

Introduction

After years of planning and construction, San Diego's Panama-California Exposition opened on the first day of January 1915. Held in Balboa Park, the exposition celebrated the completion of the Panama Canal, an economically important opportunity for the strategically located town. The exposition was self-consciously historical and grandiose in its celebration of California "heritage." Upon entering the park, visitors were met by guards in uniforms akin to those worn by the conquistadors that once explored the area. The architecture of the buildings immediately transported them back hundreds of years to a time and place of Spanish colonization. Statues of famous Spanish explorers and priests adorned the walls of the California Tower, built to mimic a Catholic church. Newspapers recounted the romantic atmosphere of Balboa Park, capturing the exact reaction architects and San Diego's boosters had hoped. Throughout the exposition's two-year run, the design and marketing of Balboa Park remained steeped in this romantic, Spanish dream thus helping create a nascent identity of the park.

Dedicated as City Park in 1869 from appropriated pueblo lands, the park's use was varied and unorganized. However, in the early 1900s, when a chance to host a world's fair arose, San Diegan boosters jumped at the idea. An exposition would provide an economic opportunity to San Diego. Celebrating its location as the first port of call from the Panama Canal, San Diego could provide a stimulus the region's stagnant economy. Up to \$200,000 of government aid was sought to improve the city's harbor and fortifications in an attempt to improve the city's chance to attract

passing ships.¹ Borrowing from literature and devising a fantasized history of the area, the boosters created a marketable identity of the San Diego region and applied it to the exposition's design. The result was a renamed park and a mythical Spanish city-in-miniature, buttressed by the 1915 Panama California Exposition's architecture.

Seventy-five years later, most of what was left of Balboa Park's Spanish aura were the buildings themselves. It evolved into an urban space with diverse uses, with the Spanish past as but one component of the park's memory. In fact, this memory began to wane so much so that by the late 1900s San Diegans went so far as to question the validity of Balboa Park's recognition in the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. It had become host to a number of groups and organizations, museums, athletic fields, fairs and parades. The architecture and buildings of the original 1915 Panama-California Exposition still remain a central component to the identity of Balboa Park but the created memories they represented had been stripped away. Replacing it was a pluralist identity, lacking the explicit themes that dominated the park in the early 1900s.

To understand the changes that occurred in Balboa Park requires researching urban space through a historical lens allows a better understanding of a park's public memory.² Historians Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's *The Park and the*

¹ *San Diego Union*, November, 5 1914, 1.

² Public memory, cultural identity, social memory, definition and narrative-myth are synonymous and may sometimes be interchanged. For more information on the differences, see Iris Aravot, "Narrative-Myth and Urban Design," *Journal of Architectural Education* 49, no. 2 (1995) : 79-

People: A History of Central Park, epitomize the successful incorporation of historical research into scholarship about urban space. Rosenzweig and Blackmar remind their readers that, “America’s most important naturally landscaped park [Central Park] is an *urban* space, best understood in relation to its city.”³ Instead of discussing Central Park as an entity separate from the rest of New York City, Rosenzweig and Blackmar tell the story of how the park reflected the needs of New Yorkers. For the authors, the definition of Central Park has changed as generations of people use it and that “parks *as well as* schools, hospitals, and housing are an essential part of a decent and humane city.”⁴ *The Park and the People* also explores the ways in which that public memory was transformed. Using their approach, control and the use of urban space can be analyzed, explored and applied to places like Balboa Park. Generations of visitors to Balboa Park, like Central Park, each have a unique memory shaped not only by preconceived memories but also of memories they themselves create. The visitors, not just the designers of the park have shaped the park’s meaning.

Shifting control and uses of public space has become typical of urban parks in America. Although sometimes overlooked, the public park is an important facet of the urban landscape of American cities. As an urban space, parks are dually shaped by the landscape designers and by the public, each operating with specific goals and

91 and Dydia DeLyser, “Ramona Memories: Fiction, Tourist Practices, and Placing the Past in Southern California,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 4 (2003) : 886-908.

³ Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3. Emphasis by author.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 529. Emphasis by author.

biases. Oftentimes park management and visitors disagree as to the nature of what a park should be. Some view parks as romantic, pastoral escapes from the crime, noise and pollution of the city. Others push for a multipurpose space, inclusive of the needs of the majority of the public. What makes each park unique is how these issues and debates reflect the local and national issues of the day. Urban scholar Hilary Taylor writes, “As one of the most powerful arenas of cultural debate, mediating between the public and private world, the designed landscape is essentially a manifestation of personal and historical ideology.”⁵ This, however, was not always the case with American parks. In the middle of the nineteenth century the public park had emerged in America, and was designed with only the upper classes in mind. The result was an elitist approach to park design that did not take into account the needs of the general public.

Scholar and historian Dolores Hayden explores this phenomenon in many of her works, concluding that the history of an urban space is created by the people who use it. They shape and reshape the history of space, specifically public areas like parks. Each generation adds another layer of memories, continually adjusting the narrative allowing historians to track it over the years. This layering becomes more apparent as Balboa Park progresses from a unitary vision in the early 1900s to multiple visions sixty years later. The 1915 exposition created a specific identity, controlled by regional boosters. By the 1935 exposition, national corporations and

⁵ Hilary Taylor, “Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning,” *Garden History* 23, no. 2 (1995) : 201.

the federal government loosened the tight-handed vision of the local boosters experienced by visitors twenty years before. The result was cracks in the veneer of the Spanish myth that was so dominant during the early 1900s. The 1935 exposition offered more themes, from technological achievements and progress to beauty signifying an opening up of the space. Diversification would not be until the mid-twentieth century when government and park administrators' vision was joined by the visions of other groups of local citizens.

The first impetus to develop an American park system occurred mainly due to the efforts of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and his push for a beautification of America's fast industrializing cities. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed an increase of Olmsted designed parks. The vision of Olmsted, and Central Park co-designer Calvert Vaux was a park that created an escape from the ugliness of the city. This soon became the dominant theme in American park design from the 1850s through the early 1900s. According to Rosenzweig, the Central Park model, which borrowed from the European model of passive, romantic beauty with as little urban interference as possible, was used as an archetype to design numerous other parks in the United States.⁶ However, the demands of the general public needed to be met along with those of the upper class. By the turn of the twentieth century, Progressive elements within American cities began to oppose the Olmsted approach to park design and pressed for a change.

⁶ Ibid., I.

Olmsted and those who subscribed to his method fell out of favor by the turn of the twentieth century as groups and individuals called for a diversification of park uses. In the late 1800s author and newspaper reporter Jacob Riis, in his book *How the Other Half Lives*, argued that parks aided in “relieving the congested population of tenement districts,” avowing that working class children would lead better, less crime ridden lives if more parks were made available to them.⁷ Others wanted freer use, and considered parks to be ideal grounds for political and cultural events.

In 1893, Golden Gate State Park set aside a field for athletic games. Urban geographer Terence Young, in his article “Modern Urban Parks,” notes that this represented a “fundamental change” in how the park was used. Never before had such a large public space been devoted to athletic activities. He further argues that modernization of urban parks increases the complexity of the space through “segmentation and specialization” of park uses.⁸ This process of segmenting and specializing the uses manifested itself by diversifying park uses. In doing so, the park became an inclusive institution and more reflective of public needs. One such example is the inclusion of playgrounds for children.

Chicago park commissioners in the early 1900s grappled with this problem of variegating park uses. For progressives in Chicago, the benefits outweighed the disadvantages as the specialization of parks would encourage a wider swath of visitors and aid in creating a cohesive bond in multiethnic neighborhoods. This

⁷ Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, David Leviatin, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St Martins, 1996), 167.

⁸ Terence Young, “Modern Urban Parks,” *Geographical Review* 85, no. 4 (1995) : 535.

would replace the Olmsted tradition of passive park design with more active uses. An article written in 1910 by a member of the Playground Association of Chicago, Graham Taylor, discussed the benefit of active park design. He lauded Chicago's attempt "to secure from city parks not only landscape beauty, but a larger human service."⁹ However, romantic park landscape architects and those who supported more diversity in park design refused to reconcile their diametrically opposed opinions and continued to stand their ground throughout the twentieth century.

The conflict revolving around how to use park space provides insight in understanding the cities and people that use them. Buildings, parks, and their use act as a window into the history of a region while exemplifying the constructed public memory of its space. For architectural and urban design scholars, the creation of an urban space and its use is dependent on various factors. Matthew Carmona, in *Public Places Urban Spaces*, writes that every facet of society including state and local governments, the public, local business, developers, visitors and even future generations are taken into account when an urban space is planned. Each group must make concessions to others in order to create a space that meets the diverse demands of the public as well as integrating future plans, federal and local laws, and demands by local businessmen.¹⁰

⁹ Graham Romeyn Taylor, "Recreational Developments in Chicago Parks," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 35, no. 2 (1910), 88.

¹⁰ Matthew Carmona, Tim Heath, Taner Oc, and Steve Tiesdell, *Public Places Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), 9 and 19. *Public Places Urban Spaces* also argues that in order to create an urban space that has tradition, certain desirable qualities are needed. Among these are character, quality of the public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability, and diversity. Character refers to the space having its own identity

Balboa Park, with its varied history of uses, provides an ideal case study for examining how urban spaces are created and used. It has been the site of regional and international expositions, a military camp, a cultural and recreational center, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. As with any institution that must meet the demands of the public, Balboa Park clearly reflects the issues and concerns of San Diego and the greater southern California region. The identity has been created and defined by the demands and uses the public has impressed on it. Balboa Park is transformed with every passing generation of San Diegans, each adding to this collective identity and memory. The ever changing landscape of urban parks, like Balboa Park, is a dynamic process and not without conflict. Public spaces are ultimately public institutions and Balboa Park illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of this ongoing debate.

This thesis will analyze two periods that represent watersheds in the use and development in Balboa Park's history. It will trace how Balboa Park, concurrent with the general attitude of the American park system, has been transformed from an exclusive, constructed landscape to one that encourages a pluralistic approach to urban space. The exposition and war years of 1915 to 1945 illustrate an attempt by San Diego's elite, national corporations and the Navy to create an urban space with a

and quality of the public realm refers to a place with "attractive and successful outdoor areas." Ease of movement is important because urban space needs to be "easy to get to and move through." Legibility needs to allow the visitor to understand a "clear image" of the space with adaptability and diversity representing the space's ability to modify itself when faced with change. Balboa Park meets the criteria Carmona and his peers consider a desirable urban space. The Park has character and continues to have very successful outdoor areas. The Park is easy to move through and adaptable. It also exhibits diversity in the programs, recreational activities, and cultural centers located within its borders. Legibility of the Park may be contentious, but those who visit are still able to have an apparent understanding of the identity of the Park.

public memory that best fit their desires in promoting the region. Juxtaposing these years with developments in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates a clear divergence in the park's identity. By the end of the 1980s public demands for the inclusion of culturally diverse organizations, along with a diversification of park uses, supported the predominant pluralist ideology of America's twentieth century park systems.

Two scholarly works have been written about Balboa Park and its historical legacy focusing specifically on the 1915 and 1935 expositions. Historians Matthew Bokovoy and Phoebe Kropp argue that the architecture of the Expositions as well as the general identity of the park were founded on a Spanish Colonial memory. They consider this invented Spanish past an excellent marketing device to secure further commercial and economic interest. Both Bokovoy's *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* and Kropp's *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* address the same problem of creating a public memory that best reifies the racial notions of the new Anglo transplants to the region. This created memory is one devoid of Mexicans and Native Americans but comprised of an affectionate, Eurocentric treatment of Spanish occupation and mission life. This approach helped comfort the Anglo settlers as "anxiety provokes nostalgia and that uncertainty drives a search for the comfort of a certain past," and that "Southern California's Spanish golden age offered a comforting past for Anglos, but Anglos did not inherit this past, they produced it."¹¹

¹¹ Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 3-5.

In *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940*, Bokovoy writes that civic leaders utilized this vacuous and idyllic Spanish memory as a foundation for Balboa Park as well as for other points of interest in the San Diego region. The architectural design and renaming of the park relay this Spanish memory, but today this heritage has less of an impact due to continually shifting social and cultural forces that have shaped the park and its narrative since the early 1900s.

Phoebe Kropp also discusses Spanish memory as being a specific part of the urban development of southern California. Her book, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* argues that Anglo boosters advertised and encouraged Spanish memory as a developmental apparatus in order to promote tourism, encourage “civic enhancement,” and use as a “theme for suburban styles.”¹² For Kropp, “The forces that create, preserve, popularize, refurbish and market a place’s emblematic architecture grow out of local debates about usable pasts and alternate futures.”¹³ She goes on to write that the Anglo settlers filtered parts of Californian history they wanted to keep and conveniently left out “genocide, war, race, class, and religious conflict.”¹⁴

Both scholars treat the Spanish identity as a monolithic historical force with a legacy that remains unchanged. What they fail to take into account is the fluidity of historical memory. The first exposition functioned as a marketing device, created by San Diego’s boosters, in order to attract settlers and increase business opportunities to

¹² Ibid., 4

¹³ Ibid., 1

¹⁴ Ibid., 5

the region. The exposition also relied on the created Spanish heritage of the region as a backdrop. It represented a top down approach to public space, exclusive to the wants and needs of the people. However, the historical legacy and function of Balboa Park has changed. Elites no longer control the park's memory as they did during the 1915 exposition. During the mid-twentieth century, the public began to determine the park's function and identity, diminishing the importance of this Spanish memory and top down control.

The architecture and atmosphere of the 1915 Exposition did relate to a created memory of the San Diego region that successfully fit the desires civic leaders and boosters had in mind. Architectural scholar Panayotis Tournikiotis writes in *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* that, "architecture and society are clearly linked. Architecture is inextricably bound up with the spirit of the age—the *Zeitgeist*—and is thus seen as a visible manifestation of social evolution."¹⁵ Anglo San Diego's *Zeitgeist*, at the time, was that of a superficial interpretation of colonial Spain. It was an overt attempt by civic leaders to manipulate and control how visitors used the park, much in line with Olmsted's single-minded attempt to retain Central Park as an escape for only the upper classes.

Later developments demonstrate an increase in the specialization of Balboa Park's uses. San Diego's warm reception of the military led to an allocation of land within Balboa Park for a permanent naval hospital as well as occupation of park

¹⁵ Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1999), 23. Emphasis by author.

buildings during World War II. The 1950s and early 1960s saw a renewed interest in a pro-capitalist international exposition and renovation after the Navy ended their residence. By the 1950s, benign neglect of the park left it in desperate need of funding for retrofitting and preservation. What made this so difficult was that control of Balboa Park was becoming decentralized, with varying opinions of what the park should be. The cultural diversification of the park in the 1960s and 1970s was due in large part to the Chicano Movement. The Chicano Movement paved the way for institutions like the Centro Cultural de la Raza to open and other multicultural organizations like the World Beat Center. Issues about use and control reemerged in the early 1980s, when other groups, including San Diego's gay community, began using the park to host an annual Pride parade and festival.

The story of Balboa Park demonstrates the diversification of the American park system. Analyzing such a unique space and understanding how outside social forces shaped it will shed light on how previous generations have appropriated it to suit their needs. As the park continues to be transformed so will its public memory and identity, but it will always be inexorably linked to the desires and needs of the citizens of San Diego.

This thesis contains two chapters and a digital component, analyzing Balboa Park from the early 1900s to the 1980s. The first chapter examines how city elites, corporations and the federal government created a unified theme and memory during the exposition years. The second chapter analyzes how these themes and memories began to wane as San Diegans wrested control of Balboa Park from these elite

groups. The digital component is a website that traces the history of Balboa Park throughout the twentieth century. It also is a repository of sources and contains a visual essay that documents the physical changes and uses of the park.

Chapter One: The Exposition and War Years

The 1915 Panama-California Exposition

The dimly lighted grounds through which first visitors passed on their way to the Isthmus never before seemed to cast the enchantment of last night. Dark-eyed Spanish girls in their striking gowns of Old Spain danced in the mellow gloom of patios which might have been hundreds of years old... From different parts of the grounds came the strains of bands playing Spanish airs, and now and then the voice of a *senorita* broke through in happy melody. The air was surcharged with romance, redolent with sweet breath from 640 acres of blooming fairyland and teeming with the atmosphere of a long time since passed and made possible only by blending the old with the new.¹⁶
- San Diego *Union*, 1915.

The city of San Diego poured its limited resources to turn the hilly and undeveloped terrain of Balboa Park into the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. Civic leaders contracted architects Bertram Goodhue and Frank Allen to design many of the buildings. They deviated from the usual Greek and Roman styles of earlier expositions and relied heavily on Spanish and Mediterranean themes in their designs. Among the most elaborate, and arguably, beautiful were the buildings along the park's El Prado. The west entrance of the exposition was the Cabrillo Bridge, white and arching across one of the park's many valleys. After crossing the bridge visitors entered through the California Quadrangle. Its wildly ornate tower, rising above the trees lining the park, gave visitors a visual history of the Spanish era in California. Spanish kings, explorers and friars were prominently displayed along the building's façade. Visitors continued passed the Quadrangle to the heart of El Prado, the Plaza de Panama. It connected to the Casa de Balboa and the Casa del Prado, all of which were representative of Goodhue's Spanish design. The buildings' unique style, accompanied by a marketing blitz in local newspapers and literature, not only

¹⁶ *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1915, 1.

entranced visitors but also created an atmosphere that contributed to the region's burgeoning Spanish myth.

When permanent structures and a unified design of Balboa Park began in the early 1900s control and management of the park rested in the hands of civic and business leaders. Unlike other city parks in America at this time, Balboa Park was not designed in the Olmsted tradition. Olmsted's approach to park design centered on nature and rejected the incorporation of anything manmade. Central Park, for example, exemplifies Olmsted's passive recreational style as no buildings or athletic fields were part of the original design. Goodhue and San Diego's civic leaders sought to develop Balboa Park as an exposition site first, and park second, with the buildings as the central focus.¹⁷ What did connect Balboa Park to other city parks of the time was that its construction and design did not aim to serve the greater public need. San Diegan elites thought of it as a marketing device in order to stimulate the region's economy, placing priority on business needs and not the public's interests and desires. The design of Balboa Park, including the creation of its public memory, did not simply appear. It was created and controlled by San Diego's boosters, with the help of Goodhue's designs.

He defended the choice of a Spanish theme because he thought it was appropriate for the region. According to Goodhue, many regions in the United States lacked any sort of European history. The American Southwest was an exception,

¹⁷ Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, *The Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Company, 1916), 6.

“For, long before the coming of our Eastern pioneers, the land had been traversed and spied-out by generations of Spanish” colonists.¹⁸ Goodhue thus attempted to imbue the booster’s desires with the grand and regal aura of old Europe.

The Panama-California Exposition was intended to represent San Diego’s rise to prominence both regionally and internationally. The exposition celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal, an immense engineering feat, which dramatically cut the distance and cost of international shipping. It was an opportunistic event for San Diegans, as they hoped their bay would become the first port of call on the west coast of the United States. San Diego’s Chamber of Commerce and leading business figures recognized this strategic location and wanted to take advantage of it. In order to attract future settlers, the military, and investors, the Chamber of Commerce decided an exposition would be the best route. Plans to host an exposition began in 1909 and the development of City Park, as it was known, soon followed.¹⁹ The product of this development was a city within San Diego, one that represented an idealized version of the history of the region. What commenced was an all out effort to market and develop a San Diego capable of handling the new maritime traffic coming in from the Panama Canal. At the same time boosters hoped to convince visitors that San Diego retained a small town charm with European traditions.

With much fanfare, the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego’s Balboa Park opened to the public on January 1, 1915. Such an endeavor would not have been

¹⁸ Goodhue, *Architecture and Gardens*, 4.

¹⁹ “Historic Struggle to Get and Keep Balboa Park,” *San Diego Magazine*, September, 1966, 36.

successful were it not for the concerted effort by the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and local businessmen. San Diego was the smallest city to attempt a world's fair in the history of the United States, a testament to the determination of city leaders to make the exposition a success. Progressivism and boosterism fanned the flames of San Diego's economic expansion as city leaders took a forward-looking stance of their town. The Exposition not only celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal but also focused national attention on the commercial opportunities San Diego offered.

The Exposition was not the only reason for the development and beautification of the park. In the late 1800s, progressive urban planners sought to incorporate elaborate city works projects known as the City Beautiful movement. San Diego, like many cities in the United States, fell under its allure. Balboa Park and its development came in on the tail end of the movement, which was typified by the creation of parks, parkways and architecturally elaborate public buildings.²⁰ The movement called for the creation of municipal organizations to control and maintain these new public works, including park boards. By the early 1900s, proponents of the City Beautiful movement would attract criticism for the immense cost of these new institutions, but many would still favor the basic tenets of the movement. In his proposed 1926 city plan of San Diego, urban planner John Nolen used many facets of the City Beautiful Movement in his design. Although he carefully worded his plan to

²⁰ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1-2.

exclude the movement, Nolen supported funding for Balboa Park and for an extension of San Diego's park system in general after the first exposition.²¹ He envisioned a park system that would follow a parkway from Balboa Park to the city's bay.

When Anglos began migrating to southern California, the land was previously settled by Native Americans, colonized by the Spanish, and governed by Mexico. The only history in the region that Anglos chose to identify with was the period of Spanish colonization. They refused to acknowledge a multi-ethnic, non-white history and subsequently devised a contrived narrative based on the Spanish occupation of the area. This was accomplished by incorporating and adulterating the literature and history of the region. Once a unified, albeit fabricated, history was established in the region that met the demand of the new Anglos, a constructed public "memory" was formed. It would serve not only booster efforts in the region but also as the foundation of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition's architecture and theme.

Architectural scholar Iris Aravot argues in her article "Narrative-Myth and Urban Design," that such an exclusive history is typical in creating a common culture for settlers of a new land. Her research focuses on the creation of the modern state of Israel and the problems Israelis had in creating their own identity and public memory. She connects identity and the expression of it through urban space and architecture. New communities' identity, Aravot posits, "concentrate on either poetry or literature

²¹ John Nolen, *City Plan for San Diego California* (Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass., 1926), 20.

or ‘free narration’” of the region.²² Scholars Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger also contend that invented traditions, like the development of Southern California’s mythic Spanish past, occur “when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns” of older traditions.²³ This rapid transformation was illustrated by the theme of the Panama-California Exposition.

In her book on the Southern California mythology of the “Vieja,” Phoebe Kropp devotes an entire chapter on Balboa Park’s 1915 Panama-California Exposition. She examines how this one event provided an international stage in which to sell the idea of Southern California. However, the advertisements and boosting left out San Diego’s history of social conflict, which included regional labor turmoil and a Mexican revolution. She also argues that the boosters decided that the exposition would serve as a “microcosm of their vision of civic belonging, regional identity, and future development.”²⁴ Kropp and Aravot’s analysis of identity explains why San Diegans based their hopes for economic growth on a false memory glorifying a romantic ‘heritage’ that served their economic purposes.

Kropp contends that the exposition “elaborated on the regional theme of Spanish romance at a new and monumental level” yet also provided a “significant venue for furthering the Anglo-dominated discussion about southern California as a

²² Iris Aravot, “Narrative-Myth and Urban Design,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 49, no. 2 (1995): 80.

²³ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

²⁴ Kropp, 113

place and about the role of the Spanish past within the region.”²⁵ In his book on the exposition, Matthew Bokovoy posits that the use of this Spanish memory for the 1915 exposition helped cement their version of the region’s memory as it “distributed national images of southern California and the Southwest unsurpassed in the early twentieth century.”²⁶

There was one additional component to southern California, which had specific resonance in San Diego and contributed to the “legitimacy” of its idealized Spanish past. Anthropologist Dydia DeLyser, in her book *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California*, argues, “The most important woman in the history of southern California never lived. Nor has she yet died. She is Ramona, the fictional heroine of Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 novel.”²⁷ The Ramona myth became extremely popular in the region as towns, parks, and bogus historical sites sprang up related to events in the book. Southern Californians used books like Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* “as sources for metaphors, analogies, symbols, and signs for architectural or urban components or compositions” to provide a baseline for boosting the region.²⁸

The result of Anglo San Diegans’ loose interpretation of Jackson’s book was a mania for all things *Ramona* as well as a strengthening of their created history. A veritable medley of faux historic sites was created, and boosters capitalized on this as

²⁵ Ibid., 103-104

²⁶ Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), xvii.

²⁷ Dydia DeLyser, “Ramona Memories: Fiction, Tourist Practices, and Placing the Past in Southern California,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 4 (2003), ix.

²⁸ Aravot, 80.

much as possible in order to promote tourism to the area. DeLyser writes that this enthusiasm produced, “A vast series of books, brochures, and magazine and newspaper articles serving as guides, and fueling the proliferation of Ramona-identified sites across the region.”²⁹ Sites where events in the book were alleged to have occurred were prized far more than genuine historic locations. San Diego, specifically, was prone to Ramona related tourism during the early 1900s due in large part to the number of sites in the area related to the novel, including the “location” of her marriage which Jackson placed in Old Town San Diego.

Local reporters helped in legitimizing and promulgating the Ramona myth by incorporating and connecting it to San Diego in their coverage. They wrote many articles on Ramona as if she, and the events in her life, were real. Articles from the *San Diego Union* reveal this preferential enthusiasm for false history as a substitute for real history. One such article discussed the decision to save the Ramona home from demolition in Old Town San Diego yet not save the building that was purported to be the headquarters for John C. Fremont during his stay in the area. Another article from the *Union* guides its reader to the famed house in which Ramona gets married. According to the reporter, the location is “the most historic and perfect in type of the old Spanish homes in Southern California.”³⁰

By utilizing both the Spanish memory and the Ramona myth, San Diego’s boosters and Chamber of Commerce successfully created a marketable ideology that

²⁹ DeLyser, xi.

³⁰ “Organization for Preservation of Landmarks Advocated Historic Adobes Neglected Except Ramona’s Home, Restored by Railway,” *San Diego Union*. January 1, 1915, 1.

promoted tourism to both the exposition and San Diego. In 1915, the president of the exposition, G. Aubrey Davidson, in a speech to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, expounded on the use of a Spanish colonial narrative as an engine to market the exposition. He claimed that the Panama-California Exposition would be the “lodestone that is going to attract the Southern California during 1915 multitude upon multitude.” He concluded, “History and romance of California are portrayed in its architecture,” and that “it is typically Southern Californian. It may be summed up as ‘California epitomized.’”³¹

Balboa Park’s 1915 Panama-California Exposition utilized a specific era, along with literature like the novel *Ramona*, of southern California as a promotional tool. San Diego’s boosters and civic leaders appropriated a history that would not only conjure tranquil past but that would also transition into a neat and tidy theme for the Exposition. The result of this manipulated history was an adulterated and whitewashed account of San Diego’s Spanish mission past.

This amalgamation of San Diego’s past and the representation of the Exposition and Balboa Park’s economic possibilities were found in the flowery reportage of opening day. The 1915 Exposition Committee portrayed San Diego as having one foot looking toward the economic possibilities of the future and the other firmly set in the tranquil ruins of a Spanish mission. The *Union*’s January 1 edition regaled the public with Spanish imagery and history of San Diego, which reflected the concerted efforts to create a Spanish aura around the Exposition and Balboa Park.

³¹ “Not on Bright Past but on Brighter Future,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1915, II 1.

The entire edition emphasized this false memory of California. The articles were devoted to the opening ceremonies and the architecture of Balboa Park or on Junipero Serra and stories from when California was a Spanish colony.

The effect of the Spanish and Ramona myths was a public memory that saturated San Diego with a romanticized version of Spanish colonization. One reporter asserted that Junipero Serra's "mild eyes would have been lifted in surprise at the progress of a twentieth century procession usurping the once shirtless California for the cause of trade and development and power."³² The description of the iconography of the California Tower also relates to this Spanish memory. The reporter writes,

At the top stands the statue of Fra Junipero Serra to whose labors was due in great measure the real start of civilization on the coast of what is now the United States. At one side stands Cabrillo, the discoverer of 1542... At the other is Vicsaino, the explorer of 1602, beneath the bust of Philip II of Spain... and across the arch is Fray Jaumo, the first white martyr. It is a pictorial history of the American west coast.³³

Media coverage of the Exposition clearly set the stage for the promulgation of an idealized Spanish past. A poem published in *Exposition Memories* again extols the Spanish memory. The author writes, "The Spaniards dreamed in days of old,/ Of earth's great treasure, shining gold;/... In vain they searched in every place;/... And now is seen 'neath leaves of green,/ The gold of which the Spaniards dreamed."³⁴

³² *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1915, 1.

³³ *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1915, 6.

³⁴ George Wharton James, *Exposition Memories: Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1916* (Pasadena: The Radiant Life Press, 1917), 136.

The lynchpin for many of the visitors to the 1915 Panama-California Exposition was the architecture of the buildings. Combining the sentimentality of the literature and reporting of the time with a vibrant Spanish Colonial Revival architectural theme, the exposition succeeded in creating an atmosphere of a romantic, Spanish past. The man responsible for turning an abstract Anglo history into a tangible urban space was Bertram Goodhue. He sought to marry the art of the buildings with the Anglo myths of the region. Under Goodhue's supervision, the exposition was designed with a hybrid architectural style that reflected Spanish colonial buildings yet added a whimsical tone. In Goodhue's book, *The Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition*, he advised that, "the Spanish-Colonial style of Mexico, of which our Mission style was an outgrowth, was decided upon, not only because of this style's historical significance in California but because it is most suited to the climate, and also has the gaiety and color so necessary for a fair."³⁵

Goodhue not only wanted Balboa Park to look and feel like miniature Spanish city but he also acknowledged the lack of an Anglo history and helped expand on the region's romanticized Spanish past. He writes,

Fortunately, however, certain sections of our great country, like the Southwest, are not so bereft of historic background: For, long before the coming of our Eastern pioneers, the land had been traversed and spied-out by generations of Spanish *Conquistadores* and priests. Fortunately, too, the littoral of the land so explored is perhaps the most beautiful countryside on earth.³⁶

³⁵ Goodhue, 5.

³⁶ Goodhue, 4. Emphasis by author.

Goodhue's design was a fantasyland of architectural marvel, an urban space that embodied southern California's new Spanish Anglo memory. San Diego's nascent public memory that monopolized on Spanish colonialism as its explicit ideology was manifested through the exposition's buildings.

Architectural enthusiasts lauded the effervescent and uncommon style of the exposition. C. Matlack Price wrote an article in *Architectural Record* explaining why Goodhue's design was so praiseworthy. He wrote that the exposition expressed "the history, resources, prosperity, industries, and products, as well as the golden-lined future promise of the Southwest."³⁷ He also believed that the design was both "historically and locally appropriate" even though the styles of the buildings resembled "a sort of architectural buffoonery, yet actually a style of strange and peculiar delight."³⁸ The *San Diego Union* reported that the exposition "might have erected buildings of Greek or Roman types which have appeared at all world's fairs of the past," but instead Goodhue promoted a Spanish style. The article continued that the exposition "has brought about a genuine renaissance of the glories of Spanish art and architecture, and something which is productive of a very great appeal to the romantic tendencies."³⁹ The remarkable and unique architecture of Balboa Park soon caught the attention, and infatuation, of the public.

³⁷ C. Matlack Price, "The Panama-California Exposition. San Diego, California. Bertram G. Goodhue and the Renaissance of the Spanish-Colonial Architecture." *Architectural Record*, January-June 1915, 234.

³⁸ Price, 234 and 239.

³⁹ "Architectural Gems of Old Spain Revived," *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1915, 1.

Visitors to the Panama-California Exposition were impressed by San Diego's Spanish city in miniature that awaited them in Balboa Park. They could visit Balboa Park and live out the fabricated dream created by white Californians. Newspaper articles and books written about the Panama-California Exposition spoke as if the grounds were a fairy tale land. One such article in the *Los Angeles Times*, covering the opening of the Exposition, referred to it as the "old Spanish city" and the "Magic City of White."⁴⁰ When visitors did come to the park, they would not be disappointed. The *San Diego Union* also featured an interview with J. Strawn de Silva, a Portuguese actor who noted that, "Such an Exposition as this one is certain to attach lasting fame to San Diego, and the city should be commended for its progressiveness in fostering such an important undertaking."⁴¹ This contradictory statement by de Silva, progressiveness by looking backward, illustrates San Diego's attempt to create not only an Anglo history but also an environment that fostered future urban development.

San Diego was not the only city in California to host an exposition celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal. San Francisco also played host to a world's fair called the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Acrimony between the two cities simmered in the years preceding the expositions because only one would receive government funding for the construction and maintenance of the buildings. Although San Diego submitted a proposal before its northern neighbor in 1911, San Francisco held an

⁴⁰ John Lloyd, "Gates of Magic City of White Thrown Open to the World," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1915, I 1.

⁴¹ "Exposition Praised by World Traveler," *San Diego Union*, March 6, 1915, 1.

exposition meeting first.⁴² Complicating matters, late-comer New Orleans also sought to host an exposition celebrating the opening of the Panama Canal. According to Bokovoy, Californian politicians decided that San Francisco's "exposition would experience better chances" at being recognized than San Diego's when it came to competing with New Orleans.⁴³ Recognition for the international exposition was given to San Francisco and the federal government lent support and money to their fair and not to San Diego's regional fair. Instead of scrapping their plans, Panama-California Exposition committee members resolved to continue moving forward.⁴⁴ This decision had the effect of strengthening regional qualities and allowed local boosters to have firm control of all aspects of the fair.

The two expositions also differed in their theme and architecture. San Francisco chose a more common approach to fair design, focusing on a broad swath of European and Asian styles. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that some of the buildings at the Panama-Pacific Exposition were reminiscent of "those frantic and dissonant operas of Southern Italy," while other buildings "show a blending of classic, renaissance and modern themes."⁴⁵ Another article from the *Times* noted that San Diego's exposition was a "new type of exposition, with spectacular achievements of man, strongest in their use of the achievements of nature in this land of loveliness

⁴² "Making Ready for Big Show," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1911, II7.

⁴³ Bokovoy, 22.

⁴⁴ "What Of Interest Happened on the Great Pacific Coast," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1909, I3.

⁴⁵ Jeanne Redman, "Gladness and Color of San Francisco's Exposition," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1915, V134.

and Spanish romance.”⁴⁶ The efficacy of San Diego’s Spanish theme was unambiguously juxtaposed with San Francisco’s assorted collection of architectural styles.

Others would also compare the two expositions, including Frederick Bisbee. Bisbee was a member of a United Universalist pilgrimage that toured California in 1915. Originally, the Panama-California Exposition was not supposed to be on the itinerary but when the fair’s management heard that there was a Universalist tour group in the area, they made 13 July “Universalist Day.”⁴⁷ The scheduling change was approved and the group came south. Upon arrival, Bisbee was amazed and impressed by Goodhue’s designs and atmosphere of the San Diego fair. Having been to both Californian fairs, Bisbee preferred San Diego’s to San Francisco’s exposition. He wrote in his book, *A California Pilgrimage*, “the Exposition is the thing!” and marveled at how Balboa Park “has become the site of an idealized Spanish city, with nothing lacking to make it complete.”⁴⁸ He was especially impressed by the California Building and wrote, “It is the reproduction of an idealized Spanish cathedral [with] the most elaborate yet always delicate ornamentation.”⁴⁹ Exemplifying regional boosterism, newspaper articles also compared the expositions with the *Los Angeles Times* stating, “An effort to describe the beauties of the

⁴⁶ “San Diego’s Beautiful Show a Mighty Achievement, Romantic, Too,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1915, V143.

⁴⁷ Frederick A Bisbee, *A California Pilgrimage: A Souvenir of the United Universalist Conventions, California 1915* (Boston: The Murray Press, 1915), 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

exposition grounds and its rare situation with mere words is futile... if you are to see both expositions, go to San Diego first.”⁵⁰

The marketing of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition was strictly controlled, created by San Diego’s elite. The sole purpose of the exposition was to serve the needs of only a few: businessmen, the chamber of commerce, and land developers. People bought into this created myth wholeheartedly as evidenced by the newspaper articles and literature. Adopted by the citizens of San Diego, the buildings would remain as a permanent reminder of the exposition, something rarely done for world’s fair structures. The functions of the buildings, like the California Quadrangle, serve to remind visitors to the park of this false history. However, the myth and identity of those buildings with the history created by boosters in the early 1900s would show signs of erosion as early as the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition.

The 1935 California Pacific International Exposition and the End of a Unified Park

San Diegans dared to have faith in the future when clouds still obscured prosperity’s horizon, and it was faith that broke down barriers of pessimism to build an exposition which today is recognized as yesterday’s beginning of tomorrow’s greater prosperity.⁵¹ -Frank F. Merriam, Governor of California

San Diego’s second and last successful attempt at holding a world’s fair occurred in the middle of 1935. In the midst of a worldwide depression, Balboa Park’s doors were once again thrown open for the California Pacific International

⁵⁰ “The Two Expositions; Their Differing Charms,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1915, VI 1.

⁵¹ Richard S. Requa, *Inside Lights on the Buildings of San Diego’s Exposition, 1935: The Dramatic Story of the Organization Planning and Construction of the California Pacific International Exposition* (San Diego: Richard S. Requa 1937), IX.

Exposition. This new exposition was no longer a lighthearted whitewashed look into the past. The marketable history of the region had shifted from Spanish to the United States. California state history also influenced the exposition's direction, but was controlled by exposition committees and not the people of San Diego. One reason for this shift was due in large part to the inclusion of government and national commercial interests instead of local business. The result was a change in iconography evident when the 1915 exposition is juxtaposed with the new California Pacific International Exposition. The United States Marine Corps replaced the conquistador, the 49er replaced the Spanish friar and a nudist colony took the role of Ramona. The newer exhibits and themes built for the 1935 exposition eclipsed the original structures. The trend of Spanish friars and explorers defining the region slowly began to fall away, replaced by national and corporate interests and their theme of progress. The contemporary looking Ford building, with its emphasis on progress and consumerism, outshone the anachronistic California Quadrangle. Although the operation of the park continued to be approached from the top down, the memories and myth of the park began to be transformed as another generation made its way to the exposition.

In May of 1935, Mrs. Emma McGovern was the first visitor to enter the California Pacific International Exposition. What awaited her and the other 25,000 visitors that first day resembled very little of the 1915 exposition's Spanish theme. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* recalled that "Spanish dons" still stood at the entrance collecting tickets, but their uniforms seem muted compared to the

conquistador costumes of twenty years earlier. The article continues that, once past the gate, fourteen miles of exhibits and attractions presented the visitor with a seemingly endless array of opportunities and entertainment.⁵² The Mayan themed Standard Oil tower was a short walk away from a replica of a California mining community of the mid nineteenth century called Gold Gulch. Next to Gold Gulch was the Zoro Gardens, home to a nudist colony. Much to a reporter's delight, "You actually can see the nymphs in the sylvan surroundings."⁵³ The \$1,500,000 Midway played host to numerous amusements, a relief after a day of walking through exhibits.

Contrasted with previous world's fairs, expositions during the 1930s went in a different direction. Mostly a consequence of the worldwide depression, they no longer explored the economic and cultural achievements of countries around the world. Instead, fairs focused on the future of the United States as a nation, emphasizing government and national corporations' ability to lift the country out of the economic crisis. In short, fairs began to popularize the potential of American progress.

National corporations and the government invested heavily in exhibits promoting the improvement of the American economy. The federal government alone spent upward of \$40 million on expositions by the late 1930s.⁵⁴ Corporations were not far behind in expenditures as they sought to demonstrate to the American people their ability to weather the current economic storm. Historian Roland

⁵² *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1935, 5.

⁵³ *San Diego Union*, May 30, 1935, 3.

⁵⁴ Frederick A. Gutheim, "Federal Participation in Two World's Fairs," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1939): 608.

Marchand notes that the Ford Motor Company spent over \$2.5 million on their 1934 exhibit in Chicago, “the largest sum ever invested in a fair exhibit.”⁵⁵ Corporate exhibits were so successful that scholar Paul Mason Fotsch notes approximately 30,000 people attended Futurama at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. It was a diorama, created by General Motors, that envisioned what cities and transportation would look like in 1960 and was the most visited exhibit for that fair.⁵⁶ Fotsch goes on to argue that, “It was expected that new technology would help to bring on this better future, and the progress of technology was embodied in the rapid progression of cars in the Futurama.”⁵⁷ The rallying cry, demonstrated by almost every exposition during the 1930s, was progress and San Diego’s California Pacific International Exposition was no different.

Progress and beauty, the two themes of the California Pacific International Exposition, dominated each exhibit in Balboa Park. Other American world’s fairs also focused on the theme of progress through demonstrating the efficacy of government and national corporations as a means out of the Depression. In his article on the theme of progress at world’s fairs, Stephen Neil Greengard writes, “In the early 1930s as America warily emerged from the Depression, making a show of regrouped forces, the most significant shift in attention occurred: from international

⁵⁵ Roland Marchand, “The Designers Go to the Fair: Walter Dorwin Teague and the Professionalization of Corporate Industrial Exhibits, 1933-1940,” *Design Issues* 8, no. 1 (1991): 4.

⁵⁶ Paul Mason Fotsch, “The Building of a Superhighway Future at the New York World’s Fair,” *Cultural Critique* Spring, no. 48 (2001): 66.

⁵⁷ Fotsch, 67.

and national pavilions and themes to corporate manifestations.”⁵⁸ A major hurdle faced by this new wave of exhibits was a need to increase their attraction.

Earlier exposition exhibits produced by companies and the government were unpopular with fairgoers, resulting in limited visitors. Effort to increase the popularity of these exhibits during the 1930s was successful mainly due to the change in approach by fair organizers. Scholar Steve Nelson writes, “The next major evolution in world’s fair performance environments came with the great expositions of the 1930s. To a world starved for good news they offered at least the hope of a better tomorrow, providing both a respite from the Depression and a means of creating employment.”⁵⁹ This call for good news was answered by corporations as “industrial exhibits of the major corporations enabled them to overshadow both the amusement zone and the thematic exhibits as the ‘hit shows’ of the fair.”⁶⁰

The popularity of the corporate exhibits during the 1930s had another effect, a shift in control of the fairs. Companies like Ford Motor Company and General Motors poured money into their exhibits, forcing local boosters and the government to include them in the direction expositions took. Contrasted with the 1915 exposition, which had a decidedly regional air, the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition was forced to incorporate corporate agendas into its exhibits and themes. In his article on Depression era fairs, Roland Marchand argues that,

⁵⁸ Stephen Neil Greengard, “A Brief History of Progress,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 2, (1986): 56.

⁵⁹ Steve Nelson, “Walt Disney’s EPCOT and the World’s Fair Performance Tradition,” *The Drama Review* 30, no. 4 (1986): 120.

⁶⁰ Marchand, 4.

“More than ever before, the great fairs became arenas for the public dramatization of corporate identities.”⁶¹ Architectural historian, Paul Norton, agreed with this sentiment when he wrote, “But, and here is the weakness, the exhibits were frankly commercial advertising, privately financed, whereas the Chicago fair of 1893, and most others, were financed with public subsidy.”⁶² The rise of corporate sponsorship loosened local control, resulting in a modification of the traditional fair model. By associating with and accommodating a greater number of public needs, corporations added diversity to expositions by diminishing the complete power boosters once held. The corporate vision still represented a “top down” approach to urban space, but opened up other possibilities of meaning, beyond that dominated by false memories of “old Spain.”

While housed in innovative and architecturally interesting buildings, many of the commercial and government exhibitors explored the theme of progress within the exhibit. Unlike the 1915 exposition, the California Pacific International Exposition focused on the future of San Diego as an important part of California and not the region. Governor Frank Merriam relayed these sentiments when he was quoted saying, “San Diego, the oldest city in the state, blessed with these advantages, hindered by no disadvantages, has earned the right to give visible expression to the achievements of the past; to portray the movements of the present and to predict the trends of the future.” He continued that Balboa Park represented the “whole range of

⁶¹ Ibid..

⁶² Paul F. Norton, “World's Fairs in the 1930s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24, no. 1 (1965): 27.

historical design from the old world atmosphere of the Home of Hospitality to the ultra-modern theme of the Palace of Travel and Transportation.”⁶³ San Diego’s old world history might still play a part in the identity of the city, but it was not marketed as it previously had been for the 1915 exposition.

Henry Ford epitomized the push by national corporations to implement the theme of progress during the California Pacific International Exposition. He went so far as to invest \$2,000,000 to the exposition, compared with the city of San Diego’s donation of \$500,000.⁶⁴ The Ford building, shaped like a gear and located in the southern part of the park, housed numerous exhibits highlighting American automotive technology. A *Los Angeles Times* article noted that the walls of the entrance and outlying walls portrayed the development and production of the raw materials used in the process of building automobiles. The main exhibition hall discussed “the manufacture of car parts – rolling of steel, die-casting operations, weaving of cloth and ignition wire.”⁶⁵ One such was the Firestone rubber exhibit, displaying the vulcanization process of crude rubber into a material that then could be used for automobile parts.⁶⁶ In July of 1935, the Ford Motor Company even placed their two-millionth V-8 car on display “marking another milestone in Ford production history.”⁶⁷

⁶³ *San Diego Union*, May 30, 1935, 5.

⁶⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1935, 10.

⁶⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1935, A8.

⁶⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1935, E4.

⁶⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1935, D3.

The state of California and other western states also exhibited the theme of progress. A *San Diego Union* article praised the west for all its accomplishments in the past few decades, “Think of the West's achievements... Boulder dam, San Francisco's bay bridges, Grand Coulee dam and All-American canal, to mention only the major projects.”⁶⁸ Another article wrote that San Diego County’s exhibit in the state building was one of the most popular. Focusing on the economic progress the county had made, the reporter writes,

San Diego county has arranged an exhibit of its citrus, agriculture, mining, harbor, road development, water resources and beaches. A dioramic display of the county's agricultural exhibit makes up an important part of this county’s contribution to the state building exhibit... Hundreds of other exhibits and displays can be found in the structure. No building on the Exposition grounds attracted a larger and more enthusiastic group of visitors than this structure filled with all the important features of the Golden State.⁶⁹

One of California’s scientific masterpieces, the telescope of the Griffith Park Observatory, was displayed by means of a scale model. While many national corporations, state and county interests were featured, the federal government also contributed exhibits that used progress as its theme.

New Deal administrations and other government departments used the California Pacific International Exposition as an avenue to disseminate information on new federal programs. The Federal Building housed an assortment of government departments featuring the latest in technological advancement. From the United

⁶⁸ *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1935, 3.

⁶⁹ *San Diego Union*, May 30, 1935, 5.

States Army and Navy to the Department of Agriculture, this medley of government agencies sought to highlight and display the progress of the Roosevelt administration. Reporter William S. Barton of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote about these exhibits and how they “present a veritable feast of science progress” to the exposition visitor. Included in his accounts was a robot that could smoke forty cigarettes in one day. The latest in aeronautics, complete with a model wind tunnel, was in the same building that housed a “mechanically operated model of a lighthouse.”⁷⁰ The United States government’s Modeltown and Modernization Magic was a “miniature town built by the Better Housing administration,” which demonstrated to visitors the advances in urban housing.⁷¹

The focus on national, and not regional, interests did not completely quash the created Spanish heritage of the earlier exposition. The themes also forced a shift from the regional feeling that typified the 1915 exposition. Consequently, this compartmentalized the regional identity of San Diego that characterized the Panama-California Exposition. At the time, the history of San Diego continued to be dominated by the same Spanish myth that was present in 1915. However, it was less influential in 1935 because of the national focus of the California Pacific International Exposition.

The theme of beauty deviated from the 1915’s approach of romanticizing the Spanish past. Beauty, in the 1935 exposition was interpreted in a variety of ways,

⁷⁰ William S. Burton, *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1935, I29.

⁷¹ *San Diego Union*, May 29, 1935, 5.

running the spectrum from works by Rubens and El Greco to the aforementioned Zorro Garden's nudist colony. Focusing on the art, music and landscape of Balboa Park, one newspaper article declared, "It should be a matter for life-long regret if San Diego's offering on the shrine of beauty is permitted to pass unseen, unhonored or unsung by any individual who can possibly visit the grounds."⁷² Another article remarked that, "The majesty and grandeur of [San Diego's] exposition beggars description. It is numbing to the senses. It is the alpha and omega of beauty."

The inclusion of national corporations and federal exhibits downplayed the importance of the myths created by the boosters and designers of the 1915 exposition. While the created Spanish heritage was still brought up in the media, it usually proved only a window treatment to outline the general beauty of the park. A *Los Angeles Times* article written in 1935 chronicled the journey from Los Angeles to San Diego and its points of interest. Remarking about Balboa Park's buildings the article states, "Their beauty, mellowed by the intervening years, has caused them to become an outstanding attraction and judging from the modernistic type of architecture rising all about them, should draw considerable attention as typical of California and Spanish styles."⁷³ Articles remarked that the exposition's art and architecture "related to the Spanish culture," but only as one part of California's history.⁷⁴ Balboa Park began to be known, not for the region's created history, but for the city's future opportunities.

⁷² *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1936, A5.

⁷³ *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1935, E1.

⁷⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1935, A1.

Fine art and architecture, combined with many of the exhibits, portrayed the theme of beauty, and included visiting orchestras, artworks and places like the House of Charm. It served as the “center of style and domestic arts,” where visitors had to visualize that the “Beauty of woman is on an imaginary pedestal here and unconsciously you bow down and worship before the shrine.”⁷⁵ Fine arts were also showcased in Balboa Park’s museums. Old World masters were situated next to neophyte southwestern artists, which harkened back to the Spanish days.⁷⁶ Music was also featured at the exposition. Orchestras and choirs, ranging from the Los Angeles Philharmonic to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, filled Balboa Park with seemingly endless music.⁷⁷

The 1935 California Pacific International Exposition closed its doors after a two season run in 1936 playing host to more than seven million visitors. Both the 1915 and 1935 expositions were responsible for cementing a common memory and identity for Balboa Park. The first one successfully marketed the history and regional interests of southern California while the second focused on the future economic opportunities of San Diego through a national and international lens. In each case, identity and control changed, as evidenced by the transformation of the park’s myth. The themes of the expositions were different; the 1915 exposition had a regional, romantic aura while the 1935 exposition focused on progress and the future. The themes of the fairs were not the only thing to change as civic leaders’ control of

⁷⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1935, G5.

⁷⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 10, 1935, A1.

⁷⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1935, A10.

Balboa Park began to wane by the 1935 exposition. The inroads made by national corporations in diversifying the park was an inkling of the further diversification that would occur in the mid-twentieth century.

Balboa Park and the War Years

The early 1940s saw Balboa Park transition from a world's fair grounds back to a public park, but was short lived. By 1941, the Fine Arts Building had amassed an art collection valued at \$1,300,000.⁷⁸ Cultural groups like the Pan-American League and the San Diego Women's Philharmonic committee also used park facilities.⁷⁹ According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, the San Diego Zoo also expanded, becoming the second largest zoo in the United States.⁸⁰ The zoo was originally created after the 1915 exposition for all the animals that were either too sick or too expensive to move, but it quickly became a tourist attraction in its own right. The municipal golf course located in Balboa Park also attracted publicity for San Diego with its numerous tournaments. However, these new recreational uses would temporarily be cut short due to the United States Navy's occupation of the grounds during World War II.

By March 29, 1942, the Navy took possession of Balboa Park and renamed it Camp Kidd, after an admiral who was killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Park buildings were off limits to civilians and the Navy forced all organizations in the park to vacate. The buildings and facilities were then used to accommodate the Navy's

⁷⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1941, 16.

⁷⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1938, A9.

⁸⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1937, G1.

needs, expansion of the Naval Hospital, education, and quarters for troops.⁸¹ After the war, San Diego faced the difficult task of restoring the damages caused by the Navy and returning to civilian use.

Once the buildings were reopened and the collections reinstalled in the early 1950s, Balboa Park would continue once again become home to the social and cultural organizations of San Diego. A third world's fair was proposed by San Diego's chamber of commerce that intended to "re-define and demonstrate the values of the Free Enterprise system in terms of 'better designs for living.'"⁸² Influenced by the Cold War, the pro-capitalist themed fair did not come to fruition, and the park continued to be used for cultural and recreational activities.

The occupation by the Navy would mark the last time in the park's history that a top down authority controlled the use of this public space without challenge from competing groups. The two expositions and the use of the park by the military all left a mark, both physically and through the transformation of memory, on Balboa Park. Boosters and designers of the 1915 exposition created a mythic history that initially attracted visitors and brought national attention to the region, elaborating on a created Spanish past. The 1935 exposition marked a transition in how Balboa Park through its inclusion of corporate interests, but in each of these three cases control of the park was limited to relatively few people. Among those in control were San Diego civic leaders, the architects and designers they hired, military officials, and

⁸¹ *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1942, 20.

⁸² World Fair Proposal, "San Diego Chamber of Commerce Records," MS-0040 Box 16 Folder 4 Page 3, San Diego State University, San Diego.

government and corporate interests. The ensuing post-war decades experienced a shift in this paradigm. Balboa Park was relinquished to appointed committees, the mayor and city council, private interests and most importantly, the people of San Diego. This diversification of control over the park would lead to a more inclusive urban landscape with wide ranging use that better represented the needs and varied cultures of a contemporary San Diego.

Chapter Two: Preservation and Diversification of Balboa Park

Friday, around noon in Balboa Park, is no empty time. There is no one single magnet to draw the park people here, but they do come and for as many reasons as there are visitors. In most cases, the time available is brief. A little football, or a little snooze; a hard bit of play on a mother-powered merry-go-round, or a romantic, symbolic stroll under the arches; a small child enthralled by the miracle of a real live bird – these make up the infinite variety of one hour in one day in Balboa Park. – *San Diego Union*, October 25, 1970

Saving the Buildings

By the late twentieth century, there had been a shift in the use of Balboa Park as an urban space. The park was no longer primarily a marketing tool for civic leaders or a military compound. The average San Diegan was able to influence the nature of the park. With the interests of the majority of the people being represented, Balboa Park began to reflect this change by an increasing amount of diversification. However, this shift was not without controversy. Balboa Park, with a finite amount of space, only allows for a limited number of uses and resources. Also, the buildings began to show signs of dilapidation and neglect due to the military's use and their original temporary construction, adding additional strain to the city's budget.

All these issues affected its memory and identity, eliciting questions about the park's uncertain future. Should buildings be saved as part of San Diego's history or should they be razed to make room for other uses? What groups would have the right to share the limited building space for their cultural/social organizations? Should nature or manmade structures dominate the park? These questions, along with many more, fueled debates between groups with differing opinions on Balboa Park's use. This chapter will analyze how specific groups, and San Diego as a whole, attempted

to find middle ground between these competing interests. Specific focus will be given to attempts by non-governmental organizations and the Chicano and gay communities to insert themselves into Balboa Park's landscape. Though these groups did not succeed entirely in transforming the meaning of the park, the conflicts and accommodations they petitioned for began to give the park a more pluralist identity.

Urban scholar Dolores Hayden's book, *The Power of Place*, explores how important the process of diversification is to the history and new memories of an urban space. She poses a question early in her book: what is preserved and for whom? "Identity," for Hayden, "is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories... and the collective or social memories." She continues that, "Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories [because they] frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes" and create a collective memory.⁸³

The collective memory created by Anglos for the expositions had effectively left out ethnic and minority groups, even though they too were historical actors in the history of Balboa Park. According to Hayden, the only solution is to force these groups to be included by becoming part of its "place memory" and taking part in its "cultural citizenship." Hayden writes,

Place memory encapsulates the human ability to connect with both the built and natural environments that are entwined in the cultural landscape. It is the key to the power of historic places to help citizens define their public pasts: places trigger memories for insiders, who have shaped a common past, and at the same time

⁸³ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), 9.

places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in present.⁸⁴

In reference to cultural citizenship, Hayden writes that, “Public culture needs to acknowledge and respect diversity while reaching beyond multiple and sometimes conflicting national, ethnic, gender, race and class identities to encompass larger common themes, such as the search for a new sense of identity in an urban setting.”⁸⁵

Although the park's new public face encouraged the public to accept diversity, it was not without conflict. Debates began and then spread about the proper way to use the park's space. Non-profit organizations, usually backed by upper class San Diegans, used their donations to further their agendas. Excluded cultural groups like the Centro Cultural de la Raza and social groups like San Diego's gay community organized and utilized protest and marches in order to be included. In every case, all issues surrounding Balboa Park as an urban space were fought squarely in the public arena. This growing contestation of uses represented the struggle of widely varying groups to attain cultural citizenship and is a testament to the diversification of Balboa Park.

Hayden also specifically attacks the superficiality of southern California's false Spanish history. In her book, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*, she discussed Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s design of Palos Verdes, California. The suburbs were a “community of Spanish colonial houses” where people could be seen “happily celebrating Mexican feast days as local rituals.”

⁸⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

However, “Residents saw no irony in adopting deed restrictions to prohibit Mexican-Americans from buying houses.”⁸⁶

Previously, those who controlled and managed Balboa Park and the expositions had made no effort to embrace San Diego's multiethnic history. By the 1960s and 1970s this trend of exclusion gave way, as previously unrepresented groups began to achieve public visibility in the park. The importance of inclusion in urban space cannot be understated as Hayden considers it to be the crux at which cultural identity, social history and urban design are intertwined. She adds, “Change over time can be traced in incremental modifications of space as much as in an original city plan or building plan.”⁸⁷

Incremental modifications began to manifest in the mid-twentieth century through a need to stop the decay of the buildings and increasing Balboa Park’s diverse uses. By the 1950s, the park was in disrepair due to the Navy’s use and temporary construction of the 1915 and 1935 exposition buildings. With no dominant control by civic leaders, not much was done to fix the situation. The benign neglect that continued through the 1950s soon changed to restoration and preservation efforts in the 1960s and 1970s as some San Diegans realized the park represented decades of San Diego’s cultural identity and social history.

The expositions’ decaying buildings created a problem for San Diegans during the 1950s. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* from 1959 typifies the extent of

⁸⁶ Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2003), 68.

⁸⁷ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 15.

neglect to the buildings. The article discusses the problem the city was having with the Ford Building from the 1935 exposition. The building did not meet safety requirements and the city deliberated whether it should be razed or renovated.⁸⁸ The Ford building was not alone as the poor condition of the majority of the buildings became such a problem for the city that an architectural firm was hired to assess the feasibility of maintaining them.

In 1960, urban planners from Harland Bartholomew & Associates submitted a proposed master plan of Balboa Park for the ensuing fifteen years. The comprehensive plan was commissioned by the Balboa Park Citizens' Committee, whose members consisted mostly of San Diegan elites, and addressed the dilapidation of the aging buildings and concerns of land use. Many were well off San Diegans devoted to encouraging the development of cultural organizations as well as to maintaining the park's history. Some founded organizations like the Timken and Putnam foundations. These foundations dually sought to preserve and expand the cultural organizations in the park by funding the expansion and creation of art galleries. Others, like Bea Evenson formed the Committee of 100 to further her own desire of saving the buildings from the previous expositions. The master plan also suggested destroying many of the exposition buildings due to the cost of maintenance and retrofits needed in order to meet contemporary safety regulations. One of the most affected was the Palisades area of the park, where many of the 1935 exposition buildings were located. It was suggested that, "Existing temporary buildings in the

⁸⁸ "Park Building Action Delayed," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1959, C9.

area would be removed including the Ford Building, the Balboa Park Club, the Palisades Buildings and the Municipal Gymnasium.”⁸⁹ If approved, virtually no trace of the second exposition would have survived. In all, thirteen existing buildings were slated for demolition and would cost the city \$21.5 million.⁹⁰

The master plan also voiced concern regarding land encroachment into Balboa Park’s land. According to Bartholomew & Associates, this intrusion into the park by the freeways, the Naval Hospital and schools on its periphery created “problems of noise, unsightliness and traffic generation.”⁹¹ Blame and criticism was placed squarely on the shoulders of the city government’s incompetence in preserving the boundaries of the park. This issue was expressed in the first page of the master plan. It read, “The central location of Balboa Park has made it the victim of a series of encroachments... The park area has been reduced from 1400 to 1110 acres by these actions, the great foresight and vision of San Diego’s pioneers not being so notable in their successors.”⁹² Though the master plan was critical of Balboa Park’s management, testament to a bottom up influence on the park came in the form of public backlash. For example, at least 33,563 San Diegans signed a proposal in early 1961 limiting the city’s desire to construct new roads and close the Prado to vehicles “without a vote by the people.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Harland Bartholomew & Associates, *Master Plan for Balboa Park: San Diego, California* (St. Louis: Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 1960), 41.

⁹⁰ “San Diego Given Balboa Park Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1960, A6.

⁹¹ Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹³ “Balboa Park Future to Be Studied,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1961, C9.

Bartholomew & Associates' master plan sparked the city's interest to begin restoring and preserving Balboa Park's buildings. However, unlike previous revitalization efforts for the two expositions, which were organized and controlled by a few, issues now arose that involved the public as a whole. Money needed to be appropriated through the city council and personal opinions regarding the aesthetic of the park created conflict. One example occurred in late 1961 when the City Council approved a facelift for the art museum and construction of the Timken museum, the latter completely breaking with the architecture of the 1915 exposition.

According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, discord broke out between the Timken and Putnam foundations and the Balboa Park Protective Association. The article states that the foundations, with the interests of wealthy families, sought to include updated architecture in their designs. They also intended to donate the money for the restoration. Critics argued that the architecture would not match existing Spanish architecture.⁹⁴ Upon hearing this, the foundations threatened to withdraw the \$1 million they were planning on donating, forcing the City Council to quickly approve the plans. This "caustic dissent" between vying groups became the norm in the ensuing years of the local politics of Balboa Park. It was an unfortunate and constant byproduct of a pluralist space.⁹⁵

More controversy over control of Balboa Park came to a head in the late 1960s as numerous committees and organizations were founded, pushing specific

⁹⁴ "Design of Balboa Park Gallery Wing Approved," *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1961, A9.

⁹⁵ "New Look to Start at Balboa Park," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1961, B1.

agendas. One of the most vociferous and well funded of these groups was the Committee of 100. Founded in 1967, with the goal of preserving and restoring as many buildings as possible, the group has continually raised non-governmental funding, often contributing their own money. Their mission is never finished, as the buildings have consistently needed maintenance. While the Committee of 100 was active in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not until the late 1970s when string of arsons and further city neglect led to a crusade of complete restoration. This continued throughout the late 1900s and into the early 2000s. Bea Evenson, leader of the Committee of 100, was so influential that in 1981 a fountain at one end of the Prado was named in her honor.⁹⁶ The committee remains one of the most vocal friends of the park, donating \$50,000 to repair the tiles of the Alcazar Fountain in 2008.⁹⁷

Media coverage in the 1970s and 1980s of Balboa Park also changed from the exposition years. There were no longer stories of fanciful Spanish histories, or talk of Ramona. The Ford Motor Company and the nudist colony of the 1930s were gone as well. San Diego business elites' honeymoon with Balboa Park was over, and replacing it were pragmatic issues related to its public land. All that was left were the buildings, and they were crumbling as organizations and individuals maneuvered to control how the space was used.

⁹⁶ "This day in our Region's History," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 4, 2008, http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080504/news_1z1m4history.html.

⁹⁷ Jeanette Steele, "Historical tile fountains restored at Alcazar Garden," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, March 2, 2008, http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080302/news_1m2balboa.html.

The cost of maintaining the Prado and Palisades area of Balboa Park was a continual thorn in the city and public's side. Many of the buildings recommended by the Bartholomew master plan for demolition were saved from the wrecking ball. Some were destroyed to make way for the Timken Museum and extra wing of the Museum of Art. Other structures, like the Ford Building, were saved, but not much was done to maintain or restore them. (Some did receive financial backing, including \$1.62 million in 1978 of federal money to renovate the California Tower, which had not been used since 1930.⁹⁸ However, this was more of a temporary patch.)

These issues came to a head with the arsons of the 1970s that devastated many of the buildings. Three separate arson attacks overwhelmed preservation efforts in Balboa Park. The Aerospace Museum, originally the Electric Building from the 1915 exposition, was destroyed and many artifacts, including a working replica of the *Spirit of St. Louis* were lost.⁹⁹ Another fire destroyed the Old Globe Theater, built for the 1935 exposition, early the following month.¹⁰⁰ A few days later, yet another fire was set by a park security guard, damaging the House of Hospitality.¹⁰¹ Adding insult to injury the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the insurance company, Maryland Casualty Co., cancelled Balboa Park's policies for every building in the park. According to the article, due to the age of the buildings and disagreement over the

⁹⁸ "Restoration Under Way on Balboa Park Building," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1978, L16.

⁹⁹ "Fire Destroys Aero Museum in San Diego," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1978, A3.

¹⁰⁰ "2 Unsolved Arson Fires Wound the Civic Pride of San Diego," *The Washington Post*, March 10, 1978 A14.

¹⁰¹ "Guard Arrested in Balboa Park Fire," *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1978, B3.

settlements from the arsons, San Diego “could resort to self-insurance.”¹⁰² Later that year, because of the fires and loss of fire insurance, San Diego fire marshals, citing lack of fire sprinklers, condemned six other buildings from the two expositions.¹⁰³

Despite the numerous disadvantages and lack of funding, many San Diegans sought to rectify Balboa Park’s precarious position. Questions arose about where the money would come from to maintain the decades old structures. Without the overwhelming support of the city, federal government and corporations that Balboa Park had enjoyed during the exposition years, collaboration between local organizations and the City Council was necessary. However, some San Diegans even asked if it was worth the maintenance, arguing the city could save money if all the buildings were razed.

Debate about the future of Balboa Park continued throughout the rest of the late 1970s. Non-governmental organizations, like the Committee of 100 and the Citizens Coordinate for Century III, collaborated with the City Council in an attempt to reach middle ground. The Citizens Coordinate for Century III was an environmental group that sought to limit the impact Balboa Park’s buildings had on its natural settings, and ran counter to the Committee of 100’s agenda. When San Diego earmarked \$5.5 million for plans to repair to seven buildings in 1979, the plan was met with resistance from the Citizens Coordinate for Century III because, “there had been no environmental impact report or chance for public response.” On the

¹⁰² Nancy Ray, “Fire Insurance Cancelled for Balboa Park,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1978, A1, San Diego Edition.

¹⁰³ “Fire Hazards Shut 6 Balboa Park Buildings,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1987, A1, San Diego Edition.

other hand, the Committee of 100's response was to donate \$105,000 to restore the Speckels Organ Pavilion.¹⁰⁴

Contention over the meaning of the park even extended to the issue of whether the park was "historic." In the mid 1970s, a petition was sent to the National Park Service to have Balboa Park's original 1915 Panama-California Exposition buildings be recognized in the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination form acknowledged the park's importance as one of the last places in America to have a majority of an exposition's buildings still intact.¹⁰⁵ There were many benefits to be gained if Balboa Park's El Prado should become part of the National Register of Historic Places. The most appealing was access to federal grants for preservation and maintenance. This would lessen Balboa Park's fiscal impact on San Diego's city budget as well as ensure the maintenance of the aging buildings from the 1915 exposition. Additionally, Balboa Park would also be eligible for alternate building and fire codes allowing some of the buildings to escape condemnation. Most importantly, the federal government would officially recognize the park as part of both national and San Diego history.¹⁰⁶

Despite the benefits to be gained, not every San Diegan agreed with the proposal to register the park as a historic place. The idea of having the original buildings recognized as a historical landmark irked local historian Richard Amero,

¹⁰⁴ Jack Jones, "Council Earmarks Funds for Old Globe, Park Plans," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1979, A4, San Diego Edition.

¹⁰⁵ National Park Service, Balboa Park Nomination Form, 1977, 3.

¹⁰⁶ "National Register of Historic Places," National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm.

who like the Citizens Coordinate for Century III, disdainfully viewed any manmade expansion in the park a death knell to the Olmsted tradition of passive park use. He represented many San Diegans disturbed by the expansion of structures in Balboa Park. His February 20 letter to the *Union* explained why he was against the El Prado's National Register recognition – there was nothing explicitly historical about it:

The [1915 Panama-California Exposition] buildings were large boxes with surface pastry-tube decoration vaguely resembling Spanish baroque motifs and with no connection whatsoever with the Franciscan mission and Mexican adobe buildings of Alta California. Mexican architects and critics today refer derisively to the historically-confused and overstated Spanish Revival style popularized by Bertram Goodhue as 'California Spanish.'¹⁰⁷

However, for Amero the debate involved more than whether the Prado deserved to be a historical site. What San Diegans were discussing was not only how to remember a piece of their history but also who determines the memory of such a place.

Amero believed in the Olmsted approach to parks, meaning that public parks should have as few urban traces as possible.¹⁰⁸ Buildings, vendors, and sports should be a minimal intrusion as they were a hindrance and detriment to the openness and atmosphere of the park. He wrote, "I want city parks to offer... a close-up experience

¹⁰⁷ Richard Amero, "Does Balboa Park's El Prado Deserve Historic Label," *San Diego Union*, February 20, 1976 B-7.

¹⁰⁸ For more information on Olmsted's landscape approach see: Werenfels, Martha L. "Frederick Law Olmsted and His Firm's Private Clients: An Unexamined Facet of Olmsted's Approach to Nature in the City." *Rhode Island History* 53, no. 2 (1995): 38-57, and Rosenzweig, Roy and Elizabeth Blackmar. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

of nature, of fresh and clean air, and of unmolested spaces.”¹⁰⁹ Amero also argued that the diverse uses of Balboa Park “shortchange the democratic character of a public park and subtract from free portions for everyone to enjoy.”¹¹⁰ Though a minority opinion on the function of the Park, Amero continued efforts to thwart manmade expansion and historic acknowledgement. His unofficial status as historian of Balboa Park, has allowed his opinions to be disseminated almost as well as organized groups.¹¹¹ Despite Amero’s objections, San Diegans that wanted the park listed won the day, and the park was officially granted a historic designation in 1977.

Amero was not alone in his attempt to limit intrusion into the park. Other San Diegan groups also supported the fight to keep new construction on Balboa Park’s land. One issue was the new proposed site for the Naval Hospital in the late 1970s. The hospital had been on park grounds since the early 1900s, but the Navy wanted more space. Adding fuel to the fire, the site they chose had arguably one of the best views in the park. Environmental groups and politicians opposed the Navy’s suggestion of Balboa Park for the site. In 1980, when Balboa Park was chosen, instead of a site in the city, Mayor Pete Wilson and senators S.I. Hayakawa and Alan Cranston joined with the Sierra Club in denouncing the Navy’s choice. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the “decision shocked San Diego’s political leaders and

¹⁰⁹ “Richard Amero Collection,” *San Diego Historical Society*, http://www.sandiegohistory.org/online_resources/downloads/MS%2076%20Richard%20Amero%20Collection.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Richard Amero, “Balboa Park: Whose Park is it Anyway?” *Balboa Park History*, <http://www.balboaparkhistory.net/glimpses/whose-park-balboa.htm>.

¹¹¹ The *San Diego Union-Tribune* continually uses Amero’s historical knowledge when writing articles on Balboa Park with the last article in 2008 referencing him.

community activists, who immediately began searching for ways to change the Navy's mind."¹¹² A letter to the editor by Sierra Club president, Lyndelle Fairlie, also supported the construction of the Naval Hospital off the park's land and argued that it would be beneficial for the citizens of San Diego since the hospital already takes up seventy-seven acres.¹¹³

Whether Balboa Park should revert to the uses of its earliest years as a quiet, bucolic escape of city life or maintain its contemporary status as the cultural, historical, and recreational center of the region continues to be a point of contention for San Diegans. A more recent group, the Friends of Balboa Park also want to preserve the legacy of Balboa Park. They contribute to the general upkeep of the park, even installing state-of-the-art information kiosks.¹¹⁴

In 1989, the city of San Diego approved a master plan for Balboa Park, which was created and submitted by Estrada Land Planning, Inc. In many ways, the adoption of a master plan, the first in almost thirty years, represented the fact that many civic leaders acknowledged the fragmentation of the park due to its many uses. The master plan focused on two major deficiencies seen as detrimental to the future of Balboa Park. The first revolved around the restoration and preservation of not only the 1915 exposition buildings, but also the newly historically recognized 1935

¹¹² *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1980, B18.

¹¹³ *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1980, A4, San Diego edition.

¹¹⁴ Jeanette Steele, "Museum seeks city OK for Calder sculpture – after the fact," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 2, 2009, <http://www3.signonsandiego.com/news/2009/aug/02/1m2balboa221519-museum-seeks-city-ok-calder-sculpt/>.

exposition buildings as well.¹¹⁵ The writers of the plan also wanted to ensure that “a high quality, cohesive design fabric within the park” would be maintained in the future.¹¹⁶ Even as the city attempted to control the aforementioned private organizations and preserve the aging buildings, two more groups pushed for space, more important issues of socio-cultural use of Balboa Park arose.¹¹⁷

The Diversification of Balboa Park’s Space

Concern and issues revolving around Balboa Park did not focus solely on land loss and problems with the buildings. Many of the aforementioned preservation groups were well connected and usually wealthy. As a result, organizations like the Committee of 100 could easily use their money to include themselves in the debate over space usage. Other groups were not as well connected and criticism over ethnic and cultural diversity began to reverberate throughout minority groups as early as the 1960s. At the head of this call for diversity were outspoken leaders of San Diego’s Chicano community, whose demands for equal representation, cultural and medical facilities fell on the deaf ears of the local government. By the late 1960s, many of these goals were successful due to a unified front by Chicano groups in San Diego. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* from 1968 noted that “a ground swell of solidarity is rising among [Chicanos] in part the result of the civil rights struggle which led many of them to ‘dream impossible dreams.’”¹¹⁸ One of the high priorities

¹¹⁵ Estrada Land Planning and City of San Diego Planning Department, *Balboa Park: Master Plan* (San Diego, 1989), 93

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63

¹¹⁷ *San Diego Union*, July 26, 1989, B4.

¹¹⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1968, O7.

of the Chicano movement during the 1960s and 1970s was a cultural center in Balboa Park. During this time, other groups, including San Diego's gay community, also sought use of the park. This movement toward diversity in Balboa Park, unprecedented since before the first exposition, was an important step in the park's urban history.

During the mid to late 1950s, Balboa Park would open to new voices further, playing host to numerous political and civil rights rallies in addition to including more, permanent cultural organizations including a permanent home for the Japanese Pavilion and the World Beat Center. Balboa Park, along with the rest of the United States, witnessed the struggle for basic civil rights for all Americans. This phenomenon would affect and encourage other burgeoning civil rights movements of the 1960s and early 1970s in San Diego, including the gay and Chicano movements.

One such organization that represents Hayden's cultural citizenship is the Centro Cultural de la Raza. The Centro was founded in the early 1970s, a result of the Chicano movement in California, and as early as 1971 the organization was pushing for a permanent space in Balboa Park. By January, the park and Recreation Board approved the use of an old water tank but needed to be finalized by the San Diego City Council.¹¹⁹ That approval came at the end of the year with the Centro leasing the space for one dollar annually. This would mark the first time that an organization using a facility in Balboa Park was solely dedicated to the Chicano and indigenous culture in California. In response to the City Council's final approval of

¹¹⁹ *San Diego Union*, January 7, 1971, B1.

the Centro's permanent home, the *San Diego Union* quoted Parks and Public Buildings Director William Gerhardt as saying, "This will meet a need that has existed for quite some time."¹²⁰

What Gerhardt's remark alluded to was the fact that San Diego, home to a large Chicano population, lacked space for a formal cultural organization of any type that supported a Chicano cultural heritage. Throughout the history of Balboa Park, for instance, not only had there not been a strong Chicano presence but Mexicans and American Indians had also been largely overlooked and disparaged to a degree. While both expositions did have American Indian exhibits, they were usually a cultural amalgamation with no emphasis on local tribes. By the late 1970s, this push for ethnic diversity in Balboa Park and San Diego, partly due to the efforts of the members of the Centro, had extended throughout the region and even into local universities. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Chicano studies in Southern Californian universities and community colleges were evolving into serious academic courses. They were seen as a "valuable, even essential part, of a balanced college education" as opposed to previous years where Chicano studies were "run as a Mexican-American club with very little academic content."¹²¹ Riding on this academic wave of cultural diversification, Chicanos in San Diego desired official representation of their local heritage and looked for this in the heart of San Diego's

¹²⁰ *San Diego Union*, January 29, 1971, B4.

¹²¹ *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1978, D1.

cultural center, Balboa Park. The result was a permanent home for the Centro Cultural de la Raza.

The Centro began as a collaboration of Chicano Vietnam veterans, artists, poets and dancers originally called Los Toltecas en Aztlan.¹²² Included in the group was David Avalos, later a professor of Visual and Performing Arts at California State University San Marcos, who met other Chicano veterans and artists as a student at San Diego State University. Los Toltecas en Aztlan were given tacit approval by Balboa Park supervisors to use the aging Ford Building to host cultural events. However, the city evicted the group when an air and space museum was proposed for the facility. They were unsuccessful in their attempt to retain the use of the Ford Building but the city of San Diego allowed use of another facility, an old water tank built for the 1915 exposition. They also advocated for more Chicano representation in San Diego and focused on four key issues, “the development of Chicano Park, the use of the Ford building as a cultural center, the proposed Interstate 805 freeway through San Ysidro, and police brutality in Chicano barrios.”¹²³

While space was finally allocated for the Centro, it was located on the outskirts of Balboa Park. Avalos remarked that, “the Centro is not centrally located. It’s not located along with the other museums in the park. It’s kind of on the periphery. If you want to find parking in the park you don’t really even go near

¹²² To commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Centro Cultural de la Raza, the book, *Made in Aztlan*, was published by the organization. The book was a retrospective of the Centro’s struggle for a permanent facility at Balboa Park and a chronicle of the diverse cultural activities and art that took place since 1970.

¹²³ Brookman, Philip, *Made in Aztlan* (La Mesa: Tolteca Publications, 1986), 21.

there.”¹²⁴ Although segregated from the other museums and facilities, the group was the first permanent Chicano organization in Balboa Park.

Avalos also echoed the need for Chicano involvement in Balboa Park, and during an interview, he recalled his time working at the Centro Cultural de la Raza. When asked what Balboa Park was like in the 1970s he replied that it “exists both as open space and also as a cultural center,” and, “at the time that the Centro was established there was no Chicano presence, which you wouldn’t expect to find as the Chicano movement really began growing around 1965.” When asked why members of the Centro chose Balboa Park as opposed to other sites in San Diego, Avalos replied, “Well, I think there was some debate among folks, but the feeling was that [Balboa Park] was where the cultural center of San Diego is and think very wisely they thought, ‘Hey, that’s where we should be.’”¹²⁵

The issues of Chicano cultural involvement and social representation in the San Diego community went further than simply having an institution in Balboa Park. For Avalos, and other Chicanos, the 1970s represented a moment in time when wrongs could begin to be righted:

And so the Centro was part of that moment in San Diego’s history and the city was willing to negotiate with organized local representatives of the Mexican American community. Chicanos insisted that the city had to allow for these things to happen: a community clinic, a park, and a cultural center in Balboa Park. So neither the park nor the Centro were necessarily given nor the community clinic were given to anybody. They were taken by folks who said, ‘Hey, we’re representing our own needs here... the discrimination was stark, why

¹²⁴ David Avalos, interviewed by Jonathan Bechtol, March 16, 2009.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

do other neighborhoods have parks? Why do other neighborhoods have community clinics? Why is there no representative institution of our culture, indigenous, native cultures, Mexican cultures, Chicano culture?'¹²⁶

The Centro's and Chicano involvement in Balboa Park represents a departure from the function of the park created by boosters of both expositions, specifically the 1915 Exposition. No longer would a unified theme or specific group dominate the park's identity. The public memory of the park would also not have a single memory as it had during the exposition and war years. Avalos' memory of his time at the Centro is but one small segment of an overall, diverse memory visitors to the park have. The old exposition buildings still remain, reminders of the various uses and transformations Balboa Park has undergone, but the myth and memory they once represented has been incorporated with other memories and no longer remains a dominant force.

By the 1980s, the Centro Cultural de la Raza would push to be fully integrated within the park. From its humble origins by a handful of local Chicano artists, the Centro Cultural grew to be well known for its diverse exhibits. The organization has gone further than acting as a space for Chicano culture and art by reaching out to other groups, like environmentalists, who were allowed to use the space to watch a televised concert in 1989.¹²⁷ The Centro Cultural de la Raza not only represents the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *San Diego Union*, June 4, 1989, B7.

diversification of Balboa Park, but also the San Diego region. In the poem “ode to san diego,” artist and member of the Centro Cultural Alturista writes,

we refused to become posters or legends
of the dead, unbendingly we stood our national ground and
liberated parks, cultural centers
free clinics... the aroma of thy roses
thy royal flowers, winter roses san diego
prevail in our hearts
our struggle rekindles its force/and it, the force, remains with us
...balboa park i ke!¹²⁸

The Chicano community was not the only group demanding fair use of Balboa Park during the 1970s and 1980s. The gay community of San Diego also began pushing for use of the park for political and social rallies. The first organized parade took place in 1974 with only a few hundred marchers. On the thirtieth anniversary of San Diego’s Pride Parade, more than 140,000 people lined the streets of Hillcrest to commemorate the festivities.¹²⁹ Along with the Pride Parade, the accompanying festival held in Balboa Park attracted many of the parade’s spectators. In 2009, the festival, located on the western side of the park attracted roughly 50,000 visitors.¹³⁰ What began as a rally for political purposes has transformed into an inclusive community experience.

Not only can the evolution of the function and memory of Balboa Park as a whole be traced, but so can individual groups and events. The 1915 Exposition was much more provincial and evolved into the corporate and government dominated 1935 Exposition. The Centro Cultural de la Raza was a product of the Chicano

¹²⁸ Brookman, 8.

¹²⁹ *San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 1, 2004, B1.

¹³⁰ *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 18, 2009, CZ1.

movement, which eventually opened a door for a stronger minority representation. The same can be said about the gay pride rallies held in the park. According to the San Diego Pride website, some of those first parade marchers in 1974 covered their faces with paper bags to not be recognized and outed.¹³¹ However, increasing demand for equality emboldened the gay community. Four years later, the paper bags were gone, replaced by demands for political rights. Among those were custody rights for gay and lesbian parents and a call to stop a ballot measure requiring the forced resignation of any openly gay or lesbian public school teachers. The *Los Angeles Times* quoted rally coordinator, Paula Frederick as saying that “the rally illustrated ‘the coming of age for the gay community.’”¹³²

The 1979 rally at Balboa Park’s Organ Pavilion also focused on political issues including a discussion on police harassment, the tenth anniversary of the New York Stonewall riots, and the murder of Harvey Milk.¹³³ More recent Pride festivals have expanded to become two-day events offering a variety of vendors, community groups and entertainment. National corporations, including MetLife and Malibu Rum, have recently sponsored the event.¹³⁴

The Pride Parade and Festival were not without critics however, illustrating the fact that not all were happy with the growing pluralism of Balboa Park. Many local anti-gay organizations also protested along the parade route and outside the

¹³¹ “History of Pride and San Diego LGBT Timeline,” *San Diego LGBT Pride Website*, <http://www.sandiegoprider.org/91/Timeline.htm>.

¹³² *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1978, E7.

¹³³ *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1979, A6, San Diego Edition.

¹³⁴ “Pride Festival,” *San Diego LGBT Pride Website*, <http://www.sandiegoprider.org/5/Festival.htm>.

festival. It became such an issue that by the mid 1980s festival organizers had to train volunteers on crowd control. The *San Diego Union* reported that this training would teach them “how to take verbal abuse, and keep any of their people from bopping us, or keep any of our people from bopping them.”¹³⁵ The article goes on to quote a local, anti-gay pastor intent on protesting. He remarked that he expects visitors and demonstrators to become violent noting, “They’re a vicious, mean, bitter bunch of people... Our people are out there for a purpose, to warn the people against this plague that’s coming into our country.”¹³⁶ In 1985, another article about Balboa Park’s 117th birthday asks what early twentieth century Park Commissioner George Marston would have to say about the southwest section of the park, named after him, being used “as a gathering place for the city’s homosexual community.”¹³⁷

Both the Pride festival and the Centro Cultural de la Raza represent the expansion of divergent interest groups shaping Balboa Park throughout the late 1900s. But diversity soon ran up against a limited amount of space. As the city grew around it, some of that space began to be chipped away. A major highway, California State Route 163, separates the western Marston Point from the rest of the park. Schools and the Naval Hospital also have penetrated the park’s land.¹³⁸ As land is slowly lost to the encroaching San Diegan metropolis, multiple groups and individuals voiced concern about budgets, uses, and the future of Balboa Park. This

¹³⁵ *San Diego Union*, June 3, 1984, B7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *San Diego Union*, July 7, 1985, B2.

¹³⁸ The Naval Hospital has been of peculiar interest to San Diegans, who have fought for decades to limit the expansion of the institution. Throughout the 1970s, vigorous coverage of the proposed expansion is evident in both the *San Diego Union* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

diversification of urban space has created yet another problem: how to cope with the dizzying amount of uses demanded by the public.

These various groups, each demanding their opinions on public space be heard and implemented, represent the numerous uses of Balboa Park. This question of what a park is, how it is defined, and what activities are included in the design of the park is very important in understanding the identity, or narrative of the park. While this diversification may cause a logjam for the local San Diego government in implementing new park policies, it also is the first time in the history of Balboa Park where the different interest groups dominated its function. The result of the public's reclamation of the park's function is countless, divergent memories.

Conclusion

Urban scholar Hilary Taylor writes that the public park “is a site – both physical and philosophical – of political, cultural, social and economic debates.”¹³⁹ How and why the park was designed, who uses it, and how it is remembered, factor into the park’s cultural identity. Diverse groups, each with their own specific concerns and issues, shape these various facets. Balboa Park is no different, as the history of the space speaks to its identity. Very few other public spaces in San Diego afford an arena for such diverse political and cultural issues. While Balboa Park was created to have a very strict origin and single-minded use, the park soon followed the trends of many other urban parks in America.

Urban parks witnessed a shift in use during the early twentieth century. The Olmsted tradition of an emphasis on trees and other greenery gave way to allow for a pluralist approach to parks’ use. No longer were they the passive gardens of the urban elite. Playgrounds and athletic fields integrated themselves into the landscape and eventually, in larger American cities, buildings and cultural organizations claimed space. Balboa Park followed this trend and, while the original construction was not designed to be specifically a park, it still followed the top down vision of the other Olmsted parks.

San Diego in the early 1900s was small town and city leaders were looking for a way to market the region. Serendipitously, the opening of the Panama Canal allowed for an ideal selling point, as the city was the first American port on the

¹³⁹ Hilary Taylor, 201.

Pacific side. The ensuing 1915 Panama-California Exposition was the manifestation of this attempt at marketing. While Balboa Park was designed with a specific function, an accompanying myth about the region also took hold. The mythical Spanish memory long outlasted the two-year run of the exposition and continues to be prevalent, though decidedly less influential than it had been.

The 1935 California Pacific Exposition illustrated how the top down myth and function of the park slowly began to diminish. The majority of the exhibits were focused on national endeavors, mainly dedicated to American government and national corporations like Ford and Standard Oil. National interests eclipsed the regional feel and Spanish theme of the 1915 exposition. As the unified uses and created myths of the 1915 Panama-California and 1935 California Pacific Expositions fade into history, they are replaced by individual memories, almost as different as each visitor.

By the early 1970s, the function of Balboa Park had transformed dramatically, as the function became fragmented. Cultural groups and other organizations demanded to be represented by having space within the park. Groups organized to ensure that specific areas and buildings of the park be preserved or maintained. The 1989 Estrada Master Plan relays this sentiment that, “Although Balboa Park has different significance to all people, it does mean something to every metropolitan resident and to countless thousands who have visited the park from outside the metropolitan area.” It was no longer a venue for marketing corporations or government projects, and the question was raised as to who would pay and support

the park. Funding for maintenance and preservation, the incursion of land for a freeway, a naval hospital, and schools, all contribute to the city government's problems at controlling such a diverse space.

The result of the diversification of Balboa Park is not without problems as government funding decreases, the infrastructure shows signs of its age, and debates continue about how to best use the land. These issues aside, for many, Balboa Park is important to what one study refers to as the "Soul of San Diego." This study, funded by the Trust for Public Land in 2008, researched how best to ensure that Balboa Park continues to be a refuge for those seeking culture and perhaps a quiet walk. It concluded, "Looking to the future, it should be managed so as to maximize its great attributes and also fit with the history and culture of the people of San Diego."¹⁴⁰ No consensus has been reached about the correct use Balboa Park's land, and possibly, will never be. Currently, control of its future has been given to people of San Diego and elected government officials, not the Chamber of Commerce or influential members of the community alone. Regardless of who controls Balboa Park, its identity and memory will reflect the history of San Diego.

¹⁴⁰ *The Soul of San Diego: Keeping Balboa Park Magnificent In its Second Century* (The Trust for Public Land, 2008), 16.

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