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Front Cover: The Baynard children—Theron (Sonny), Norma Jean, Arnold and Truelene. ©SDHC #91:18476-1746.

Back Cover: Elijah Gentry poses for a photo next to his automobile in 1948. ©SDHC #91:18476-1746.

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The Norman Baynard Photograph Collection: Three Perspectives

The Baynard Photograph Identification Project by Chris Travers

Local photographer Norman Baynard (1908–1986) operated a commercial studio in Logan Heights for over 40 years where he documented the social, political, and religious life of San Diego’s African-American community. From 1939 through the mid-1980s, he photographed individual and group portraits, residences, businesses, street scenes, churches, weddings, sports, clubs, political and civic functions, funerals, Masonic and Eastern Star organizations, and Muslim groups. His large body of work constitutes a unique record of San Diego’s twentieth century African-American community.

Originally from Michigan, Baynard moved to San Diego and opened N.B. Studio out of his home at 2912 Clay Avenue in 1939. The studio later moved to the business district on 29th Street and Imperial Avenue. A long-time Muslim, Baynard changed his name to Mansour Abdullah in 1976. His photo studio’s name also changed – first to Baynard Photo, and then to Abdullah’s Photo Studio. This remarkable historical photograph collection was donated to the San Diego History Center by Norman Baynard’s son, Arnold, in 1991 and was minimally processed at that time. Undertaking the thorough processing, cataloging and re-housing (moving the negatives from acidic envelopes to archival-quality envelopes) of a collection of this size is both time consuming and costly. SDHC applied for and was awarded a grant in mid-2009 from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to make this collection more accessible to the public and to lay the groundwork for future preservation efforts.

The first step was to determine accurately the cost of re-housing and cataloging the entire collection. Over a period of months, staff worked with

Christine Travers is Director of the Photograph Collection at the San Diego History Center and the Project Director of the Norman Baynard Photograph Identification Project.
volunteers to determine that there were 13,521 unique photo sessions and a total of over 29,217 images. While the negatives were being counted, those that were especially interesting for subject matter and composition, as well as technical qualities like exposure and focus, were noted. From the thousands of negatives viewed, 500 images of various subjects were selected. These 500 negatives were then sent to the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Massachusetts to be digitally photographed. From the original digital files a smaller thumbnail version was made to attach to the catalog records that were created.

The basic catalog records were created by consulting Baynard’s original index cards as well as the San Diego City Directories, biographical files, and other resources in the SDHC Library. A major challenge for the project was that the index cards contained only minimal information about the photo shoot—just the name of the client, the one who paid for the shoot, and sometimes a date. The name of the client was not necessarily the same as the people shown in the images. The names of the people, places, or events in the photographs were not usually noted.

To get more information about the images and to tell the stories of the people in the photographs, it was necessary to take the photographs out into the community. First, a small exhibit of 50 images was displayed at the Arts and Culture Fest at the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation in South San Diego. The images were then shown at the Nineteenth Annual Kuumba Fest held at the Lyceum Theatre. Following that, binders were created with the basic catalog records and printouts of the 500 selected photographs. These binders also contained forms that allowed people to record what they knew about the images. Churches, senior centers and various social...
organizations were determined to be the best sources of information about the decades shown in the images. Community meetings were held at Bethel A.M.E. Church, the George L. Stevens Senior Center, New Creation Church, The Catfish Club, Bethel Baptist Church, and The Rotary Club of Southeastern San Diego.

Reviewing the images brought out many emotions—both laughter and tears—as people remembered those days in Logan Heights. As the Baynard Photograph Identification Project was drawing to a close, an exhibit about Baynard and his work was created at the History Center. This exhibit will also travel to the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation early in 2012. Additional programs and lectures will be held in conjunction with the exhibition and identification project, including a photography workshop for young people. A webpage was created to share the images and information online and allow viewers to add their own comments and information to the images.

During the course of the project, experts on African-American studies and photography were brought to the History Center to assess the contents of the collection. Dr. Deborah Willis, Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, was joined by Dr. Camara Holloway, Assistant Professor of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American Art at the University of Delaware, and Dr. Cristin McVey, to explore the local and national significance of this collection. Dr. Willis also presented the lecture “Posing Beauty: African American Images from 1890s to the Present.” At last this collection was getting the national attention and recognition it so richly deserved.

In addition to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the James Irvine Foundation, the Charles & Ruth Billingsley Foundation, the Heller Foundation, Union Bank, Wells Fargo Bank, and Balboa Park Online Collaborative, all generously supported this project. Local TV station, Channel 4, an enthusiastic supporter of the project, filmed community meetings and interviewed many individuals as they shared their stories. Segments about the project have run on San Diego Insider, and a half-hour TV special documenting the project was shown on Shades of San Diego. The footage compiled throughout the project is also included in the exhibit.
The Baynard Photograph Identification Project brought the photographs to the community and the community to the History Center. It was a tremendous success and generated a dialogue and joint effort that will continue for years to come.

Recollections of my Father by Arnold Baynard

My father was a family man and religious. He worked for Convair for two years in the photo lab-processing center. He also worked as a gardener in Mission Hills. He played a banjo at a nightclub for awhile. Most people considered my father a gifted and talented man for someone who only finished the second grade. I have always known my father to be honest and respectable. He was a very hard worker who worked 12 to 14 hours a day and believed in paying for most items up front and not on credit. He built his first house at 2912 Clay Avenue.

My father always made sure we had clothes on our back and food on the table. Back then they didn’t believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. If you misbehaved you got spanked. We were taught to respect our elders. While my
father had a successful business, I feel that this respect was due to my mother’s contributions. She would make appointments, take pictures in the studio and hand-paint all the color photos for my father. Together they were a great team.

Curating the Baynard Photographic Exhibition by Nicholas Vega

Initially settled in the 1880s, Logan Heights is one of San Diego’s oldest neighborhoods. Always home to a variety of ethnicities, Logan Heights became a predominantly African-American community by the mid-twentieth century. The district identity of Logan Heights emerged as one grounded in family, religious conviction, and commitment to social equality and economic enterprise.

Norman Baynard established himself as the community’s photographer of choice. Working out of both his home and a professional studio on Imperial Avenue, Baynard and his camera served thousands of clients. People, places, and events of more than five decades are documented, ranging from intimate portraits to promotional shots and photojournalism. Now, nearly 30 years after he took his last photo in 1985, it is clear that his images are more than snapshots that record moments in time. Collectively they offer a dynamic illustration of the rich history, culture and soul of one of the West Coast’s oldest and most dynamic African-American communities.

Norman Baynard moved to San Diego with his parents in the 1920s from Pontiac, Michigan. Despite being colorblind, having only a second grade education, and no formal photography training, Baynard established himself as a polished professional photographer in the local African-American community. He eventually opened Baynard Studio, featured in this exhibit, at 2695 Imperial Avenue, the area’s most bustling thoroughfare.

In addition to being a successful photographer and businessman, Baynard was a dedicated husband and father. In 1936, he married Frances H. Russ of

Nicholas Vega is Director of Exhibitions at the San Diego History Center. He received his BA and MA in History at the University of San Diego.

In 1976, after a long association with the Black Muslim community at Muhammad’s Mosque No. 8 on Imperial Avenue, Norman became a devoted member of the Nation of Islam and legally changed his name to Mansour Abdullah. His studio was also renamed Adbullah’s Photo Studio. Mansour Abdullah (Norman Baynard) continued operation of the studio until his death in 1986.

**A Community Identity Surfaces**

Exhibit map of Logan Heights showing the location of businesses, churches, mosques, and schools. Photo by Matthew Schiff.

During the mid-twentieth century, Logan Heights emerged as an African-American community in part because attitudes of racial prejudice prevented ethnic minorities from living in some San Diego neighborhoods, along with specifically written restrictive real estate covenants. Another factor leading to the development of Logan Heights was the desire of many of San Diego’s black residents to unite geographically for purposes of increased self-determination and political representation. Instead of being scattered throughout the city in small enclaves in various council districts, coming together meant a stronger voice in civic affairs. Along with more power at city hall, they could operate and patronize businesses in a welcoming environment. This became increasingly important during and after World War II as newly arriving defense-industry workers and military personnel of color required accommodations, services, and leisure-time opportunities.

Logan Heights has bustled with energy for nearly a century. The streets that comprise the district’s commercial corridor extend inland from downtown San Diego. Military personnel, manufacturers, educators and students, port and transportation professionals, retailers, and service providers have made it a hub
of activity. National Avenue, Logan Avenue, and Ocean View Boulevard are important locations of commerce in the center of Logan Heights, but Imperial Avenue has been the retail and social center of the area for most of this time.

Imperial Avenue, by the 1950s, was home to hardware, clothing, grocery, liquor, and furniture stores in addition to the Baynard Studio. Law and doctor’s offices, restaurants, nightclubs, beauty salons, barbers and auto repair shops were also located along the thoroughfare. The presence of these businesses enabled residents to patronize and strengthen the local, black-owned economy.

During the 1940s and 1950s, a new economic demographic emerged in Logan Heights—a vibrant, hardworking African-American middle class. Residents were proud of their accomplishments and wanted to document them and they called on Norman Baynard to do so. His images often portrayed individuals achieving the “California Dream” and they exemplified collective success, as entire families were routinely photographed together. Family portraits taken in front of recently purchased single-family homes and new automobiles were commissioned, as were portraits of people in elegant clothing. Baynard’s photos reflect not just achieved success, but reveal their subjects’ aspirations for the future.

This community was interested in creating images that recorded status and conveyed their values. In the mid-twentieth century, for the first time, millions of African-Americans gained the means to do this. These images demonstrate that our nation’s middle class African-American communities were thriving—a historical reality that is often overlooked in accounts of the period.

Similar to other areas of the country, San Diego’s African-American community responded to segregation and social injustice by actively participating in the civil rights movement during the mid-twentieth century. This grassroots movement was supported by people of all ages and spurred the evolution of attitudes regarding social justice. Locally, Logan Heights was at the center of the civil rights activities taking place in San Diego. The various social changes occurring at this time helped shape the community’s identity.

The desire for social change and the battle for civil rights were expressed in a
variety of ways: increased membership in civil rights groups like the NAACP and Urban League, political organizing, student and public protests, community-led marches, and the formation of neighborhood defense groups such as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and the Brown Berets. Interest in new religious organizations such as the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) also underscored a departure from business as usual. Clothing and hairstyles reflected a distinct black identity, as did new forms of music.

An Exhibition of Norman Baynard’s Photographs Comes to Life

In 1991, Norman Baynard’s son Arnold donated his father’s entire collection of negatives to the San Diego History Center. Such extensive collections of photographs that document African-American communities are virtually unknown west of the Mississippi. Because relatively little information about the photos was included with Baynard’s business records, the History Center sought support in 2010-2011 to identify the subjects of Baynard’s photos and place them on display.

Working with the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, the Baynard family members and volunteers under the direction of Chris Travers, the History Center took Baynard’s photographs out to a wide variety of community locations to seek help in identifying the people, places, and events captured in the images. Given the strong ties the photographs have to the community, an outpouring of interest in identifying the pictures quickly surfaced. The treasure trove of stories that emerged throughout this process has been used to enrich this exhibit, strengthen the History Center’s database records, and deepen our understanding of San Diego’s African-American history.

Portrait of a Proud Community combines the voice of the community with the photographic works of Norman Baynard to showcase the rich history of Logan Heights. Featuring more than 120 reproduced images from the Norman Baynard Collection, this installation differs from many traditional photographic exhibitions
in that it contains a number of interactive components. Greeting visitors at the entrance to the gallery is a reproduced building façade, similar to Baynard’s Imperial Avenue commercial studio. Guests are encouraged to try-on period costumes in a reproduced photo studio and pose for pictures as though they are actually being photographed by Baynard. A work station has also been installed that allows guests to search through the 500 digital images from the collection. To complement the images on display, a number of audio-video components have been inserted in this exhibit including video interviews from various members of the community, commentary from Diana Guevara, host of Channel 4 San Diego’s Shades of San Diego, and a sampling of recorded music from Baynard’s personal collection.

**Portrait of a Proud Community: Norman Baynard’s Logan Heights 1939-1985** will be on display at the San Diego History Center until January 22, 2012. For additional information relating to the exhibit and its accompanying programs, visit sandiegohistory.org/baynard.

*The JFK Democratic Club gathering held at a private home. San Diego Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin on the far left, and Mrs. Sylura Barron, far right. Elezo Cooper is the man on the right at the back. ©SDHS #91:18476-150.*
Photographs from the Norman Baynard Collection

Four firefighters inside Station 19 have been identified as (l to r): Sheldon Perry, Joe Smith, Timothy Williams, and Captain Alfredo Salazar, c. 1945. ©SDHC #91:18476-117.

Mr. Johnnie Williams, one of the earliest African-American detectives in San Diego, 1945. ©SDHC #91:18476-1112.

Mrs. Johnnie L. Byrd with her children, Darlene Byrd on the left, and Judith Byrd, on the right, wearing matching plaid dresses, 1945. ©SDHC #91:18476-1197.
A studio portrait of Jimmy Liggins, son of the preacher “Mother” Liggins. Jimmy and his brother, Joe, were both musicians and known for the song “Honeydrippers,” c. 1950. ©SDHC #91:18476-1718.

Janette Bowser’s 6th birthday party held at 4150 Hemlock Street. Janette (now Janette Tate) is standing directly behind the birthday cake, 1950. The children have been identified as (l to r): Gwendolyn Marshall, Jewelene “Cookie” Williams, Katie Bartley, Arlin Bartley, Janette “Blossom” Bowser, not known, Beulah “Faye” Jones, Lorraine Foster, Alicia Summers, and Lorraine Foster’s sister. ©SDHC #91:18476-712.

Lola and Robert Williams with their son Truman Youngblood. The Williams family lived near Imperial Avenue and 28th Street, July 12, 1947. ©SDHC #91:18476-1202.
John Handcox and his family at their reunion held in Presidio Park, 1968. From left to right: Ruth Handcox-Richardson holding toddler Sabrina Wright, John Handcox, Vinna Handcox holding the baby Barry Covington-Sharp, Glenda Wright-Reynolds. John Handcox was a sharecropper, songwriter, and poet. He also owned Handcox Market at 28th and Clay Street for over 20 years. ©SDHC #91:18476-163.

Jackie Green with her baby brother Jeffrey Green. Their mother was Vernice Green, January 6, 1964. ©SDHC #91:18476-203.

Exton Hullaby with his wife, Ethel, c. 1940. Mr. Hullaby was a singer with the gospel group “The Spiritual Kings” and a member of Bethel Baptist Church. ©SDHC #91:18476-1752.
Customers getting haircuts at Fay's Barber Shop at 2816 Imperial Avenue. The barbershop was owned by Mr. Fay who later sold it to Leroy Arthur and Horace Smith. ©SDHC #91:18476-254.

Groom Oscar Boyd Flagg and bride, Connie, on their wedding day. The wedding was held at the home of Gardner Lee, the pastor of St. Luke’s Church, January 1, 1960. ©SDHC #91:18476-897.
Essie Smart is recognized as “Colored Woman of the Year, 1957.” Award is presented by Eva Young and her husband, Nelson Young, owners of The Lighthouse newspaper, February 23, 1958. ©SDHC #91:18476-633.

Photo as yet unidentified. ©SDHC #91:18476-1571.

The Spiritual Kings was a popular gospel group. Members included: Reverend Marvin Hines, who was a minister at Pilgrim Progressive Baptist Church, Exton Hullaby, Rudy Haines, and 2 unidentified members, c. 1955. ©SDHC 91:18476-1722.
Baynard children with friends dressed up to celebrate Halloween. Two of the children in the front row have been identified as Tony and Dora Williams, c. 1950. ©SDHC #91:18476-1566.

Frances Baynard with children, Arnold, Theron, Truelene, and Norma Jean, on Christmas morning, c. 1950. ©SDHC #91:18476-808.
The Norman Baynard Photograph Collection: Three Perspectives

Mrs. Maggie Bullock with children, Percy (left) and Melvin (right). Maggie was a talented singer known for her popular rendition of “Let It Breathe On Me” c. 1950 ©SDHC #91:18476-1738.

Men inside RBG House of Music located at 4268 Market Street. Earl Mitchell, father of baseball player Kevin Mitchell, is seen in the white hat in the center of the group, April 1974. ©SDHC #91:18476-247.

The little boy in the suit and hat is Glen Alvin Kirk, age 2, the first son of Richard and Truelene Kirk, 1956. ©SDHC #91:18476-1389.
Remarkable Healers on the Pacific Coast:
A History of San Diego’s Black Medical Community

by Robert Fikes, Jr.

In August 2009, a front-page article in the San Diego Union-Tribune announcing the region’s history-making paired-donor kidney transplants featured a color photo of Dr. Marquis E. Hart, a former director of the University of California San Diego’s Abdominal Transplant Program who, along with another transplant physician, pulled off the feat.¹ That same month Dr. Wilma Wooten, San Diego County’s Public Health Officer serving 3.1 million residents and often seen on local television, used the media to warn residents to take precautions to prevent the spread of swine flu virus, to inform them of a substantial increase in cases of whooping cough, and to report a second case of West Nile virus. The rise to prominence of Hart and Wooten, among other notable African-American doctors in the area, is the most recent example of extraordinary achievements against the odds stretching back more than a century with the arrival of the county’s first black doctor in 1899.

Dr. Marquis E. Hart performed organ transplants in children and adults in UCSD’s Abdominal Transplant Program. Internet photo.

Dr. Wilma J. Wooten is Board certified in family medicine with a master’s degree in public health. She has been San Diego County Public Health Officer since 2007. Internet photo.

Robert Fikes, Jr. is Senior Assistant Librarian, San Diego State University and is the author of “Black Pioneers in San Diego: 1880-1920” in The San Diego Historical Society Quarterly (Spring 1981). Fikes is well known nationally for his research and publications regarding African-American history and culture, and is a 2007 recipient of the San Diego State University Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Faculty Contributions.
The Pioneers

Born in Indiana, William A. Burney (1846-1912) was a Civil War veteran who fought in the Union Army’s Twenty-Eighth Regiment of Colored Volunteers. He completed his medical training at the Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, in 1877 and settled in New Albany, Indiana, where for a while he was the sole black doctor. Respected by the white medical community, Burney served on the Floyd County Board of Health and was briefly president pro tempore of the county’s medical society. He assisted in establishing New Albany’s black newspaper, The Weekly Review, in 1882. At the pinnacle of his career, in 1888, Burney teamed up with another black physician and their associate just across the Ohio River and co-founded the Louisville National Medical College, one of the nation’s fourteen medical schools in the late 1800s specifically committed to producing black physicians.

An instructor of surgery and on the board of trustees, Burney made a valiant effort to rescue the struggling college that ultimately failed before graduating its final class of seventy-five students. In 1899, at age fifty, Burney retired to San Diego where his younger brother had preceded him, living at several addresses in the city over the next thirteen years. Although almost no evidence survives of his interaction with San Diego’s tiny black community of roughly two hundred persons, his reputation as a professional in good standing was confirmed in 1908 when his name appeared on a list of the city’s physicians in William E. Smythe’s authoritative History of San Diego, 1542-1908. Burney died in 1912, leaving behind a wife who claimed his Civil War pension before moving to Los Angeles, and a legacy of excellence and dedication to improving the health prospects of African Americans everywhere.

By 1900 there was roughly one black doctor per 3,194 African Americans. Most of them practiced in the southern states where the majority of the black population struggled against cruel circumstances in regards to both their physical and mental health. Between 1890 and 1920 the number of black doctors in the United States increased dramatically from 909 to 3,885. Atypically, but like Burney, the next black physician to arrive in San Diego was trained at a northern school and chose to blaze a trail in a far western state. In 1920, Fred Clarence Calvert
(1883-1941), a handsome, single, thirty-three-year-old doctor who had obtained his medical degree at the University of Michigan and had spent the previous ten years practicing in Atlanta, Georgia, arrived in San Diego and hung his shingle at 636 Market Street. For the next two decades Calvert was the most prominent black medical professional in the county. This civic-minded physician and surgeon was a member of the Elks, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, and the Masons.7

By the mid-1920s the city’s black population was approaching 2,000—enough, people thought, for Fred T. Moore, a graduate of Meharry Medical College, to compete for patients with Calvert. In 1926, Moore occupied an office several blocks east at 1434 Market Street. He too advertised in the community’s Colored Peoples Business Directory, but things must not have worked out as he had planned because after just a few years here Moore dropped from sight. The area’s first African American dentist, Jesse D. Moses, arrived in 1924 and shared office space with Moore. But Moses suffered a similar fate as Moore and both vacated the building before the onset of the Great Depression.

Business directories and group photos confirm a surprisingly diverse black workforce that joined vibrant civic groups, including some that encouraged social activism and demanded racial equality. The local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), inaugurated in 1919, gleefully announced its first triumph to the national headquarters in New York City, rushing off a telegram on September 7, 1927 that read: “The San Diego Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was victorious in the fight for admittance of colored girls as nurses in the San Diego County Hospital.”8 By 1930 the number of blacks in the city had virtually tripled (from 997 in 1920 to 2,839 in 1930). The 1931 edition of the city’s Colored Directory presented a rather surprising diversity of occupations held by blacks, including that of Elec M. Cochran and J.T. Buchanan, two black chiropractors.

Perhaps the combination of a growing black populace and perfect climate attracted the fourth black physician, Howard University medical school graduate A. Antonio DaCosta (1902-1950). A native of British Guyana, he proved to be an
exceptional entrepreneur. Arriving in 1933, DaCosta built a highly successful practice serving the area’s Portuguese, Latin American, and African American communities. His offices were located at 2875 Franklin Avenue and at 245 Twenty-Fifth Street in Logan Heights. He invested in several business ventures with the money he earned from his medical practice. A newspaper article disclosed: “DaCosta’s estate including numerous rental properties in a section largely populated by Negroes, has been estimated to be worth $250,000. His holdings include ownership of a Mexican picture theater here and a third interest in one of the largest San Diego-based tuna boats, the *Elena*.”

Divorced in 1942, DaCosta lived in a hacienda-style ranch home on fifteen acres located one mile east of Spring Valley on Campo Road. It was in the dining room of his palatial home that the good doctor was shot to death the night of April 16, 1950, his body riddled with four slugs from a .32 caliber revolver. *The San Diego Union* gave the case front-page coverage with follow-up articles over the next fourteen months. With an estate valued at $422,000 (or $3.7 million in today’s dollars), DaCosta had been the county’s most prosperous African American. The newspaper repeatedly reminded its readers of his wealth, a home requiring two caretakers, and delved into his personal life. Rev. C. H. Hampton of Bethel Baptist Church presided over his funeral service. Despite all of the news coverage, what was then one of the region’s most sensational crimes eventually became one of its biggest unsolved mysteries as authorities failed to pin the murder on the main suspect—John DaCosta, his sixteen-year-old son.

Forever to DaCosta’s credit is the fact that he helped launch the career of the city’s most illustrious black health care professional—Jack Johnson Kimbrough (1908-1992). Having hitched a ride all the way from Northern California—bypassing relatively crowded Los Angeles—Johnson alighted on Imperial Avenue in Southeast San Diego in 1935, having finished dental school at the University of California at San Francisco. Soon after his arrival, he was befriended by DaCosta, who offered Kimbrough office space in one of his rental units. In 1939, ignoring threats from some white residents, they paired up in an office on Twenty-Fifth Street. Married to a schoolteacher in 1937, Kimbrough volunteered for, but was denied, military service during World War II. Though he built a thriving practice, destiny pushed this self-assured, kind, and unfailingly gracious man to become
a civil rights pioneer and a standout among his peers in the medical community.

Born in Lexington, Mississippi, Kimbrough had fled the state with his family when confronted with Ku Klux Klan harassment and was taken in by relatives in Alameda, California. Early on, he developed a strong sense of social justice and a deep appreciation for learning and the arts. An incident in which Kimbrough was refused service at a humble downtown snack joint because of his race set in motion a number of civil rights accomplishments that climaxed with his ascendancy as president of the local chapter of the NAACP in 1947. He conceived brilliant strategies to force white restaurant owners—including the posh eatery at the prestigious U.S. Grant Hotel—to serve blacks.

After a string of racial anti-discrimination victories in the late 1940s, Kimbrough co-founded and led the San Diego Urban League as its first president in 1953. His benchmark achievements in the dental profession were his election as the first black president of the San Diego County Dental Society in 1961; his election as the first black president of the California State Board of Dental Examiners in 1968; and his selection as a fellow of the American College of Dentistry. His home in National City, a meeting place and cultural Mecca for the area’s black social elite, was filled from floor to ceiling with books on African American history and literature—many were signed first editions—and museum-quality African sculpture and artifacts, many of which he loaned out to exhibitions. In his living room Kimbrough entertained countless distinguished visitors from afar, among them scholars W.E.B. Du Bois and E. Franklin Frazier and blues singer Leadbelly. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy invited Kimbrough to visit the White House to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was an appropriate gesture and recognition of a life of substance born of service of others.

A contemporary of Kimbrough who came to San Diego in the mid-1930s was dentist Albert Exeter Richardson (1911-2008). Born in Houston, Texas, and educated at Howard University, Richardson did his own laboratory work and was a skilled expert in prosthetics and gold inlay. His son, Albert Jr., is a dentist in Calexico.
inlay. An Army Lt. Colonel who was called to active duty during the Korean War, he spoke six languages. His son, Albert Jr., one of seven children, inherited a love of his father’s profession and today works as a dentist in Calexico. In 1965, the senior Richardson’s office was at 128 Twenty-Fifth Street.

Another Houstonian, Cleveland L. Jackson (1897-1962), rose to the rank of Major in the Army Medical Corps during World War I, completed his medical training at Howard University, and had practiced in Radford, Virginia before relocating to San Diego in 1937. He maintained an office at 2754 Imperial Avenue and was on the medical staff of Mercy Hospital. A member of major medical associations, a life member of the NAACP, and a former Exalted Ruler of Clementine McDuff Elks Lodge Inc., Jackson died while vacationing in Phoenix, Arizona.

Another doctor who did yeoman work was Edward Anderson Bailey (1884-1963) from Winchester, Texas. One of only four black physicians in San Diego in the 1940s, Bailey, a Meharry graduate who in 1929 was profiled in Who’s Who In Colored America, had earlier practiced in Cleveland, where his family was besieged by violent whites who forced them to flee their newly bought home in Shaker Heights. A 32-degree Mason and a member of several medical and fraternal groups, Bailey was president of the San Diego NAACP in 1944. He died in Los Angeles in 1963.

Richardson, Jackson and Bailey were well positioned to administer to the needs of their ethnic base as the city’s African American population, better educated and increasingly mobile, grew to 4,143 in 1940, 14,901 in 1950, and 34,435 in 1960.

The Middle Years: 1940 to 1959

Disturbingly, from 1900 through the 1940s, the ratio of about one black doctor per 3,300 black Americans stayed fairly constant. Meharry and Howard produced the overwhelming majority of black doctors and dentists. Examples include Virginia native Elbert B. Singleton (1915-1988) who, before starting his practice in San Diego in 1946, had been a ward officer captain during World War II and a flight surgeon for the Tuskegee airmen at the Tuskegee Army Air Field Station Hospital; and Donald M. Cary (1913-1983), from Ohio, who had been an Army
doctor in Italy before coming to San Diego in 1946 where he co-founded the local Urban League. Cary served on the boards of governmental and social service agencies. After working on the staffs of several hospitals, he headed the Sharp Hospital general practice department before retiring in 1980.

Craig Morris (1893-1977) was somewhat of a rarity on two counts: he finished Creighton University Dental College (a predominately white school) and was an ordained Episcopalian minister. Having been denied a commission in the Dental Reserve Corps in 1917, presumably on account of his race, he returned home to Omaha, Nebraska where he became president of the Nebraska Negro Medical Society.15 Morris resettled in San Diego in 1945 where he died in 1977 at age 83.

Recognizing the relative poverty of black families and the persistence of flagrant, debilitating racism, in a revealing, often-cited two-part study published in the NAACP’s *The Crisis* in the late 1940s, the legendary black physician-anthropologist W. Montague Cobb concluded with these prophetic words: “The health plight of the Negro will be solved as the health plight of the nation is solved. The Negro can no more view himself as a creature apart than he can permit others to do so.”16 In the late 1940s, the reform-minded National Medical Association (NMA), led by Dr. Emory I. Johnson of Los Angeles, took up the fight for national health insurance. The far more powerful, but conservative, American Medical Association (AMA), vigorously opposed this as insidious “socialized medicine.”17 At the half century-mark, only snail’s pace progress was being made in raising the number of black physicians in America. On the one hand there were more majority-white medical schools allowing admission to blacks, but fewer blacks were applying to these schools in this era of pervasive racial segregation and discrimination. More residencies and internships were made available to newly minted black doctors, but there remained the bothersome problem of denial of hospital privileges and black patients favoring white doctors to treat them.

Meharry and Howard—once referred to by Cobb as “the heart of the medical ghetto”—still graduated the bulk of black doctors and dentists in the 1950s. By the end of the decade progress was observed in closing the gap in black-white morbidity and mortality rates and life expectancy, and there was a sharp decline in deaths of blacks due to tuberculosis. Still, in 1951, the NAACP felt it necessary to call attention to the popular “Amos ‘n Andy” television show and insisted it be cancelled because it reinforced negative stereotypes of blacks in
general and specifically black professionals, among them black doctors who the group claimed were “shown as quacks and thieves.”

Laboring to improve the health prospects of black folk in San Diego in the 1950s was John R. Ford (1923-2009), the area’s first African American board-certified surgeon who was affiliated with no fewer than twelve hospitals in the county. Although a lifetime member of the NAACP, he was somewhat politically conservative. Ford was picked by Governor Ronald Reagan to serve on the California State Board of Education and became its president in 1975. A devout Seventh-day Adventist, ironically, he supported sex education in schools but was a leading advocate for requiring the viewpoint of “creationism” in state approved textbooks. Ford taught surgery at Meharry in the early 1950s and later at UC San Diego. He was a board trustee at Andrews University and Loma Linda University (his alma maters) and predominately black Oakwood College in Alabama.

Malvin J. Williams (1930-1987) was first employed as a physician at the Naval Training Center. A general practitioner, he was team doctor for the Lincoln High School football team, a deacon at Bethel Baptist Church, and became president of the San Diego chapter of Family Physicians and secretary of the California Academy of Family Physicians. Today, the Malvin Williams, M.D., Memorial Scholarship at UCSD for students interested in family medicine honors his career. Raphael Eugene Tisdale (1903-1999), named California Family Physician of the Year in 1983, spent the first half of his career in his native Alabama where he taught biology at Tuskegee Institute and served as a doctor in private practice in Montgomery. The military draft and the Navy brought Tisdale to San Diego in 1954. For twenty-four years he operated the Chollas View Medical Clinic at 4629 Market Street. The venerable Rev. George Walker Smith eulogized Tisdale as a person of “impeccable character” and “just a good, caring, serving man.”

In 1958, the first black female doctor appeared: Shirley Jenkins-Phelps, a Wayne State University-trained psychiatrist who worked at the San Diego County Health Department and was once the wife of prominent minister Grandison M. Phelps. The decade closed with the arrival of general practitioner Vell R. Wyatt who completed his residency at the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton. Also here in the 1950s was Harold E. Burt (OBGYN); and Herbert A. Holness (1911-2000), born in Panama, who later collaborated with his brother-in-law and fellow African American...
American physician, Jimmie R. Valentine, as general practitioners.

Essentially unchallenged for generations as his/her community’s most esteemed professional, the black medical professional came under increasing scrutiny as the nation moved into the turbulent 1960s and the civil rights revolution. In 1947, Howard University’s W. Montagu Cobb sneered at those who seemed more concerned with accumulating and flaunting their wealth and social status than improving the quality of their medical practice. Pioneering black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier in his classic *Black Bourgeoisie* (1955) asserted, “no group in the black bourgeoisie exhibits its conservative outlook more than doctors.”

Writing from the perspective of 2005, medical historian Thomas J. Ward Jr. characterized black physicians—though often prominent as community leaders—as considerably more hesitant than other black professionals in challenging racial segregation and discrimination. In critiquing Ward’s book, *Black Physician in the Jim Crow South*, one reviewer emphasized: “There was no Charles Houston, Thurgood Marshall, or Fred Gray among the physicians. Many accepted and benefited from Jim Crow.” Nevertheless, wherever black enclaves existed, the black medic—by dint of his advanced education and higher-level social connections—continued to be trusted and sought out for advice on a wide array of nonmedical issues, from politics to finances to marriage to new automobiles.

**Self-Assertion and Change: The 1960s and 1970s**

In the 1960s, black health care professionals in San Diego engaged in a number of nontraditional pursuits. In 1962, Harold E. Burt, two black attorneys, and an architect—in step with the zeitgeist of an era that challenged authority and tradition—sued for $31,000 and won an out-of-court settlement and obtained a permanent injunction against the Bonita Golf Club for practicing discrimination “solely on the basis of race and color.” In 1965, physicians Malvin J. Williams and Vell R. Wyatt and dentist Charles H. Hammond, among others, intent on devising a tax write-off, pooled their money to start up an indie soul music record label featuring local talent called Musette Records. The business produced twenty singles during its three-year run, including the tunes, “I’m No Fool,” “You Know How Love Is,” and “A Million Tears Ago.”

Meanwhile, Joseph W. Joyner and Leon R.
Kelley, the area’s first black pediatricians, began their remarkable careers. Former Navy lieutenant Nathaniel W. Burks Jr. (1932-2004), an OBGYN physician who distinguished himself as one of the three co-inventors of the Fetal Heart-Rate Monitoring System and patented a device to prevent child pool drowning, founded five business enterprises and established the Crocker-Burks Scholarship Foundation.25 Family physician Richard O. Butcher also commenced his journey to medical stardom.

The near institutionalization of government and private industry affirmative action and equal opportunity programs in the 1970s coincided with the long-hoped-for and dramatic acceleration in the number of blacks attending and graduating from medical school. Just as impressive, since World War II, the head count of black doctors in California had multiplied ninefold. There was a huge spike in the number of black doctors in San Diego over the course of the decade and their expertise in an expanding list of medical specialties was apparent. Prominent doctors specialized in cardiology (Guy P. Curtis), orthopedic surgery (Harry R. Boffman and Edwin B. Fuller), urology (Francis T. Greene), orthodontics (David D. Wynn), vascular surgery (Edgar L. Guinn), thoracic surgery (Frantz J. Derenoncourt), anesthesiology (Clyde W. Jones), radiology (Charles D. Lee), ophthalmology (Gordon J. Montgomery), neurology (Arthur M. Flippin and William T. Chapman), neurological surgery (Tyrone L. Hardy), pathology (Clarence Curry Jr.), and otolaryngology (Earl M. Simmons).

The influx of so much new talent meant there was now a critical mass to form professional advocacy groups. In 1972 the San Diego chapter of the San Diego Society of the National Medical Association (NMA) was chartered and in 1974, incorporated by Drs. Richard O. Butcher, Vell R. Wyatt, Terry O. Warren (1936-1992), and Harold E. Burt. Similarly, in 1976, Lottie Harris organized a chapter of the National Black Nurses Association and served as the first president of the San Diego Black Nurses Association.

In 1973 the Southeast Medical Center opened at 286 Euclid Avenue as the first medical center in California—and anywhere west of the Mississippi River—to be owned and operated by black doctors. Interestingly, of the eight doctors and two dentists who pulled off this achievement, nine were Meharry alumni. In 2002, when the center completed a $4 million, 35,000-square-foot building expansion, a reporter for the San Diego Union-Tribune interviewed some of the founders,
including managing partner Leon R. Kelley who later said: “If you are poor and live in southeast San Diego you deserve health care as good as if you lived in La Jolla... [The Center] continues to be the focal point for medical care in the South East community.”26 The reporter commented:

[The founders] came with a mission to make people healthier in a community that had a great lack of doctors. A mission to eliminate racial disparities in health care. And despite the struggles—and there were many—they stayed... Which is why he (Dr. Kelley) stayed. And is why he and his partners...have invested even more into their community.27

Rodney G. Hood, once described as the exemplar of the African American leader in medicine, was one of many notables who arrived in the 1970s. A foresighted principal in the venture that brought the Southeast Medical Center to fruition, a co-founder of the Multicultural Primary Care Medical Group that matches minority patients with minority physicians in their communities, and a co-designer of the HMO CompCare Health Plan servicing Medi-Cal patients, Hood soon gained the reputation as an articulate voice on matters pertaining to black health care that catapulted him into the national spotlight.28 Richard O. Butcher became President of the San Diego NMA chapter and the youngest president ever of the Golden State Medical Association. In 1972 the NMA chapter, through the auspices of the national organization, implemented “Project 75”, a program aimed at finding and encouraging students mainly at largely black Lincoln High School to consider careers in health care.

Finally, a noteworthy sidelight comes from an article headline in the April 1973 issue of Jet magazine, “Hospitalized Ali’s Wife; Takes Eight to Calm Her,” told how distraught and violently hysterical the wife of boxer Muhammad Ali became when opponent Ken Norton broke the champ’s jaw in a bout in San Diego that Norton won in a split decision. The article

Dr. Rodney G. Hood graduated from UCSD in 1973 ©SDHC #91:18476-1406.

Medical services innovator and sought-after commentator Dr. Rodney G. Hood was elected President of the National Medical Association in 2001. Internet photo.
continued: “It took nearly 20 hours of medical attention provided by a black physician, Dr. Jimmie R. Valentine, at San Diego Mercy Hospital to calm her. Ali, who learned of her condition after undergoing surgery, slipped out of nearby Claremont Hospital and spent the night with his wife.”

Talent and Opportunities Abound: The 1980s and 1990s

Whereas E. Franklin Frazier had portrayed black doctors as conservative, there were others who examined them as a group and found them more liberal and/or progressive in their social and political views than their white counterparts. Historian Carter G. Woodson, the first scholar to produce a study of them in *The Negro Professional Man and the Community* (1934), gave credit where credit was due, recognizing that black doctors and dentists, in particular, had long facilitated the uplift of the race through health education, voicing community concerns, and risking their careers to challenge an oppressive “pigmentocracy.”

Clear proof of a dedicated and resourceful group of medical professionals present in San Diego in the 1980s abounds. Take, for example, La Jolla dentist Lennon Goins, the youngest son of Georgia sharecroppers in a family of fourteen children, who in 1983 created the Black Alumni Fund at UCSD that has disbursed hundreds of thousands of dollars to assist high-potential black students; brilliant laboratory scientist Janis H. Jackson, M.D. (1953-2003), who began in 1985 at the Scripps Research Institute and mentored gifted students and befriended the city’s homeless population before her untimely death; and Richard O. Butcher who in 1988 became the first black president of the San Diego County Medical Society.

On the civil rights front, in 1986 a lawsuit filed in federal court by seven local black dentists (Lennon Goins, Robert Robinson, Charlie F. Carmichael, Lois Center-Shabazz, Gene Moore, Jefferson W. Jones, and Charles H. Hammond) alleged that the Veterans Administration bypassed black dentists when making “fee basis” work referrals to private practitioners.

Between 1940 and 1970, the pool of the nation’s black doctors grew from only 4,160 to 6,044; stunningly, by 1990 the number had leaped to 13,707. Correspondingly, the number of black dentists had increased from 1,533 in 1945 to about 3,700 in 1990. Following the mitigation of racism in American society and the gradual dismantling of barriers to professional training over generations, the pioneers in San Diego’s black medical community were gratified to observe a record of outstanding achievements by their colleagues in the closing years of the century.

The decade got off to an auspicious start with the election of Richard O. Butcher as president-elect of the National Medical Association, then representing almost 15,000 black physicians nationwide. During his tenure as president he reiterated the
organization’s stance on national health insurance, assisted the Clinton Administration’s fight to approve the appointment of Jocelyn Elders as U.S. Surgeon General, and joined with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in an anti-smoking campaign targeting African Americans.

With an M.D. and a Ph.D. in pharmacology from New York University, Neil J. Clendeninn, a well-published scholar and drug developer, was Vice President for Clinical Affairs at Agouron Pharmaceutical in La Jolla from 1993 to 2000. He retired early, and rich, to Hawaii. The Dr. Neil Clendeninn Prize at Wesleyan University funds the education of promising biology and biochemistry students. In 1992 William T. Chapman was named “Doctor of the Year” at Paradise Valley Hospital, the premier hospital serving the mostly black and Latino population of Southeast San Diego and bordering communities.

George Prioleau (1949-1996) had taught at UC San Francisco School of Medicine before his appointment as Chief of Neurosurgery at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center. This nationally known brain surgeon and pilot was killed in 1996 in a helicopter crash at age forty-seven. Pediatrician Robert K. Ross (M.D., University of Pennsylvania) was director of the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency from 1993 to 2000 when he was selected to head the California Endowment, a $5 billion health foundation. In the mid-1990s San Diegans were accustomed to seeing the tall, well-groomed James L. Kyle dispensing medical advice on KUSI-TV. The calming, deep-voiced UCLA alumnus continued appearances on other television stations and became Dean of the Loma Linda University School of Public Health, Vice President for Medical Affairs at St. Mary Hospital in Apple Valley, and senior pastor of the Tamarind Avenue Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Compton.

For black physicians, 1995 turned out to be an interesting year both nationally and locally. It was the year when San Pablo, California, internist Lonnie R. Bristow took over as the first black president of the AMA. The shocking announcement

Former Director of the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, currently Dr. Robert K. Ross heads The California Endowment, a multi-billion dollar health foundation. Internet Photo.
of a not-guilty verdict in the O.J. Simpson murder case on October 3, 1995, sent reporters to the door of psychiatrist William H. Grier, co-author of the bestseller *Black Rage* (1968), who had moved from San Francisco to San Diego, to get a black point of view on the so-called “Trial of the Century.” Grier obliged and commented: “I think that really well-intentioned people think that blacks were exaggerating. The important thing is that for once a black guy was able to turn the tables on the authorities.”32 Also in 1995, Joseph S. Freitas made the front page of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* when he did an emergency Caesarian section on a deceased woman and saved her twin girls. He commented: “I listened to her abdomen, heard faint fetal heart activity, determined they looked viable in size and told the nurse, ‘Let’s get these babies out now. Give me a scalpel and towels.'”33


### Rampant Optimism in the Twenty-First Century

The trend toward specialization was even more apparent in the initial decade of the new century. Among today’s practicing African-American specialists are Marquis E. Hart (transplant surgery), Cheryl Wright (rheumatology), Daniel J. Brown (plastic surgery), Cynthia Ann Coles and Donna M. Mills (psychiatry), Kevin B. Calhoun (laser and cosmetic surgery), John M. Carethers and Roderick Rapier (gastroenterology), William Meade Jr. (emergency medicine), Donna M. Baytop (preventive/occupational medicine), Theodore S. Thomas (nephrology), Amilcar A. Exume (pediatric...
surgery), Brenton D. Wynn (pain and sports medicine), and Fern P. Nelson (dermatology).

Despite considerable progress made in advancing racial tolerance and the wide acceptance of the notion of equal opportunity and diversity, evidence of a still-imperfect society was confirmed in a published study in 2001 that found 12 percent of black doctors and 15 percent of Latino doctors “reported difficulty getting specialty referrals of their patients, compared to 8 percent of white doctors.” A survey of 2,500 doctors by a University of Washington professor concluded that: “The majority of doctors in all ethnic and racial groups showed an implicit preference for white Americans compared with black Americans, except for black doctors who typically did not have a preference either way.” In a bittersweet victory of sorts, in 2008, after a review of past history and practices, the AMA apologized for “excluding Black doctors from its ranks and for not challenging legislations that could have contributed to the end of racial discrimination within the organization.”

Racial attitudes and equal opportunity matters aside, there remain a number of problems common to many black physicians such as cutbacks and reformulations of government subsidized health programs and competition with managed care organizations. These issues are carefully analyzed in Against the Odds: Blacks in the Profession of Medicine in the United States (1999) and in a chapter on the black health care crisis in volume two of An American Health Dilemma (2000). A report released in 2008 by the Center for California Health Workforce Studies at UC San Francisco revealed that in San Diego and Imperial Counties, the disparity of practicing physicians compared to the population of blacks was greater than in the state as a whole. The residents of these counties stood at 5.7 percent, but only 2 percent of physicians were black, compared to California’s black population of 6.7 percent. Blacks represent 3.7 percent of the state’s physicians.

If one hundred years ago William A. Burney or Fred C. Calvert could have gazed into a crystal ball and seen the varied accomplishments of their

The second African American president of the San Diego County Medical Society, Edgar D. Canada, President of the California Society of Anesthesiologists in 2006, works in pediatric anesthesiology at Rady Children’s Hospital. Internet photo.

Cited in 2002 as one of “America’s Top Opthalmologists” by the Consumer’s Research Council of America, the work of Charles W. Flowers Jr. has earned him numerous awards. Internet photo.
successors in the black medical community, their spirits would indeed have been lifted. On January 1, 2000, Arthur M. Flippin assumed the position San Diego Area Medical Director of the Southern California Permanente Medical Group and, the following year, Nora M. Faine (M.D. and M.P.H.) was chosen Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of Sharp Health Plan. Rodney G. Hood began his tenure as the second physician from San Diego to be tapped President of the National Medical Association in 2001. In 2002, decorated former military officer James Colbert who earned his pharmacy doctorate at UC San Francisco, currently an assistant dean and clinical professor at UCSD, was proclaimed a “Health Hero” by the local chapter of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. A past president of the San Diego Society of Health-System Pharmacists (SDSHP), Colbert was the recipient of the group’s “Pharmacist of the Year” award in 2000. Charles W. Flowers, Jr., was named one of “America’s Top Ophthalmologists” in 2002 by the Consumer’s Research Council of America, an honor reinforcing his reputation as one of the city’s “Top Doctors” listed in San Diego Magazine in 2004.

In 2003, surgeon Tracy Downs, a specialist in urologic oncology who did his residency at the Harvard Medical School, joined the faculty at UCSD. In 2004, Rev. Mark Reeves, a hero to the rescue in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, became the first staff chaplain at the UCSD Medical Center. Edgar D. Canada became the second African American to assume the helm of the San Diego County Medical Society and, in 2006, was President of the California Society of Anesthesiologists. Also in 2006, surgeon James A. Johnson became President/CEO of Meals-on-Wheels Greater San Diego, Inc.

Pediatrician Sandra Daley was made Associate Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer at UC San Diego in 2007; while Donna M. Baytop, Medical Director for Solar Turbines and a member of the University of San Diego Board of Trustees, was given the Rutherford T. Johnstone Award for superior service in occupational
medicine by the Western Occupational & Environmental Medical Association (WOEMA). In 2008, Kenneth H. Schell (Pharm.D.), Vice President for Compliance and Quality Assurance for Prescription Solutions and formerly an administrator at Sharp and Kaiser Permanente hospitals, was appointed President of the California State Board of Pharmacy.

General practitioner Suzanne E. Afflalo and internist Robert Felder were listed among San Diego’s “Top Doctors” in San Diego Magazine. Voted to this exclusive list in 2009 were Theodore S. Thomas (nephrology) and Leon Kelley (pediatrics), and in 2010 Oyewale O. Abidoye (hematology/oncology) and Gail R. Knight (pediatrics) who that same year was named Division Chief of Neonatology Rady Children’s Hospital. At a dinner in January 2009, Dr. Thomas was toasted as the new Chief of Staff of Scripps Mercy Hospital, overseeing 3,000 employees and 1,300 doctors. More recently, Michael Owens, an M.D. and M.P.H. from Yale University and founder of Imhoptep Health Systems Inc., was made Regional Director of Molina Healthcare of California, an HMO. At its Thirty-Third Annual Awards Event, the San Diego Black Nurses Association gave five local nursing students scholarships totaling $6,250.

It was announced in August 2009 that John M. Carethers, Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology at UCSD, would leave to become Chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan. Also in 2009, Richard O. Butcher received the Gary F. Krieger Speaker’s Recognition award from the California Medical Association for his decades of medical leadership. In 2011, Rodney Hood, Butcher’s long-time colleague and business partner, received the Pride in the Profession Award from the AMA at a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps Drs. Burney and Calvert would not have been overly surprised to learn of all the high professional achievements and civic work mentioned herein, because they would have understood that, like themselves, many of their successors were just as bold, ambitious, and optimistic enough to take a chance on building a career in a place far off the beaten path, and in the shadow of that seemingly irresistible magnet and mega-metropolis to the north known as Los Angeles. A combination of San Diego’s sunny, mild climate, underserved population, and access to advanced education and research may have attracted them but, undoubtedly, valued personal relationships, dedication to and leadership in local community and professional groups, and perceived appreciation of their good work persuaded most of them to stay and prosper.
NOTES


10. The often heard accomplishments of Dr. Jack J. Kimbrough are recapped in more interesting detail by Kimbrough himself in an interview conducted by Robert G. Wright, October 11, 1990, an oral history project of the San Diego Historical Society which on occasion has been offered as an audio file on its website.


27. Ibid.
28. See Robert Fikes, Jr., “‘Medical History: City’s Tradition of African-American Medical Leadership Embodied in Dr. Hood,’ _Journal of the National Medical Association_ 93, no. 9 (September 2001), 350-353.
38. Keith Darce, “This is a Very Urgent Issue,” _San Diego Union-Tribune_, B-1.
The Day the San Diego River Was Saved:  
The History of Floods and Floodplain Planning in Mission Valley  
by Philip R. Pryde, Ph.D.  

We will only conserve what we love;  
We will only love what we understand;  
We will understand only what we are taught.  
Baba Dioum

Rivers have defined many of the world’s great cities—think of London, Cairo, Paris, New Orleans, and others. The San Diego River is not quite as impressive as the rivers that flow through these cities but, in its own way, it too has defined significant aspects of San Diego’s history and development. In the middle of the twentieth century, however, its death knell was being actively discussed, in the form of a concrete flood channel from the Pacific Ocean to Grantville. The story of how the San Diego River dodged this potentially fatal bullet is not only fascinating, but also instructive, reminding us of the intrinsic importance of all our free-flowing rivers and the need to protect them.

The Context

The San Diego River rises in the hills surrounding Julian and drops over 4,000 feet to its rendezvous with the Pacific Ocean at Ocean Beach. Most of its tributaries, like other streams in the county, are dry much of the year, but can occasionally flow with impressive volumes of water. They support one of the county’s most

Philip R. Pryde is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies in the Department of Geography at San Diego State University. He is author of San Diego: An Introduction to the Region (2004) and Conservation in the Soviet Union (reprinted 2010). The author wishes to thank all those who assisted in the preparation of this article, with special appreciation to Rob Hutsel, Jim Peugh, Diane Coombs, Elizabeth Hanley, Paul Lehman, Judy Swink, and Clare Crane (and especially to everyone who appeared at the March 1971 hearing).
productive wildlife habitats—riparian forests. And they harbor surprises: many county residents are not aware that a couple of the river’s tributaries also contain two truly spectacular wet-season waterfalls, Cedar Creek Falls and Mildred Falls.¹ The latter, located a few miles west of Pine Hills, drops some 300 feet down a sheer rock face (Figure 1). A more arid Yosemite comes to mind.

The River, of course, was the birthplace of the City of San Diego and, by extension, the State of California as well. Long before the arrival of Father Junípero Serra in 1769, the benefits of living near the river were well known to the Kumeyaay Indians who resided in its valley. Both the Native Americans and the missionaries knew it as a source of both food and potable water, although the latter was not necessarily reliable twelve months of every year. To overcome this problem, the Spaniards

¹ Fig. 1. Mildred Falls on Ritchie Creek showing its 300-foot drop. Photo courtesy of the San Diego River Park Foundation.

² Fig. 2. Coast Highway bridge on the San Diego River destroyed by the 1916 flood. ©SDHC #6015.
moved their settlement several miles upstream—to Mission San Diego de Alcala—where they could obtain both year-round potable well water and water via an aqueduct from Padre dam.

For almost two centuries, little happened in the valley except agriculture and scattered Native American encampments. After World War II commercial development began, continuing at accelerated paces ever since. The development tended to hide the river, and it was easy to find newer residents who, fooled by our generally arid climate, had no idea there was even a river there.

Dry years and droughts were not the only periodic problems associated with the San Diego River. Occasional wet years and high levels of upstream run-off could produce significant floods. The huge flood of 1916, which cut off San Diego from Los Angeles and destroyed the Lower Otay Dam, is well chronicled, and is the largest flood having an officially calculated size estimate (Figure 2). An even larger deluge, however, is believed to have occurred in 1862, and several other very large floods are recorded in the last third of the nineteenth century. A good overview of some of the major flooding events in San Diego County can be found in the Spring 1971 issue of The Journal of San Diego History. Interestingly, there is a rather poor correlation between the rainiest years in San Diego, and the years of the largest San Diego River floods (Table 1, Figure 3).

In the twentieth century, the ten largest floods occurred in 1916, 1918, 1921,
## Table 1. Largest San Diego River Floods of the Twentieth Century [a]

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<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Maximum cfs [c]</th>
<th>Rain year precipit’n</th>
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<td>January</td>
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<td>12.55</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>16,700</td>
<td>18.65</td>
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<td>February</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>15.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>[d]</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>9,590</td>
<td>18.26</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>9,250</td>
<td>24.74</td>
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<td>1931-32</td>
<td>February</td>
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<td>13.18</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>9.72</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>1992-93</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>3,460</td>
<td>18.31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>3,420 [f]</td>
<td>15.72</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>10.63 ave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>3,010 [f]</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[a] Actual years covered by available data are 1914 to 2001.
[b] In California annual rainfall is measured from July 1 to the following June 30.
[c] Cfs = cubic feet per second (at maximum flood flow).
[d] Annual precipitation for this year was below the mean.
[e] Note that 8 of the 10 largest floods occurred prior to 1942. This can be attributed mainly to the absence of dams on the river at that time.
[f] The peak run-off data for Jan. 1978 and Feb. 1980 may be understated. It seems questionable that the peak flow of 1983 was three times that of 1978 or 1980. Water was so high in 1980 that Mission Valley was evacuated. No such emergency was declared in 1983. Also, there was no recording gage in Mission Valley in 1978 and 1980.

Sources: U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Weather Bureau
1927, 1932, 1937, 1938, 1941, 1983, and 1995 (Table 1). The largest of these could be counted on to put significant portions of Mission Valley under water. By 1950, San Diego was rapidly expanding as a result of the boost that World War II gave the economy. Some people saw the flood potential in Mission Valley as a threat to economic prosperity. The stage was set for the great debate over the future of the San Diego River.

The Threat

As most people know, when it comes to natural forces and landscape redesigning, “water rules.” But during the period from roughly the 1930s through the 1970s, the federal and state dam building agencies disagreed, and operated under the tacit maxim that “water projects rule.” This era produced such megaprojects as Grand Coulee and Hoover dams, and the Colorado Aqueduct and the State Water Project. It also produced the discredited Cross-Florida Barge Canal and Everglades drainage projects, as well as the disastrous “MR.GO” (Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet) canal that allowed Hurricane Katrina direct access into downtown New Orleans. Not all water project ideas are good ones.

But this was the era when people in power thought it was desirable to redesign nature. And if the San Diego River was prone to flooding, well then, it needed to be tamed. The taming had actually begun in the 1850s, when “Derby’s Dike” was built to direct the river westward so that it would not bring unwanted sediment into San Diego Bay (Figure 4). It lasted only two years, but a new dike was built in 1876.

The perceived twentieth-century flood threat required much larger-scale taming. In the early 1940s, the federal and state dam building agencies disagreed, and operated under the tacit maxim that “water projects rule.” This era produced such megaprojects as Grand Coulee and Hoover dams, and the Colorado Aqueduct and the State Water Project. It also produced the discredited Cross-Florida Barge Canal and Everglades drainage projects, as well as the disastrous “MR.GO” (Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet) canal that allowed Hurricane Katrina direct access into downtown New Orleans. Not all water project ideas are good ones.

Fig. 4. The lower San Diego River area in 1853.
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the War Department (now the Department of Defense) stressed the need to prevent siltation in San Diego Bay. A recommendation for a new and larger dike, prepared in 1942, was authorized by acts of Congress in 1944 and 1946. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prepared a hydrologic study for the river in 1947, and a channelization project for the western end of the river was approved two years later. The current rock-sided channel west of I-5, completed in 1953 ensured that the river would never flow into either one of the two bays again. At that time most of Mission Valley was still in agriculture, but that quickly would begin to disappear (Figure 5).

By the late 1950s, with the 1953 channel now a reality (and perhaps with visions of its extension farther up Mission Valley), large developments such as the May Company’s Mission Valley Shopping Center began construction. The incipient commercialization of the Valley was lamented by a few writers, as well as by planning organizations such as Citizens Coordinate for Century 3. As a reflection of the new development, by 1960, a much larger flood control project was being discussed—one that would encompass all of Mission Valley. Accordingly, the City of San Diego requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to recommend a solution to the perceived San Diego River flood problem. Not surprisingly, they did.

The initial step was a public hearing attended by ninety-three people held on April 5, 1961. The purpose of this hearing was to get community input regarding the preparation of a new Corps of Engineers report, and did not focus on any specific plan. Of significance, however, was the following comment in the 1964 report about this 1961 hearing, stating, “Local interests expressed their desire for
a plan of improvement through Mission Valley similar to the existing Corps of Engineers’ improvement from Morena Boulevard to the ocean, which is a channel with rock-revetted levees.”10 In other words, even back in 1961, San Diegans were making clear that they did not want a Los Angeles-style concrete channel in Mission Valley. But that was precisely what the Corps presented to them three years later.

To further facilitate the flood channel project, the San Diego City Council passed a resolution on August 29, 1963, guaranteeing that the city would carry out all its obligations with regard to a channel, including land acquisition.

The result was a preliminary recommendation for a massive flood control channel on the San Diego River, presented by the Corps in 1964.11 It envisioned a rectangular concrete structure 200-250 feet wide and 23-25 feet deep, running the entire length of Mission Valley. It would have begun at Zion Avenue in Grantville and continued westward through the valley, joining the existing rock-sided channel that begins just east of I-5. As noted, the latter had been constructed in 1953 to ensure that the river would carry its sediments due west to the ocean, rather than into the bays. The Corps’ new project for the Valley also called for concrete side channels in Alvarado, Murray, and Murphy Canyons.

Fig. 6. The Los Angeles River concrete flood channel. Photo by P.R. Pryde.
The main large channel in Mission Valley would have looked almost exactly like the concrete channel that replaced the Los Angeles River through that city’s downtown area, and which L.A. residents are now actively talking about removing (Figure 6). Its size would have accommodated a flood flow of 115,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), a number that might be hard to visualize unless one is well versed in hydrology, but the reader can probably envision a huge amount of water. By comparison, it is larger than any flood that has ever been measured on the San Diego River (including estimates for the 1862 flood), and indeed is larger than the average flow of the Columbia River as it enters the United States from Canada!

To give the Corps of Engineers the proper authorization to conduct additional, more detailed studies for a flood channel, Congress passed Public Law 89-298 in October 1965, formally approving the concept and authorizing the preparation of a flood control project on the San Diego River in Mission Valley. In May 1967 the city passed an ordinance to provide for a Flood Channel Zone in Mission Valley, and a city publication that year said, “Construction for this project is scheduled to begin between 1968 and 1970.”

While few San Diegans were aware of the proposed plan at the start of the 1970s, those who knew about the project began asking questions and raising objections.
It was the dawn of the environmental era, and the slogan, “We don’t want to be like Los Angeles” was starting to be heard. Even so, most people assumed that if the City wanted it, and the Corps of Engineers wanted it, and Congress passed a law approving it, like it or not, it was probably a done deal. You couldn’t fight both City Hall and a giant federal bureaucracy simultaneously. Other regional agencies began conducting their long-range planning on the assumption that a concrete San Diego River channel would be built (Figure 7).

The Hearing

Large projects such as the proposed San Diego River flood channel, even in those days, required a public hearing. For whatever reason, a public hearing on the proposed project did not occur for several years following the issuance of the 1964 report. Finally, a public meeting (the Corps preferred the term “public meeting” to “public hearing”) was scheduled for 7 p.m. on March 30, 1971, in the Town and Country Convention Center in Mission Valley. By 1971, however, it had become harder to ram through projects such as this. The huge Santa Barbara oil spill had engendered the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, better known as NEPA (“neepa”). It required the preparation of Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) on significant projects. Of course, reports were different then. Instead of the voluminous EIRs that appear today on major projects, the one for the San Diego River flood control channel consisted of just six pages (mostly descriptive), contained no graphics or tabular data, and was not even dated, though probably was issued in either late 1970 or early 1971. It would be considered laughably inadequate today, but that was forty years ago. Times have changed.

It was fortunate that the hearing was scheduled at such a spacious venue. Whereas the 1961 hearing had drawn San Diego Union article on the March 30, 1971 public meeting regarding the San Diego River. Photo by P.R. Pryde.
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ninety-three participants, the attendance at the 1971 gathering was estimated at around one thousand.\(^\text{15}\) The meeting hall was packed, the overflow spilled out into the corridors, and over one hundred people submitted slips to speak. The *San Diego Union* writer noted, “Most who spoke were against the plans” (Figure 8).\(^\text{16}\) It was clear that the San Diego River was no longer to be ignored, nor its fate left up to governmental machinations.

Colonel Robert J. Malley, the head of the Los Angeles office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, chaired the meeting and must have been surprised by the size of the turnout. He probably sensed it was going to be a long evening. Mayor Frank Curran, who favored the channel, opened the proceedings. Per normal procedure, after explanatory comments by Corps personnel, the proponents of the project spoke first. Only four businessmen spoke in favor of the plan; they were mainly property owners in the valley who believed the channel was needed to allow them to develop.\(^\text{17}\) Most influential among them was Bruce Hazard, a major landowner and developer in Mission Valley for whom Hazard Center is named.

Twenty-four others followed, all speaking in opposition to the project. Among the planning and environmental organizations that spoke against the proposed channel were the San Diego chapters of the Sierra Club and Audubon Society, Citizens Coordinate for Century 3, the Ocean Beach Ecology Action group, the Environmental Quality Committee, the Mission Beach and Ocean Beach Town Councils, the Navajo Community Planners, the College Area Community Council, the Community Planners Committee, the Park Northeast Planning Association, and other similar organizations. They were followed by a number of individual speakers who likewise expressed their opposition to the proposed concrete channel.

The one elected official who did speak was County Supervisor Jack Walsh, who had taken a personal interest in the project and opposed it, at least as proposed by the Corps, writing several letters to their offices in 1970 and 1971.\(^\text{18}\) He questioned the size of the project and asked for alternatives to be studied.

The author of this article presented the main statement from environmental groups in opposition. At the time, he chaired the Conservation Committee of the San Diego chapter of the Sierra Club, and his comments were endorsed by both the local Audubon chapter and Citizens Coordinate for Century 3, for whom he was also authorized to speak. These comments contained three main themes: (a) that a concrete channel was unacceptable, (b) that if any “improvements” were needed they should be as natural as possible, and (c) that the proposed size of the channel, and the size of the calculated flood that justified it, were open to question.

Interaction with the Corps concerning the project had begun well before the March 1971 public meeting. Among the many individuals preparing statements
or sending communications to the Corps prior to the hearing that questioned the projects were scientists in the biology and zoology departments at (then) San Diego State College, particularly Drs. Joy Zedler and Jason Lillegraven. Dr. Zedler’s letter, which was more in the form of a position statement, was co-signed by eight other professors in the Department of Biology.19

As this was only a public forum to garner citizen and organizational input, no action was taken that evening. It is to Colonel Malley’s credit that he conducted a very fair and even-handed hearing. The San Diego Union article quoted him as saying, “That’s why we’re here. We want to find out what the people think about the proposed channel. And it’s only proposed. It’s not final. It can be changed.”20 The latter turned out to be four very prophetic words.

The Re-think

Following the March 30 public meeting, interest in the fate of the San Diego River did not flag in the slightest. In the spring of 1971, various letters were sent to the San Diego City Manager asking if the city was going to reconfirm its August 1963 guarantees (noted above), and to Colonel Malley, requesting again that their proposal be restudied.

On May 11, 1971, this author went to the office of the Corps of Engineers in Los Angeles to speak directly with its staff about many specific details of the project. They were surprisingly helpful, perhaps because, on the same day, The San Diego Union reported that a decision to re-examine the project had already been made.21 This surprising message caused considerable, albeit restrained, rejoicing in San Diego. Even more heartening, the newspaper article quoted the Corps’ Colonel Malley as saying that the restudy, “came about because of testimony at the hearing in Mission Valley” on March 30.22

On May 21 the Corps issued a response to the letters requesting a re-study, signed by Edward Koehm, Chief of the Engineering Division at its Los Angeles office. In it, Koehm stated, “The alternatives, proposed by the Sierra Club and others at the public meeting in San Diego, are being studied...It is estimated that the proposed studies will be completed in eight to ten months. Another public meeting will be scheduled upon completion of the studies and before any final design selection is made. You will be notified...”23

One of the main objections leveled at the Corps on March 30 was that the large flood envisioned for the San Diego River was not based on any meteorological event that had ever taken place in San Diego County, but rather on a huge storm that had occurred in 1943 in the San Gabriel Mountains north of Los Angeles. It was suggested that no such storm would be likely to occur under the considerably
The May 11 newspaper article specifically mentioned that the underlying hydrologic calculations were being looked at. Col. Malley stated, “We are seeking to confirm our flow data leading to our estimates of a standard project flood.” By “standard project flood” he meant the size of the calculated flood that would justify the very large concrete channel being proposed. If it could be proven that the size of their calculated flood was exaggerated, much of the justification for a large concrete channel would be rendered questionable.

It was hoped that their new study would contain not only a re-examination of the hydrological assumptions, but also specific alternatives to the increasingly disliked concrete channel proposal. Although perhaps not directly related to the Corps’ restudy then underway, the city of San Diego in September 1971 adopted its first ordinance to start controlling development in floodplains. The main purpose of this ordinance was to define a legal floodway to enable the city to qualify for Federal flood insurance (Figure 9).

Finally, on March 23, 1972, the San Diego City Council passed a resolution formally asking the Corps to study various types of alternative facilities, including “a natural bottom wide channel” throughout most of the valley.
The Critique

The communications from the Corps of Engineers in the spring of 1971 were most encouraging. But those who wanted to see the river kept unchannelized felt it would be desirable to keep pressure on the Corps to let them know San Diegans were still keeping a sharp eye on what was going on in Los Angeles.

Accordingly, the present author decided it might be beneficial to back up the questions that were asked at the March public meeting with a more detailed analysis of exactly what seemed to be wrong with the way the Corps calculated flood flows for the San Diego River. There was, of course, more than a little nervousness with this course of action, as one could easily visualize a Corps official looking at you over his glasses and sniffing, “And exactly which engineering degree do you have?” Nevertheless, the defense of the river called, and research on a critique of the Corps’ procedures was soon underway.

A year earlier, to lend additional credibility to the opposition to the channel, a new organization had been formed, known as the San Diego County Floodplain Technical Committee (SDCFTC). It consisted largely of young faculty at San Diego State College, with the author as its chair, and several other members that included Joy Zedler (biologist) Arthur Kartman (economist), Howard Chang (hydrologist), Frank Stratton (civil engineer), and others. The SDCFTC sent out many letters and

![Fig. 10. The Corps’ isopercentual map as transposed to San Diego County, used to justify a large concrete channel. Photo by P.R. Pryde.](image-url)
position papers, but its most significant effort was the 1972 critique of the Corps’ methodology for calculating a maximum flood in Mission Valley.26

In summary, the critique said that the Corps procedure for predicting a maximum flood flow (in Corps parlance, a “standard project flood”) for the lower San Diego River was invalid. The Corps’ procedure was to take the largest 24-hour rainfall that had occurred in the mountains north of Los Angeles, depict cartographically the percent of normal annual rainfall that fell in that one day period (termed an “isopercentual map,” see Figure 10), and then transpose that storm, on paper, to the mountains east of San Diego, centered on the upper San Diego River watershed.

The critique pointed out several reasons why you cannot do this. The Los Angeles mountains are higher, their windward slopes are steeper, they are aligned so as to face directly towards incoming storms, and more (and larger) storms move through Los Angeles than through San Diego County. The coup de grace was a statement in a major hydrology text that said, “storms in mountainous regions cannot be transposed...hence, the patterns are best defined by the major storms of the immediate area.”27

The report was disseminated to the Corps of Engineers offices in Los Angeles, the local media, local elected officials, and other interested parties and stakeholders.28 Some years later, in a casual conversation with Corps personnel, the author inquired as to whether they had seen the SDCFTC report and asked if it had influenced their subsequent actions. They acknowledged that it had.

The Surprise

Now the question was: what kind of a reconsidered proposal for Mission Valley would the Corps of Engineers produce? Their response came back relatively quickly, received by the city in September 1972, only about six months after the city’s official Resolution requesting the restudy. The new Corps study contained nine different alternatives, which are summarized below. To analyze all these new concepts, the city created a special Task Force for this specific purpose on September 22, 1972, and the Task Force also worked quickly, submitting a detailed report to the City Manager and Council in January 1973.29

The nine proposals that the Corps looked at in the 1972 re-study fell into five conceptual categories. The first two, designated as Alternatives I-A and I-B, were essentially two variations on the existing plan, differing only in where the concrete portion of the channel would begin. Both would convey the previously proposed “standard project flood” of 115,000 cfs.

Next came Alternatives II-A and II-B, both involving one new dam on the river
north of Lakeside. One would have a concrete channel in Mission Valley and the other an earthen bottom channel with rock levees on the sides. A major conceptual difference here was that the size of the flood flow that would be accommodated would be dropped from 115,000 cfs. to 42,000 cfs. The latter figure was considered to be the “hundred-year flood flow.”

Alternatives III-A and III-B envisioned two upstream dams, but these would be smaller detention dams downstream from the existing El Capitan and San Vicente dams. III-A and III-B would again differ in terms of the nature of the downstream channel; the design flood would also be the smaller 42,000, or “hundred-year flood,” figure.

Alternative IV envisioned a new dam in the Lakeside area, but only a grass-lined channel in Mission Valley, starting near the present SR-163 crossing. It would also be designed to convey the smaller hundred-year flow.

Finally, Alternative V would entail two detention dams, similar to Alternative III, and only a grass-lined earthen channel downstream, again starting just east of the SR-163 bridge (Figure 11).

The ninth alternative was the “status quo”; in other words, doing nothing at all. The city warned that this alternative might entail a building moratorium in most of Mission Valley.

Then came the surprise. The Task Force turned away from the Corps’ earlier
concrete channel proposal (which the city had previously also supported), and selected the least intrusive of all nine variants, Alternative V.\textsuperscript{30}

The Task Force enumerated several reasons for doing this, aside from public sentiment. The Task Force examined all nine options from four perspectives: economics, engineering, regional planning, and environmental factors. Each of these categories had a number of sub-topics that were individually evaluated. As a result of this analysis, the top three candidates were Alternatives V, IV, and III-B, with Alternative V scoring first in all of the four primary categories except planning, where it was second. The least intensively engineered alternative, V, had proven itself to be the most desirable.\textsuperscript{31}

Alternative V, however, assumed that the “big flood” would be entirely stored in the new reservoirs. It provided for a flood in Mission Valley generated by a very large thunderstorm occurring below the new dams, calculated at 25,000 cfs in the valley. This is the reason that a smaller, soft-bottom “green” channel could be proposed for Mission Valley under Alternative V.\textsuperscript{32}

To illustrate the problems with the more grandiose alternatives, the single new dam (the “Lakeside Dam”) proposed in Alternatives II-A, III-A, and IV would have been both huge and very destructive. It would have been built just north of El Capitan High School, almost 300-feet high, and stretching from the hills on the east side of Ashwood Street to the hills on the west side of SR-67, north of that highway’s present river crossing. The top of the dam would have been over a half mile long. The reservoir would have inundated virtually all of El Monte Valley, as well as most of Moreno Valley along San Vicente Creek and SR-67.\textsuperscript{33} Property acquisition costs (using eminent domain) would have been enormous, even in 1973 dollars.

The Task Force report also identified several aspects of the overall project that it felt warranted additional study and analysis. Although Alternative V might be most desirable, it would provide safe passage for a much smaller flood than had been planned for previously. And the size of the flood that the city should be planning for in Mission Valley was very largely an unknown entity (and, it might be noted, that same statement could probably still be made today).

The Aftermath

Needless to say, most San Diego area environmental groups—feeling that a bullet had just been successfully dodged—endorsed Alternative V, as did almost everyone else. The SDCFTC sent a letter of support, as did the San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club, whose letter carried the signature of its then Conservation Chair, none other than future County supervisor, mayor, and radio talk show host Roger
Hedgecock. On the whole, Alternative V looked good to most San Diegans, at least compared to what was being proposed previously. On April 17, 1973, the San Diego City Council voted 7-0 to approve the concept of Alternative V.

But that small bit of euphoria was destined to be temporary. Alternative V was not without its critics and, as noted above, would have involved two new retention dams immediately below the existing El Capitan and San Vicente dams. Some conservation groups and many individuals preferred an open space-green belt concept in Mission Valley, while a few landowners were still sympathetic to the concrete channel idea. A few years of discussions, planning, and additional thinking ensued.

The death knell for the Corps’ proposal came in 1976 when the Corps itself opined that, based on a much lower estimated hundred-year flood size in the valley (25,000 cfs) plus the use of more realistic (higher) interest rates in its economic calculations, none of its nine 1973 alternatives would have a positive benefit-cost ratio. That statement pretty much killed any chance of getting a funding appropriation through Congress.

The city then began to seek ways to resolve the situation itself. It studied concepts for the river’s floodplain that it could incorporate into the community plans for Mission Valley, and that embodied the idea of a “soft-bottom” channel (that is, with a bottom of soil and vegetation). Because some sections of the valley were already so well developed that there was little room for any kind of a channel left (for example, the Fashion Valley area near the Town and Country complex),

Fig. 12. The San Diego River flood of February 18, 1980 at Fashion Valley Road. Photo by P.R. Pryde.
flood planning for the valley would have to be done in segments, with different approaches used depending on how much of the floodplain remained in any given stretch of the river.

In the mid-1970s, much of the discussion at City Hall involved preparing, adopting, and applying the comprehensive set of floodplain zoning regulations required by the new Federal flood insurance law. The first such zones were adopted in 1973, but the application of comprehensive floodway zoning in Mission Valley was not accomplished until October 26, 1977. The city also prepared plans for small excavations in parts of the valley, calling them “pilot channels,” to direct smaller flood flows more quickly to the ocean.

One impetus for a heightened awareness of nature in San Diego city planning was the highly acclaimed Donald Appleyard and Kevin Lynch study, *Temporary Paradise*, which appeared in 1974. It urged that the city should “preserve all remaining undeveloped valleys and canyons;” and that “no further channeling of the streams should be permitted.” It lamented that the future of Mission Valley “appears gloomy,” calling it “an urban trench,” but also emphasized that it could still be transformed, if wanted, into a beautiful asset for the city.37

About that time, Mother Nature must have decided that San Diegans needed a timely reminder about flood potential for, in both 1978 and 1980, the winter rains produced the greatest flooding on the river in many years (Figures 12 and 13). Significant flooding also occurred in 1983.
The flooding caused the major landowners in the valley to propose a plan to the city that would comply with the city’s new floodway regulations, safely accommodate floods such as occurred in 1978 and 1980, and allow them to develop their prime properties between the SR-163 and I-805 freeways. This was the start of planning for the first major flood control project in the valley, which eventually carried the name, First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP), affectionately pronounced “FizzDrip.”

This concept required some major work by the City Planning Department but, by early 1982, the plan was completed and the Environmental Impact Report for the project was ready for circulation. The entire plan was approved by the city council on November 16, 1982. It became a part of the newly prepared Draft Mission Valley Community Plan, which had been six years in the making. The specifics of the proposed FSDRIP plan were embodied in a separate document, the San Diego River Wetlands Management Plan. The latter document included floodplain concepts for all of Mission Valley eastward to Zion Street, not just for the FSDRIP portion.

With the plans approved, the city was well into the process of acquiring all the many permits needed to begin construction of the FSDRIP project by 1984. Work was soon underway, and the project was completed in the early 1990s (Figure 14). Even before it was completed, there were good indications that it would be a biological success.
In addition to FSDRIP, other plans for the river were being worked on in the 1980s. One was a similar concept for the middle stretch of the river between Padre Dam and the El Capitan Dam, which bore the name Upper San Diego River Improvement Project (USDRIP). This plan was authorized in 1978 but, because it involved multiple jurisdictions and complex planning problems, it was not completed until 1983. The result was a small and highly schematic report, which has remained as merely a concept document, although some aspects of it have been carried out by the cities of Santee and San Diego. Santee, for example, has significant flooding problems of its own along the river (Figure 15). In response, it adopted the concept of the USDRIP proposal into its initial General Plan in 1981, just one year after the city was incorporated.

Provisions of the federal and state Endangered Species Acts required another plan for the river in order to protect the endangered Least Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii), a migratory songbird that nests only in riparian woodlands. In order to protect such species and provide for their recovery, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires the preparation of Habitat Management Plans for, in this case, their breeding territories along the San Diego River. This plan was completed in July 1990.

There was one other plan that many San Diegans wanted to see developed: a master plan for a long dreamed-of San Diego River Park.
The Park

The idea of a San Diego River Park had been around for a long time, an enduring dream held by many. What was lacking was any coordinated effort to actually bring such a park into reality. The concept appears to have begun with a more modest vision of a river park in Mission Valley. In 1978, a San Diego Union article illustrated a possible “Mission Valley Regional Park” extending from Morena Boulevard eastward to I-805. The writer gave credit for the first use of that phrase to a paper prepared in 1975 by Kim Wiley, a student at Cal Poly Pomona.46 As noted earlier, however, the idea of a park in the valley had been strongly urged in the 1974 Appleyard and Lynch report that may have influenced Wiley.

A year later, one of the earliest references by name to a “San Diego River Park” was in a lengthy 1979 article in The San Diego Union written by Roger Showley.47 In it, he noted the many development projects pending in the valley, and lamented the uncoordinated planning that had taken place there in the past. His reference to a San Diego River Park at that time, however, referred only to the newly proposed Mission Valley greenbelt that accompanied the two-mile FSDRIP project.

The San Diego River Park concept continued to be discussed for a few years,

Fig. 16. Announcement of a public meeting to discuss a San Diego River Park, 1982. Photo by P.R. Pryde.
including at a luncheon conference and walking tour of the river to promote the idea, sponsored by Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 on February 27, 1982 (Figure 16). As noted above, a portion of the river became a de facto open space park with the construction of the FSDRIP project in the late 1980s. But after that, the park concept seemed to fade into the background as the focus of city planning shifted to downtown redevelopment proposals, such as the Horton Plaza Shopping Center, the Convention Center, the light rail system, and the revitalized Gaslamp District. The river park idea was little discussed during the 1990s. The generalized river park idea still lacked an implementing vision and, for ten years or so, was largely absent from civic discussions.

In the year 2000, a small but determined group of San Diego conservationists, appalled by a huge sewage break into the San Diego River that year, became determined to breathe new life into the San Diego River Park concept. Among the leaders in this effort were Michael Beck, Rob Hutsel, Jo Ann Anderson, Jim Peugh, and Mike Kelly. Their objective was to create a new organization with the goals of promoting, maintaining, and helping to fund an open space park along the entire course of the river. This was really the first time the entire length of the river had been envisioned as constituting “The San Diego River Park.” The new organization, known as The San Diego River Park Foundation, was soon put together and its Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State on July 18, 2001.

There is no one basin-wide jurisdiction that is charged with creating a San Diego River Park; rather it involves a collaborative effort among all its “partners”—
the cities of San Diego and Santee, the County of San Diego, other appropriate agencies, private organizations, and the various landowners along the river.

To keep all interested parties informed and interactive, a coordinating organization called the San Diego River Park Coalition was quickly created in September 2001; any responsible group with an interest in the river may join. It meets monthly and, in 2011, had a membership of seventy-four affiliated organizations. One of its main tasks is to prepare and periodically update a Work Plan of projects that are desired within the river’s watershed.

Three of the River Park’s partners deserve special mention. One that predated the Foundation was the Mission Trails Regional Park, and is by acreage the largest single component of the San Diego River Park. The river cuts through the middle of it, creating an impressive gorge almost a thousand feet deep. And of course, the historic Mission (or Padre) Dam is one of its highlights (Figure 17).

Another significant partner is The San Diego River Park Lakeside Conservancy, created in 2001, with Robin Rierdan currently its Executive Director. This is a regional wetlands conservation endeavor in the unincorporated community of Lakeside, built around old sand and gravel borrow pits along the San Diego River. Some of its major tasks are wetlands restoration, improved flood management on the river, habitat preservation, and new community recreational opportunities.

The third significant restoration project is at Famosa Slough, a small marsh on the south side of the flood channel in Ocean Beach. Here, as the result of a twenty-year project spearheaded by Jim Peugh and the non-profit Friends of Famosa Slough, an amazing transformation has taken place from a polluted dump for tires and shopping carts to a healthy, water-bird filled tidal wetland.

![Fig. 18. The entrance to the River Park Foundation’s native plant garden in Mission Valley. Photo by P. R. Pryde.](image)
Other significant partners and contributing organizations include the Coastal Conservancy, the San Diego Foundation, Friends of Dog Beach, I Love a Clean San Diego, San Diego Audubon Society, Friends of the Mission Valley Preserve, and many others. It might be noted that the Mission Valley Preserve was the only open space park in the Valley that predated the creation of the San Diego River Park Foundation in 2001.

Potentially, a large amount of support for the park could come from a newer organization, The San Diego River Conservancy. This is a California state agency, created by the state legislature on September 13, 2002, to protect and enhance the assemblage of natural resources found within the river’s watershed. Its charter extends until 2020, and in 2011 its Executive Director is Michael Nelson. For the most part, the monies it receives go towards implementing some of the projects proposed in the Coalition’s Work Plan. Its funding from the state has increased slowly over the years, but, nevertheless, in 2008 it was receiving the second smallest amount of funding of the nine state Conservancies. However, it has also received significant funds from some of the state’s environmental enhancement bond issues.

The San Diego River Park Foundation plays a major role in maintaining the beauty and health of the river. Since 2004, volunteers have removed more than 1.3 million pounds of debris and trash from the river’s course, and in 2010 the Foundation received a national citation from the national Keep America Beautiful organization. Its environmental education programs include the creation of two native plant gardens, one in Ocean Beach and one in Mission Valley (Figure 18). The Foundation also has a major objective of restoring habitat along the river, including acquisition of key open space parcels, especially in the upper watershed of the river.

The Future

As a result of the creation of the San Diego River Park Foundation (SDRPF), together with its many partner organizations that are noted above, it is clear that in the early years of the twenty-first century, the river was being ignored no longer. The media was now very attentive to the future of the river (as well as to its past), and articles about the river were now more frequent and more detailed. The previous section noted the wealth of pro-river activities that have taken place over the past ten years in Mission Valley and elsewhere along the river, but what about the future?

As projects such as FSDRIP become a part of the river’s hydrologic and biotic reality, there will be a need to engage in monitoring the overall health of the river, and of its key components (aquatic wildlife, etc.) as well. This is currently
taking place on several fronts. The biological results of FSDRIP were required to be monitored for a number of years. Both the State of California’s Water Quality Control Board and the SDRPF monitor the quality of the water in the river. The number of sewer-line breaks has been diminished in recent years, although the city still lags behind the need in replacing old sewer trunk mains.

Even the general public is involved in protecting the river, and will continue to be so engaged in the future. And they are not just helping with trash cleanups, for there is a significant “citizen scientists” effort as well. For example, volunteers do much of the SDRPF’s monitoring of water quality that was mentioned above (Figure 19). This will be an ongoing task. In February 2011, the author observed both excessive reed growth as well as young willow tree die-off in the FSDRIP section of the river in Mission Valley. The reason for the willow die-off is not known.

Another example is the effort of a large number of volunteers who are skilled professional and amateur ornithologists, and who are providing a good picture of the increases in bird numbers within Mission Valley. This information serves as a barometer of the total biological productivity of the emerging green belt, as well as long term time-series data that documents it. As vegetation there becomes more abundant and diverse, the numbers of birds and their diversity
should increase as well. Nevertheless, one expert on local birds, Paul Lehman, characterized the birds in the valley as “underachieving,” especially fall and winter migrants, as they currently seem to be present there in somewhat smaller numbers than might be expected. The long-term biological sustainability of the river is still a work in progress.

One outstanding future development in the valley will be the creation of The Discovery Center at Grant Park. This will be a combination visitor center and nature education facility at a new park to be built on 17 acres of prime land along the river that was donated in 2009 by San Diego’s Grant family. Funds still need to be found to build the Center but, when completed, it will be one of the crown jewels of Mission Valley and the answer to the long held dream of a significant open space park in the central part of the valley.

In the future, the Foundation and the Conservancy will likely devote increased attention to the upper portions of the watershed. The first step was taken with the acquisition of a large parcel in the mountains west of Julian that has become the River Park’s 516-acre Eagle Peak Preserve. Additional montane parcels will be acquired. The Foundation is also currently (2011) acquiring parcels in the Chocolate Creek-Peutz Valley area to create a mid-county continuous wildlife corridor from the mountains to the foothills. Also, in the middle portion of the Watershed is the 752-acre Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary and Nature Center, owned and operated by the San Diego Audubon Society. The San Diego River Park Foundation has acquired some properties of its own near this facility as well.

**Fig. 20. Flooded commercial property in the floodplain fringe area of Mission Valley, February 1980. Photo by P. R. Pryde.**
There still remain, however, three related problem areas in the Mission Valley part of the river that relate to floodplain management and flood loss prevention. At the start of the new century, there was no coordinated plan for flood protection on the river. One problem is the continuing development taking place in the Valley, right up to the edge of the floodway. A 2003 article in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* focused on the problem, noting that ongoing urbanization in Mission Valley is having the effect of increasing the elevation reached by floods of any given size, as open areas in the floodplain fringe that formerly served to temporarily store flood waters, and function as a natural “sponge,” are lost to urban development (Figure 20).56

Closely related to this is the second problem: over time various stretches of the river have been developed with vastly different flood sizes in mind. Thus, at the east end of the valley there is the 250-foot right-of-way for a flood channel, but without any formal improvements as yet. The stadium parking lot, and stadium, are still part of the de facto floodway, as was famously demonstrated at the December 2010, Poinsettia Bowl. From there, floodwaters flow into the FSDRIP section with a presumed hundred-year flood capacity of 25,000 cfs. Then the river flows under the SR-163 bridge and into the trolley station—Town and Country section—that has virtually no channel at all. It next crosses Fashion Valley Road (which is often flooded out), and onto a golf course that provides a grassy channel.

*Fig. 21. Flooding at the Fashion Valley Transit Station, December 2010. Photo courtesy of the San Diego River Park Foundation.*
of sorts with an uncertain floodwater capacity. Flowing under I-5, the river then enters the very wide rock-sided channel built in 1953 that can convey a much larger flood than has ever been recorded on the river.

This historical piece-meal approach to flood planning in Mission Valley has been lamented for decades, but no plan yet exists to correct this third problem. To be sure, both economically and politically it is an extremely complicated dilemma. Nevertheless, thirty-five years after the demise of the concrete flood channel concept, the problem remains unresolved.

Compounding this dilemma is the fact that we really do not know how big a flood to plan for. Just between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, the size of an anticipated flood varied from 110,000 cfs in the 1960s, down to 36,000 cfs, then back up to 49,000 cfs, and finally, with Alternative V, down to 25,000 cfs. Huge floods are so infrequent and randomly spaced that one would prefer to have at least five hundred years of records to work with. On the San Diego River, even though some mission records exist, we have just a little over one hundred years (and, parenthetically, far less than that on all the other San Diego County rivers). Further compounding the challenge of putting a number on the hundred-year flood is the “inconvenient truth” of climate change, with its unknown future implications for precipitation and winter-season storms in the San Diego River watershed, as well as elsewhere in the County. But one thing we know for certain, floods will continue to occur in Mission Valley (Figure 21).

Still, the changes that have occurred over the past four decades have been very heartening. The stake remains through the heart of the concrete-channel monster. The river course through Mission Valley is starting to look healthier and more attractive than it has for a great many years, and certainly far greener. Many more amenities now exist, along with thousands of new residents living on the floodway’s edge. The new walkways, bikeways and open space parks along the river are one of the city’s great recreational opportunities. The river lives again.

From time to time, when San Diegans are enjoying the tranquil beauty of the open space and wildlife habitat along the river in Mission Valley, it would be appropriate to recall the events of the evening of March 30, 1971, and quietly celebrate the day the citizens of San Diego rallied together to save the San Diego River.
NOTES


2. A good history of this development can be found in Iris H. W. Enstrand, San Diego: California’s Cornerstone (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2005).


7. E. F. Gabrielson (City Engineer), Development of Flood Control Projects for the San Diego River (nine-page report to the City Manager), July 30, 1970.


14. City of San Diego Planning Department, Guidelines for the Use of San Diego’s Floodplains, 1967.


16. Ibid.


19. The author has a copy of this statement that bears a hand-written date of January 4, 1970.

20. Barnes, “Flood Control Channel Debated.”


22. Ibid.

23. Edward Koehm to the author, May 21, 1971, with copies to the San Diego City Manager and
City Engineer.


33. Task Force Report, Plate 5.


49. By the late 1980s, the concept of watershed planning was beginning to take hold, and this trend was reflected in media accounts, for example, Noel Osment, “Hidden Beauty: 45-Mile Waterway Rich In Diversity and Wildlife,” San Diego Union, May 21, 1989, D-1 and D-6.


51. This figure is from the Foundation’s web site, at www.sandiego river.org/cleanandgreen.php (accessed June 19, 2011).


Placing the Past in the Present: The Creation of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

by Matthew G. Schiff

Old Town State Historic Park, dubbed the “Birthplace of California,” recreates for its visitors San Diego’s Mexican and early-American period from 1821 to 1872. Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821 marks the beginning of this period when a small village sprang up at the base of what is today Presidio Hill, just below the original Spanish presidio. In 1872 a fire damaged several buildings in what is today considered the area of Old Town—the main center of commerce and government in the settlement that went from a Spanish missionary and military outpost to small American city in just over fifty years—prompting the relocation of county and city records south to Alonzo Horton’s “New Town.” This story of San Diego’s birth is told to several million people each year through reconstruction and preservation of various period buildings as well as the re-enactments of individuals. It provides a glimpse at the social landscape during a time of transition between the Mexican and early American time periods. But Old Town San Diego State Historic Park can tell us something of the time period in which it

Entrance to Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. Photo by Matthew Schiff.

Matthew G. Schiff received his Master of Arts degree in history at the University of San Diego in May 2011. Matthew is currently the Multimedia Communications Associate at the San Diego History Center and is working on a biography of the J. Douglas and Marianne Pardee family.
was created as well, and that story is just as compelling. Research for this topic repeatedly led to one person, Senator James R. Mills. At Old Town’s conception as a park, Mills was assemblyman for the 79th district that included downtown San Diego, North Park, and East San Diego. Because of his abiding love for making history available to everyone, he was considered by other local legislators to be the best person to push the passage of a particular bond issue. Mills stated:

In 1964 a measure had been put on the ballot at the request of the State Division of Beaches and Parks, under the Pat Brown administration, for a major bond issue to finance park development and acquisition. California was expanding its park system at this time and was planning to use tax-payer funds to finance it. California too it seems was beginning to realize the opportunities that existed by targeting the American tourist. The Pat Brown administration went to most of the members of the Legislature, and asked them to introduce resolutions calling for a study of a new state park, or expansion of the state park within their areas. So they came to me—they knew that I’d been the curator of the Junípero Serra Museum in Old Town—and they thought I would be a good person to put in that resolution to create a state park with bond funds in Old Town to preserve that part of San Diego that existed from Mexican times to now; at least elements of it.

The idea was to sell this idea to voters by writing the measure in such a way that they would look at the resolution and consider the benefits that this project would bring to the region: state funds, tourist dollars and civic pride. Essentially it was “a piece of promotion for the bond issue,” as Mills pointed out, and was presented to voters as such. Many resolutions were also submitted for sites throughout California at this time. Mills introduced the resolution in his district, suggesting that the

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George Romney with Clair Burgener (left) and Hale Ashcraft (right) 1965 ©SDHC #UT 85:e9012.

site should be for Old Town San Diego. It passed along with others throughout the state. Of note also is that another San Diego area assemblyman, Hale Ashcraft, submitted his recommendation, which passed, for expansion of Torrey Pines State Park in his assembly district. Those two resolutions represented the only ones submitted from San Diego County.

According to Mills, once the resolution passed and before any monies could be appropriated, the administration had the burden of submitting results of the due diligence they conducted on all of the sites that passed. The idea was to ensure that the acquisition of property and everything that went into creating or expanding a state park would be financially feasible. Those findings would then be submitted to a subcommittee of the state’s Ways & Means committee, the entity that approves government expenditures. The Brown administration had “about thirty or so” proposed site recommendations and submitted them to this subcommittee. Neither Old Town nor Torrey Pines were on the list.

During the conceptualization process, there were certain conditions without which the creation of Old Town State Park would have been impossible. Both Mills and Ashcraft, as luck would have it, sat on the subcommittee that was going to evaluate which sites showed the most promise and eventually appropriated the funds for them. Moreover, the chair of the committee was a person Mills called, “a good friend of mine, John Williamson.”5 Upon receiving the site recommendation from the Brown Administration and seeing that their sites had not even been considered, Mills and Ashcraft “raised hell about it.”6 Once the resolutions passed in the legislature, the Brown administration was supposed to provide a full consideration of each site. But that didn’t happen. Rather than investigate every site approved by

the voters, they had only conducted feasibility studies on a sample of them and in doing so had failed to consider Old Town San Diego as well as others throughout the state.

Sitting at the junction of his own proposed project and the committee that appropriated the funds, Mills wielded considerable power. He reminded the administration that they “were supposed to consider all of the sites in the resolution and provide full disclosure of how and why projects were feasible or not and to leave it to the subcommittee to decide” and that “appropriation of the funds would not be completed until the following year anyways.”8 Jockeying for position, the administration countered by claiming that, “it would be cheaper to act on certain projects this year due to rising costs.”9 That claim made by the administration, however, went against the subcommittee’s policy by not leaving the final “yay” or “nay” votes to them. Mills claimed that without all of the data necessary, they would not be able to make financial decisions and therefore would not approve any of the projects on the list. The Brown administration “got hysterical” about having to resurvey the sites but this worked out to be another specific condition that allowed for the creation of the park.

During this time, Mills was able to solicit the City of San Diego to “contribute to the acquisition of the plan for the state park.”10 Going before the city council after the bond issue was approved in November 1964, Mills asked the city to contribute funds and property to supplement the budgetary shortfall the project was experiencing. He stated that “it is important for San Diegans to remember our heritage, important for us to preserve our heritage, and then in addition I said, ‘this will be a major tourist attraction, this will attract people, this will be a good thing for tourism, tourism is an important source of income for San Diego.’”11 Before even going to the San Diego City Council, however, Mills had first approached the San Diego Chamber of Commerce asking them for their support of the project. The City of San Diego was in favor, since it would increase city revenue in the form of occupancy and sales tax receipts.

As one can imagine, the chamber was also enthusiastic at the prospect of bringing in new businesses into its network. Lucille Mortimer, a staff member with the chamber who was on the board to consider whether or not this issue
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was viable also voiced her enthusiasm. According to Mills, Mortimer “thought it was a great idea and single-handedly persuaded the board to go along with the proposal and asked them to submit it to the city council with full support of the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce.” To this, Mills stated that “I have always been of the opinion that [they] had a decisive role in convincing the city council to go along with it” and the city accepted their new role in the project.\textsuperscript{12}

Old Town State Park was not created in empty space. While both of these entities may have been in favor, many residents of the area were predictably not enthusiastic about having their homes and businesses relocated. One man in particular was James H. Cardwell, owner of the Casa de Pico and Casa Bandini. In 1964, the Casa de Pico was operating as an upscale tourist motel—one of the only businesses of note in the area. Cardwell had gone so far as to accuse Mills “of being paid off.”\textsuperscript{13} Another opponent was the president of the Carpenters Union who managed to “get the entire union to oppose it.”\textsuperscript{14} Ordinary citizens were expected to be upset about the situation; however when one of the residents managed to get an entire union to band against the project, the mayor of San Diego at the time, Frank Curran, called Mills to discuss the issue saying “Jim, I wish to God you’d drop this. This is a hot potato, it’s very controversial and it’s very hard to go along with and you would do everyone a favor if you’d just forget this.”\textsuperscript{15} In short, the prospect of creating the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park at this time was heavily in question.

At this point another event crucial to the development of the park occurred. Mills pointed out that the City of San Diego offered Old Town property owners trades instead of cash to compensate their loss. Property owners would acquire land that the city would offer from various properties it owned, in exchange for the property the state was going to take, as a way to defray costs from the project. By providing property trades, the city was not decreasing its liquidity, but merely unloading unproductive properties. That would in turn free up monies from the bond issue to be appropriated for the development of the site, not the property acquisition. Suddenly, the project became financially possible. Mills

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Homes_removal_Congress_Mason_1968.jpg}
\caption{Homes were removed from Congress and Mason Streets in 1968. ©SDHC #84:14942-1.}
\end{figure}
added that “property owners did all right with the arrangement” and the vitriol that surrounded the project eventually subsided. Mills added that residents in Old Town, though outside the park’s boundaries, “saw their property values increase substantially with the creation of the park” and that “if I wasn’t carrying this legislation, I told my wife, I’d buy property there tomorrow.”

Mills went to Santa Barbara to meet with the Beaches and Parks Commission (the agency that had been asked by the Brown Administration to introduce the resolution) to ask them to reconsider the San Diego project for Old Town given its new source of funding. The commission, in turn, accepted the project as a viable option. Since Mills’ subcommittee was given the task of spending California’s money responsibly, they then decided that in light of the new plan, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park was the best option as Mills emphatically stated, and “that was the action that created the park.” In 1966 money was appropriated and the property acquisition began on a statewide basis in 1967. The next step was to design the park to resemble the time period it was to honor. With the legislative process largely complete, the park’s geographic property was legally acquired. But getting legislation passed was only part of the challenge; how would the past be put into the present?

While lacking roller coasters and certainly not as grandiose as Disneyland or Knott’s Berry Farm to the north, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park is indeed a theme park. Susan Davis wrote, “the centrally planned, media-infused environment of the modern theme park is one of Southern California’s distinctive contributions to the tourism industry.”

In order to preserve Old Town’s theme, concessionaires wishing to operate within the park “had to meet certain park standards and must submit their plans for approval by the state.” Frank Sturgeon, former State Senior Architect for the Department of Parks and Recreation, confronted these kinds of challenges. Given the task of reconstructing “40 to 50 buildings,” Sturgeon worked...
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

collaboratively with University of San Diego history professor Ray Brandes to draw up plans for structures that fit the period from 1821-1872.\(^{19}\) For example, to recreate the public square that had been in the center of Old Town during the Mexican-American period, the state needed to move the Mission Playhouse (currently Old Town Theatre) to another location within the park.\(^{20}\) In addition, in order for the theater to continue operation, the building in question needed to be restored to a historically accurate structure. In much the way a log cabin, for instance, would look out of place in Disneyland’s “World of Tomorrow” section of the park, so too would putting a modern playhouse in the Old Town State Historic Park. Researching historic documents, maps and photographs, Sturgeon’s team surmised that a barn had existed on or near the new playhouse location and thought that might be an appropriate structure in which to situate the new playhouse.

Traveling to nearby Julian in east county where late nineteenth-century barns were still standing, the team sought inspiration from those structures and sketched plans that would be used to rebuild the Mission Playhouse. Sturgeon noted that the key to creating the past in the present was to “engineer it to modern standards.”\(^{21}\) Nevertheless this same approach was utilized throughout the 1970s as the park’s restoration process evolved, making it look more and more like the Mexican-American period in San Diego. Soon, “Living History” projects in the park delighted visitors by giving them a look into what life was like in nineteenth-century San

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When the Economic Research Bureau of San Diego originally published its report in 1966 lauding the potential for capturing tourist dollars in the area, it assumed Old Town’s attendance would fall somewhere within the attendance levels of its competitors. It stated that “The Columbia State Historic Park has recorded attendance during 1966 of approximately 800,000, the Monterey State Historic Monument 242,927, and a restoration project in St. Augustine, Florida, averaged from 400,000 to 500,000 annually.” By 1977, San Diego had more visitors to the site “where California began” than where the United States of America began. Old Town State Park had 1,844,739 visitors compared to Philadelphia’s Independence Hall of 1,258,789.

The fire that tore through Old Town in 1872 is not commemorated in the park, despite the fact that it was an important part of the park’s creation. There had been some debate prior to this time at the city-planning level about where the city center should formally be—its present location at the base of Presidio Hill or Horton’s “New Town” just to the south. Some county and city records had already been moved as early as 1870, but the fire effectively ended any additional debate over this matter. As Old Town was, for the most part, devastated, present-day downtown San Diego began as the center of city government. From 1872 on, Old Town San Diego as a commercial zone went into decline as the city center shifted to its present-day location. By the 1950s, Old Town had become what Senator Mills called “an economic wasteland” with no businesses to speak of except for an olive cannery called Mission Olives.

While the fire had destroyed many structures, it preserved the opportunity to, at a later time, develop a relatively untouched slice of San Diego’s history. The fire, while completing the move of vital offices of government to another location, preserved the city’s ability to turn the area into the Old Town of today. Mills concedes this fact saying:

San Diego is the only place in California where you can take the beginnings of a major city, and preserve something of what it was
like. You can do that in San Diego, you cannot do it in Los Angeles or San Francisco or San Jose or anywhere else because the major developments are in the same place but in San Diego we had the opportunity to preserve Old Town as it was, and preserve our Hispanic heritage particularly.\textsuperscript{28}

Old Town San Diego would in fact thrive after some ninety years of neglect. Had that area of town been a more productive economic center, perhaps Mills’ vision would not have been achieved as fully as it was. Mills’ involvement as a passionate historian, his delay of the appropriation of funds and his behind-the-scenes efforts to enlist support were integral in the creation of the park and certainly without his contributions, the project would not have reached fruition. But one cannot help but wonder, had the story of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park not unfolded as it did, would we have a state park today?

Old Town State Historic Park’s beginnings were as tenuous as the settlement created by the Spaniards in 1769, always under attack from various entrenched interests of the day. The need to diversify the City of San Diego’s asset mix and siphon significant investment into the infrastructure of the tourism industry was what ultimately brought the park into being and helped eventually to assuage public resistance. Many times the park’s creation hinged on the personal relationships between some with a love for history and preservation with those who had the foresight to see that tourism can work alongside those interests. There is an untold story of the back room planning and strategy that is often used to move legislation forward whatever it is. The political atmosphere is a vital ingredient to any public project. In the case of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, the process of hearing how this resolution came to pass is an important look at a political process and a story that needed to be told.

\textbf{NOTES}

3. Senator Mills made himself available to me during my research. His narrative has been relied upon heavily as, at the time of writing, was one of the last living people directly associated with the formation of Old Town. His insight as a state legislator provided an invaluable record of what went on behind closed doors to make Old Town San Diego State Historic Park a reality. I am truly grateful to him for his availability during my research.

5. John C. Williamson was a Kern County Assemblyman and authored the California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) in 1965; Alvin Sokolow, “Outlook: Budget Cuts Threaten The Williamson Act, California’s Longstanding Farmland Protection Program,” California Agriculture 64, no. 3:118-120.


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. The Brown administration, in an effort to stretch the bond money further, asked for contributions by the City of San Diego for the project.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.


19. The buildings proposed for historic renovation were outlined in the state’s Resource Management Plan.

20. Frank Sturgeon, telephone interview by author, April 28, 2011.

21. Sturgeon, Interview. What is somewhat ironic to note is that in 1957, due to lead poisoning and old age, the city removed perhaps one of the earliest records of European settlement in Old Town, “The Serra Palm.” This palm was named as it was thought to have been planted by Father Junípero Serra in 1769; Joey Seymour and Heidi Trent, “Examining California’s First Palm Tree: The Serra Palm,” The Journal of San Diego History 56, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 105.


25. Reference to the condition of the pueblo (town) is attributed to an historian-journalist Carey McWilliams, cited in State Park Historian Victor Walsh’s article on Old Town; Victor Walsh, “Old Town San Diego: What was really there,” San Diego Union-Tribune, August 9, 2007.

26. Engstrand, California’s Cornerstone, 78-79 and 89-94. William Heath Davis laid out a “32-square block area between present-day Broadway and Market streets” and when he was unable to attract settlers to the area, his project failed. Alonzo Horton purchased “960 acres for $265” in 1867 and revived the idea of a “New Town.” His improvements along with the fire of 1872 provided the impetus for settlement in the area.

27. Mills, interview, November 17, 2010; Mission Olives was located at the present north side of the Caltrans building in Old Town.

In Memoriam
Clare Crane 1926-2011

Dr. Clare B. Crane, long-time member and supporter of the San Diego History Center, passed away at home on June 17, 2011, after a courageous battle against cancer. Clare received her BA from San Diego State College in 1958 and her Ph.D. from the University of California San Diego in 1970. She received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and a Ford Foundation Fellowship for her outstanding work. She was the first Curator and Education Director of the Villa Montezuma (1972-1974). Under her leadership, the Villa sponsored children’s programs and tours for those interested in Victorian architecture. She also taught United States and San Diego History at several local colleges.

In 1976, Dr. Crane served as historical advisor and co-host of a series of radio programs on KPBS titled “Twelve Who Shaped San Diego.” The College of Arts and Letters at San Diego State University honored her with a “Monty” award in 2006. Dr. Crane and her husband Architect Loch Crane were enthusiastic supporters of C-3 from its inception. A tireless worker, Clare had recently published *Citizens Coordinate and the Battle for City Planning in San Diego* through the San Diego History Center in 2011. Clare was vitally interested in city planning and in the preservation of the buildings in Balboa Park.

Clare was born in Wisconsin to David and Elinor Bloodgood and grew up in Milwaukee. She met Loch Crane at Taliesin, the home, studio and laboratory of Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin. They were married in 1944 while Loch was serving as a flight instructor in the Army Air Force. She is survived by her husband and son Loch David Crane. Clare will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to know her.
BOOK REVIEWS


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

Although Pío Pico served as the last governor of Mexican California, his life story did not end with the United States’ conquest of the region in 1846. His presence in California history actually spanned three sovereignties: born in California in 1801 (and thus a subject of Spain), he acquired political stature during Mexico’s rule of California and then went on to leave another mark as an American citizen. His time as governor by itself merits a biography, but his success as an entrepreneur in the American era also deserves due attention, in part because it questions the traditional thesis advanced for the decline of the Californios. Carlos Manuel Salomon relates a story of rags to riches, albeit one that does not end on a successful note. He devotes five chapters to Pico’s early life and political career under Mexico and four to Pico’s business ventures from circa 1848 to 1891. The work rests on a combination of solid primary sources and the impressive published scholarship on nineteenth-century California.

Pico, a Southern Californian (_sureño_), hailed from San Diego. Born into the lower class the son of an enlisted soldier, he gradually gained upward mobility on account of kinship to influential ranchero brothers-in-law; such connections facilitated entry into the politics of 1820s and 1830s California. His acquisition of Rancho Jamul as a grant from the Mexican government in 1829 elevated his status and drew him further into California politics. Increasingly, Pico became embroiled in political clashes between centralists and liberals, siding in 1831 with the latter element (which sought a semi-autonomous relationship with Mexico) in a rebellion against the centralist governor of California. Henceforth, he emerged as a leader in California politics, resisting the federal government’s effort to exert tighter control over the province.

Economic good fortune accompanied Pico’s broadening political might during the period of mission secularization in California. Between 1835 and 1840 he served as “_comisionado_” at Mission San Luis Rey, and in that capacity oversaw the granting of secularized mission lands. He personally profited as _comisionado_ by building a cattle empire and acquiring Rancho Santa Margarita. His political
activism meanwhile continued uninterrupted, and in a rebellion carried out in 1845, he replaced Mexico’s appointed governor. When American forces attacked his homeland in 1846, Pico sought to mobilize the Californios, but then left for Mexico in order to avoid capture and the indignity of surrendering the province to the invaders. The exile returned from Mexico after the war’s end to reclaim his Rancho Santa Margarita.

In chapters 6 through 9, Salomon focuses on Pico’s career as a Mexican American businessman. The author marvels at Pico’s business acumen as the don astutely forged profitable business alliances with *americanos* (and even accommodated himself with the new political order). From the 1850s to the 1870s Pico turned huge profits from the sale of cattle and with returns purchased several ranches throughout Southern California. But, Salomon observes, Pico was prone to taking business risks, many of which produced financial reversals and others litigation. By the 1880s, Pico’s economic fortunes began a decline due to the diversification of the California economy, his own business mistakes, and the cost of legal fees. During the last few years of his life (he lived to the age of 93), indeed, Pico experienced deepening financial losses and by 1891 faced indigence.

Several conclusions surface from this informative study on Pío Pico. Mainly, as Salomon contends, the governor’s continued participation in California’s nineteenth-century political and economic life complicates the standard thesis that disaster followed the war with Mexico because the Californios could not compete in the new milieu. A similar observation of individual perseverance might be made of Mexican Americans in other regions of the conquered Southwest; in Texas, for instance, José Antonio Navarro’s political and economic life paralleled Pico’s in some ways (according to a recent book by David McDonald). On the other hand, Pico’s economic misfortunes (and perhaps that of fellow Californios) cannot be completely attributed to orchestrated efforts among Anglo Americans to victimize the Californios; Pico often brought problems upon himself due to imprudent business decisions. Last, historical figures can often shape history long after their deaths. As Salomon opines, for Mexican Americans today Pío Pico symbolizes ethnic pride and the very embodiment of the maxim that individuals can prosper despite difficult odds.

Reviewed by David Miller, Lecturer, Department of History, University of San Diego.

One can imagine the Kit Carson Hollywood blockbuster: ruggedly handsome frontiersman mounts his horse, charges the savage Indians he is swift to dispatch without a flinch of remorse, and rides off into the Western landscape, but not before offering a folksy proverb to the young woman he has saved. Indeed one need not imagine; such is the script of the heroic Carson of numerous dime novels and Westerns. On the other hand, in their quest to debunk the heroic Carson, revisionist scholars have gone to great lengths to portray a much less romantic and ultimately more savage anti-hero. David Remley, who has published two previous books on the Old West, has written Kit Carson to remind us otherwise. To Remley, Carson and the mid-nineteenth-century frontier he inhabited were much more complicated, fluid, and nuanced than romanticized memory or recent critical scholarship would permit.

Remley has reconstructed the life of one of the frontier’s most mythologized heroes, Kit Carson, in order to answer some basic, but important questions: Who was Christopher Carson? What responsibility did he have for “the important events connected with the history of his time…and what [do these] fact[s] suggest about his character?” (p. xix). Remley identifies the debate around which much of the recent Carson biographies have revolved: Was he ultimately a “great white hero” as portrayed in his own time or “just another damned killer” as portrayed in ours? (p. xxviii). Remley answers plainly, Carson was neither. He was a man of his culture and a product of his time. He was just a man who spent most of his life on the frontier and thus lived a life of complexity, fluidity, occasional violence, and change. Remley concludes that the real Carson was at times “humane and responsible” as well as “violent and aggressive” (p. xxviii).

Remley uses eleven chapters to trace the arch of Carson’s life from birth in 1809 to his death in 1868. But precisely because Carson’s history is so enmeshed in his myth, Remley must carefully pick apart fact from fiction. He engages the sources, both popular culture and scholarly works, to paint, in this reviewer’s mind, a satisfying portrait of the real Carson. The narrative includes two chapters on Carson’s childhood and a chapter on his formative years in the frontier West around 1832. In chapter 4 Remley places Carson within the context of Indians in the West and explores Carson’s relationship with them while he worked as a
trapper and guide. Chapters 5 and 6 tell the story of Carson’s experience with John C. Frémont’s first two expeditions, first in 1842 and then 1843-44. Remley devotes a separate chapter to the most mysterious and controversial of Frémont’s expeditions, his 1845-46 trek into Mexican California that coincided with the Mexican American War and led to Frémont’s court martial. Remley highlights the intimate relationship between Frémont and Carson while untangling the many competing memories of what, exactly, happened in California. The narrative continues with Carson’s life as a rancher and sometimes guide in New Mexico in the 1850s, through to the Civil War and his role with Indian Affairs, and to his final years in Taos. Remley succeeds in clarifying Carson’s life and character, only to end the narrative abruptly with Carson’s death, showing no intent or interest in the significance of Carson as actual historical agent or mythical figure, let alone his legacy as both.

Historians, however, should do more than uncover and recount the past; they should explain causation and interpret the significance of events. Remley does not use the life of Carson to spotlight broader historical events and processes. There is not much new here in terms of our understanding of the nineteenth-century frontier. While historians argue about the “real” Carson versus the myth in a growing body of scholarly biography and western studies, they fail to consider why the myth developed. What purpose did it serve and how did it fit into a larger process of national expansion? And perhaps most importantly, this recent scholarship has not considered the implications of Carson’s legacy within the context of a broader set of American attitudes about empire.

But these themes are beyond the scope of the book. Remley’s is a biography in its purest form – an attempt to parse out the life of an individual. In this regard Remley succeeds. He separates fact from fiction, demonstrates that Carson “matured intellectually and ethically as he grew older,” and will certainly “stimulate more thoughtful writing about him than the cardboard fictions of the nineteenth century or the simplistic negative characterizations of the recent years” (p. xxviii). What Remley does provide is a highly readable narrative of the life of Kit Carson that disentangles myth from reality. It is a story any enthusiast will be sure to enjoy and appreciate.
In The Father of All, Louise Pubols chronicles the establishment of the de la Guerra family as part of California society’s elite and explores the efforts of José de la Guerra to maintain that status throughout California’s tumultuous history. Pubols argues that the use of patriarchy, in various forms, allowed de la Guerra to preserve his rank in society and accumulate a vast family fortune. Pubols draws convincing connections between the various styles of patriarchy under Spanish, Mexican, and American control of California, pointing to similar goals achieved through different means.

The book begins with a young José de la Guerra y Noriega relocating from Spain in 1792 and eventually joining the military in New Spain at age 19. He was posted in California, where he used his Spanish birth to advance faster than other soldiers who were born in New Spain. Within this section, Pubols aptly describes the sistema de castas in New Spain and depicts the military and California society as environments where social mobility was still possible. José, through a combination of his birth and his talent, advanced to the position of habilitado. He then used his role in gathering supplies for California settlers to establish connections that allowed him to become a successful private trader.

At this point in his life, José began to form the elaborate kinship networks that would become the base of his power and are a recurring theme throughout the book. Besides marriage and birth connections, Pubols describes the intricate system of compadrazgo, in which elite families would sponsor one another’s children as godparents to create fictive kinship networks. De la Guerra used these networks, along with the presence of commercially isolated missions, to build a fortune acting as an intermediary between missionaries and traders. Mexican independence brought free trade to California and American traders, formerly smugglers, established a much stronger and more visible presence. However, de la Guerra successfully integrated American traders into his kinship networks through the marriage of his daughters and by sponsoring the newcomers’ conversions to Catholicism.

In the next section, Pubols describes a generational conflict, as the next generation of California elites matured and sought their place in society. This new generation wished to distinguish themselves politically, embracing liberal ideals and attempting to eliminate the mission system. Yet, these younger male heads of households
continued to use the traditional system of patriarchy through which they distributed political and economic benefits to non-elites. While this maturing process resulted in several confrontations, occasionally with violent consequences, Pubols attributes the minimal bloodshed to the use of a patriarchal system to quash conflict.

The book ends with the annexation of California by the United States. While elites had varied reactions to the presence of Americans, de la Guerra’s actions were guided mainly by his desire to maintain his power within California society. He accomplished this by appearing politically moderate and participating in American government, even though he did not recognize its legitimacy and secretly funded the initial resistance efforts against it.

Pubols also studies the role of California’s elite women throughout the book. Her portrayal of Angustias de la Guerra, José’s daughter, is particularly memorable. Angustias’s actions during the resistance to American annexation and involvement in cultural interaction at galas and other society events show an opinionated, strong-willed, clever woman making an impact on American annexation. While Pubols has not set out to write a history of gender in this period, she does not ignore the experiences of women and uses a deft touch to include both the role of the patriarch and his wife in California society.

Pubols relies primarily on sources from the de la Guerra family papers. Her use of correspondence and journals as well as occasional secondary source references allows her to create a narrative of vivid setting and memorable characters. While her primary sources are mainly those produced by the elite, she nevertheless incorporates the stories of a range of actors, and in presenting the experiences of Indians and Hispanics she continues the New Western History’s pattern of restoring the voices of those often neglected in traditional historiography. The book is a pleasant read for any interested in California history, and though its topic may be too narrow for use in undergraduate surveys, it is a valuable resource for advanced undergraduates and graduate students.

Reviewed by John A. Heitmann, Professor, Department of History, University of Dayton.

Histories of the automobile in America often begin with the all-too-familiar observation that “the Automobile is European by birth and American by adoption.” And while that generalization certainly is useful in explaining things to undergraduate students, it rings particularly true in the case of the state of California, where beginning with the car’s appearance on the streets of Los Angeles and San Francisco, late nineteenth-century society and culture were rapidly and markedly transformed into a twentieth-century machine age. Indeed, the automobile is the perfect technological symbol of American culture, a tangible expression of our quest to level space, time, and class, and a reflection of our restless mobility, social and otherwise. It transformed business, life on the farm and in the city, the nature and organization of work, leisure time, and the arts. Further, the automobile transformed everyday life and the environment in which we operate. More specifically, it influenced the foods we eat, music we listen to, risks we take, places we visit, errands we run, emotions we feel, movies we watch, stress we endure, and the air we breathe.

That part of the story seems obvious to anyone who has ever visited the state. A related story, however—namely one of how Californians contributed to the evolution and diffusion of the automobile in American (and indeed global) life—has never been carefully compiled. However, the recent publication of Wheels of Change does explore how Californians shaped the larger history of automobiles in American life. For example, Carl Breer, Harley Earl, Frank Howard, and Earle Anthony were critical to the engineering and design of the automobile, notions of planned obsolescence, and the formulation of sales strategies. The business of speed was very much a California enterprise, as witnessed by the work of Harry A. Miller, Leo Goossen, Fred Offenhauser, Stu Hilborn, Mickey Thompson and many, many others. California contributed more than its share of the greatest race drivers of the twentieth century, from Jimmy Murphy, who was the first American to win a European Grand Prix race in 1921, to the late and incomparable Phil Hill. And finally, several generations of Hollywood actors and actresses, to a degree unwittingly, did more to glamorize the automobile than all the Madison Avenue advertising agencies combined, intimately connecting this inanimate and often mass-produced object to wealth, status, and individuality.
While *Wheels of Change* is author Kevin Nelson’s first work dealing specifically with automobile history, it demonstrates the author’s surprising command of the topic. Harnessing a considerable variety of sources, Nelson skillfully spins a tale that centers on individuals but weaves these figures together almost seamlessly. And with each of the figures, Nelson develops fabulous and at times humorous stories and adventures, as these characters come alive on the page. Further, the narrative moves at a fast pace. Nevertheless, there always seems to exist a context bigger than the automobile and California, as Nelson reminds the reader at several junctures of concurrent events nationally and globally. In terms of chronology, the story is strong and comprehensive to the late 1960s. However, it then falls off as almost every auto history does, perhaps because of the end of the automobile’s Golden Age, perhaps because it is easier to write enthusiastically of its positive virtues than the critiques and problems that followed Oil Shock I in 1973. Yet the 1970s are now forty years removed from us, and historians need to conduct more work on this recent past.

While my overall evaluation of this book is most positive—I would argue that it would be a great addition to an undergraduate course reading list in 20th century history, the history of technology, or California history, it does have its shortcomings. Most significantly, *Wheels of Change* reconstructs an expected past. By drawing so much from newspapers and journalistic literature, this story is one that has been told in various places far and near, but it does not probe beyond the largely known. Nelson provides a wonderfully readable synthesis, but there are no surprises or new insights. Second, the citation format of this book is awkward to say the least. Source notes exist in the back of this book, but conventional footnotes or endnotes would have been more helpful to this reader. Placing these criticisms aside, however, *Wheels of Change* is a great read that makes the history of the automobile come alive with human interest and a rare energy.

Reviewed by Theodore A. Strathman, Lecturer, Department of History, University of San Diego.

The currently stagnant job market has prompted some politicians to call for a modern-day equivalent of the Works Progress Administration, the New Deal agency that employed millions of Americans during the Depression. While it may not sway conservatives from their opposition to federal work relief programs, this recently published volume is a valuable testimony to the high quality of work produced by the WPA. The researchers and writers of the WPA created guides to each of the states and a number of major American cities. These books were travel guides, surveys of leading economic activities, and local histories. Fortunately for researchers and aficionados of Los Angeles history, the University of California Press has released the WPA's 1941 guide to Los Angeles with a new introduction by critic David Kipen.

The guide's opening section contains Kipen's introduction, the original preface, and listings of accommodations, attractions, and annual events. There follows a general survey of Los Angeles, including a brief history of the region and sections on the arts, religion, education, and recreation. Part 2 highlights points of interest in the city itself, and as Kipen observes, the guide then spirals outward, examining neighboring cities in part 3 and the “Country Around Los Angeles” in part 4. This section is one of the book's most intriguing: it directs readers on seven tours from Los Angeles to outlying destinations including Palm Springs, Catalina Island, and Santa Monica. Each tour offers precise directions, mile-by-mile accounts of towns and attractions, and passages describing local history and industry. With guide in hand, the present-day reader could follow one or more of these routes for a fascinating journey through seven decades of change in Southern California.

Yet the volume finds its real value not as a guidebook (one cannot assume that Deadpan Maxie still features at Slapsy Maxie Rosenblum’s Café) but as a rich primary source. The narrative sections reveal a great deal about what Angelenos and outsiders in 1940 thought Los Angeles was and what it might be. The section on the history of the region, for instance, offers a more-or-less celebratory account of the rise of a major American metropolis where once stood a “primitive village” of Gabrieliño Indians (p. 24), and accepts rather uncritically such assessments of
the Hispanic pueblo as James O. Pattie’s observation of Californios who “sleep and smoke and hum Castilian tunes while nature is inviting them to the noblest and richest rewards of honorable toil” (p. 32). Such cultural chauvinism aside, the authors of the guide did in fact identify some of the themes that have dominated Los Angeles historiography in the last seventy years: the decline of the Californios (even if the authors here downplay the clash between Hispanic and American legal traditions and overstate the Californios’ personal failings as landowners); the struggle to develop infrastructure (although the duplicity of Los Angeles in acquiring Owens Valley water rights is omitted); the spectacular (and often speculative) growth of the 1880s and 1920s; and the industrial boom of the interwar years. Meanwhile, the lengthy section on the motion picture industry reflects the perception that Hollywood was Los Angeles.

As well-written as the narrative sections are, it is the guidebook’s listings of accommodations and facilities that may prove most useful for social historians. The sections on restaurants, amusements, night clubs, and recreational facilities provide great insight into the fascinating mix of leisure activities in pre-war Los Angeles. The mélange of high culture (“symphonies under the stars” at the Hollywood Bowl) and “lowbrow” amusements (midget auto races and “very ripe” burlesque shows featuring “seminude girls” (p. xlvi)) suggests something of the schizophrenic nature of leisure and culture in what was even then a bustling and diverse metropolis. These listings are potential gold mines for scholars who are interested in mapping the recreational terrain of Los Angeles.

Scholars and writers have indeed mined the WPA guides for decades, but in publishing Los Angeles in the 1930s the University of California Press has done a great service in making this guide available to a new generation. The liveliness of the prose and the inclusion of dozens of evocative black and white photographs will attract many non-scholars. The new introduction is humorous and engaging as well, but professional historians may desire more contextualizing and analysis than what Kipen provides. Kipen is especially interested in the great assemblage of literary talent in Los Angeles in the late 1930s, and he uses the introduction to consider what the WPA guide tells us about the social and economic environment that surrounded the likes of Raymond Chandler and Nathanael West. Yet Kipen is absolutely correct when he notes that this book “exists to preserve not just the memory of a great city, but also the attitudes round and about it—the received wisdom of the time” (p. xxviii). In these capacities it will be a welcome addition to many bookshelves.

Reviewed by Philip R. Pryde, Professor Emeritus of Geography, San Diego State University.

There are some books that really do belong on everyone’s bookshelf. If you happen to live in coastal Southern California, Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California by Richard Halsey is one of those books. It will not only inform and educate you, but under the frightening onslaught of periodic wildfires, it might also save your life. The intent of the book is to familiarize southern Californians with the most salient characteristics of our dominant land-cover, chaparral, examine certain misconceptions about chaparral that the author believes exist, and help us all minimize the chances of losing our homes (or worse) in major wildfires such as those that occurred in San Diego County in 2003 and 2007.

The new edition is not significantly changed from the first edition. Both are richly illustrated and highly informative. The main change is in the introduction, which has been increased from three and a half pages to fifteen. If you have only one hour to spend with this volume, read the introduction, which is an excellent summary of the author’s main points. But for the reasons stated above, it is worthwhile to read the whole book.

A major objective of the book is to dispel what the author considers myths about chaparral and chaparral fires, such as the belief that old growth chaparral is a significantly greater fire threat than younger stands. His conclusions are based on both published studies and his personal experiences in the field as a professional firefighter.

Halsey makes frequent use of the disastrous southern California fires of 2003 as examples to bolster his main theses. The book was published shortly after the equally destructive fires of October 2007 and there are brief references to these later fires as well. One important lesson from these two fire episodes is the highly damaging effects to chaparral ecosystems from fires that burn the same area only a few years apart. One new addition, Figure 4.5, shows the many overlapping burn areas from the 2003 and 2007 San Diego County fires.

One of the best-written chapters is the last, in which the author appeals for the creation of a personal connection to nature, and in particular to Southern California chaparral. The book blends the exhortations of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Henry David Thoreau (and, in the epilogue, San Diego’s now-famous Richard
Louv as well) to urge the readers to enhance their lives by connecting more with the therapeutic attributes of nature.

The book is enhanced by two sets of photos, and the pictures in both sets are well chosen and photographically very instructive. The first set illustrates types of chaparral, chaparral fires, and post-fire effects. The second, near the end, depicts some key plants and animals of the chaparral community. The sixty plant photos would serve quite well as a beginning field guide for identifying the most common chaparral plants.

The only topic that seemed to be somewhat skirted was an overview of the pros and cons of the “defend in place” option, where homeowners under very specific sets of conditions might be allowed to defend their homes instead of evacuating. This is a controversial topic which many fire professionals quickly dismiss for liability reasons, but a case can be made for its limited and narrowly defined use.

The book has been well edited, and is virtually free of typographical errors. A few minor glitches were noticed: the illustrated invertebrate in the second edition is the ceanothus silk moth, but a different insect is named in the text (page 135). The common name of Adenostoma sparsifolium is red shank (not pluralized). Also, his description of the wrentit’s song (“a descending whistle”) seems incorrect; that’s more the call of another chaparral songbird, the canyon wren. A small suggestion: on page 25 he might change the starting year of the nineteenth-century drought from 1862 to 1863. 1862 is well recorded as possibly the wettest year in California history. Another suggestion for the third edition (I hope there will be one) might be to expand the “Animals” section of chapter 1. It overlooks many key species, and also doesn’t note that almost all of the mammals (except ground squirrels and rabbits) are nocturnal.

Finally, the epilogue by Anne Fege (pp. 173-174) presents a good introduction to the many benefits and values of nature, but a future edition could profit the reader by summarizing the importance of current research in the fields of ethnobotany and biomimicry. Next to tropical rain forests, chaparral might have the most to teach us in these emerging research areas, which will be increasingly important to our common human future.
BOOK NOTES

The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles. Edited by Kevin R. McNamara. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Appendix, notes, and index. xxii + 211 pp. $24.99 paper. This collection of essays on Los Angeles literature is organized chronologically and thematically, exploring such topics as the literature of the Californios, the traditional detective fiction, environmental change in Los Angeles writing, and the city in Asian American, Latino, and African American literature.


Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias. By Bárbara O. Reyes. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. Illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. xi + 231 pp. $50.00 cloth, $25.00 paper. Reyes uses the stories of three women of different class and ethnic backgrounds in Baja and Alta California to examine how women functioned within the constraints of the mission system.

$34.95 cloth. In this inventive book poet Susan Suntree explains the origins of Southern California’s environment and people in two parts: the first an account of the area according to Western science, the second based on myths and songs from the region’s indigenous people.

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