
BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by Richard L. Carrico, Lecturer, Department of American Indian Studies, San Diego State University.

One of the battles for patrimony and cultural identity raging in California goes largely unnoticed by the general populace. A large percentage of the nearly quarter of a million California Indians who inhabit the lands that were once the territory of their ancestors are not federally recognized and are not enrolled on any of the state’s more than one hundred reservations. These people, who strive to be acknowledged, not for the purpose of building a casino but as part of a cultural renewal, are not alone in their efforts. There are currently more than forty non-recognized Indian groups in various stages of seeking federal recognition.

The large format book O, My Ancestor, is an up close and personal view of a vibrant urban Indian group in the throes of a protracted effort to be recognized locally, at the state level, and by the federal government. Known historically and generally as the Gabrielino after Mission San Gabriel, most of these people self-identify as Tongva or Tongva/Gabrielino. The 1,500 square miles of ancestral lands of these people comprise much of what is now Orange and Los Angeles Counties as well as the offshore islands.

This work is part of the Heyday Books series on California Indians and stakes out a proud place on the growing bookshelf of studies written by Native Americans or in which tribal members play a major role. The two authors, or more correctly, editors and compilers, of the book are Claudia K. Jurmain, Director of Special Projects and Publications at Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Ranch and Gardens and William McCawley, author of The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles. The professionalism and skill of these two collaborators in weaving an intricate yet approachable story while utilizing interviews and photographs of tribe members make this book remarkable.

The historical and modern photographs of Tongva/Gabrielino people form a visual continuity with the past, while providing images of the future. Through the photographs, the reader sees the evolution of native families as they are woven into the ethnic tapestry that is contemporary California. Within the narrative the interviewees offer their personal thoughts on what it is to be Indian, to be Tongva, and to be the descendants of California’s first people. A common thread to the stories is what the on-going battle to save the sacred site of Povuu’ngna on the grounds of California State University, Long Beach means to those involved in the struggle and to the greater people identified as Tongva. In the 1990s the once populous vil-
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Lage became a rallying point for dispersed urban Indians and for many their first true emergence from the shadows of history. For others, it was a continuation of a decades-old struggle to be seen and heard as a viable, thriving ethnic group with cultural patrimony in the region.

While there are many similarities in the stories, there is also a variety of life experiences, of reawakening, and also at least one example of a family that finds it more important to be recognized as a smaller unit rather than as a politicized tribe or nation. Similarly, some Tongva/Gabrielino strongly embrace the Catholic Church as part of their rich heritage and others see the church as a historically oppressive institution. That this book offers such a variety of voices and insights is one of its major contributions. The “one size fits all” approach to California Indian history and oral narrative is, and should be, largely a historical relic in itself.

Readers interested in further research will find the references cited and bibliography helpful and up to date. Although O, My Ancestor is perhaps most pertinent to scholars, educators, and readers interested in the cultural history of the Los Angeles Basin, the book should appeal to anyone seeking to understand indigenous revitalization and renewal. Often obscured in the shadow of the more well-known “gaming tribes,” the landless, non-recognized tribes such as the Tongva deserve to tell their stories and this book does a fine job of giving us that narrative.


Reviewed by Marianne Richert Pfau, Ph.D., Professor, Music Department, University of San Diego.

This book offers an exhaustive study of the music heard and created in the California missions during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It focuses on the eight decades from the founding of the first Spanish mission at San Diego in 1769 to the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Craig Russell, professor of music at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, pulls together two strands of inquiry: in the “musical journey” he scours the extant musical manuscripts, while in the “biographical journey” he highlights, as representative example, the life of one of the most important padre-musicians, Juan Bautista Sancho (1772-1830). The overarching aim of the study is to rediscover a lively and rich artistic tradition in California that was performed in large part by Native American artists. The repertoire itself is offered as a measure of the musical worth of this tradition. A veritable gold mine of information, this book is testament to Russell’s ardent energy, musicological probing, and intense artistic fascination with this music and offers sharp insight as well as an enormous amount of new material for performance.

While by any standards a meticulous musicological study, the book aims not just at a scholarly or academic readership. It expressly appeals to musicians and listeners alike whose curiosity it wants to excite for the enormous riches of California’s sacred musical tradition. Moreover, by placing the repertoire in historical and
cultural context, the book extends its relevance to students and scholars of Latin American culture and history, Mexican history and culture, California history, mission studies, Native American studies, and American studies.

The book is clearly structured, outlining both scope and purpose in an engaging introduction that acknowledges earlier work on the subject and clarifies the contextual approach taken here. It proceeds with a discussion of performance practice issues and mission performance styles in the Americas, bringing to light many novel aspects and correcting earlier views. The chapter on “Notation and Music Theory” is a lucid study of notational idiosyncrasies in the sources and of the church modes. Their depth and emotive power is of main concern, for the padres viewed them not just as “pleasant patterns to entertain the ear,” but as “part and parcel of cosmic law” (p. 105).

A discussion follows of Junípero Serra’s founding of the Baja California San Fernando de Velicatá Mission as well as the San Carlos Borromeo Mission (near Monterey) and the introduction of sacred song there, distinguishing canto llana (Plain Chant) and canto figurado (Polyphony) in a “modern style.” Next, the author turns to Sacred Celebration with Song, Sequence, Dance and Pageantry on special feast days such as Corpus Christi, ending with two “prominent gems” of California liturgy (the sequences Dies Irae and Veni Sancte Spiritus).

Russell brings into focus music by many important mission padres who compiled or composed music for special celebrations such as Holy Week. These include Narciso Durán, compiler of Mass Ordinaries, and Martín de Cruzelaegui, possible composer of the beautiful Misa de Cataluña. The portrait of Juan Bautista Sancho as the musical friar who introduced the modern “galant” style in California is fascinating. The Credo Artanense and the Misa en sol are testimony to the level of musical expertise, breadth of repertoire, and adroit craftsmanship which this padre brought to mission music.

The last chapter discusses the imposing concerted Classical Masses of Ignacio de Jerusalem, an Italian composer working at Mexico City Cathedral, and of García Fajer, an Aragonian who after a Roman sojourn became chapel master at the See of Zaragoza. Their ambitious, elaborate concerted Mass music would have been heard at the San Antonio, Santa Barbara, and Santa Clara Missions which had available the impressive instrument inventories required for performance of these magnificent large-scale works.

As a whole, the book makes a compelling argument for a new appreciation of the high level of artistry achieved in the missions of Alta California by the Native American artists who performed under the guidance of the padres. While this is a wonderful achievement, the feature that makes this book powerful beyond all expectations is the on-line companion web site. In five appendices of enormous extent, the author offers a full critical apparatus and comprehensive descriptions of his sources (App. A), including their current location, physical features, detailed listing of content, annotations and reconstructions, and critical commentary on pieces copied in several manuscripts. Perhaps most valuable are the transcriptions (App. D), fully critical editions with orchestral accompaniments. This tool makes further engagement with this repertoire easy and enticing. Lastly, an exhaustive bibliography (App. E) includes a list of all manuscripts as well as a discography.

I have no doubt that Russell’s hope that this book will jump from library shelves will materialize. He offers a story of great musical creativity in California,
detailing in most palatable fashion a rich artistic history whose sound can now be rediscovered in performance and experienced once again in the restored resonating spaces whence it emanated. Performance of this music, guided by Craig Russell’s deft musical insights and rich historical explanations, should be a most rewarding and illuminating journey of discovery for musicians and audiences alike. This work is sure to ignite curiosity about the sounds of Alta California while also providing the tools needed for rediscovery.


Reviewed by Dave Bush, Adjunct History Instructor, Shasta College.

In The Sounding, David Klauber offers a portrait of his great-great-grandfather, a nineteenth-century European immigrant who came to California during the gold rush and enjoyed remarkable success as a merchant in mining districts before relocating to San Diego. This accessible book provides an enjoyable and detailed narrative, but some readers may desire a more critical analysis of the historical significance of Abraham Klauber’s life.

Abraham Klauber was born in Bohemia in 1831. When his father died thirteen years later, Abraham started supporting the family by working in a small store owned by the Mandlebaum family. Here Abe began a profitable relationship that lasted over twenty-five years. After migrating to the United States in 1850, Abe located Francis Mandlebaum, Abe’s former employer’s son, in Illinois, and the two soon became business partners.

In 1852, Abe and Francis left New York City where the men lived with the Epstein family—also recent immigrants from Bohemia whose daughters wed Francis and Abe. Abe followed Francis to California, and the journey included a harrowing thirty-one day Nicaragua crossing. After Abe’s ship docked in San Francisco, he joined Francis in Sacramento.

While Mandlebaum remained a buyer in Sacramento, Abe peddled goods in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He built a store in the town of Volcano. Abe sold goods at comparatively low prices because he led his own mule trains, and later wagons, from the valley into the mountains, and he built his business by offering free delivery to outlying mining camps and selling on credit. He soon expanded and diversified his business by opening stores in what would become Nevada Territory and by engaging in cattle ranching.

Abraham Klauber was active in the region’s civic life. He joined the Volcano Volunteer Fire Department and helped the company raise money for the town’s first fire engine. In 1859, he became a naturalized citizen, and a few months later, joined the Masons. By the late-1860s, Abe was involved in a tax dispute that worked its way up to the United States Supreme Court, he supported a Nevada territorial delegate to Congress, and he was appointed to Nevada’s Board of Capitol Building Commissioners who oversaw the construction of the new statehouse.
From 1869 until his death in 1911, Abe spent most of his time in San Diego. He opened a store in the city, participated in land speculation, opened several more stores east of the city, invested in a toll road to Yuma, and was elected to the County Board of Supervisors. In the mid-1880s, Abe returned to San Francisco, acting as a buyer for the San Diego store he left in the hands of his eldest son, Melvin. Seven years later, Abe returned to southern California where he spent the last nineteen years of his life surrounded by his large family.

*The Sounding* is a romantic history and would benefit from a more analytical approach to the subject. For instance, the author at times notes important factors in Abraham’s success, such as when he states that Abe learned the importance of building fire-resistant stores through his experience with the 1852 Sacramento fire (p. 83). But when explaining Abe’s ability to rise from poverty, he credits the less tangible factor of “divine intervention” (p. 17). When detailing a letter in which Abe instructs Melvin to hire one of his younger brothers in the San Diego store—even if Melvin must terminate a current employee—the author provides no significant scrutiny of this anti-labor position (pp. 433-4). While there are 534 endnotes, some information is not fully cited, and the use of citations is inconsistent. The book is filled with pictures; some, such as photos of Abe and his family and pictures of Abe’s properties, add depth to the book, but others are superfluous like the picture of the author and his daughter standing where James Marshall discovered gold.

While the writing is accessible, in many places it is repetitive and in others embellished. When discussing Abe’s involvement with the fire department, the author muses, “We will never know if Abraham scaled trees like Spiderman to save a frightened or stranded kitten, or stood under the window of a burning building ready to catch a baby” (p. 128).

David Klauber offers a rather uncritical profile of his ancestor, but the book does present a readable story of an interesting figure. There is no doubt that Abe was a skilled businessman who had excellent timing and possessed a keen understanding of how best to cater to clients and cultivate important social and business connections. To his credit, the author does present detailed descriptions of Abe’s travel to California, mining-town life, the joys and tribulations of ranch ownership, life in late-nineteenth-century San Diego, and the impact of Abe’s businesses in the communities where he worked.


Reviewed by Kimber M. Quinney, Adjunct Faculty in the History Department, California State University, San Marcos; Chair of the Board of Directors for the Convivio Society for Italian Humanities and its affiliate the Italian Historical Society of San Diego.

In *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (2002), Joseph A. Amato reminds us that “Local history satisfies an innate human desire to be connected to a place. It feeds our hunger to experience life directly and on intimate terms.
It serves nostalgia, which (especially when one concedes nostalgia’s political and literary cultivation and exploitation) is arguably as compelling a force as the quest for progress” (p. 4). Peter Corona’s *Little Italy: The Way It Was* fits precisely Amato’s portrayal of effective local history: Corona’s story is indeed a nostalgic journey into what a local community once was but, in traveling through time, the reader is reconnected with a place that continues to exist, albeit in a very different form. Thus Corona’s book fulfills Amato’s contention that nostalgia and progress, equally compelling forces of the human experience, are revealed in local history.

Far too few local histories have been written about San Diego’s Little Italy. Corona refers to an early fictional account of Little Italy titled *A Confetti for Gino*, written in 1959. For those of us who share a commitment to preserving the history of San Diego’s Little Italy, Corona’s work thankfully joins a few more recent histories in helping to fill this gap, including *Frenchie’s Memories* (2003) by long-time resident of San Diego’s Little Italy, Fran Marline Stephenson, and *San Diego’s Little Italy*, a pictorial history published in 2007 by the Convivio Society / Italian Historical Society of San Diego.

Change is at the heart of Corona’s book. His intimate descriptions and photographs of what was San Diego’s Little Italy bring into stark contrast the hip, chic community of today, especially since its renovation beginning in the early 1990s. But he is careful to remind us that the culture of Little Italy’s past is not necessarily better than the thriving, present culture; rather, they are both part of the larger whole (or, as he asserts, akin to the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in water – you cannot have water without the both). And so, we are invited to follow Corona in his journey back in time, but we are not misled into dismissing progress for the sake of nostalgia: “We should cherish the past,” he explains, “but not have the past hold us back” (p. 5).

Effective local histories find ways to celebrate the unique character of a given community but also bring a comparative light to reveal distinctions between our own and other communities. Again, Corona’s story succeeds in doing just this: He celebrates his neighborhood as one of the “best kept secrets” of the early 20th century, noting that in his travels across the nation, few people were aware of San Diego’s Little Italy. San Diego’s community was different for one reason, in particular: it was an enclave unto itself. In contrast to other Little Italys, Corona explains, “The residents in the San Diego neighborhood lived in a more confined geographical area, stayed mostly within that area, and rarely associated with people who were non-Italian” (p. 10).

*Little Italy: The Way It Was* is organized into slices or “glimpses” of life in Little Italy, which serve to invite the reader to walk alongside the author in a guided tour of the neighborhood as it once was. Included are brief but highly detailed descriptions of activities (such as “Hauling Fishing Nets,” “Making Wine,” and “Becoming American Citizens”); landmarks (such as “The Star and Crescent Oil Company,” “The Fire House,” and “The Pool Hall”); and even sounds and odors, all of which contribute to the sense of place evoked by the author.

The most rewarding aspect of Corona’s local history is the way his story is intimately and inextricably connected to the lives and livelihoods of neighborhood families and friends. This, it seems, is the essence of the human side of local history to which Amato refers. Peter Corona’s own experience cannot be separated from that of others in the community, and this point is made explicitly clear by
the author himself. He provides meticulous descriptions of individual families (including, for example, a graph that depicts various family names, Italian origins, and professions of the family members). The book also includes seventy pages of photographs, lending a visual richness to the sense of community described in such detail by Corona.

The author concludes with a reference to a Sicilian phrase he heard often when growing up in Little Italy – “cammina solo,” which he translates to mean “walk alone, and don’t let anyone know your business” (p. 7). Reflecting on his life experience in the Italian neighborhood, Corona acknowledges that he was “alone but not lonely,” owing to a lesson implicit in his book: “I learned that I am a product of all those whom I came in contact with throughout my lifetime” (p. 325). This is indeed the value of local history for both the writer and its readers: to be reminded of one’s personal connection to a place but, most important, to be reminded of the people who made that place the way it was.


Reviewed by Deborah Lou, independent scholar.

Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons’s meticulously detailed account of the social, cultural, and political history of gay and lesbian Los Angeles is an excellent contribution to the growing interest in LGBT historiography over the last three decades. While previous works have documented narrow slices of gay L.A., this work ambitiously covers a lot of territory, ranging from the history of early homosexual activity and gender-bending behavior in the early 20th century to the activism of recent years. The authors “discovered that, historically, more lesbian and gay institutions started in Los Angeles than anywhere else on the planet, and that L.A.’s multifaceted, multiracial, and multicultural lesbian and gay activism continues to have tremendous impact worldwide” (p.3). Indeed, the book succeeds in positioning L.A. at the center of the modern gay and lesbian movement in the United States with exhaustive and illuminating detail. Gay L.A. brims with stories about ordinary people, Hollywood icons, political pioneers, disco impresarios, and gay business leaders, among others.

There were several factors behind L.A.’s centrality in shaping twentieth-century gay and lesbian life, one of the most important of which was Hollywood. Many of the creative and artistic types who flocked to Hollywood in the early 1900s “were fluid both in sexuality and in gender presentation, and their daring was encouraged” within the film industry (p.40). The chapter on Hollywood includes a compelling discussion of how Hollywood’s promotion of an androgynous female sexuality (but not necessarily of lesbianism per se) had both intended and unintended consequences. On the one hand, the image was a conscious marketing strategy designed to attract both male and female fans. On the other hand, the image also resonated with “unstraight” women across America who found some degree of validation and inspiration in the gender-bending and sexual ambiguity...
of Hollywood stars like Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo.

A chapter on the 1940s and ‘50s exemplifies the authors’ success throughout the book at striking a balance between men’s and women’s experiences, and providing a broad, inclusive view of the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of L.A.’s gay history. During these “noir years” the city’s gay and lesbian population flourished yet faced an increasingly suspicious and oppressive atmosphere. Post-war L.A. gained a reputation for being a paradise for gays and lesbians migrating from all over the country; however, gays and lesbians suffered from routine police harassment, brutality, and false charges. In spite of such obstacles, this period was also a time when gay men and women found creative and daring strategies to socialize, build community, and have fun while successfully negotiating their private and public personas. This period led to community building, political organizing, and institutional formation among gays and lesbians.

Chapter 4 convincingly shows how L.A. was instrumental in the nation’s gay and lesbian political and institutional development. For example, Harry Hay’s creation of the Mattachine Society in the early 1950s signaled the birth of the national homophile movement. Some of the Mattachine Society’s original members established what would become one of the country’s most influential and far-reaching gay organizations, ONE, Incorporated. This organization produced both the country’s first homosexual magazine and first gay studies program, and it essentially became the first gay center in America, spawning gay churches and social services, among other things.

However, as influential as Mattachine and ONE were, these organizations reflected tensions between gay men and lesbians that would challenge the community for decades. For example, lesbians for the most part felt alienated from and/or fearful of joining such homophile groups. The authors do well to cite factors for both working and middle-class lesbians’ lack of explicit political organizing in the middle of the century. Middle-class lesbians did not face constant police harassment, a big impetus in forming gay male political consciousness. And while working-class lesbians did experience more danger from the police, they had larger class-based concerns beyond those related to sexual orientation. These factors also made it difficult for lesbians to find a common political struggle across class lines.

The book’s tour through ensuing decades includes many other outstanding examples of the city’s significance to gay and lesbian history. For instance, PRIDE, (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) was founded in 1966 and was a marked contrast to the earlier homophile groups because it brazenly embraced its sexuality and welcomed gays of all classes. Notably, PRIDE was responsible for one of the first demonstrations against police harassment – preceding Stonewall by more than two years.

Chapter 10 documents the experiences of gay and lesbian ethnic minorities, including the many immigrants who found refuge in a city rich in both ethnic and sexual diversity. The chapter includes moving accounts of L.A. as a promised land for these minorities. Still, Faderman and Timmons are careful not to romanticize the gay L.A. experience, incisively outlining the discrimination many minorities encountered within the larger gay community. Fittingly, the book closes by showing how this global city generated a myriad of organizations, movements, and institutions focused on gay and lesbian immigrants and people of color.
While this book builds on several smaller works on LGBT history in L.A., it also breaks new ground by drawing from previously overlooked archival materials and over two hundred new oral histories to show effectively how L.A. was uniquely positioned to become a highly influential center of gay and lesbian life in the United States. In so doing, the book makes a significant contribution to LGBT historiography.


Reviewed by Arnoldo De León, Professor, Department of History, Angelo State University.

Professor Mario T. García pursues several goals in *A Dolores Huerta Reader.* First, he wishes to have this collection of articles, interviews, and Huerta’s own writings substitute for a biography until such a time as a more complete profile appears on this important figure, a fixture in the farm workers’ movement in California since the 1960s. Second, he endeavors to bring deserved attention to a bona fide leader perpetually consigned to a secondary capacity. García wisely seeks to highlight gender, as almost universally labor organizers have been male.

Dolores Huerta rose to prominence in 1965 during the famous farm workers’ *huelga* in California. She appeared destined for leadership early in life, though she did not recognize her calling until reaching her mid-twenties. Born in New Mexico in 1930, she grew up as part of a comfortable middle class environment, attended college, and for some time took up teaching. By then she had married but found household chores, motherhood, and school instruction unappealing. She preferred working on behalf of social justice, and in due time joined César Chávez’s farm workers’ crusade. From 1962 until the present day, she acted as spokesperson for farm laborers and for other causes dear to her as well.

While those within the farm workers’ movement fully recognize and appreciate Huerta’s role as a champion, others outside it do not. Thus, García attempts to chronicle her life commitments. In the decade of the 1960s, Huerta acted as a morale builder for the strikers, led grape boycott drives nationally (spending some time in New York City), and became Chávez’s chief negotiator with California growers. During the first half of the 1970s, when agribusiness resisted renewing old contracts, Huerta resumed grape and lettuce boycott efforts. Upon Chávez’s death in 1993, Huerta became the public voice for the farm workers.

García has examined numerous publications and researched various archives in compiling this most welcomed addition to labor history. The essays thus come from scholarly journals, news reports, speeches by Huerta, letters she wrote (most of them to César Chávez), testimony before government committees, and interviews. The various chapters touch on Huerta’s life, her religion, her politics, her work with migrant workers, feminism, homosexuality, the environment, and many other subjects.

The book indeed functions as per García’s intent to see his collection fill the

Reviewed by Paul Kahan, Assistant Professor of History, Slippery Rock University.

From the Barrio to Washington chronicles Armando Rodriguez’s improbable journey from Mexican immigrant to college president and high-ranking official in four presidential administrations. The story is recounted in the sort of informal style that one would expect from a book whose front cover proclaims “…as told to Keith Taylor.” Rodriguez’s story is unambiguously and unapologetically an “only in America, up-by-the-bootstraps” tale, and there is little here that will appeal to readers interested in San Diego, California, or American political history. Worse, the “as told to” style of the book makes it very difficult to read because the text contains numerous redundancies and digressions.

The book is divided into eighteen chapters, spanning Rodriguez’s life from his birth in 1921 to the book’s publication in 2007. At age six, Rodriguez migrated with his family from Mexico to San Diego where (except for a brief period) he lived until he entered military service during the Second World War. During the war he became a citizen in order to satisfy the requirements of his security clearance. After the war, he attended college on the G.I. Bill and, after graduation, became a teacher and then a school administrator. Rodriguez also became involved in local and then national Democratic politics, which brought him to the attention of the Johnson administration. The White House offered Rodriguez a high level position at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, where Rodriguez served until the mid-1970s. Rodriguez left HEW to become president of East Los Angeles College in 1973 and remained there until 1978, when he joined the Carter administration in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Rodriguez stayed through most of Reagan’s first term, serving under future Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. After retiring from government service in 1983, Rodriguez continued his public service through a variety of endeavors, including sitting on the school board of Fairfax County, Virginia.

Three themes consistently appear throughout Rodriguez’s narrative. The first theme is that hard work and determination have been the cornerstones of his
success. Throughout his life, Rodriguez has overcome challenges (usually involving being the first Hispanic American in a particular field or office) by dint of determination and hard work, values that he learned from his father. The second theme that frames the narrative is the importance of education, which has obviously played a central role in Rodriguez’s life. The third and final theme that runs throughout the book is Rodriguez’s determination to facilitate cross-cultural communication while acting as an advocate for the Hispanic American community. These themes, though never explicitly enunciated, appear throughout dozens of anecdotes that make up the bulk of From the Barrio to Washington, giving the book a Horatio Alger style that seems slightly optimistic given the tone of recent debates over immigration.

Moreover, while Rodriguez has clearly enjoyed a very eventful life punctuated by a number of amusing anecdotes, there is almost no attempt to put the events of his life in context or to provide any sort of analysis. I can point to nothing uniquely Californian about Rodriguez’s story; his childhood could as easily have been spent in New Mexico or Arizona as in Southern California. In addition, Rodriguez offers little insight into the many interesting and historically important people—Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Clarence Thomas, Hugo Chavez, Armand Hammer, Randolph Hearst, etc.—with whom he interacted throughout his life. For someone as committed to advocating for cross-cultural communication, Rodriguez provides incredibly little in the way of information about how policies are developed and implemented or how those policies affect people “on the ground.” Unfortunately, Rodriguez missed a wonderful opportunity to speak about the changing position of Hispanics in American society, an ironic omission given the fact that he was often at the forefront of those changes. In sum, the book is a middling autobiography, albeit an often amusing one, that misses a number of opportunities to provide crucial insight and perspective on issues of critical importance for Californians.
BOOK NOTES


The Blue Tattoo: The Life of Olive Oatman. By Margot Miffin. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xii + 263 pp. $24.95 cloth. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. This biography tells the story of Olive Oatman, a thirteen-year-old girl taken captive and raised by the Mohave tribe in 1851. Miffin argues that despite popular myths to the contrary, Oatman resisted rescue and had become assimilated among the Mohave.


Electrifying the Rural American West: Stories of Power, People, and Place. By Leah S. Glaser. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Illustrations and maps. $55 cloth. Leah Glaser uses three case studies from Arizona to provide a social and cultural history of Western electrification, showing the implications of technology on people, culture, and economies in the American West.


Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A. By Robert Bauman. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. xiii + 189 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. $34.95 cloth. Bauman analyzes the African American and Mexican American community organizations that emerged to implement President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty programs. While the War on Poverty provided assistance to needy Americans, it also sparked both racial conflict and cooperation.


Sacramento and the Catholic Church: Shaping a Capital City. By Steven M. Avella. Reno, University of Nevada Press, 2008. xvii + 368 pp. $39.95 cloth. Illustrations, notes, maps, chart, tables, bibliography, and index. Avella’s monograph examines the interaction of the Catholic Church and the city of Sacramento as they developed from the Gold Rush to the present day, considering how religious institutions affect urban communities, and vice-versa.

Winning Their Place: Arizona Women in Politics, 1883-1950. By Heidi J. Osselaer. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009. 240 pp. Photographs, illustrations, table, map, notes, and index. $45 cloth. This book examines the efforts of Arizona women to influence politics from the territorial period to the years immediately following the Second World War. Osselaer contends that the suffrage movement in Arizona drew great strength from working women who saw the vote as a way to counteract discrimination in the workplace, and she connects this legacy of activism to women’s later success in gaining election to state and local office.
EXHIBIT REVIEW

*Enlightened Voyages, Enlightened Visitors*

Reviewed by Travis Degheri, MA in History, doctoral candidate in Leadership Studies, University of San Diego.

San Diego’s active embarcadero is home to a myriad of attractions that grace the harbor front. One attraction in particular, the HMS *Surprise*, conveniently floats between the *Star of India* and the steam ferry *Berkeley*, all of which are part of a group of historic vessels making up the San Diego Maritime Museum. You may recognize the HMS *Surprise* simply by its “commanding” presence. In recent vintage, it was the featured vessel used in the filming of the 2003 blockbuster, *The Master and Commander*. Despite being praised by Hollywood and the movie industry, the HMS *Surprise* has remained a rather modest sea-faring vessel with all of its eighteenth-century accoutrements, not giving in to a modern makeover but to improvements that will allow it to be even more authentic.

The permanently moored and accessible vessel encompasses historic maritime exhibits that anchor on its wood planked floors every few months before making
way for something new. The current exhibit, Enlightened Voyages, invites visitors to come aboard and explore the famous journeys of the HMS Dolphin and the Spanish packetboat San Carlos representing their competing nations, Great Britain and Spain. The newly opened exhibit has already caught the attention of the curious passerby, myself included.

With my sea legs leading me, I boarded the HMS Surprise and was quickly taken aback by its immense stature. After inspecting the main deck of the ship, I went below to the site of the Enlightened Voyages exhibit. My first impression can be summed up in one word—authentic. The name of the exhibit accurately and cleverly describes the voyages of the HMS Dolphin and the San Carlos, also known as the Toison de Oro or Golden Fleece during the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment. My self-enlightenment occurred when I saw the easily accessible and well-lit displays. Accompanying the colorful and legible descriptive panels were eighteenth century artifacts and replicas. Enclosed in clear cases, the artifacts are well incorporated, easily visible, and in abundance, especially the collection of “Tools

Serra and the Sea

The founder of the California missions Fray Junipero Serra believed that ships like the San Carlos were essential for the survival of Spanish outposts in Upper California.

Having grown up on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca, Fray Junipero Serra was no stranger to the sea. His journals and correspondence with fellow missionaries and secular authorities reveal a keen understanding of the vital role played by maritime transportation in the survival of the new missions in California. Serra himself had blessed the San Carlos and celebrated mass on its main deck before the outset of the “Sacred Expedition” to found San Diego in 1769.

Like the military authorities in the newly established presidios, the first Franciscan missionaries depended heavily on the San Carlos and the San Antonio for the transportation of bulky items. Inventories of materials sent by sea include not only foodstuffs and trade goods, but also items for the decoration of churches, the celebration of the liturgy, and the conversion of the indigenous population. The arrival of vessels sent from San Blas to San Diego and Monterey provoked great rejoicing. Their irregular schedules, however, were cause for frequent complaint.

Fray Junipero Serra was convinced that the survival of the missions and presidios in upper California depended on maintaining a maritime lifeline with San Blas in Mexico.

Bottom: As this illustration suggests, transporting supplies overland by mule train was not a simple affair given the rugged terrain between supply centers in Mexico and the new settlements in California. Serra wrote an impassioned letter to the Viceroy of Mexico arguing against the use of mule trains and pleading for the survival of San Blas as a supply depot for upper California.
for a New Frontier.” These tools reflect the same tools carried on the San Carlos and recommended by José de Gálvez, the Spanish official who prepared the 1769 expedition. Gálvez thought they “would be used to build the first presidios, mission churches, and dwellings proposed for San Diego and Monterey.” Other noteworthy artifacts are the decagonal long glass and octant.

I must say I appreciated the diverse perspective the displays presented. The exhibit could have simply featured the lives of ship commanders John Byron and Samuel Wallis, the English explorers, but it also went into much greater depth by discussing living conditions for the sailors, food, weaponry, and difficulties at sea, among other things. The exhibit also explains the role of Father Junípero Serra and the overland parties that united with the San Carlos upon their arrival in San Diego in July 1769.

Enlightened Voyages takes visitors on a journey. In the beginning, there were voyages, and by the end, there were discoveries. I certainly hope other visitors will discover all that the Enlightened Voyages exhibit has to offer. I must also extend my appreciation to the curators for their hospitality, friendliness, and entertaining stories.

The exhibit is located within the HMS Surprise, a part of Maritime Museum in San Diego Harbor. The museum is open to the public and welcomes visitors between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Enlightened Voyages is a long-term exhibit. For additional inquiries, contact the San Diego Maritime Museum at (619) 234-9153 or visit their website, http://www.sdmaritime.org.
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Museum built in 1929 as headquarters for the San Diego Historical Society.

Padre Junipero Serra was born in Petra de Mallorca, Spain in 1713. He arrived in New Spain (Mexico) in 1749. After working in the missions of New Spain for twenty years, he led the expeditions to Alta California in 1769 and founded the first nine of the twenty-one California missions.

Cross first erected by the Order of Panama in 1913 from Presidio tiles.

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The Serra Museum was built through funds contributed by George Marston to commemorate the first site of San Diego Mission de Alcalá and the San Diego Presidio (fort). The building was dedicated on July 16, 1929. The museum, designed by William Templeton Johnson in the Mission Revival style, is frequently confused with the current site of the Mission San Diego de Alcala six miles inland. The mission was moved in 1774, five years after its founding, to its current location in Mission Valley for better agricultural opportunities. The Presidio remained for its strategic vantage point.

Although the site represents the first mission and presidio in Alta California, it also includes Native American (Kumeyaay) history and information on San Diego in 1929 when the museum building was completed.

We have learned from archaeologists who excavated this site where the original buildings were located.

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Publication of The Journal of San Diego History is underwritten by a major grant from the Quest for Truth Foundation, established by the late James G. Scripps. Additional support is provided by “The Journal of San Diego Fund” of the San Diego Foundation and private donors.

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Articles appearing in The Journal of San Diego History are abstracted and indexed in Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life.


Cover: Earliest known sketch from the perspective of Presidio Hill showing the presidio ruins, Mission Valley, the San Diego River emptying into San Diego Bay, Old Town, and Point Loma drawn by William Birch McMurtrie, artist on board the U.S. Steamer Active on the Pacific Coast Surveying Expedition in July 1856. The sketch was probably colorized by the young James Madison Alden, a second artist on board the Active. Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

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