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**Front Cover:** Clockwise: Casa de Balboa—headquarters of the San Diego History Center in Balboa Park. Photo by Richard Benton.

**Back Cover:** *San Diego & Its Vicinity, 1915* inside advertisement. Courtesy of SDHC Research Archives.

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A Room of Their Own: The Contribution of Women to the Panama-California Exposition, 1915

By Molly McClain

Among the more popular architectural features in Balboa Park are the statues, or caryatids, of bare-breasted women who strain to hold up the eaves of the Casa de Balboa, the reconstructed version of the Commerce and Industries Building that was built for San Diego’s first world fair, the Panama-California Exposition (1915).1 With their pendulous breasts and sagging bellies, the statues provide an eye-catching example of the kind of Spanish Baroque embellishments that were much admired at the time. Perhaps less often noticed were the sharp elbows on these modern caryatids; elbows would be needed if representation of women at the Exposition was to be more than symbolic. In 1914, a San Diego Union journalist described them as “heroic nudes” who typified “the woman of toil, a patient, powerful mother of men, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water.”2

San Diego women knew all about work, patience, and toil, having expended numerous hours on volunteer projects throughout the city.

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It came as something of a shock, then, that the directors of the Panama-California Exposition Company failed to acknowledge women’s potential for service, much less allocate them physical space in the buildings under construction in the park. In 1914, after what the local newspaper described as an “Exposition Teapot Tempest,” women secured the right both to representation and a local headquarters, though not their own Woman’s Building. Over the course of the next two years, county women volunteered to greet visitors, run tea rooms, and provide safe spaces for women traveling alone. The Official Woman’s Board, meanwhile, made a special effort to showcase San Diego’s progressive values and appreciation for modern art, literature, and music. Determined to help the city overcome the negative publicity created by the Free Speech Fight of 1912-13, they emphasized their openness to new and visionary ideas.

By the early twentieth century, women across the United States had gained freedoms that their grandmothers could not have imagined. In many Western states, including California (1911), they had won the right to vote. The goal of many women, particularly those who joined labor unions and women’s clubs, was to make themselves visible and active players in the debates going on around them. Issues of particular concern included immigration, child labor, urban poverty, pure food, the minimum wage, crowded penitentiaries and hospitals, and prostitution. They also took every opportunity possible to celebrate women’s role in history, their labors in the creative and industrial arts, and their potential for transforming the way the nation envisioned social and political change.

To that end, women played important roles at the great world fairs that flourished in the United States between 1876 and 1915. Every American fair had a woman’s building or space set aside for female exhibitors. The first Women’s Pavilion was built at Philadelphia (1876) to host exhibitions of women’s art, work, and industry. Chicago’s 1893 Columbian Exposition had a Board of Lady Managers, created by an act of Congress, whose activities were funded by the federal government and the exposition board. An appropriation of $200,000 was made for a women’s building, designed by MIT graduate Sophia Hayden, one of the few female architects in nineteenth-century America. Subsequent fairs in Atlanta (1895), Buffalo (1901), and St. Louis (1904) also allotted space to women’s exhibits and activities. In St. Louis, women “for the first time stood with equality,” serving on the juries of awards and acting as concessionaires and contractors.

Seattle women, meanwhile, rallied to establish a Woman’s Building at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909. The building included reception spaces, displays, rest rooms with couches, and a large nursery. It also hosted meetings of the Washington State Federation of Women’s Clubs and the National Council of Women. The National American Woman Suffrage Association held its 41st
Annual Convention at the Seattle exposition, attracting a “who’s who” of American feminists. Dr. Charlotte Baker, a well-known San Diego doctor, was one of nearly 2,000 women who attended the convention and participated in the “Women’s Suffrage Day” at the Seattle exposition. She heard a speech by the organization's president, the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, and made arrangements for social reformer Florence Kelley to come to San Diego later that year.

Women had almost no hand in planning San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition (1915) because the event had forfeited Congressional funding in return for the title “International.” The act of Congress that designated Chicago as the site of the 1893 World’s Fair, approved April 25, 1890, had included the provision that a Board of Lady Managers be appointed by a National Board of Women Commissioners, two from each state and territory. Bertha H. Palmer summed up the importance of federal recognition, “Even more important than the discovery of Columbus, which we are gathered together to celebrate, is the fact that the General Government has just discovered women.” The San Francisco exposition was financed chiefly by the State of California, bond issues, and stock sales to residents still recovering from the 1906 earthquake and fire. Frank Morton Todd, the official historian of the fair, explained, “The boards of lady managers of other expositions have been appointed from every part of the Union because the expositions have received the financial aid of the whole country. There was no obligation on the part of this Exposition to make or accept such appointments.”
San Francisco women, however, did not let this rest. In 1911, San Francisco clubwomen pressured exhibition organizers to acknowledge an official Woman’s Board. Women including Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Helen Sanborn argued that the exposition board needed women to host receptions, provide entertainment for international visitors, and deal with the anticipated influx of immigrants traveling through the Panama Canal. They planned to involve women from San Francisco and adjacent counties who were accustomed to civic and philanthropic responsibilities. The directors finally agreed, making the Woman’s Board a subcommittee of the Exposition directorate, under the authority of an all-male “committee on woman’s participation.”

Tasked with furnishing and maintaining the California Host Building, the board began to raise money by organizing a statewide California Woman’s Auxiliary. Volunteers persuaded their neighbors to buy a membership subscription for $2, a small amount that enabled women from throughout the state “to do something for the welfare of the Exposition.” They also sold pins and collected donations for a Pioneer Mother Monument. According to Anna Pratt Simpson, author of Problems Women Solved, the board “started without a dollar” and “never received anything akin to a subsidy or a gift from official sources.” Clever management and good fundraising enabled them to run a restaurant and tea room, host receptions for visiting dignitaries, and plan educational programs.

The California Woman’s Auxiliary included some of the most prominent women in San Diego, among them Lydia Horton, Ellen Browning Scripps, and Anna Marston. Horton was made an Honorary Vice-President while Scripps and Marston were honorary members. Eliza McKee served as the president of the Southern California Women’s Auxiliary while Mary Ritter acted as the county chairman.

**No Free Speech and No Shrieking**

Having been invited to participate in the San Francisco exposition, San Diego women anticipated that they also would become involved with the Panama-California Exposition. What they did not realize was that the male organizers had no more interest in women’s participation than their counterparts in San Francisco. Without federal recognition or funding, they had no reason to create a Board of
The Contribution of Women to the 1915 Exposition

Lady Managers. They saw the fair as a commercial venture and wanted to permit the sale of alcohol without opposition from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). They also wanted to avoid unnecessary conflict. As one female participant later joked, the men imagined a women’s board as “a polite synonym for a Squabble Court, where the poor dears would meet, discuss, weep, even fight with umbrellas for weapons, and then proceed to sulks and hysterics.”

San Diego’s exposition was built quickly, with limited funds and considerable doubts about its success. The directors of the Panama-California Exposition Company, founded in September 1909, scrambled to keep up with San Francisco boosters who were well on their way towards hosting a competing world’s fair. E.W. Scripps, who attended the first meeting, warned that “the job was too big a one for San Diego.” He told the company’s vice-presidents that he only knew one man who could “carry through the bluff, if it could be carried through at all,” and that was David “Charlie” Collier. Even with Collier on board, the directors faced the lack of Congressional support and no guarantee that government-sponsored museums such as the Post Office or the U.S. Mint would be able to send exhibits to San Diego.

Part of the problem was the negative publicity garnered by San Diego during the Free Speech fight of 1912-13. City officials, fearful that revolutionary activity would make its way over the border from Mexico, had passed an ordinance suspending public speaking in the city center, known as “Soapbox Row.” In response, the International Workers of the World (IWW) sent hundreds of protesters. Some were beaten by policemen and thrown in jail; others were tortured by “vigilantes” and driven out of town. The situation attracted national headlines and badly damaged the city’s reputation.

Appalled by the events of 1912-13, many San Diego women decided to take steps towards influencing public policy. In a speech before the La Jolla Woman’s Club, Ellen Browning Scripps told clubwomen “I think women would have managed the Industrial Workers of the World better, and less to the discredit of the city.” She continued, “The time may not have come yet when we can work effectively in public policies; but it will surely come, and we ought to be ready.”

One place to start was the upcoming...
Panama-California Exposition. In 1913, a group of progressive San Diego women reminded the board that women should be involved in the preparations. They proceeded at first with politeness and deference. Julia Riall, a member of the Wednesday Club, asked her husband to write to the directors on behalf of the group. A San Diego attorney, Ernest Riall, penned a letter recommending that some “distinctive task or work” ought to be assigned to the women of California, and he suggested that an organization be formed for that purpose.22

The directors, however, did not want women’s participation at this stage in the planning process, largely because they had not yet dealt with the question of alcohol consumption at the fair. According to the minutes of the Executive Committee, members discussed Riall’s advice “very freely” before tabling it until the subsequent meeting. The next time they met, Collier introduced the subject of alcohol. He said that the exposition was getting inquiries as to whether or not alcohol would be permitted on the grounds. The group decided that it would be allowed in restaurants but they did not sanction saloons. In addition, they granted manufacturers of liquors the right to distribute samples, free of charge.23

The sale of alcohol was a significant issue in San Diego. Having won the right to vote, many local women’s organizations, including the WCTU, campaigned vigorously for prohibition. They believed that alcohol consumption, particularly among the working classes, caused serious social problems such as crime, poverty, and prostitution. One contemporary spoke of “the enervating, the dehumanizing, the corrupting influences of alcohol” and argued that the community had the moral duty to “save the victim of intemperance from the wreckage of himself.”24 In La Jolla, for example, the Woman’s Club protested the movement to allow local cafes to sell beer and wine with meals. The election of 1913 was known as the “liquor election” which would decide whether the village went “wet” or “dry.”25

In August 1913, Dr. Charlotte Baker, a member of the WCTU, wrote the exposition board asking that “no concessions should be granted for the sale of alcoholics [sic] in any form on Exposition grounds.” Having attended the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, she knew that prohibition could be successful. In response, the executive board agreed to limit the sales of distilled spirits to “two high class restaurants” while the other establishments could sell beer and wine with meals.26 The debate over the exposition’s alcohol policy continued through 1913 and 1914 as prominent citizens like George W. Marston, religious and fraternal organizations, and the Anti-Saloon League pressed for “A Dry Exposition.”27

At a 1913 meeting of the San Diego County Federation of Women’s Clubs, members discussed the potential for rapid urban growth after the opening of the Panama Canal. European immigrants continued to stream into East Coast cities
and overwhelm existing social services. Eva Bird Bosworth read a paper, “How Shall San Diego Meet the Immigration Problem,” and suggested that it would only be through the “cumulative work of all interested organizations on the broad basis of service to man, that the problem can be solved.”28 Her words echoed the sentiments of San Francisco women who justified their participation in the 1915 exposition by citing the need to deal with an influx of immigrants into the city.

At the same time, a nation-wide cooperative Travelers Aid Society was forming for the purpose of aiding tourists, particularly women and girls, travelling to the California expositions. Grace Hoadley Dodge, founder of the Travelers Aid Society of New York and a leading member of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), thought that these two organizations could cooperate with religious groups, charities, and local chambers of commerce to help travelers at railway stations and docks. Their goal was to prevent human trafficking, among other crimes. According to an article in The San Diego Union, the opening of the Panama Canal and the expositions in San Diego and San Francisco represented a “crisis point” that required national coordination.29 In the fall of 1913, Orin Baker, General Secretary of the Travelers Aid Society of New York, was invited to California to help organize a state chapter with branches in San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles.30

In October 1913, the San Diego County Federation of Women’s Clubs sent a resolution to the directors of the exposition, asking to be recognized and given a chance to cooperate. Henry J. Penfold, secretary of the Panama-California
Exposition, was told by the board to respond that “their organization would be given due consideration when the time came to take up the women’s department; also that he ask them to make suggestions along the lines in which they wished to cooperate.”

Personally, Penfold thought that women should be involved. A successful druggist, he had participated in the Nebraska State Fair in 1895 and knew how valuable female volunteers could be. His wife Ella, a leading member of the Omaha Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), now served as the president of the Chula Vista Woman’s Club. He told the club of the plans for the exposition and then invited members to view the buildings under construction.

In April 1914, the San Diego County Federation of Women’s Clubs reviewed a letter from Penfold, “asking that the Federation appoint a committee to work for the erection of a Woman’s Club building at the Exposition.” The exposition board had named Rosa Davidson, the wife of the exposition’s president, as “director of social activities” but gave her no defined role. In the meantime, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the YWCA had been allocated space on the balconies of various buildings. The San Diego exposition board had no plans to fund women’s organizations, expecting them to raise money themselves as San Francisco women had done.

Forty-seven-year-old Evelyn Lawson, newly elected president of the Wednesday Club, organized the first meeting of San Diego women to discuss their role at the exposition. A woman with keen literary interests, she was married to the Yale University-educated brother of Victor Fremont Lawson, owner and publisher of the Chicago Daily News and president of the Associated Press. She was described
The Contribution of Women to the 1915 Exposition

as “a woman of extraordinary tact” and, presumably, political skills.36 On May 27, 1914, representatives of local women’s clubs met at the Wednesday Club House “to discuss what part, if any, the women would take at the fair.”37 They included Carrie Gertrude Gilbert, president of the Amphion Club; Alice Klauber and Evelyn Lawson of the Wednesday Club; Ella Allen; Angeline E. Frost, president of the San Diego Woman’s Club; Gertrude Longenecker, educator; and Anna Owen, president of the County Federation of Women’s Clubs. A few days later, they met with the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to discuss the creation of a headquarters for women at the exposition.38

Two weeks after the meeting with the board of supervisors, leading clubwomen met at the U.S. Grant Hotel and organized the San Diego Woman’s Association, under the leadership of Lawson and fellow Wednesday Club member Alice Klauber. Their objective was to secure $75,000 that remained in the hands of the board of supervisors. The women wanted it to build a headquarters at the fair; exposition officials had been promised that money for advertising. “The women of San Diego city and county,” said Klauber, “feel they should be represented at the Exposition. There has been no provision made for rest rooms or comfort facilities for women and children at the Exposition grounds. San Diego women believe this should be done, and a determined campaign toward this end will be carried on until the Exposition officials do something definite for us.”39

Klauber promised that women would fight for their right to be represented at the exposition. She said, “[I]f proper provision is not made for women during 1915, we will advertise the fact in every woman’s club in the United States.”40 A well-known artist and clubwoman, Klauber had both the charisma and the connections to make good on her threat. Her brother-in-law Julius Wangenheim, a prominent banker, had served as chairman of the civic improvement committee of the Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the park board. He was now on the Panama-California Exposition board.41

The exposition directors were well aware of women’s capacity for political action. In 1911, California women had won the vote after a hard-fought campaign led by the California Equal Suffrage Association, the Political Equality League, and the Votes for...
Women Club, among other organizations. British women, meanwhile, were still fighting for their rights. In June 1914, San Diego’s newspapers covered the civil-disobedience campaign waged by suffragists in England. Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the Women’s Social and Political Union, an all-women suffrage organization, was pictured in the San Diego Sun above the caption, “Mrs. Pankhurst, Arrested at Palace Gate, Screams Message to the King.” The conservative San Diego Union, meanwhile, reported “Militants Defy Law; Britons Bordering on Panic.”

In the end, the Exposition Board relented and agreed to provide space and official representation to San Diego women. At a June 9, 1914, meeting, the executive committee voted to appoint members of a Woman’s Board and provide them with quarters at the fair to be used “for entertainment purposes only.” At this late date, a separate Woman’s Building was deemed both impractical and expensive, so they set aside rooms on the second floor of the California Building and in the basement of the Ethnology Building and granted them $5,000 for furnishings. Later, they gave space to female exhibitors in the Southern California Counties Building.

Advertising managers, meanwhile, reached out to women’s organizations across the country. In Chicago, Clifford A. Williams invited representatives of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to visit San Diego. He turned a reception room at the Congress Hotel into “a veritable orange grove” filled with orange trees, heavily laden with fruit, and “a bevy of beautifully gowned daughters of California.”

San Diego newspapers enjoyed the drama. The Union heralded, “Exposition Teapot Tempest Subsides After Explanation” and “Exposition Officials Surrender to Fair Sex.” Frank J. Belcher, Jr., stated defensively, “It has been our intention for a long time...to appoint a board of women to work out the details of the women’s representation at the Fair...Everything will be done at the Fair Grounds for the pleasure and comfort of women. It has only been a question of time.” The Sun, meanwhile, paraphrased remarks for their article, “Expo Heads and Women Make Up:”
“We’re strong for the women who have banded together for the entertainment and welfare of their sisters at the expo,” said the directors today.

“And these directors are really mighty nice men after you get acquainted with them.”

“Everything will be done on the fair grounds for the comfort and pleasure of the women,” said Director Belcher today. “We want to work with the San Diego women along this line.”

“All right,” said the women, “we’ll give you plenty of opportunity to make good.”

Not everyone was satisfied with woman’s role as hostess, however. Florence Collins Porter, an editor at the Los Angeles Herald, regretted “that but little of any active constructive work has been given into the charge of the women of the State. Their duties and privileges seem to be curtailed to those pertaining to social entertainment.” Her article, published in July 1914, must have been viewed as a challenge to the women of San Francisco and San Diego because both groups quickly took steps to prove that they were doing more than entertaining the wives of distinguished guests. Sanborn, president of the Woman’s Board of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, said that their most important endeavor was the protection of women and girls at the exposition, whether visitors or employees, and cited their cooperation with the Travelers Aid Society of New York. In San Diego, the Woman’s Board developed progressive programs and exhibits for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
The Woman’s Board

The first official meeting of Woman’s Board of the Panama-California Exposition was held in early December 1914 at the Grant Hotel. Evelyn Lawson served as the president of the board. Officers included pillars of society like Anne Sebree, wife of Rear Admiral Uriel Sebree, USN (Ret.), former commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, and working women like Daisy Barteau, a linotype operator and member of the Typographical Union. Klauber, chair of the Art Committee, had been chosen to serve as the head of the furnishing committee and tasked with decorating the Headquarters for Women and Hostess Gallery. With the opening of the exposition a month away, they focused their attention on four key goals: setting up a headquarters and a space to welcome guests to the exposition; creating nursing facilities, a rest room, and a crèche for babies; hosting a modern art exhibition and musical events; and developing special programs for organized labor and other groups.

The Woman’s Board included some of the most progressive, intelligent, and artistic women in San Diego. The majority belonged to the Wednesday Club, a group of women who believed that aesthetic enterprises, in particular the study of art and literature, could transform both the individual and society. Their Arts & Crafts philosophy harmonized with their clubhouse, designed by architect Hazel W. Waterman and located only a short distance from Balboa Park. History has left us only fragments of information about these women. Ella Foote wrote poetry and experimented with a variety of art forms. Her daughter described her as a “remarkable woman” with an “immense intellectual curiosity.” She was “restless and seeking—she wanted to try everything in the way of an art, and experience everything she couldn’t know directly, through reading.” Klauber was one of the “moderns” who promoted avant-garde art from an early date. She lived in the “rhythm of the artistic...Her sensitivity to the beautifully artistic was quite exceptional.” Topics discussed at weekly meetings included Post-Impressionism, modern drama, new music, and twentieth-century poetry.

The headquarters of the Woman’s Board were located on the second floor of the California Building, a highly ornate Spanish Colonial style structure that

Anne Sebree and her son, John B. Sebree, c. 1910. Sebree, Children’s Committee chair, organized a day nursery, or crèche, for infants and a playground for young children on the grounds of the exposition. ©SDHC #82:13210.
welcomed visitors to the fair. Below, in the west wing, were the offices of G. Aubrey Davidson, president and official host of the exposition. Opposite the California Building, on the south side of the Quadrangle, stood the Fine Arts Building where the Woman’s Board was given permission to host a modern art exhibit.57

In addition to offices, the California Building contained exhibits focused on the pre-Columbian native populations of the Americas. Archaeologist Dr. Edgar L. Hewitt of the School of American Archaeology in Santa Fe, New Mexico, brought together objects and works of art that celebrated the ancient Maya, Inca, and Aztec civilizations. These included bas-relief sculptures from Mexico and Guatemala; ancient pottery excavated at Chiriquí, Panama; architectural models of temples and pyramids; and mural paintings of Mayan cities by artist Carlos Vierra.58 A visitor from New England described it as “a remarkable record and exhibit of available records, relics and data of the early peoples of the So[uth] West…” He continued, “The early Spanish explorers carried back glowing accounts of the peoples whom they met or whose civilizations they saw. Never in any other exposition has such care been expended in gathering useful information and data as here. Even the most casual inspection indicated what a high type of civilization existed once here in America.”59

The second floor, meanwhile, contained copperplate reproductions of photographs by ethnologist and photographer Edward S. Curtis for his series, *The North American Indian*.60

The Woman’s Board chose to complement these exhibits with a decorative scheme that reflected the cultures of the Pacific Rim.
Visitors noted the “resourcefulness and ingenuity” of Alice Klauber and her committee who converted a square piano into a writing desk. ©SDHC #OP 1731.

Klauber and her committee transformed a long, bare room and gallery into an artistic space filled with Navajo rugs, black lacquered wicker furniture, and a curtain taken from a Chinese theater in Canton, or Guangzhou. The color scheme, regarded as “daring,” consisted of persimmon red and black with an undercurrent of soft brown. On the walls hung paintings by Donald Beauregard, a modernist artist whose works were filled with vigorous brushwork and brilliant color. Klauber defended these works from critics of the “new art” by equating their freedom and innovation with her Arts & Crafts decorative scheme. She later wrote, “What the pictures did for that room cannot be exaggerated. For two years they sang across the spaces of a rather cold interior and made it vibrate with clear, fine tones. Persons who arrived at the doorway...to see this colorful interior drew audible breaths of relief.”

The Woman’s Board also provided a well-furnished rest room in the basement of the Fine Arts building. It contained couches, easy chairs, cots, two hospital beds, and first aid equipment monitored by a professional nurse. In May 1915, an average 1,300 women per week visited the Hostess Gallery, located upstairs, and made use of the rest room.

Volunteers from women’s clubs and organizations throughout San Diego County staffed the Hostess Gallery, served tea, sold postcards, and maintained a peaceful atmosphere. County librarian Jennie Herrmann volunteered a book case and one hundred volumes while Marion Robinson offered back issues of California Garden. Mrs. Morgan, meanwhile, sold copies of Spanish and Mexican songs, postcards, and over 700 copies of Art & Archaeology containing an article by Edgar Hewett. Tea was served in persimmon-colored cups and saucers, edged in black, with the monogram WB for Woman’s Board.

The Hostess Gallery provided a space where women could sit, rest, and enjoy a little solitude before diving back into the hurly burly life of the fair. They stood in marked contrast to other areas, most notably the “Isthmus” or amusement zone, where women’s activities were often commodified and sexualized. The Isthmus contained educational exhibits such as the Painted Desert, a display of Indian life of the Southwest where men and women wove rungs and shaped pottery. But it also included a model Chinatown with an underground opium den and...
“slave” girls; a Hawaiian Village with hula dancers; and ‘49ers mining camp that recreated the lawless atmosphere of the Gold Rush. There, patrons could get “something a little stronger than water” and flirt with “ladies.”

Rest rooms were also offered by other women’s organizations. The YWCA had a headquarters, “a large homey room,” and a café in the Varied Industries building. It also secured space in the Science and Education building where women employed on the grounds could enjoy some leisure time. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) had a tea room and rest room in the Arts and Crafts building, along with a display of objects from eighteenth-century England and America. The San Diego Women’s Press Club maintained a library in the southeast corner of the California Quadrangle. The WCTU, meanwhile, provided tea and a seating area on the balcony of the Commerce and Industries building. Here, walls were covered with newspaper clippings, posters, and flyers providing information about the temperance movement, including “comparative statistics concerning prohibition and non-prohibition territory, effects of alcohol on the human system, figures as to the work of the organization, etc.”

A novel feature of the Exposition was a day nursery, or crèche, organized by the Woman’s Board. At the time, there were few care facilities for young children as the Kindergarten Movement was still in its infancy. Anne Sebree, head of the Children’s Committee, arranged for a portable house to be placed at the back of the California Building. For a modest fee, women could leave their children for a half-day or whole day while they toured the grounds. A nurse took charge of the babies while a trained kindergarten teacher looked after older children on an adjacent playground. The local newspaper crowed that even San Francisco could not compete with the largest “baby checking establishment” on the Pacific Coast.

The Fine Arts Committee, meanwhile, established a modern art exhibit in the Fine Arts Building. Alice Klauber, the chair of the committee, worked with artist Robert Henri and Edgar Hewitt (Director of Exhibits) to develop the show. A painter herself, she had studied with Henri in Spain. In 1914, she
welcomed him to San Diego where he spent the summer painting portraits of ethnic minorities in the region, including some of the key exhibitors in the Painted Desert section. Convinced that San Diego welcomed new ideas, he invited his East Coast friends—many of them realist artists of the ‘so-called’ Ashcan School—to join him in establishing a cutting-edge exhibit. They included John Sloane, George Bellows, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Maurice B. Prendergast, and William Glackens. Ella Foote, a frequent contributor to the “Art and Artists” column of The San Diego Union, praised the avant-garde nature of the show. “You can imagine Mr. Henri as wishing the public would understand,” she wrote, “but you’d know that Mr. Luks would suppose that of course it wouldn’t.” She added, “These men have seen a new light.... Nearly every picture seems to be painted, not to sell but as a great experiment.” Patrons may not have purchased the paintings but they did walk away with copies of the exhibition catalog published under the direction of the Woman’s Board.

The art committee also organized a series of modern art exhibits in the Little Gallery in the Fine Arts Building that included modernist pastels by Ruth Townsend, portraits of children by Kathleen Houlahan, and landscapes by Alice Anderson. Meta and Herbert (Bert) Cressey showed pieces painted in Madrid and Paris. In June, the committee hung a collection of paintings by post-Impressionist Jerome Blum: “The work of this Chicago man is very modern and the committee felt his work would be welcomed with much interest.” Subsequent exhibitors included Santa Fe artist Orrin Sheldon Parsons and Oliver Newberry Chaffee, whose Fauvist landscapes had appeared in the Armory Show of 1913 in New York. In September, Robert Lee Eskridge displayed watercolors and etchings of ghetto life in Chicago as well as beach scenes set in Coronado and La Jolla. Charles A. Fries, who also exhibited at the Southern California Counties Building, displayed pastels and western landscapes. In November, Klauber hung some of her own oil paintings, including California Tower (1915).

Klauber became a minor public celebrity at the time of the exposition. She offered teachers the opportunity to “go to school” at the Exposition, lectured at a summer extension course, and gave a series of talks to the Wednesday Club, among other organizations, on “The Art of the Two Exhibitions,” in San Diego and San Francisco. Her continuing promotion of San Diego art led to the establishment of the San Diego Art Guild in order to promote and sell the work of local painters
and sculptors. Along with Julius Wangenheim, she also played an important role in the establishment of a permanent home for art—the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego (1925).

The Woman’s Board was also responsible for bringing internationally recognized performing artists to the Exposition. Gertrude Gilbert, chair of the Music Committee, drew on the resources of the Amphion Club, a woman’s organization that became a powerful force in the development of the San Diego music scene. A talented pianist, Gilbert “had an exceptional mind—very fast thinking and farseeing,” according to one contemporary, “—and people would listen to her and get things done.” She was able to promise financial support and an appreciative audience for musical stars such as Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, the celebrated operatic contralto, and Madame Ellen Beach Yaw, the coloratura soprano known as “Lark Ellen” or “The California Nightingale” because of her ability to produce exceptionally high notes. Recording artists for the Victor Talking Machine Company, the two women had become international celebrities. The Spreckels Organ Pavilion was chosen as a venue for many such performances. Sarama Rainoldi, an opera singer who performed there in April 1915, was pleasantly surprised by the experience: “I anticipated that it would be very difficult to sing with the organ in the open air, but I found that the organ acted as a sounding board and I had no trouble whatever in placing my tones just as I wished.” Other singers were John MacCormack, the Irish tenor.
known for his rendition of the bestselling ballad, “I Hear You Calling Me,” and Florencio Constantino, Spanish grand opera tenor who recorded “La Paloma” for Columbia Records. Two of the world’s greatest violinists, Fritz Kreisler and Efrem Zimbalist, Sr., appeared at the Exposition, along with popular composers Carrie Jacobs Bond who had sold one million copies of the parlor song, “I Love You Truly”; Amy Beach; and Charles Wakefield Cadman, author of “From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water.”

Given San Diego’s newly acquired reputation as a city hostile to organized labor—or at least the IWW—the Woman’s Board made a special effort to reach out to unions. Daisy Barteau, a Socialist who supported temperance, equal suffrage, and universal peace, was named as head of the Union Labor Committee and tasked with creating events. She invited representatives of San Diego’s many labor unions to receptions at the Woman’s Headquarters and organized a Valentine’s Day dance on the Plaza de Panama. The committee also held a Universal Peace Day not long after the sinking of the British passenger liner Lusitania by German U-Boat torpedoes and the first aerial bombing of London. In August, Barteau encouraged a visit by 500 members of the International Typographical Union who had been attending a national convention in Los Angeles. She also succeeded in drawing Samuel Gompers from the American Federation of Labor convention in San Francisco. He appeared at the exposition along with John Hays from the typographical union; Anne Fitzgerald, President of the Women’s Union Labor League; and British trade union leader Ernest Bevin, among others. Barteau also wrote several feature articles on the exposition for labor papers in Los Angeles.
Like their counterpart in San Francisco, the Woman’s Board entertained visiting dignitaries, most notably former President Theodore “T.R.” Roosevelt who attended a reception at the Woman’s Headquarters shortly after his arrival. They hosted a banquet in honor of Eleanor McAdoo, the daughter of President Woodrow Wilson, who represented her father for the exposition opening. Rebecca MacKenzie, chair of the Social Committee, having done “some tall thinking” about possible guests, invited Bertha Palmer who had headed the Chicago women’s board and “won undying fame and unstinted praise for the masterly and lavish manner in which she entertained the celebrities who visited the Chicago exposition.” Other famous guests included Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova who performed at Spreckels Theater; José Guadalupe Estudillo, surviving founder of Balboa Park and descendent of one of San Diego’s oldest families; and Mount Holyoke President Mary E. Woolley, “the youngest college president of the oldest women’s college.”

The Woman’s Board continued their work through 1916 after the exposition was extended for a second year. Visitors continued to praise the Hostess Gallery and ask about how they could acquire Arts & Crafts furnishings. Evelyn Lawson noted, “The inference appeared to be that to many classes of visitors, San Diego was furnishing fresh and vivid ideas, as well as picturesque memories.” A new show opened in the Fine Arts Building, while the modernist exhibit organized by Klauber and Henri went on a tour of the western states organized by Maxwell Galleries of Los Angeles. Gilbert and the music committee, meanwhile, “inviegled the greatest musical talent in the world into giving its services free or at a minimum cost.”

When the exposition finally closed, the Woman’s Board congratulated themselves on having performed heroic service for the city of San Diego. Sebree praised “the businesslike way in which the women went to work,” their skill at organizing committees, and their frugality when, in the minds of most men, all women were “spenders.” In the Fine Arts Building, they introduced “the Twentieth century point of view” espoused by avant-garde artists, while in the California Building they presented opportunities for women to explore and share progressive ideas about child welfare, labor relations, and the domestic arts.
Twenty years later, at the end of close of the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition, Evelyn Lawson organized a reunion for members of the 1915-16 Woman’s Board. Then in their sixties and seventies, the women recalled with pride their contribution to their community. They had paved the way for a younger generation of women to take leadership roles in civic affairs, and encouraged visitors to appreciate San Diego’s forward-thinking attitudes towards modern life at the turn of the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. A caryatid (from the Greek: Καρυάτις, plural: Καρυάτιδες) is a sculpted female figure serving as an architectural support taking the place of a column or a pillar supporting an entablature on her head. The best-known and most-copied examples are those of the six figures of the Caryatid Porch of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis at Athens.

2. The caryatids, among other plaster decorative features, were produced by a team of sculptors working under the direction of H.R. Schmohl who was described by one reporter as “a veteran of practically all the big expositions in the country.” “Dream City Assuming Reality at Exposition Grounds,” The San Diego Union, May 31, 1914, II:2.


4. Phoebe Kropp Young puzzled about the seeming absence of women among the organizers of the Panama-California Exposition. Although they started later than their counterparts in San Francisco, they were heavily involved in San Diego exposition activities from 1914 onward. Phoebe S. Kropp, California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 107-08.

5. Christine Bolt, The Women’s Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), chap. 5; Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980); Ann Firor Scott,


19. E.W. Scripps to C.A. McGrew, Miramar, March 13, 1914, Ohio University, E.W. Scripps Collection, MS 117, Series 1.2, Box 20, Folder 1. Scripps considered Collier to be bright and ambitious, “the most perfect type of genius booster.”


23. Minute Book, 1913-14, 255. The Woman's Board in San Francisco agreed not to block the sales of alcohol at the Panama-International Exposition. In March 1913, they petitioned the California State Legislature “not to pass or give approval to any measure the effect of which will be to prohibit the sale of liquors” within the exposition. The Kehoe Bill sought to prohibit alcohol in any form. They explained that they had been assured by the directors of the fair that no liquor would be sold to minors, no saloons would be maintained within the site, and that concessionnaires be allowed to serve only malted liquors and wines, not distilled alcohol. *Journal of the Assembly during the Fortieth Session of the Legislature of the State of California, 1913* (Sacramento: State of California, 1913), 916-17. Abigail Markwyn was mistaken when she wrote that no evidence exists to support the claim that the Woman's Board had adopted this resolution. See Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco: The Pacific Rim, the Great West, and California at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2014), 185-86.

24. Ellen Browning Scripps, speech [1916], Ellen Browning Scripps Collection, Scripps College, Drawer 22, Folder 36.


31. Minute Book, 1913-14, 322.


34. “Club Notes,” *The San Diego Union*, April 12, 1914, Women’s Section, 1.

35. Minute Book, 1913-14, 322, 341.
The Contribution of Women to the 1915 Exposition


37. Wednesday Club, Club Minutes, 1910-1915, 142. Born Harriett Evelyn Nichols, she went by her second name, Evelyn, after her marriage to Iver Norman Lawson.


40. “Women Seek Representation at Exposition, Promising Big Fight if Denied Recognition,” 16.

41. Klauber would become the driving force behind the development of an arts community in San Diego. At the time, she was entertaining New York artist Robert Henri and his wife on their first visit to California. Robert Henri to Alice Klauber, June 16, 23, 1914, San Diego Museum of Art, The Alice Klauber Papers, Martin Peterson Collection of Klauber Materials, Series 6.


43. “Mrs. Pankhurst, Arrested at Palace Gate, Screams Message to the King,” The San Diego Sun, June 6, 1914, 1; “Militants Defy Law; Britons Bordering On Panic,” The San Diego Union, June 4, 1914, 1.

44. “Women’s Plans for Exposition,” The San Diego Sun, June 4, 1914, 2:10; Minute Book, 1913-14, 391, 402, 420. The San Diego County Women’s Association wrote a letter to G. Aubrey Davidson requesting these particular spaces.


47. “Expo Heads and Women Make Up,” The San Diego Sun, June 20, 2.


50. Minutes of the Woman’s Board of the Exposition, December 4, 1914, SDHC MS 263 7/1. Other officers were Angeline Frost; Marion (Mrs. Earl) Garretson; Mrs. Thomas B. Wright, president of the San Diego Women’s Press Club; Alice Halliday; Rebecca (Mrs. George) MacKenzie; Alice Klauber; Gertrude Gilbert; Rebecca (Mrs. Jarvis L.) Doyle; Gertrude Longenecker, and Emily (Mrs. B.G.) Saville.

51. For more information on Klauber’s place in early San Diego arts and letters, see Martin E. Petersen, Alice Ellen Klauber (2007), http://www.aliceklauber.museumartistsfoundation.org (accessed September 1, 2014). Other members of the committee included Rebecca MacKenzie, Laura (Mrs. Julius Wangenheim), Ileen (Mrs. Ernest E.) White, Miss Alice Halliday, and Evelyn Lawson. Minutes of the Woman’s Board of the Exposition, December 4, 1914.

52. Wednesday Club members also involved in the exposition included Ella Foote, Evelyn Lawson, Lydia Horton, Gertrude Gilbert, Carrie G. Frost, Ileen White, Rebecca MacKenzie, Laura Wangenheim, Alice Klauber, and Alice Halliday. For more information on women’s arts associations, see Karen J. Blair, The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

54. Foote was also connected to the arts community through her friendship with art critic and engraver Frederic C. Torrey. Doris Foote Merriam, “As I See Myself When Very Young,” Ella Woodward Foote Collection, Montana Historical Society, SC1739. The Wednesday Club holds copies of two lectures read to the club: “Henrik Ibsen” (1909) and “The Philosophy of Marcus Aurelius” (1911).


57. The Woman’s Headquarters consisted of several spaces: the Hostess’ Gallery, the Bridge, the Corridor, the Blue Tea Room, and the Roof Balcony. They were at the top of the stairway in the southwest corner balcony. The Fine Arts Building, now known as Evernham Hall, is used by the San Diego Museum of Man as a temporary display space. Construction of the permanent Fine Arts Gallery was completed in 1925, opened in 1926, and is now The San Diego Museum of Art.


61. “Woman’s Artistic Touch Lends Fair Great Warmth and Beauty,” The San Diego Union, January 7, 1915, 10; Amero, Balboa Park and the 1915 Exposition, 78. So striking were the colors that the space became known as the “Persimmon Room.” For more information on the social meaning of Arts & Crafts design, see Eileen Boris, Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), chap. 4.


63. “Woman’s Artistic Touch Lends Fair Great Warmth of Beauty.”

64. Minutes of the Woman’s Board of the Exposition, January 26, February 16, May 26, 1915.


69. “Relics of Ye Olden Time Exhibited; D.A.R. Tearoom at Fair Allures; Heirlooms Express
Revolutionary Spirit; Colonial Furniture, China Loaned by Many Members,” The San Diego Union, January 25, 1915, 7.


72. Grace Gould Klauber recalled, “As to details Alice Klauber was very active with the 1915 Exposition. She helped organize the art display and had a great deal to do with the building that was supposed to be the women’s reception hall... At the time of the 1915 Exposition there were many paintings here that had been sent by men like George Bellows and Robert Henri and many prominent artists of that day. At that time they were only asking $350.00, $450.00, $500.00—as I remember, certainly none over that—for their paintings. The reason that I remember that is because Alice Klauber gave me a bunch of correspondence that she had with a number of these artists. They offered these paintings at those prices.” Grace Gould Klauber, interviewed by Philip Klauber, February 5 and 26, 1978, 29-30, OH Klauber, Grace Gould, SDHC.


75. The Art Committee had previously provided a typescript copy. Minutes of the Woman’s Board, January 12, 1915 and May 26, 1915.

76. Ruth Townsend [Whitaker] shared a studio with Alice Klauber and Alice Mary Clark on the Exposition grounds in 1915-16. She and several other modern painters organized an informal group called San Diego Moderns, which started exhibiting in the early 1930s. Petersen, Alice Ellen Klauber, Appendix B; Bruce Kamlering, “Painting Ladies: Some Early San Diego Women Artists,” JSDH 32, no. 3 (Summer 1986).


78. Minutes of the Woman’s Board of the Exposition, August 3, June 21, 1915.

79. Ibid., September 28, 1915.


81. “Chicago Artist’s Work to be Shown at Fair,” The San Diego Union, September 16, 1915, 14; “Art Works to be Shown at San Diego Exposition,” The San Diego Union, November 5, 1915, 3. Southern California artists like William Wendt and Maurice Braun displayed their work in an exhibit organized by the California Art Club of Los Angeles. It was held in the Southern California Counties Building.


84. Jesse T. Buker, interviewed by Pearl Steffken, March 14, 1963, OH Buker, Jesse T, SDHC. Reflecting on the musical performances of the 1915 and 1916 expositions, one journalist wrote, “It is not too much to say that Miss Gilbert’s efforts in behalf of San Diego are responsible for the greater portion of the music it has enjoyed during the last two years.” W.W.B. Seymour, “Love of Music is Characteristic of San Diego People,” The San Diego Union, January 1, 1917, 2. See also the records of the Amphion Club, MS 134, SDHC.


86. “Soprano Charms Hearers at Fair,” The San Diego Union, April 7, 1915, 8.


88. Exposition officials had agreed to keep the peace with local unions by hiring as many union workers as non-union workers. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, 290-98.


98. Minutes of the Woman’s Board of the Exposition, November 22, 1915.

99. Ibid., August 17, 1915; Petersen, Alice Ellen Klauber, 18.

100. Sebree, “Faithful Efforts and Skill of Women Members Important Aid to Directors of Great Exposition.”

101. Ibid.

Introduction

The 1915 Panama-California Exposition changed Balboa Park forever. It took park development and landscape in a direction never anticipated by its creators and early designers, including Kate O. Sessions, Samuel Parsons, Jr., and John Charles Olmsted. The insertion of buildings and a lavish landscape on an unimproved park mesa disregarded expensively purchased park planning advice and set the course for today’s congested and water-intensive park center.

This article reviews the early history of Balboa Park landscape planning and
development. It sets aside the myth of Sessions’ involvement in landscaping the 1915 Panama-California Exposition grounds and brings two “accidental landscapers”—Frank P. Allen, Jr. and Paul G. Thiene—out of the shadows. Instead of following the advice of experienced experts, Allen and Thiene turned away from the use of native plants and drought-resistant landscaping, embracing a flower-filled landscape with grassy lawns. The gardens of Balboa Park were overwhelmingly popular with visitors who would go on to recreate similar high-maintenance displays in their own yards. The “Garden Fair” was expensive, costing San Diego approximately $400,000 in grading and planting alone. The result was a landscape as fanciful, improbable, and beautiful as the Spanish Colonial Revival buildings it showcased.

**Before the Exposition Bloomed**

When farsighted San Diego officials set aside 1,400 acres of pueblo land as “City Park” 1868, they did not at the same time earmark funding for the park or create a plan of park development. For almost four decades, the vast acreage reserved as a park remained in its natural state.¹

For many residents, the lack of recreational amenities and landscape improvement made it difficult to think of the dusty, chaparral-covered expanse
as a “real” park, or any kind of special place worthy of care and preservation. The lands and canyons of City Park were used carelessly: for dumping, target practice, animal slaughter, storage of dangerous explosives and other activities incompatible with the purposes of a public park. City Park’s vast acreage tantalized avaricious land speculators and property developers. This same abundance made it easy for the City Trustees to parcel out park land for alternative uses. The mere survival of City Park was under constant threat from those who would repurpose the land.

When the first park improvements came, they were intermittent, grassroots efforts by concerned citizens eager to show that the park could be improved. Lack of consistent garden care, inadequate water and vandalism doomed all but two of the early privately undertaken planting projects within the park. Horticulturist and nursery owner Kate O. Sessions presented the first comprehensive landscape design plan for City Park in 1889, but the city did not act on the idea. Three years later, Sessions was appointed to the unpaid position of City Gardener. She had just leased a small corner of City Park for her nursery business. The unusual lease agreement required Sessions to establish “an experimental nursery and garden” and extracted payment in the form of trees which Sessions was obligated to provide to the city and plant in the park. Under this arrangement, Sessions undertook a sustained ten-year park planting program. At the same time, her nursery, with its seasonal displays of blooming roses, chrysanthemums, violets, and other colorful flowers, became a popular place to visit. The Sessions nursery was, in effect, a demonstration garden—living proof that botanical beauty could be coaxed from the formidable scrub lands of City Park. Her successful work encouraged the next major step in park landscaping.

Understanding the long-term value of a large urban park to the City of San Diego, the Chamber of Commerce established a Park Improvement Committee in 1902. This was an end run around a city government that could not be moved to care for its park, but city officials acquiesced to private work in the park. Acting on the advice of Kate Sessions, George Marston and others, the Chamber hired Samuel Parsons, Jr., one of the nation’s most experienced and best known landscape architects, to create a comprehensive plan of development for every acre of City Park.
Parsons came to San Diego in December 1902. In the planning tradition of landscape architects, he “consulted the genius” of City Park, meaning that he looked for attractive natural features that should be preserved and enhanced by his landscape plan. Parsons found the park, with its glorious views of mountains and ocean, to be both beautiful and unique in the world. He did not try to overlay a standard design on City Park, but instead suggested making a regional statement. Unlike parks that might be found in New York, Paris or London, regional sensibility in San Diego suggested very restrained planting and use of native or well-adapted exotics appropriate to the climate. Park mesas should be largely unadorned, Parsons said, because the views were so decorative.

Parsons’ plan aimed to “preserve and accentuate natural beauties of a very unusual kind, which we trust may be kept free from interjection of all foreign extraneous and harmful purposes or objects.” He was warning San Diego not to bring their city into the park. If absolutely necessary to put structures in the park, they should be kept within a narrow band at the southern edge of the park. Likewise, Parsons suggested that any formal gardens of seasonal flowers be located in the same area, near downtown.

The Parsons plan reflected the philosophy of landscape architects of the time. Witnessing the unpleasant effects of the Industrial Revolution on cities, they believed that bucolic and quiet urban parks functioned as an important safety valve by offering repose from city life. San Diego was not a busy metropolis like New York City where Parsons worked, but from his vast experience, he was inviting San Diegans to imagine a future in which growth would enhance the public value of the open land preserved in their City Park.
As the Parsons plan was implemented, new park roads, paths and landscaping showed San Diego that large-scale park development was more feasible than had been imagined. Encouraged about their park, voters amended the city charter in 1905 to set aside a percentage of property taxes to create a fund for park development and the first Board of Park Commissioners was appointed. The Chamber of Commerce now stepped back from direct park involvement and allowed the Parsons plan to guide city work in the park.6 This changed in 1909 when San Diego decided to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal with a world’s fair.

The Panama-California Exposition Company voted a preference for using City Park for the 1915 celebration and expressed an expectation that city bonds would be floated for park improvements.7 Parsons was brought back to assess the progress of San Diego parks and made a final contribution with his 1910 report. It included a suggestion that City Park be given a more prepossessing name in advance of the exposition, resulting in its renaming to Balboa Park.8 Parsons and his original landscaping plan then faded from local memory as exposition planning charted an entirely new direction for the park.

John Charles Olmsted Stands on Principle

Resolving to hire top professionals to create the exposition, the Panama-California Exposition’s Building and Grounds Committee started a talent search in 1910. They scored a public relations coup when the nation’s leading landscape architecture firm signed on. The Olmsted Brothers were in demand across the country and were experienced designers of exposition grounds.11

By early November 1910, John Charles Olmsted was in San Diego.12 He set to work designing exposition grounds on the Balboa Park site designated by the Exposition Company and approved by the Board of Park Commissioners.13 It was at the southern side of the park, conveniently near downtown San Diego. This site comported with the planning principles
of both Parsons and Olmsted. If man-made structures had to be brought into
an urban park, the intrusion should be limited and kept to the park perimeter.
Olmsted quickly developed a general plan for the Panama-California Exposition
and specified some new landscaping for Balboa Park. He designed, built and
staffed an exposition nursery to propagate and cultivate the millions of plants
that would be needed for the exposition grounds.14

Olmsted’s exposition plan was fatally undermined by two other bright young
professionals brought to San Diego by the exposition’s Building and Grounds
Committee, Frank P. Allen, Jr. and Bertram Goodhue. Both disliked the south side
location, favoring instead the park’s elevated central mesa as an exposition building
site. Allen, proven builder of expositions and Director of Works for the Panama-
California Exposition, liked the additional space and more accommodating
topography.15 Lead architect Goodhue, meanwhile, knew his buildings would
be more imposing if placed on the higher ground of the mesa.16 The two men
audaciously developed an alternative to the Olmsted Plan and used it to garner
support.17 Their persistent lobbying for the new location played into the hands
of local businessmen who saw financial advantages in building the exposition
at a further remove from downtown San Diego.18

Opposition to the Olmsted Plan culminated in a September 1, 1911, decision
by the Building and Grounds Committee to override Olmsted and move the
exposition to the central mesa of Balboa Park.19 Olmsted did not hesitate when
informed of the new building site. As a matter of professional principle, the
Olmsted Brothers firm resigned from the Panama-California Exposition. Olmsted
believed that building an exposition in the heart of Balboa Park was a needless and irreversible sacrifice of San Diego’s most unique and valuable civic asset. He refused to allow the Olmsted Brothers firm to be a party to “the ruin of Balboa Park,” and was saddened by a decision leading to its “outrageous disfigurement.” He accurately predicted that this incursion would be the beginning of a more widespread invasion into the park’s once peaceful interior. Drawing on his long professional experience, like Parsons before him, Olmsted invited San Diego to take a longer view and to protect the priceless tranquility and open space of its urban park.

Stunned by the abrupt resignation of the Olmsteds, exposition officials, along with the chagrined Allen and Goodhue, made frantic attempts to bring the Olmsted Brothers back to the project. However, the firm quickly moved to sever all Panama-California Exposition business ties, including the reassignment of the Olmsted employees who were overseeing the thriving plant nursery established for the exposition.

**Expert Consensus: Sessions, Parsons and Olmsted**

Many San Diegans mistakenly believe that Kate O. Sessions landscaped Balboa Park in advance of the 1915 exposition. In fact, Sessions’ active planting within the park ended in 1903 when her ten-year lease of park land expired. She retained a lively interest in the horticultural development of the park throughout her life and was remembered as a valued local consultant to both professional landscape architects hired for Balboa Park. She spent substantial time with Parsons after his hiring in 1902 and Olmsted after his arrival late in 1910.

Sessions domesticated native plants and was open to using exotic (non-native) plants in San Diego landscapes if they were practical choices. She looked for new plants from parts of the world with a climate similar to San Diego’s and for species that did not require irrigation. She consistently advised against grassy lawns because of their water requirements. Her thinking was very much in line with the recommendations made by Paul Thiene excelled at mixing plants into attractive groupings, as along these El Prado buildings. ©SDHC #8125-20.
Parsons and Olmsted for Balboa Park: that landscape choices needed to suit the San Diego climate, soils and rainfall. The Parsons plan recommended that much of Balboa Park remain in its natural state and that formal planting be kept to a minimum.

Olmsted, who had lived in California as a young man and worked on landscape projects across the country, was cognizant of regional differences and aimed to created landscape designs appropriate to the place and its ecology. For the Panama-California Exposition, the Olmsted operation consulted with Kate Sessions, Los Angeles native plant expert Theodore Payne, and the superintendent of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, John McLaren. They ingeniously asked San Diego residents to donate cuttings to the exposition nursery. Not only was this a money saver and a way to stir public interest, but it also identified plants already proven to thrive in this region. Local gardeners responded generously with thousands of starts for roses, ferns, vines, shrubs and other plants. In addition, the Olmsted nursery staff began to expertly propagate native plants of San Diego and to move full-sized trees onto the exposition grounds.

Balboa Park was an ideal place to practice a new Olmsted planting technique developed for dry western climates. It preserved and enhanced natural chaparral lands. Underbrush would be cleared, leaving behind native flowering plants, young oaks and hardwood shrubs. Then attractive native and compatible plants would be added to the semi-cleared chaparral lands. New plants might need some water to become established, but soon the entire tract would be self-sustaining and dry-farmed.

This “new native park typology for the American West,” the managed, naturalistic landscaping that Olmsted envisioned, aligned with Parsons’ recommendation that San Diego aim to make a unique regional statement with its naturally magnificent park. Olmsted described his landscape ideas at a meeting of the San Diego Floral Association shortly after arriving in San Diego and spoke to the local newspapers. Inspiration for the more formal landscaping of the exposition would be found in the Mediterranean gardens of Italy and Spain,
places where rainfall was also scare and seasonal. These gardens were exemplars for San Diego, Olmsted explained, because they used flora indigenous to their climate, incorporated hardscape (stone and tile walls, terraces and arcades) and did not rely on “the lawn effect.”  

Although Sessions, Parsons, and Olmsted shared similar views about Balboa Park landscaping, they played no role in preparing the park for the Panama-California Exposition nor did they substantially influence the design. Sessions was in her mid-fifties, busily operating her nursery in Mission Hills. She sold plants to the exposition, but her interests and expertise did not extend to organizing and supervising a massive multiyear park development project. Parsons had wanted to return to San Diego for the exposition landscape job, but was edged out by the selection of the Olmsted Brothers. Then, just when it was time for exposition landscaping to get underway, the Olmsteds resigned and withdrew their experienced employees. The proficient exposition nursery lived on, but the nuanced design sensibilities of John Charles Olmsted left town with him.

Ironically, the ideas of these experts—San Diego’s preeminent horticulturist and the two most famous landscape architects of their day—the three people who had most carefully studied and considered the appropriate landscape for Balboa Park, were largely ignored when it came time to execute the grandest design and planting project in the history of the park.

Exposition visitors found shady pergolas and a plentiful supply of benches. ©SDHC #87.
Although not widely recognized for this work, Frank P. Allen, Jr. and Paul G. Thiene were the landscapers of the Panama-California Exposition. Each was hired at the exposition in a different capacity, then propelled into landscaping responsibilities by the Olmsted resignation.

Allen, the exposition Director of Works, had promoted the central mesa building site in opposition to the Olmsted Brothers’ aesthetics and design plans. At the same time, Allen was caught off guard by their resignation and was surely mortified by his role in depriving the Panama-California Exposition of the talent and prestige of the Olmsted firm. Perhaps as a way to make amends to his corporate bosses, or from a sense of duty, Allen stepped up to assume responsibility for overseeing landscaping of the exposition. This added a substantial work load to his already heavy responsibilities, but obviated an embarrassing and possibly fruitless search for a successor.

While the Olmsted resignation brought consternation to Panama-California officials, one low-level employee saw opportunity. Paul G. Thiene understood that his exposition nursery supervisors would be leaving San Diego with the Olmsted exodus. He promptly wrote to Allen, asking for a promotion. The latter desperately needed help once he had agreed to take over landscape responsibilities. He promoted Thiene to Nursery Supervisor. Before long, in recognition of Thiene’s
ambition, supervisory abilities and horticultural expertise, Allen promoted him again to Exposition Landscape Supervisor.

Securing an exposition nursery job as a sub-foreman earlier in 1911 had been a salvation for Thiene. He had relocated to San Diego in 1910, purchased land in Old Town and started the Ramona Nursery. Business was slow and his financial reserves exhausted when he was hired at the exposition. With the Olmsted departure, and its unexpected opportunity for advancement, Thiene proved more than capable of handling complex landscape projects and directing large teams of workers. Additionally, he had a designer’s eye.

Allen and Thiene approached their work in Balboa Park from a completely different perspective than that of Sessions, Parsons, and Olmsted. They had little time for consultation or reflection on earlier ideas, although Allen put himself through a crash course of landscape reading and tried to learn something of local growing conditions. They had a mandate to landscape just the exposition grounds—a 640 acre island within Balboa Park.33 They were not urban park planners and did not have to consider the park as a whole or the long-term impact of their plant choices, although the landscaping—funded by city bond money—was to be one of the permanent enhancements left in Balboa Park after the exposition.

Unconstrained by well-considered principles of landscape design for urban parks or the environmental sensibilities of more experienced horticulturists, Allen and Thiene relied on their own landscape references, all from well-watered parts of the country. Allen grew up in the upper Midwest and had lived on the verdant coasts of Washington and Oregon. Thiene was a German immigrant who first lived in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and, immediately before coming to San Diego, was a resident of Portland, Oregon.

Together Allen and Thiene changed the types of plants being cultivated at the nursery and began scraping away native vegetation on Balboa Park’s central mesa. They called on the traditional park and garden aesthetics of English romanticism to create a densely planted, lushly green, vine draped, flower-filled exposition landscape with plenty of grassy lawns. San Diego’s mild climate was celebrated with a lavish overlay of tropical accents.

The work of these accidental landscapers was a great popular success. “Whoever loves flowers and trees will find it hard to leave this exposition,” wrote an enthralled Sunset contributor, “never has there been such an exposition, one vast botanical garden, the finest, rarest specimens of plant life growing and thriving in open air.”34 Captivated visitors and writers used every superlative in praising the landscape beauty of the Panama-California Exposition.35 Others simply declared that the gardens of the exposition were the product of a magic wand, a paradise on earth, a new Eden.
In creating this botanical wonderland, Allen and Thiene made plant choices and design decisions for 1915 that popularized a contrived and water-dependent landscape style that continues to influence Southern California. Furthermore, they helped to institutionalize a basic climatic misunderstanding that confuses frost-free regions with tropical plant zones. But frost-free does not mean tropical. The difference is the rainfall disparity between a Mediterranean climate like San Diego’s and places soaked by tropical downpours.

Favorite Exposition Gardens and Landscape Displays

Travelers from Chicago and other winter climates were dazzled by the exposition’s opening day show of bright flowers. While their home gardens hibernated under a blanket of snow, visitors saw living proof of San Diego’s mild January climate. Ten thousand blooming poinsettia shrubs blazed against the creamy walls of the new buildings and proclaimed the official red and yellow colors of the exposition. Adding to the pleasure (and publicity value) was the rarity of the poinsettia in most parts of the country. In 1915 a single poinsettia bloom cost one dollar at Christmastime in New York, the equivalent of about $25 today. 36

The opening day floral display was carefully planned to impress, as were all other plantings throughout the year. In a descriptive essay on the Panama-California Exposition for The Architect, Allen wrote that as much care was given to the design
of the landscape as had been lavished on the buildings. “Holding the interest of the visitor” was the overriding objective, with the result that long, straight walkways were avoided in favor of paths that “swing easily from one view to another.” Along a canyon rim one might see “a jungle of palm and bamboo,” giant ferns, rich bloom and undergrowth resembling the tropics. Use of many different plants in novel groupings was a signature design technique at the exposition. One source estimates that two million plants of 1,200 varieties were used. There were 350 kinds of trees and 85 different vines. In 1912 alone, 50,000 shrubs were planted on the exposition grounds. When Thiene created a comprehensive list of exposition plants for the official guidebook, it filled 25 pages.

Within the framework of overall attention to landscape and rich planting across the exposition grounds, there were special features, all well-described in San Diego Floral Association's *California Garden* magazine. “A Monthly Excursion Through Exposition Grounds” was written by a horticultural expert who botanically identified plants and appraised the ways they were used.

Three formal flower gardens charmed visitors. The “Garden of Montezuma” was situated just inside the west entrance. Geometric walkways divided formal flower beds planted with ever-changing displays. Picturesque street lamps lighted the garden at night and a large vine-covered pergola provided shade during the day. A peacock was likely to stroll out of the dense green eucalyptus forest sheltering the south side of the garden. The stately California Tower rose to the north. Balboa Park visitors today know this area as the Alcazar Garden. It was renamed and given a Moorish design makeover for the 1935 exposition. The eucalyptus forest to the south gave way to a parking lot.

Across the Prado, the less elaborate “North Gardens” provided a quiet place to contemplate the dome and tower of the California Building while resting on heavy Italian benches. Surrounded by acacia, eucalyptus, and other trees, a central meadow and wildflower area was seasonally enlivened by a changing show of bright flowers, including a Canna Lily display that earned a special mention from architect Carleton Winslow in his book on the exposition. Today's Old Globe Theater complex occupies the location of this 1915 garden.

The Southern California Counties Building was fronted by the largest and most stylized garden of the exposition. Perversely, the Southern California exhibitors set out to convey English formalism and, indeed, the garden would have been at home in a London park. Within crossing walkways, ten separate square and rectangular flower beds were laid out, each encircled by a low hedge and a wide border of grass. Color and types of flowers varied with each bed, presenting a patchwork of bright blooms. Two large curved beds bracketed the geometric layout. Trees were strategically placed among the flower beds, including a young *Ficus macrophylla*.
that has continued to grow since being planted in 1914. The rest of the garden is
gone, but this Morton Bay fig centenarian has become a state champion in the
California Register of Big Trees and is a long-time favorite of Balboa Park visitors.
It stands between Spanish Village and the San Diego Museum of Natural History.

With enough water, even temperamental tropical plants can thrive in San Diego,
but the Botanical Building ensured ideal conditions for rare plants. Many exposition
visitors had their first encounter with the alluring green world of a lath house,
having already been charmed by the reflecting ponds with colorful water lilies in
front of the building. Many people saw their first Tree fern, blooming Rhododendron,
Anthurium, Papaya plant, Staghorn fern, Bird of Paradise and open air orchids
within this “lath palace.” In 1915 a long glasshouse extended out the back of the
Botanical Building. Songbirds trilled and ever more exotic plants inhabited that
steamy environment. Thiene went to great lengths to acquire rare water plants for
the glasshouse pond and equatorial flowering vines to trail languidly from above.

By walking north, past the Botanical Building, to the present day location of
the Children’s Zoo, visitors came upon the Japanese Garden and Tea Pavilion.
The tea house, garden bridges, gates, and lanterns were all shipped in from Japan.
The structures were assembled with wooden pegs by Japanese workmen. Visiting
gardeners created an authentic Japanese-style garden. Its horticultural highlights
were a 100 year-old Sugi pine (the national tree of Japan), a Ginkgo tree, and a
magnificent wisteria vine. Paths and a water garden with colorful carp completed
the setting. Green tea was served in the Pavilion.44
For a different cup of tea, it was possible to visit the exposition’s tea plantation. Sir Thomas Lipton decided to test Southern California as a tea-growing area by shipping in 200 tea trees from his commercial plantations in Ceylon (today’s Sri Lanka). He brought along a crew of Sinhalese gardeners and harvesters. Very few exposition visitors had seen tea trees under cultivation, let alone been served a cup of tea from freshly harvested and processed tea leaves.45

An attractively planted pond at the base of the Cabrillo Bridge was another visitor favorite. Called Laguna del Puente or Laguna Cabrillo it provided an enjoyable overlook down into the canyon. A chorus of singing frogs perched among the water plants and surrounding papyrus, lotus, rushes, bamboo and Pampas grass were reflected in the water.46 While that feature has completely disappeared, other 1915 landscapes are almost unchanged. Pepper Grove during the exposition was a place to escape the bustle of the El Prado area, to relax with a picnic lunch and to find play areas for children. In 1915, visitors were reminded that the softly weeping California pepper trees were symbolic of the state’s mission past. Palm Canyon was created in 1915 as an overt celebration of the San Diego climate.47 Additional plantings over the years developed it into a botanically important palm collection, still offering pleasure and education for the hardy canyon hiker.

The Panama-California Exposition, as proof of San Diego’s year-around mild climate, announced that it would be open during all of 1915. This was a logistical nightmare for landscapers expected to maintain the high standard of a horticultural wonderland. To perpetually refresh all gardens over a full year, the nursery had to retain a huge inventory of plants in all stages of development.
Thousands of other plants were kept in emergency reserve in case a frost or other disaster killed entire planted areas or if a whole nursery crop failed.

Upkeep was unending, particularly in the formal gardens. Beds were inspected daily for drooping or dying plants. All major work had to be done outside of visitor hours, so crews worked at night to replace plants or totally replant the beds to keep them looking fresh. Early morning crews watered flowers and other thirsty plants before the exposition gates opened. The grassy lawns of the exposition required high maintenance and heavy watering during most of the year. The generous use of lawns and non-native flowering plants sharply distanced the landscape, as created in 1915, from the style proposed by earlier Balboa Park planners.

Following the Money to Landscape Success

Allen and Thiene overcame obstacles by working compulsively and employing their epic organizational and supervisory skills. Still, all the energy and talent of this dynamic pairing may not have been enough to produce and maintain a picture-perfect landscape without one other asset: a great deal of money. The generous funding for exposition landscaping is a largely untold story, but is essential to understanding the success attained in converting an unadorned mesa of Balboa Park into an acclaimed “magic garden [in] place of the desert.”

The funding source was $1.5 million set aside from Park Improvement Bonds. These funds were tapped by the Board of Park Commissions to pay their contractor, the Panama-California Exposition Company, for building and landscape improvements within the exposition grounds. There is a full accounting in a 1916 exposition audit report.

Landscape expenses totaled $408,747. In addition, $427,000 was spent on pergolas, benches and other garden furniture while Palm Canyon landscaping cost $169,000. A $437,000 irrigation system was installed. Balboa Park’s recalcitrant soil was forced into fecundity by adding $203,000 worth of top soil and manure.

The “accidental landscapers” Allen and Thiene were enormously successful in meeting the challenges placed before them late in 1911. Their teamwork was productive and transformational. They deserve every plaudit, but in the end, funding levels dictated what they could accomplish. The scale of exposition landscaping success was ratcheted up to its pinnacle of triumph by the enormous financial investment made by the people of San Diego who had voted for the Park Improvement Bonds that paid for all the landscaping at the Panama-California Exposition.
NOTES


2. Even as exposition planning was underway, the San Diego Board of Park Commissions was fending off efforts to purchase pieces of Balboa Park for housing development. In 1912, speculators offered $600,000 for 240 acres of the park. Letter, McFadden & Buxton Real Estate Co. to Board of Park Commissioners, September 3, 1912, San Diego (City) Board of Park Commissioners Correspondence, Box 1, File 1-20, San Diego Public Library (hereafter Park Commissioners SDPL).

3. Park improvements, including well-established trees planted by the early-day Golden Hill neighborhood, may still be seen on the southeast corner of Balboa Park. Likewise, planting by Kate O. Sessions between 1892 and 1903 still lends a well-established appearance to the northwest corner, near Upas Street and Sixth Avenue.

4. The lease required 300 trees annually for city use and 100 trees for the park. The lease was approved as Ordinance #153 by the San Diego City Common Council, Feb. 17, 1892. Elizabeth C. MacPhail, Kate Sessions: Pioneer Horticulturist (San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1976), 51.

5. The newspapers ran stories about which flowers “Miss Sessions” had in bloom and visitors turned out by the hundreds. During these years Sessions earned the “Mother of Balboa Park” appellation later bestowed upon her and introduced many species of trees and plants to San Diego.

6. Samuel Parsons, Jr. (1844-1923) was born into a family of horticulturists. He worked with the famous Calvert Vaux who with Frederick Law Olmsted had designed New York’s Central Park. Parsons won commissions to design public parks, private estates, and cemeteries in more than 20 states. He served as superintendent of Central Park and was president of the American Society of Landscape Architects.


9. Exposition Director-General Charles Collier said that the city would eventually spend a great deal of money upgrading City Park, so why not spend in advance of the exposition. “Preliminary Plan for Exposition is Outlined,” The San Diego Union, September 8, 1909, 1:3. Eight months later, after some possible derailments of the exposition were avoided, the Exposition Company adopted a resolution calling on the city to “vote bonds in the sum of $1,000,000 to be expended in park improvements for exposition purposes.” “Exposition Stockholders Endorse Terms of Compromise Proposals by San Franciscans,” The San Diego Union, May 8, 1910, 9:1-4.

10. Samuel Parsons, Jr., [Report] To the Board of Park Commissioners, June 30, 1910. For the full story of the name change from City Park to Balboa Park, see Nancy Carol Carter, “Naming Balboa Park: Correcting the Record,” JSDH 56, nos. 1-2 (Winter/Spring 2010): 31-42.

11. “Committee Selects Olmsted to Plan Park and Fair Improvements,” The San Diego Union, November 10, 1910, Sec. 2, 9:1. Traveling to job sites was the province of John Charles Olmsted (1852–1920), one-half of the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm and heir to the consummate reputation of his step-father Frederick Law Olmsted. The brothers undertook more than 3,500 commissions all across the United States and were, in 1910 and for many years afterwards, at the top of their profession.


14. This nursery eventually covered 35 acres of propagation beds and more than 100 growing beds. An inventory showed that seven million plants had been propagated. “Panama-California 1915 Fair is Magnificent Triumph of Art and Enterprise,” The San Diego Union, March 28, 1914, 11:2-5.

15. Frank P. Allen, Jr. (1881-1943) was an obvious candidate when the Panama-California Exposition Company set out to “hire the best.” He had the matchless experience of helping to build two other world’s fairs. Allen trained in architecture and engineering under his father in Michigan and established successful practices in Chicago and the Pacific Northwest. He was Director of Works for the San Diego exposition and participated in the engineering and architectural work, notably as the designer of the Cabrillo Bridge. The exposition building and grounds were completed under Allen’s management one month in advance of the January 1, 1915, opening day. For a profile see Nancy Carol Carter, “Meet Frank P. Allen, Jr.,” California Garden 105, no. 2 (March-April 1914), 19. A fuller account is given in: Kathleen Flanigan, “Frank P. Allen, Jr.: His Architectural and Horticultural Imprint on San Diego,” JSDH 42, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 332-359.

16. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869–1924) was lead architect for the Panama-California Exposition. He established his reputation as a New York architect by designing Gothic Revival buildings. Travel in Spain and Mexico inspired the extravagant Spanish Colonial Revival style he brought to the San Diego exposition. Photographs and descriptions of his work are found in Carleton Monroe Winslow, The Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1916).

17. A drawing of the new plan filled one-half page in the newspaper within days of winning a vote to move the exposition. “Magnificent Exposition Site Laid Out,” The San Diego Union, September 6, 1911, 7, 1-7.

18. Historians differ in their emphasis on business interests as a factor in the placement of the exposition buildings and grounds, but the real estate and transportation interests of John D. Spreckels, Joseph Sefton, Jr., G. Aubrey Davidson, Charlie Collier and other exposition officials are commonly mentioned as forces acting against the Olmsted Plan. Matthew F. Bokovoy, The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwest Memory, 1880-1940 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 56-58.


20. The day after John Charles Olmsted was informed of the decision to move the exposition to the central mesa, he sent his firm’s resignation to the Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee of the Panama-California Exposition. Day Letter [Telegram] Olmsted Brothers to George W. Marston, September 2, 2011, Job #4051, Records of the Olmsted Associates, Manuscripts Room, Library of Congress (hereafter Olmsted Associates).

21. Night Letter [Telegram], Olmsted Brothers to Judge M. A. Luce, September 2, 1911, Job #4051, Olmsted Associates.

22. On the same day that the Olmsted Brothers resigned from the exposition, a message was sent to their local supervisor instructing: “Do no more work on any plans for the Exposition or Park” and “remove all belongings” and “leave San Diego as soon as possible.” Day Letter [Telegram], Olmsted Brothers to H.H. Blossom, September 2, 1911, Job #4051, Olmsted Associates. For more information on the Olmsted work with the Panama-California Exposition, see Gregory Montes, “Balboa Park, 1909-1911: The Rise and Fall of the Olmsted Plan,” JSDH 28, no. 1 (Winter 1982).

23. Sessions was on the Park Plans Committee of the Chamber of Commerce Park Improvement Committee and was instrumental in the hiring of Samuel Parsons, Jr. in 1902. She led his first tour of City Park and introduced him to other local horticulturists for advice on local growing conditions and appropriate plantings. The first meeting between Olmsted and Sessions was late in 1910. [Lists and Memoranda], Box 1, File 1-1. Park Commissioners SDPL.

Balboa Park Transformed

Brothers’ Ecological Park Typology,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 1 (March 1911), 72.

25. Frank Sessions, brother of Kate O. Sessions, was the large tree moving expert for the exposition. San Diegans donated unwanted landscape trees. Homeowners got a free tree removal service and the exposition grounds were enhanced with mature specimens.


29. As was her customary behavior, Sessions also provided unsolicited advice. After receiving an order for a certain plant, she wrote the exposition landscape supervisor a tart note explaining that that particular plant “had never been a success” in San Diego. She offered to sell him a related plant that could thrive in the local climate. Letter, K.O. Sessions to P.G. Thiene, July 27, 1912. Box 1, File 1-4, Park Commission, SDPL.

30. Paul George Thiene (1880-1971) received horticultural training as a young man in Germany. He immigrated to the United States in 1903 to find greater opportunities in the landscape field. Thiene parlayed a short period of low-level employment with the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm—approximately seven months in 1911 in San Diego—and his experience as supervisor of landscape at the Panama-California Exposition into a highly successful private landscape architecture practice in Pasadena. His association with architects of the Golden Age of estate building in the 1920s secured his reputation as a leading interpreter of Italian Renaissance garden style. A full profile appears in: Nancy Carol Carter, “Meet Paul George Thiene,” *California Garden* 105, no. 2 (March-April 2014), 15-18. Although Frank P. Allen, Jr. is credited in several sources with overseeing Panama-California Exposition landscaping and Paul G. Thiene receives an occasional mention in the literature, no published source focused on the dimension of their task or told the story of their successful working partnership before the publication of John Blocker, “Collaboration Brings Balboa Park Into Bloom,” *California Garden* 105, no. 2 (March-April 2014), 10-14.

31. The Olmsted resignation prompted the Board of Park Commissioners to hire a new landscaping expert for park areas outside the exposition grounds. John Morley became Superintendent of San Diego Parks in November 1911. He made prodigious improvements to the park before 1915, including planting the first rose garden. During 1914 the Board of Park Commissioners altered its relationship with the exposition company in a way that extended John Morley’s authority into the exposition grounds. Morley retained his position for decades and is vitally important to the history of Balboa Park, but his role is not covered in this article.

32. Letter, Paul G. Thiene to Frank P. Allen, Jr., September 7, 1911. Box 1, Folder 1-2, Park Commission SDPL.


34. Walter V. Woehlke, “Nueva España by the Silver Gate,” *Sunset* 33, no. 6 (December 1914), 1130, 1127.

35. The exposition spawned a publishing boom of new books and articles in publications like *Colliers, Overland Monthly*, and the local papers. A news writer rhapsodized over Frank P. Allen, Jr.’s work, including the lushness of planting, blooming flowers and “velvet lawns.” W.C. Getty,

36. Woehlke, “Nueva España by the Silver Gate,” 1125.
37. Frank P. Allen, Jr., “The Panama-California Exposition,” *The Architect* 9, no. 6 (June 1915), 218-37. Note: Some sources cite this article to *The Pacific Coast Architect*, but the journal changed its name with the June 1915 issue.
40. The *Official Guidebook of the Panama California Exposition San Diego 1915*. Note: One printing of the *Guidebook* did not include Thiene’s plant list.
45. Ibid.
47. By 1911, three thousand palm trees had been planted in the canyon. Letter, Frank Allen to James Frederick Dawson, October 16, 1911, Olmsted Papers, cited in O’Hara, “Panama-California Exposition,” 79.
49. Unsurprisingly, people loved these lawns. Visitors and residents from outside the Southwest expected bright green grass in parks and formal garden settings. For those from more arid climates, lawns were an appealing touch of landscape luxury. Architect Bertram Goodhue liked the way that the exposition’s “green, velvety lawns…frame the first glimpses and views” of his light-colored exposition buildings. Winslow, *Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition*, 20.
52. Ibid.
53. Palethorpe, Report. All landscape expenses are listed in “Schedule D” of the Palethorpe audit. These costs were paid by the San Diego Board of Park Commission from Park Improvement Bonds. There were also costs for planting the north border of the exposition grounds.
Architect Irving Gill (1870-1936) and the Specifications for Bentham Hall, The Bishop’s School

By Nicolas Stougaard and Nicole Holland

“All workmanship shall be strictly first class in every respect…”¹

A rare document was discovered in the basement of The Bishop’s School, La Jolla, California, during preparations for the School’s Centennial Celebration in 2009. Architect Irving Gill’s specifications for the construction of Bentham Hall, one of the two earliest buildings on campus, provides a remarkable opportunity to reflect on issues of design, materials, and the translation of the architectural vision into the practical details of recipes for aggregate concrete, pouring times for framing molds, architect’s approvals, and contractor’s liabilities, among other issues.

Examination of the contractors’ specifications is particularly interesting considering the document was generated by the working team of Joseph H. Johnson, Bishop of the Los Angeles Diocese of the Episcopal

Portrait of Irving J. Gill, 1915. ©SDHC #80.7818.

This article developed from an independent art history study by student Nicolas Stougaard (‘11) in his senior year at The Bishop’s School, under the direction of instructor Nicole Holland. The authors wish to thank Aimeclaire Roche, Head of The Bishop’s School; Lenore Fraga, Chief Operating Officer; Suzanne Weiner, Director of Marketing; John Jones, former Building Manager; Jane Kenealy, Archivist, San Diego History Center; and Dr. Molly McClain, editor, The Journal of San Diego History.
Church, Ellen Browning Scripps, and Gill, all of whom were dedicated to the virtues of simplicity and serenity (still part of the School’s motto) and the creation of a learning environment “set apart” that continues to serve its original mission. Gill wrote, “If we, the architects of the West, wish to do great and lasting work we must dare to be simple.” Scripps, meanwhile, envisioned a campus of simplicity and natural beauty.

How does such a campus rise from the exacting instructions for mixing materials in a concrete tub? The Gill project for Bishop’s stands today as one of the great multi-structural projects of his career, a life’s work distinguished by an innovative and ethical stripping down of ornamental elements in favor of the simple geometry of the straight line, the arch, the circle, and the square. Fusing American pragmatism with idealism in the Progressive Era, Gill ranks as a leading proto-modernist. He achieved with The Bishop’s School qualities of “honesty, frankness and dignified simplicity.”

Contractor’s specifications from this period are rare in any archive, and a careful examination of the Bentham Hall specifications both enhances our understanding of the building itself, and offers vital information on period building practice.

**The Architect**

Irving John Gill, born in 1870, in Tully, New York, near Syracuse, began his career as a draftsman in the architectural office of Ellis G. Hall. After a few years, Gill moved to Chicago in 1890 to work with Hall’s old partner, Joseph L. Silsbee. The latter also employed the Wisconsin native Frank Lloyd Wright, later to rise to preeminence as a twentieth-century American architect. Wright quickly transferred to the office of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, as would Gill. It was there that Louis Sullivan, the so-called father of the skyscraper, famously dictated, “form ever follows function.” This principle would remain fundamental to both Gill and Wright in their formulation of organic architecture. They believed that the form of the building rose from its physical and social requirements. During his time at the firm, Gill may have assisted Sullivan with his work on the renowned Transportation Building for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a design that featured Sullivan’s unique stylistic combination of precociously modern simplification and Arts and Crafts-style Romanesque ornamentation.

In the year that the Exposition opened, Gill became ill and was forced to leave Chicago for the healthier climate of San Diego. He brought with him to Southern California a rich heritage of design principle and technique. Shortly after opening his first office with Joseph Falkenham, an article in the local San Diego newspaper, *The Golden Era*, noted: “Mr. Gill intends doing nothing short of revolutionizing the country architecture of this fair ‘Italy’ of ours.” He did just that.
Architect Irving Gill (1870-1936)

Gill envisioned a school design of poetic simplicity, drawing on California’s Spanish Mission style, Italian and Moorish architecture, and the natural beauty of the coastline. In the forty-one-page specifications document, Gill scrupulously detailed construction methods for the reinforced concrete school, ranging from concrete to plumbing, the vacuum cleaning system, pipe width and electricity, as well as safety requirements. Let to bid in 1910, the specifications served as the textual blueprint, or instruction manual, for the winning builder: La Jolla Building and Lumber Company. In it, Gill detailed materials and labor, including transportation, scaffolding, ladders, apparatus, tools and utensils, and instructed the winning bidder “to protect his interests against loss by fire, earthquake etc.” Finally, the contractor was directed to “keep the premises in as clean and orderly a condition as possible…. At the completion of the contract to leave the work broom clean, complete and perfect in every respect, weathertight [sic] and ready for occupancy.”

The firm hand of the architect was clear from the beginning. Gill wrote, “Make no changes or departure from the plans, drawings or specifications without a written
order to that effect from the Architect.” He placed the greatest emphasis on “concrete work,” as his project revolved around the expert use of the ancient building material. He also highlighted the importance of using only the “standard, uniform brand” of Portland cement of “uniform color and free of lumps” mixed in a “batch machine mixer” to be approved by the architect. He gave precise specifications for the grades of aggregate, “free from loam, clay, sticks and other such impurities,” and listed the amounts of water, aggregate, mortar, and cement to be used in each individual section of the School. For the piers, walls, and flooring, Gill required eight parts of aggregate for every bag containing less than or equal to ninety-four pounds of cement per cubic foot. For other sections of the building, Gill required only six parts aggregate for each bag of cement because these areas simply “didn’t need to be as sturdy.” Finally, Gill insisted on using the Kahn system of concrete reinforcing, to be ordered from the Trussed Concrete Steel Company, Detroit, Michigan.

The wooden forms for piers, columns and walls needed to be clean, “good quality lumber, sufficiently strong and rigid and thoroughly braced and secured in place so as to properly form and fully sustain the concrete work without deflection.” Gill wrote, “Place the rough side of the lumber next to the concrete for all plastered surfaces.” Lumber should be Oregon Pine except for the sashes, which were to be made in sugar pine with birch veneer. Samples for hollow terra cotta, to be used for second-story floors and roofs, had to be approved by the architect, and should “emit a metallic sound when struck and a fracture must show close texture and uniform color.” Concrete should set at least six hours in column and pier molds and, for the concrete floors, it was advisable to pour “vigorously to completion.” If it was necessary to stop, however, the architect would determine “the place of stopping.” All forms would remain in place for eighteen days, and floors would be tested with one hundred pounds per square foot in “one month after removing forms.”
Directions for the foundations include the stipulation that “the Architect will measure the excavations, determine the amount of variations, and order changes in writing before any concrete is laid.”

Walls would be finished in plaster with exact thicknesses ranging from 1/2 to 3/8 inch, and made in proportions “five (5) parts cement, twelve (12) parts sand, and (1) one part lime paste.”

The architect’s insistence on the finest quality materials is clearly stated in the section entitled “glazing,” in which he specified that all glass shall be the best of its class.

Gill’s command of sources is evident in his stipulation that hardware should be provided by P&F Corbin manufacture, and finish should consist of “dull bronze well-lacquered” and nickel plated in bath rooms. Details for size of plumbing pipes included precise instructions for the drinking fountain, to be “cut from Italian marble.”

Steam heating had to be “first class” while Gill’s radiators of choice were the “Rococo [sic] Pattern wall radiator, manufactured by the American Radiator Company.”

Gill provided the location of all electrical outlets as well as vacuum cleaning piping. Facing for the “Gillespie” Runford [sic] fireplace is specified as “Cambridge “Fieance” [sic] tile selected by the Architect.”

In the section entitled “painting,” the architect stipulated approval of all colors. Then, in a hitherto unknown detail of the project, Gill stated: “The concrete cross on the north elevation shall be properly treated and covered with gold leaf so as to make a first class, durable job.” Projects change in production, and therefore it is not surprising that this cross no longer exists. What is astonishing, however, is that the architect called for gold leaf, a luxury form of decoration associated with Renaissance opulence and completely out of character with the otherwise modernist style of the building. We may never know whether architect or patron stipulated this ornamentation, what model it may have been based upon, or how design moved from this grandeur to the simple Celtic metal crosses that adorn Bentham and Scripps Halls today.

Scripps Hall, left, and Bentham Hall, right, with its small chapel and bell tower, 1912. At this time, the main entrance to campus was located on Prospect Street. ©SDHS #81:11867.
The Style

In the early twentieth century California was still a rural countryside, unsettled and vast, lacking a permanent architecture. In his 1916 article for Gilbert Stickley’s architectural magazine, *The Craftsman*, Gill noted, “The West unfortunately has been and is building too hastily, carelessly and thoughtlessly.” He declared that it was his and other architects’ duty to “create lasting work” that would help residents of young California settle the land.

A modernist, Irving Gill believed that in order to “break away from this degradation (temporary housing) we must boldly throw away every accepted structural belief and standard of beauty and get back to the source of all architectural strength—the straight line, the arch, the cube, and the circle.” Keys to the realization of these pure shapes were the wooden form for the concrete molds, and, indeed, the color, texture, and thickness of the concrete itself. Because Gill shaped his architecture on the basis of these enduring fundamental forms, he was able—like Sullivan and Wright—both to focus his attention on the functionality of the spaces and to consider the complimentary interplay between building and surrounding nature. Gill’s aesthetic lay in the conviction that ornament detracts from the grandeur and meaning of buildings, and that it is merely a cover-up for “the fundamental weakness of (the architect’s) design.” Nonetheless, his attention to the fine points of radiator pattern, fireplace tile, and the gold-leaved cross itself demonstrates that, within the bounds of his aesthetic, there was room for the architect’s discretion.

Hygiene as a value of architectural practice, one commensurate with simplicity,
Architect Irving Gill (1870-1936)

was another value on which Gill insisted. He pursued “the idea of producing a perfectly sanitary, labor-saving house, (a style) where the maximum of comfort may be had with the minimum of drudgery.”

In his projects, including The Bishop’s School, Gill omitted all architectural accents that required maintenance, including baseboards, molding, and paneling. He viewed them as merely dust collectors. Gill’s system for vacuum cleaning pipes was noted in the specifications. In addition, the architect emphasized the purity with which he approached his work by washing his buildings of any color and painting them a creamy white, always having the final word on color, as he stated in the specifications.

With his dedication to honesty and simplicity, realized through painstaking attention to texture, color, strength, and finish, Irving Gill was able to create an architectural language that was permanent to the West. With its historicist references to Spanish Mission, Renaissance and Moorish styles, it inserted itself into traditional practice. It also participated in the vocabulary of European modernism that was to flourish in the years following World War I.

NOTES

1. [Joseph H. Johnson], The Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Los Angeles and Irving J. Gill, Specifications of Materials and Workmanship to be Supplied for the Erection of the Instruction Section of a REINFORCED CONCRETE SCHOOL to be Built on Lots 1 to 4 and 13 to 24 in La Jolla Park Addition to the City of San Diego, California, January 18, 1910; collection of the Trustees, The Bishop’s School, La Jolla, California. This is one copy of an edition of six.


9. Ibid., 4. The sections are listed in the index as follows: General Conditions (page 1); Excavation (5); Concrete Work (7); Carpenter Work (16); Glazing (19); Hardware (20); Sheet Metal Work (22); Composition Roofing (23); Plumbing (24); Vacuum Cleaning (28); Electrical Work (29); Steam Heating (32); Lathing and Plastering (36); Painting (39).

10. Ibid., 13.

11. Ibid., 7-9.

12. Ibid., 7-8.

13. Ibid., 9.


15. Ibid., 11.

16. Ibid., 12.

17. Ibid., 15.

18. Ibid., 12.

19. Ibid., 14, 36.

20. Ibid., 19.


22. Ibid., 26.

23. Ibid., 33.

24. Ibid., 28.

25. Ibid., 13.

26. Ibid., 40.


28. Ibid., 143.

29. Ibid., 142.

30. Ibid., 147.

What Happened To The International Skyride?

By Barbara Zaragoza

In 1959, forty-year-old entrepreneur Allen Parkinson set out to construct a privately funded International Skyride to cross the international border from San Ysidro into Tijuana. He imagined that an aerial transport system would ease automobile congestion at the U.S.-Mexico border and encourage more people to travel to Baja California. His never-realized plans got a hearing from U.S. Congressman Robert “Bob” Wilson and remain in the latter’s collection of papers at San Diego State University. They provide some insight into the way businessmen and politicians conceptualized the border in the middle of the twentieth century.¹

Why a Skyride?

The idea to build an aerial transport system was original only in that the ride would cross an international border. Passenger-carrying ropeways had existed for centuries. Engineer Wilhelm Albert’s invention of the twisted steel cable in the 1830s helped to advance the technology necessary for lifting and hoisting tramways. By the early

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1900s various recreational aerial lifts started to become popular, especially for skiers. The organizers of Chicago’s 1933 World’s Fair unveiled a mammoth aerial ferry called the “Sky-Ride” that carried more than 4,000 passengers an hour 200 feet above the earth. Engineers believed that the aerial ferry would eventually replace costly bridges by swinging vehicular traffic across rivers or canyons in mid-air and at high speed.2

Two decades later, the popularity of aerial rides persisted and innovations continued. In 1956, Disneyland unveiled its unique Skyway, a gondola lift attraction. The Los Angeles Times reported that Walt Disney had bought a Skyway for $300,000 after he learned that Von Roll, a Swiss industrial manufacturer, was testing a transportation system involving small gondolas moving along suspended cables. Disney saw an opportunity to demonstrate a new mode of transportation that was practical and futuristic. Von Roll engineers then came to Anaheim and constructed the company’s first aerial ropeway.3

Parkinson, who lived only minutes away from Anaheim, was convinced that an International Skyride would be a great success. He wrote to Ralph Kelly, the Commissioner of Customs at the Treasury Department, explaining:

I would like to point out some of the obvious advantages of a ride of this type: It will be the first skyride to cross an international border and, as such, would receive worldwide publicity. For example, I mentioned the project to Mr. Arthur Stein, Publisher of Coronet Magazine, and he immediately requested permission to do a picture story on the project as soon as we start construction. Life Magazine has also indicated an interest, and my feeling is that this would not
only create a great deal of international good will, but would greatly aid the American public in crossing the border with a minimum of inconvenience.4

Described as a dreamer who was terrible at math, Parkinson opened an office along East Anaheim Street in Long Beach and called his new company the International Skyride Corporation.5 A decade before, Parkinson had been working as a salesman for a wine company. Suffering from terrible insomnia, he noticed an advertisement for a sleep aid named Persomnia. He thought the idea was good, but the name was terrible, so he created his own over-the-counter medication and called it Sleep-Eze. The product became a bestseller and in 1959 he sold it for $1 million.6 Even before the money was transferred into his bank account,7 he leased a 25-acre parking lot that adjoined the border and U.S. Highway 101. He also became 49 percent owner of a Mexican counterpart company called Transportes Aereos Internacionales, S.A.8

In 1959, Parkinson approached the Italian Pinna-Farina, maker of the Ferrari, to design his skyride.9 The company agreed, although no records have been found of Parkinson’s visit or documents explaining why the famous automobile manufacturer would have wanted to build such a ride. Parkinson also hired Carlevaro & Savio, makers of the first aerial gondola in 1949, to draw up his architectural designs.10

Parkinson then created a descriptive brochure outlining the skyride’s specifications. He planned to have the tram located on a parking lot that would
accommodate 2,400 cars. The ride would be five-eighth of a mile long and would carry 800 passengers per hour. From the terminal at the U.S. parking lot, the skyride would cross the border and turn left on Avenida Revolucion, gliding two more blocks until arriving at an unloading terminal in the business district of Tijuana. The Mexican government would set the rates on the Mexican side and the Americans on the U.S. side. In May 1959 Parkinson said he planned to charge $1.50 round trip and $0.85 one way. His skyride would operate 16 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The brochure is lost to time and whatever remains of Parkinson’s vision is preserved in a box, part of the Robert Carlton (Bob) Wilson Papers at San Diego State University’s Special Collections & University Archives. Consisting mostly of letters written between Parkinson and Congressman Wilson’s office, the documents show a dizzying number of government agencies Parkinson contacted to receive permission for his project. Parkinson was persistent, determined and always cordial.

Wilson and his administrative assistant, Leon W. Parma, were Parkinson’s main points of contact from early 1959 until late 1960. Parkinson made sure to send Wilson copies of all his correspondence to the various agencies. He also encouraged Parma to call collect if anything urgent ever came up. Both Wilson and Parma wrote courteous letters back to Parkinson, lauding his idea for border tourism.

Border Tourism

Tourism at the San Diego-Tijuana border had existed for a century before Parkinson’s skyride idea. After Mexico and the U.S signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, a Boundary Commission erected monuments along the new line from El Paso, Texas, to the Pacific Ocean. In 1851, the Commission placed, among other monuments, a marble obelisk at the furthest western location in what today is Border Field State Park and erected a granite monument at today’s San Ysidro Port of Entry. Tourists came in droves. By some estimates, more than 100,000 visitors per year went to see these two monuments at the end of the nineteenth century.

Leisure activities attracted visitors to Tijuana starting in the 1880s. Real estate developers set up daily stagecoach services, luxury hotels, and entirely new towns
to accommodate the crowds. They advertised mild weather, sandy beaches, and the nearby Tijuana Hot Springs.\textsuperscript{17} Within a decade, however, the real estate boom had busted and most of these early developers had left.\textsuperscript{18} In the 1920s, Tijuana flourished again as the result of prohibition. So-called “Border Barons” such as Frank Beyer, Marvin Allen, and Carl Withington created saloons, casinos, brothels, opium dens, and race tracks in Tijuana, which became known as “Vice City.” Famous celebrities and locals crossed the San Ysidro border in droves to enjoy the delights forbidden inside the U.S.\textsuperscript{19}

The border crossing continued to be busy long after the repeal of prohibition. In 1950, it was estimated that 1,876,340 cars had entered the U.S. at San Ysidro in the past year.\textsuperscript{20} Newspapers reported incidents of border congestion, but old-timers such as Jaime Mercado remembered that crossing the border was easy. He said,

Prior to 1955, we lived in Tijuana two blocks from the border about a mile west, across what is now Las Americas. As kids we used to walk across over three strands of barbed wire that were always flat on the ground…. We moved to San Ysidro in 1955 and I often went to Tijuana on foot or on my bike to visit relatives or buy meat, tortillas, and Mexican bread. Upon crossing back, the only requirement was to declare your citizenship, show your “green card,” or passport if you were neither a citizen nor a legal immigrant. If you said American citizen, they would ask for place of birth. If you were naturalized, they mostly asked when and where. Very rarely did they ask me for the “blue card,” which was issued upon request to naturalized citizens so they wouldn’t have to carry around the 8” x 11” certificate as proof of citizenship. There were no long lines to enter the US or to go to Tijuana….\textsuperscript{21}

The porous nature of the border started to erode during the 1950s as a result of anti-Communist attitudes. While Wilson seemed very positive about Parkinson’s plan, he also was a staunch conservative. A Republican Congressman originally from Calexico, Wilson had been elected to the newly created 30th District of San Diego in 1952. He became a member of the House Armed Services Committee and his campaigns featured anti-Communist themes. During his term, the media propagated the idea that

\begin{center}
\textbf{U.S. Congressman Robert “Bob” Wilson, n.d. ©SDHC #15563.}
\end{center}
Communist Red China was deliberately targeting American youth to get them addicted to narcotics. It was suggested that China was responsible for the illegal drug trade at the U.S.-Mexico border.\textsuperscript{22}

By 1954 fears associated with illegal immigration led U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell to launch an aggressive deportation of illegal Mexican immigrants in what became known as Operation Wetback. Border security was further tightened when the government constructed a new 10-foot-high chain-link fence running 3.5 miles west of the San Ysidro Port of Entry in 1956.\textsuperscript{23}

If hostile political conditions existed at the border, or if Wilson had any reservations about the skyride, Parkinson seemed unaware of them. In his letters, he wrote that the skyride would relieve congestion and serve to illustrate a good neighbor policy.\textsuperscript{24} He also said that it possibly could lead to the improvement of Tijuana because he planned to donate some of the profits to an orphanage or a tree planting project.\textsuperscript{25}

**Getting Permissions**

Parkinson took a hands-on approach to his skyride, traveling to Washington, D.C. with his idea. He wrote follow-up letters to the politicians and administrators on May 25, 1959. They included: Ralph Kelly, Commissioner of Customs, U.S. Treasury Department; David B. Strubinger, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Customs, Treasury Department; Lt. Gen. J.M. Swing (Ret), Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, Department of Justice; E.A. Loughran, Associate
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Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, Department of Justice; Medical Director Andrew P. Sackett, Chief, Division of Foreign Quarantine, U.S. Public Health Service; and William A. Wieland, Director, Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs, Department of State.26

On June 9, 1959, Congressman Wilson sent the same letters to Kelly, Swing, Sackett, and Wieland, along with the following note:

Your office was recently visited by Mr. Allen Parkinson, President of the International Skyride Corporation, and subsequent to the visit Mr. Parkinson wrote to you.

May I respectfully request that I be kept advised of any action taken by your office with respect to this case.27

The letter suggests that Congressman Wilson considered himself a primary contact for Parkinson. Indeed, as time went on, warm relations seemed to have been established. Parkinson wrote two friendly postcards, one to Parma, Wilson’s administrative assistant, from the Environs De Chamonix near Geneva and another to Wilson himself from St. Mortiz, Switzerland.28 Both postcards depicted tramcars in the snowy mountains.

Parkinson wanted to begin construction by January 1960, a mere seven months after starting the permissions process.29 In June 1959 he contacted Bob Wilson saying that he had not heard from the State Department and asking if the Congressman could contact the appropriate people to determine what permits or treaties would be necessary. Wilson agreed.30

The State Department had never received such a request before and needed to do extensive research.31 They explained that an international agreement between Mexico and the U.S. would not be necessary. Instead, Parkinson would need a Presidential Permit from President Dwight D. Eisenhower because only he had the power to conduct relations with foreign countries. In order to fill out the application and receive the permit, he would first need to have approval from several departments, including: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Treasury (Bureau of Customs), the Department of Justice (Immigration and Naturalization Service), the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Public Health Service), the Department of Agriculture, possibly the Interstate Commerce Commission and the International Boundary and Water Commission. He would have to gain approval by the Government of Mexico and consult the appropriate state and local authorities of California.32

Undeterred, Parkinson sent an optimistic letter to Parma three days later saying that both the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Immigration intended
to approve his skyride. In addition, the Mexican Government planned to publish a notice about the construction of the skyride in their official papers. Thirty days after publication, the franchises would be granted.33 Parkinson also wrote: “I am sending copies of this to Mr. William Wieland of the State Department so we can proceed with the Presidential Permit.”34

Obstacles

While a few government departments gave their approval right away—such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare—others had questions and requirements.35 The International Boundary and Water Commission requested that detailed engineering plans be submitted in order to determine whether the skyride would materially affect flood flows in the Tia Juana River.36 The Bureau of Customs within the Treasury Department explained that they hoped to be able to arrange with the Immigration and Naturalization Service for the assignment of the necessary number of officers at Parkinson’s U.S. terminal. The Plant Quarantine Division of the Department of Agriculture said that it was likely unable to supply inspectors during the current fiscal year, but the Bureau of Customs believed they could take care of the plant quarantine inspection for a temporary period.37 The Bureau of Customs, meanwhile, told Parkinson that if the skyride operated on Sunday and holidays, it would be necessary for him to furnish a bond to the collector of customs at San Diego, guaranteeing payment of the extra compensation of customs officers for service on those days.38 Parkinson agreed to pay the money.

Problems continued to multiply. In September 1959, Parkinson discovered that the government had either a 10- or 20-foot easement on the 25 acres of leased property
that was needed in order to patrol the border. To remedy the situation, Parkinson planned to build a platform 13-feet high that would bridge the government easement. This would allow vehicular traffic to pass underneath the loading platform.39

The Mexican franchises ended up taking much longer than the anticipated thirty days.40 In October 1959, Parkinson returned from Mexico City and lamented to Parma, “You are no doubt aware that matters of this kind take a little longer in Mexico than in the United States so, rather than wait on the franchises any longer, I am going to apply for the Presidential Permit at once as time is growing short.”41

The Foreign Service Dispatch from the American Consul in Tijuana, meanwhile, lodged a concern about safety, to which Parkinson answered, “With reference to the paragraph where he was concerned about accidents, I would like to point out that the cars will be completely enclosed so that no objects can be thrown out or passengers fall out.”42 To protect his International Skyride, Parkinson went ahead and hired an insurance company to provide his corporation with a $1 million bodily injury liability and property damage policy.43

On August 5, 1959, Parkinson again met government officials in Washington, D.C. The meetings seem to have been fruitful because five days later, Parkinson wrote to Alan F. Neidle, the attorney adviser in the State Department, thanking him and saying that all the permits had arrived. Now, he was just waiting for the franchises from the Mexican Government.44

It appeared that the skyride would become a reality when, on May 5, 1960, Parkinson received a telegram from Wilson saying: “Good News. President Signed Permit Today. Best Wishes.”45 Having obtained clearance from twenty-one federal agencies and an executive order from President Eisenhower, Parkinson left to Italy a month later to discuss construction plans with Pinna-Farina.46

Plans for the skyride hit a major snag, however, when it was discovered that the State of California had designs on the space needed by Parkinson. According to Jacob Dekema, 11th District Engineer of the Division of Highways, the state planned to acquire Parkinson’s 25-acre parking lot for the relocation of the south end of U.S. Highway 101 at the border.47
A month later, on October 26, 1960, Parkinson wrote Wilson and Parma to tell them the result. He expressed shock at the news:

I would like to emphasize that we had already checked this out some months ago and the Highway Department said they had no intention of using the property and to proceed with our plans. I only mention this so you will know we did check thoroughly; however, evidently something happened to change their plans. Therefore, of necessity, we are forced to abandon the project.48

The California Division of Highways

Parkinson had focused his attention on federal regulatory permissions, failing to see historic legislation taking place in the State of California. In 1959, a massive twenty-year project to improve the state’s roads was signed by Governor Edmund Gerald “Pat” Brown. This would create 12,000 miles of freeways at a cost of $10.5 billion.49 On July 22, 1959, Section 104.6 of the Streets and Highways Code was amended to read: “The authority conferred by this code to acquire real property for state highway purposes includes authority to acquire for future needs.”50

These pieces of legislation, completed and signed during the exact time that Parkinson was getting his permissions, signaled the end of the skyride project. Dekema lawfully claimed Parkinson’s leased parking lot without negotiation. By 1969-70, Dekema had received funding for the widening of what became Interstate 5 at the international border in San Ysidro.

Dekema would spend a quarter of a century overseeing the momentous construction of the San Diego County freeway system. A graduate of USC with a degree in civil engineering, Dekema strongly believed that the greatness of the Roman Empire was based on its 53,000 miles of highway connecting all the borders of the far-flung empire.51 He also believed that progress lay in developing freeways, even at the cost of historic and/or community preservation.52 In 1957, San Diego County had a mere 24 miles of freeway, all of which were non-interstate. By 1972 the county was scheduled to have 179 miles of interstate freeways and 64 miles of other freeways.53
At the end of 1960, Parkinson received a letter from Parma, expressing the congressman’s regret about the abandonment of the International Skyride project, “Bob specifically asked that I contact you and ask if there is anything possible that we might do to get this back on the track again. We would very much appreciate your appropriate advice.”

Parkinson did not give up right away. He wrote the State Department and asked if the federal government would consider taking over the project. He reasoned that if the federal government bought the property, the California Division of Highways would have to stop constructing the freeway. To that end, he offered to turn over all his stock in the corporation, architectural plans and his option to lease the property, insisting that his project had not been intended solely to make money. His $50,000 investment would be lost. Melville Osborne, the new Officer in Charge of Mexican Affairs at the State Department, thanked him, but respectfully declined the offer.

Parkinson’s Life After Skyride

After the failure of the skyride, Parkinson plunged his fortune into a new project, Movieland Wax Museum. Located in Buena Park, California, and inspired by Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum in London, Movieland opened in May 1962 to much fanfare with searchlights and film stars in stretch limousines. During its peak years, the museum drew in as many as 1.2 million visitors annually. Soon thereafter, Parkinson also built a Japanese Village and Deer Park as well as a Palace of Living Art. In 1970 he sold them all to Six Flags for $10 million.

In 1988, Parkinson planned to open a new wax attraction, The War & Peace Wax Museum, that would include a miniature Nazi concentration camp, complete with moan-filled sound tracks. He intended to add scenes from the Mexican
Revolution and the life of Christ. Parkinson scrapped his plan after local Jewish leaders protested, saying that his intention had been to provide awareness to the American community, not offend anyone.

Two years later, he tried to erect The Life of Christ Historical Wax Museum in an industrial building near Disneyland. This museum would be replete with 350 wax figures and special effects such as water changing into wine and Jesus walking on water. A separate gallery would feature Latino history. Parkinson, however, failed to raise the necessary $6 million.

Towards the end of his life, he bought a 40,000-acre ranch in Scottsdale, Arizona where he raised horses and bred cattle. After about eight years, he lost everything during the stock market downturn and declared bankruptcy. Parkinson died in 2002 at the age of 83. His obituary said that he was living in Warwick, Rhode Island, at the time.

Parkinson’s dream of an International Skyway failed to account for the increased popularity of automobiles. It took many years for residents of San Ysidro to understand what freeways, including the I-805, would do to their border community. Hundreds of residents and businesses were displaced and the community fragmented. Instead of a Disneyland-like skyride, the San Ysidro Port of Entry became the busiest border crossing in the world, with approximately 50 million vehicles passing through every year by the 1980s.

NOTES

1. Thanks goes to longtime San Ysidro resident Michael Freedman for showing me the newspaper article about the International Skyride that led to this article. Steven Schoenherr, Professor Emeritus, USD, then brought to my attention the International Skyride Box in the SDSU Special Collections Archives. Robert Ray, head of the SDSU Special Collections Archives, provided permission and help for me to research the archives.


7. Parkinson to Alan F. Neidle, August 10, 1959, BWP.

8. Parkinson to Kelly, May 25, 1959, BWP.

9. Parkinson to Leon W. Parma, December 13, 1959, BWP.
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11. Parkinson to William A. Wieland, May 25, 1959, BWP.
12. Parkinson to Kelly, May 25, 1959, BWP.
13. Parkinson to Wilber M. Brucker, 28 July 1959, BWP.
14. At the beginning of Parkinson's correspondence, he incorrectly wrote Leon Pamar, but later changed the name to the correct Leon Parma.
15. Parkinson to Parma, May 25, 1959, BWP.
24. Parkinson to Wieland, May 25, 1959, BWP.
25. Parkinson to Wilson, October 26, 1960, BWP.
27. Wilson to Kelly, June 9, 1959; Wilson to Swing, June 9, 1959; Wilson to Sackett, June 9, 1959; Wilson to Wieland, June 9, 1959, BWP.
28. Parkinson to Parma, undated postcard from Environs de Chamonix; Parkinson to Wilson, undated postcard from St. Moritz, BWP.
29. Parkinson to Swing, August 18, 1959, BWP.
30. Parkinson to Wilson, June 22, 1959; Wilson to Parkinson, July 1, 1959, BWP.
31. Wilson to Parkinson, July 1, 1959, BWP.
32. Wieland to Parkinson, date unknown, copy received by Wilson’s office July 24, 1959, BWP.
33. Parkinson to Parma, July 29, 1959, BWP.
34. Ibid.
35. Bryant to Wilson, date unknown, received by Wilson on September 22, 1959; Sackett to Parkinson, June 2, 1959, BWP.
36. Parkinson to Hewitt, June 5, 1959, BWP.
37. Strubinger to Parkinson, date unknown, received by Wilson on July 22, 1959, BWP.
38. Ibid.
39. Parkinson to Hewitt, September 25, 1959, BWP.
40. Parkinson to Parma, July 29, 1959, BWP.
41. Parkinson to Parma, October 26, 1959, BWP.
42. Parkinson to Wieland, January 13, 1960, BWP.
43. W.G. Wilson (of the Bill Wilson Co.) to Congressman Wilson, February 8, 1960, BWP.
44. Parkinson to Neidle, August 10, 1959, BWP.
45. Wilson to Parkinson, May 5, 1960, BWP.
46. Parkinson to Parma, June 7, 1960, BWP.
On February 9, 1960, the Governor’s office in Sacramento said that a letter was sent to Mr. Wieland of the State Department advising that in their opinion there was no California State department that could assume jurisdiction over the ride. Parkinson to Parma, February 9, 1960, BWP.
48. Parkinson to Parma, October 26, 1960, BWP.
50. Statutes of California, 1959 Regular Session, Chapter 2157, Section 1. 104.6: 5213.
52. Ibid., 11.
54. Parma to Parkinson, November 22, 1960, BWP.
55. Parkinson to Osborne, November 12, 1960, BWP.
56. Ibid.
57. Osborne to Parkinson, December 5, 1960, BWP.
64. McLellan, “Allen Parkinson, 83.”
BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by Ryan Jordan, Lecturer, Department of History, University of San Diego.

In the history of California there are few figures as important—or as controversial—as Junípero Serra. The man who played a pivotal role in the creation of the mission system has elicited strong emotions over the years. Some have seen Serra as a well-intentioned agent of civilization for the natives while others have viewed Serra as a man guilty of nothing less than genocide. As always, the truth is far more complicated, and Nick Taylor’s novel captures many of the idiosyncrasies in Serra’s character without demonizing the Franciscan missionary.

The celebration of Junípero Serra’s three hundredth birthday in 2013 led to renewed focus on the history of Spanish California, and Taylor’s novel is timely. Unlike other biographical treatments, Taylor relates the story of Serra and the missions from the fictional perspective of Fray Francisco Palóu. Palóu, it should be recalled, not only accompanied Serra on part of his journey to California, but also wrote two works on the history of the missions and on the life of Serra that are still read by scholars of New Spain.

In Taylor’s novel, however, Palóu has considerable reservations regarding the character of Junípero Serra, which is in contrast to the accounts left by Palóu in the historical record. Through the voice of Palóu, for example, Taylor takes the reader through several episodes of Serra’s gruesome self-flagellation, which makes for a gripping, if at times disturbing, read. Taylor also speculates on the rivalry between Palóu and Fray Juan Crespí, the other Franciscan confidant of Serra in California.

Taylor is at his best when describing some of the tensions between the natives and the missionaries at the Carmel mission, as well as when Taylor depicts the social and family life of the natives of California. In crafting his fictional narrative, Taylor creates a plot that injects very human emotions of jealousy, ambition, and longing into the characters of Serra, Palóu, and Crespí.

*Father Junípero’s Confessor* is not a work of history—there are no footnotes, nor does the author explain to the reader how he used historical sources to create his story. While some scholars may dislike the novel’s literary licenses, *Confessor* is a reminder to historians that carefully constructed stories and characters can pique the interest of the general reader in ways not often accomplished by academic
writing. This novel, for example, could be used in the classroom as a starting point for discussing the culture of the Franciscan missionaries and its relationship to Native Americans. As a work of literature, *Father Junípero’s Confessor* will likely keep alive public fascination with the man who is often seen as the Founder of California.


Reviewed by Robert D. Miller, Lecturer, Department of History, California State University San Marcos.

Tamara Venit Shelton’s *A Squatter’s Republic* examines the changing discourses challenging monopoly in California—a center of anti-monopolist activity—from 1850 to 1900. For much of the nineteenth century, reformers condemned land monopolies for creating an artificial scarcity of land and restricting opportunities for Americans to become small freeholders. In Gold Rush California, white Americans employed these anti-monopolist arguments to challenge Mexican land grants by defending the squatter’s right to preemption as an essential component of the American republic. Debates about land tenure broadened to encompass the conflict between slavery and free labor during the 1850s, culminating in the Republican Party’s passage of the Homestead Act of 1862. However, rather than providing homes for all aspiring yeoman farmers, Republican policies accelerated the industrialization of the nation, requiring anti-monopolist supporters to reframe their critiques. Henry George was one such figure whose writings linked land monopolies with emerging industrial monopolies while castigating Chinese immigrants as an unassimilable menace to white laborers’ existence. Anti-monopolist arguments gradually eschewed discussions of property rights as land ownership proved increasingly irrelevant to permanent wage workers. By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, reformers recognized competition and the valorization of small producers inhibited the efficient management of critical industries, particularly the often-maligned railroads. Rejecting the nationalization of monopolistic corporations sought by the People’s Party, anti-monopolists, such as Senator Stephen White, promoted “targeted government intervention” to regulate monopolies to mitigate their worst abuses while preserving their economic efficiencies (p. 166).
Shelton’s *A Squatter’s Republic* brings nuance to discussions of anti-monopolism, particularly the conflicts between speculators and squatters in Sacramento following the discovery of gold in California. Though earlier scholars and the squatters themselves cast the conflict as a struggle between ordinary Americans and a propertied elite, Shelton demonstrates that the distinction between speculators and squatters “was one of scale of wealth, with clear differences only at the extremes” (p. 26). Many of the speculators held assets that were comparable in value to the property held by squatters. As the median value of squatters’ properties in Sacramento was $1,050, Shelton contends that many squatters hoped to acquire additional land to further increase their wealth. Shelton’s linkage of squatters to the fear of Confederate plots in California is also illuminating. She examines a conflict between Antonio Chabolla and squatters who denied the legitimacy of his Mexican land grant at Rancho Yerba Buena. Even though squatters drew upon existing denunciations of land monopoly, the outbreak of the Civil War, combined with the fear of Confederate subversion in California, compelled the squatters to emphasize their loyalty to refute any hint of secessionist sympathy. In emphasizing the capacity of anti-monopolists to adapt to the modern world, Shelton echoes Charles Postel’s *The Populist Vision* by demonstrating that anti-monopolists did not remain wedded to an anachronistic agrarian world view.

Though Shelton effectively reveals the complexity of anti-monopolism within California, there are opportunities for further analysis. Shelton’s contention that “Indian land tenure did not seem like much of a threat to squatters” minimizes white Californians’ attempts to control Native labor and land during the early 1850s (p. 14). For example, California’s legislature instructed the state’s Congressional delegation to oppose ratification of the eighteen treaties negotiated with the state’s Native inhabitants between 1851 and 1852. The United States Senate acquiesced by rejecting all eighteen treaties as Californians believed these posed a threat to the state’s agricultural and mining interests. Evaluating the extent to which anti-monopolism permeated Californians’ efforts to defeat these treaties merits analysis. Furthermore, anti-monopolist concerns about the dangers posed by non-white labor—represented by the Chinese, slaves, and free African Americans—raise further questions about the state’s support for the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, which sanctioned the indenture of Indian children and the punishment of Indians identified as vagrants. Finally, while Shelton provides a detailed analysis of the anti-Chinese writings of Henry George, considering the ways in which antimonopolist thought shaped the California constitution of 1879 could prove rewarding. On the whole, however, Shelton makes a commendable effort in emphasizing the ongoing importance of anti-land monopolism in Gilded Age California.

Reviewed by William Issel, Professor of History emeritus, San Francisco State University and Visiting Professor of History, Mills College.

Sarah J. Moore, Professor of Art History at the University of Arizona, Tucson, offers a critical account of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE). She alleges that its attractions and its booster publicity operated in support of a racist, sexist, imperialist patriotic nationalism, with the implication that the PPIE was a project of questionable moral content due to its being “a manifestation of the United States’ imperial prowess and revitalized national manliness” (p. 4). In her view, the (male) planners, designers, and managers of the Exposition were informed by “Social Darwinian logic” (p. 14). As a consequence, fairgoers were treated to a variety of experiences that “served a pedagogical function and offered geographical evidence of America having fulfilled its promise of Manifest Destiny” (p. 9).

Like a number of previously published, similarly critical, accounts of the PPIE and other world’s fairs of the era, beginning with several of the essays in Burton Benedict’s edited volume of 1983, The Anthropology of World’s Fairs, Moore deploys cultural studies-inspired textual criticism techniques to make a close reading of everything from the speeches of the day to the design of the buildings, the layout of the exhibitions, and the content of posters and post cards. The book begins with three chapters that set the stage for her discussion of the PPIE.

The first chapter revisits the Turner thesis about the end of the frontier and the 1898 Spanish American War, the second chapter covers the origins and development of the Panama Canal and the rhetoric that accompanied its planning and building, and chapter three retells the story of the city of San Francisco’s recovery from the disastrous earthquake and fire of 1906. In these chapters, Moore applies cultural studies scholarship to the booster rhetoric of the time to argue that since American culture was a racist, sexist, and imperialist phenomenon, the nation’s technological advances, infrastructure projects, and programs for recovery from natural disaster were all morally tainted. The following three chapters represent the PPIE to have been a schoolhouse for socialization into celebratory Americanism: “a palimpsest, dense and layered, on which is inscribed multiple narratives—geographic, ideological, historical, political, imagined, and desired—of progress, civilization, and manliness as they were refracted through the contemporary lens of Social Darwinism” (p. 197).
Moore is not the first to interpret the PPIE in a post-realist fashion that makes use of the various tropes of cultural studies criticism, but her book is the most thorough recounting along such lines since the now out-of-print Burton Benedict work of 1983. Skeptical readers will look in vain for actual evidence that the fair’s attractions were in fact experienced as “pedagogical” exercises, and that the displays and activities the fairgoers flocked to succeeded in inculcating the values and viewpoints that Moore attributes to them. Readers sympathetic with her brand of critique will no doubt nod in agreement with the assertions about America’s moral and ethical shortcomings that are a central theme of the book. All readers will appreciate the 49 black-and-white illustrations and the 15 color plates. The book is attractively designed and, except for some minor errors (such as writing that James Duval Phelan’s last name was “Duval” (p. 77)) it is marked by careful scholarship throughout.


Reviewed by Rich Schultz, lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, California State University San Marcos.

Societal bouts of fear and anxiety, growing socioeconomic inequality, and environmental collapse could—and should—generate calls for a reevaluation of the systems and habits that have led to such failures. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl provided the backdrop for novelists, journalists, artists, and academics who pressed egalitarian themes and took on these very problems in their work. Many of the most devastating results of the “dirty thirties” played out in the American West, where regionalist activists fused their work with the images they were witnessing in their parts of the country. As is detailed in the fifteen essays contained in Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West, the results of this work are still with us: classics of twentieth-century American literature, purposeful art, and new critical histories about not only the American West, but also about the United States and its role in the world. The book is edited by Michael Steiner, who argues in his introduction that these important regionalist voices, their “egalitarian dreams,” and their “devotion to environmental, economic, and racial justice can inspire us today” (p. 16). This inspiration seems timely in the wake of the most recent financial debacle that
turned countless American homeowners “upside down,” and at a time when many political leaders and media pundits continue to insist that the evidence is lacking on global warming.

The book’s chapters read like evaluations of the life and work of a somewhat small circle of friends and colleagues, if not merely like-minded activists. Some contributed essays to “little magazines” that promoted left-wing socialist and communist principles. Many of these activists were members of the Communist Party, or at least flirted with that organization and its ideals. A number, including writers Meridel Le Sueur from Minnesota, California novelist John Sanford, and the Texas legend J. Frank Dobie, were among those hounded – if not blacklisted — as a result of the work of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Authors in the volume make a unified case that it was the context of the regionalist work of these individuals—their ability to wrap their social critique in spatial and temporal terms specific to their part of the country – that gives their work relevance today.

In his analysis of novelist Mari Sandoz, Robert Dorman contends that she saw her interpretations of Nebraska history as a “microcosm of the universal” (p. 97). This is a theme we see played out in a number of the essays. For example, Bryna Campbell points to the painter Joe Jones, who challenged the notion of a harmonized telling of American history by depicting race and class discrimination that was both specific to his native Missouri and seen as untouchable in national historical narratives. He taught an Unemployed Art class to a largely African-American student body and encouraged his students to protest a decision to shut the class down for being subversive. All of this at the very courthouse where the Dred Scott case played out and in the broader context of efforts to end segregation nationally (p. 69-74).

In her chapter, Shirley Leckie Reed offers a brilliant account of the life and work of Oklahoma historian Angie Debo. Debo compiled a stinging and informed history of the deceit and trickery behind the white grab of Native American lands in her part of the country, a story not previously told with such precision. Not only was she turned down for promotions and positions because she was a woman, but her work was rebuked by an “old boys club” (that included her one-time mentor) for, among other reasons, indicting some prominent business and political families in that shameful part of the state’s history. Leckie Reed concludes that “as a regionalist historian,” Debo “viewed US Indian policy as America’s ‘real imperialism’” and believed that understanding regional histories like those found in Oklahoma were essential to promoting a more just American foreign policy abroad (p. 178).

José Limón’s comparison of the works of Dobie and Américo Paredes in Texas offers an intriguing platform from which to consider transborder and transnational
tellings of the American story. Limón argues that these two regionalists “could not make common cause to articulate a bilingual, bicultural progressive Texas” to challenge “capitalist and racist domination” (p. 201). “For the most part,” he concludes, “in Texas we remain neither friends nor strangers” – a contemporary challenge to both egalitarian-minded Texans, and to those concerned about matters of discrimination and discord along linguistic, cultural, and racial lines nationally (p. 201).

Regional tellings of American history contribute to a more complex – and more interesting – notion of what the United States is, and what it represents. Steiner acknowledges in his introduction that there exists a camp that attacks the regionalist approach for leaning toward the simplistic, and for not fostering radical ideas. This collection suggests otherwise. With drought, environmental destruction, deregulation, and an increasing gap between the wealthy and the impoverished today, the words of Carey McWilliams are indeed worth echoing: “bang tables, shout, and raise hell” (p. 367).


Reviewed by Greig Tor Guthey, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Planning, Department of Liberal Studies, California State University San Marcos.

UC Press’s new Atlas of California both characterizes the state in the post-Great Recession period and provides an overview of a number of significant historical and contemporary issues. There are standard maps that you might find in a good textbook on California, such as the map of contemporary Native Californians. But then there are sections where readers will not find a single map such as those covering government finances, taxes, and sexual orientation.

This is not an ordinary atlas, and the authors make no bones about it. Richard Walker is an emeritus professor of geography at UC Berkeley where he regularly taught courses on California with an ample dose of social criticism (full disclosure: this reviewer was once a TA in his course); Lodha is a UC Santa Cruz professor of computer science whose interest lies in using spatial data for social change. No atlas, they explain, comes free of bias. But they refreshingly take the usual biases one step further so that their facts inspire social change.
Their call to action begins in the introduction and is carried throughout the volume’s ten chapters. Eight chapters cover substantive themes through which the authors present the state’s current challenges by means of historically-based commentary, maps, and charts. The thematic chapters are: “Land & People,” “Politics, Governance & Power,” “Economy & Industry,” “Urban Areas,” “Water & Energy,” “Environment,” “Health & Education,” and finally, “Inequality & Social Divides.” The last two chapters provide a conclusion about the challenges facing the state and an appendix concerning the problem of finding and mapping accurate data about the state.

The introduction proves a fascinating beginning to an atlas bent on pulling the veil back on the California Dream and related myths. The authors argue that any understanding of the state has to begin with the hard-nosed realities of its political economy rather than Hollywood gloss or Gold Rush glitter. California is a favored place not because “anything is possible,” as one version of the dream has it, but because of a particularly well-endowed natural resource base, an abundance of skilled and unskilled labor, industrial and economic innovation, and good government. Combined with an (historically at least) easily accessible opportunity structure, these four cornerstones along with the hard work of ordinary people have generated wave upon wave of economic growth and prosperity across 164 years of state history.

As the authors point out, the state’s economic growth made it particularly open to immigration while also accentuating racial and ethnic divisions. California is a giant experiment in multicultural democracy that reflects and may presage larger national patterns. It’s also a state largely still politically controlled by white voters even though minorities make up the majority. And political decisions about limiting educational access, property taxes, and civil rights now threaten the continuation of the state’s past success. These are just a few of many contradictions the authors identify and map.

There are so many issues covered in the atlas that it is not possible to cover each one in this short review—but I’ll mention two more. The chapter on cities provides an introduction to the significance of California cities—two of the nation’s largest cities are contained in California. The authors characterize these cities (The Bay Area and Greater Los Angeles) and focus on the most recent housing bubble and transportation. We are left with a picture of California as a mostly urban state—95% of the population lives in cities—riven by debt and linked by one of the world’s greatest road systems.

Next, California, as many scholars have pointed out, is exceptional in many realms. This atlas walks this line as well. The state has the largest road system in the nation. Its democracy is complicated by more frequent use of the initiative
than any other state. It contains among the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet. And, it faces comparably enormous problems with poverty, educational access, pollution, and climate change among others. Time will tell how California weathers these various challenges.

While we await the outcome, this atlas provides readers with the orientation to understand the state’s underlying crosscurrents. I found the combination of maps and commentary on the state’s geography provides a concise, accessible, and thought-provoking analysis of the complexities and contradictions of California. I am already using it with my undergraduates and I think serious students of California will find the atlas a welcome addition to their understanding of the state.

**BOOK NOTES**


*Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction.* By Stacey L. Smith. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. xv + 324 pp. $39.95 cloth. Stacey Smith of Oregon State University examines various forms of unfree labor in California—from indentured Native Americans to Chinese “coolies”—in the period from the gold rush to the 1870s. *Freedom’s Frontier* demonstrates how heavily California relied on such forms of labor and explores the ways discourse about unfree labor in the state connected to a larger national conversation that shaped politics in the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction eras.

*Go West, Young Women! The Rise of Early Hollywood.* By Hilary A. Hallett. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013. Illustrations, notes, filmography, and index. x + 314 pp. $29.95 paper. This book analyzes the role of women in the Hollywood film industry in the formative decades of the 1910s and 1920s. Not only did women make up a major share of early motion-picture audiences; they also found work as actresses, publicists, directors, and journalists. Hilary Hallett
thus notes how the film industry was a critical factor not only in the emergence of new gender roles and expectations associated with the “New Woman,” but also in the creation of a “feminized” Los Angeles economy.

*Herbert Eugene Bolton: Historian of the American Borderlands.* By Albert L. Hurtado. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Illustrations, afterword, notes, bibliography, and index. xvi + 370 pp. $39.95 cloth. Herbert Eugene Bolton, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner, developed the concept of the Borderlands that would—and that continues to—shape historical scholarship on the Mexican North and American Southwest. Albert Hurtado’s biography illuminates Bolton’s life and career while exploring his legacy, both intellectual (as in his call for a less provincial, more transnational approach to American history) and institutional (as in his contributions to the Bancroft and Huntington Libraries).

*The House on Lemon Street: Japanese Pioneers and the American Dream.* By Mark Howland Rawitsch. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2012. Photographs, glossary, notes, bibliography, and index. xiii + 388 pp. $29.95 cloth, $19.95 paper. This monograph traces the history of the Harada family, who settled in Riverside and whose 1915 purchase of a home in a white neighborhood triggered the first court action involving California’s 1913 Alien Land Law. While the Haradas won their case (because the family patriarch had purchased the home in the names of his three American-born children), they continued to confront anti-Japanese sentiment, and Rawitsch provides an account of the family’s struggles during the interwar period and the trauma of interment.

*Upton Sinclair: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual.* By Lauren Coodley. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. Illustrations, map, appendices, notes, and index. xvii + 237 pp. $28.95 cloth. Coodley’s biography of writer and socialist Upton Sinclair, one of several published within the last decade, pays particular attention to California’s influence on his political activism while also sketching a man whose outlook on social causes from temperance to birth control was shaped by his feminist convictions.
“Ingenious! The World of Dr. Seuss”

Exhibit Review by John Wilkens

Theodor Geisel called them his “midnight paintings”—art that he did for his own enjoyment and kept private, away from the public who knew him as Dr. Seuss. A new exhibit of reproductions of these little-known and infrequently shown works is currently showing at the San Diego History Center in Balboa Park, offering locals a fuller picture of the late La Jolla author’s artistic talents and wink-and-nudge humor.

There’s a cat, not wearing a hat, playing pool and smoking a cigarette. There’s a female bird, in a see-through negligee, holding a martini. There’s a band playing music at a New Year’s Eve Party. As surprising as some of the material is, it’s also decidedly Seussian, full of the kinds of whimsical characters,

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1. Reprinted with permission from the UT San Diego, December 2014.
bright colors and clever titles that make his children's books so popular and so distinctive, even today, 23 years after he died at age 87. "Seuss is Seuss through and through," said Bill Dreyer, one of the curators of the exhibit, "Ingenious! The World of Dr. Seuss."

So it is that the earliest known painting, "Abduction of the Sabine Woman," from 1930, seven years before Seuss did his first kid's book, includes an elephant that looks very much like the one that would become Horton. And so it is that his 1933 cover for Judge magazine, "After Dark in the Park," has fish like those that would populate "One Fish, Two Fish" and turtles that would feel right at home with Yertle.

"The paintings are breathtaking," said Roz Casarez, a Yucaipa resident who toured the exhibit the morning after it opened. "They give you a little bit of his human side, which I've always wondered about, how real he was. I mean, who eats green eggs and ham?" She said she was particularly drawn to two of the paintings, "Freebird" and "Firebird," shown side by side, which to her are a reflection of the emotional ups-and-downs life inevitably brings, even to the rich and famous.

Dreyer said the exhibit has been in other places, most recently Portland, but the show here has a strong San Diego feeling. One wall includes seven of Seuss' "La Jolla Birdwomen" paintings, playful spoofings of high-society life. There are also large photos of him in his Mount Soledad studio.

Another part of the exhibit is devoted to his most famous children's books, including The Lorax and How the Grinch Stole Christmas! There are craft stations for kids to explore themes from the books, prints of original sketches, and statues of various characters. Kids flocked to that area in full giggle the next day, including Olive Ross, 2. "The only books she'll let us read to her are Dr. Seuss," said her mother, Jasmine Ross, as Olive turned the pages of Oh, The Places You'll Go!

The books at their Palm Springs area home, by the way, are the same copies Jasmine Ross had when she was a kid, an example of the reach the author continues to have across the generations.

"Dr. Seuss was a genius," Dreyer said. "He knew how to speak to the child in all of us, even the adults."

The Dr. Seuss exhibit runs through the end of 2015.
Incidental Music for a New Year’s Eve Party by Dr. Seuss. First published as a black-and-white center spread in Judge magazine in 1932, and again in color in the Danish magazine Illustreret Familie-Journal, circa 1932. This work embodies all the best of Geisel’s musically exaggerated imagination and is an early hallmark that set the stage for an elaborate history of made-up vehicles, machines, and instruments.

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