

The Olmsted Brothers' Visionary Work for California

Christine Edstrom O'Hara

CGLHS Lecture Series 2020
October 21, 2020



from *Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect, 1822-1903*, edited by
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Theodora Kimball, published 1922.



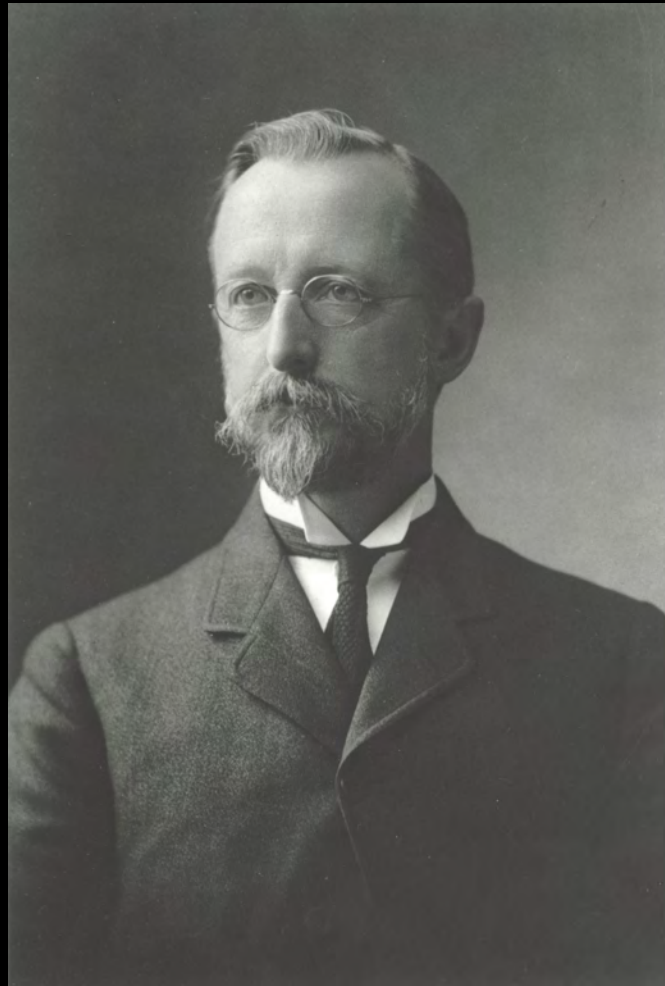
The Five Friends in New Haven Days

Charles Trask	Frederick J. Kingsbury	John Hull Olmsted
Charles Loring Brace	Frederick Law Olmsted	



Mary Perkins Olmsted

Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm principals in California



John Charles Olmsted
1852 - 1920



Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
1870 - 1957



Fred Dawson
1874 - 1941

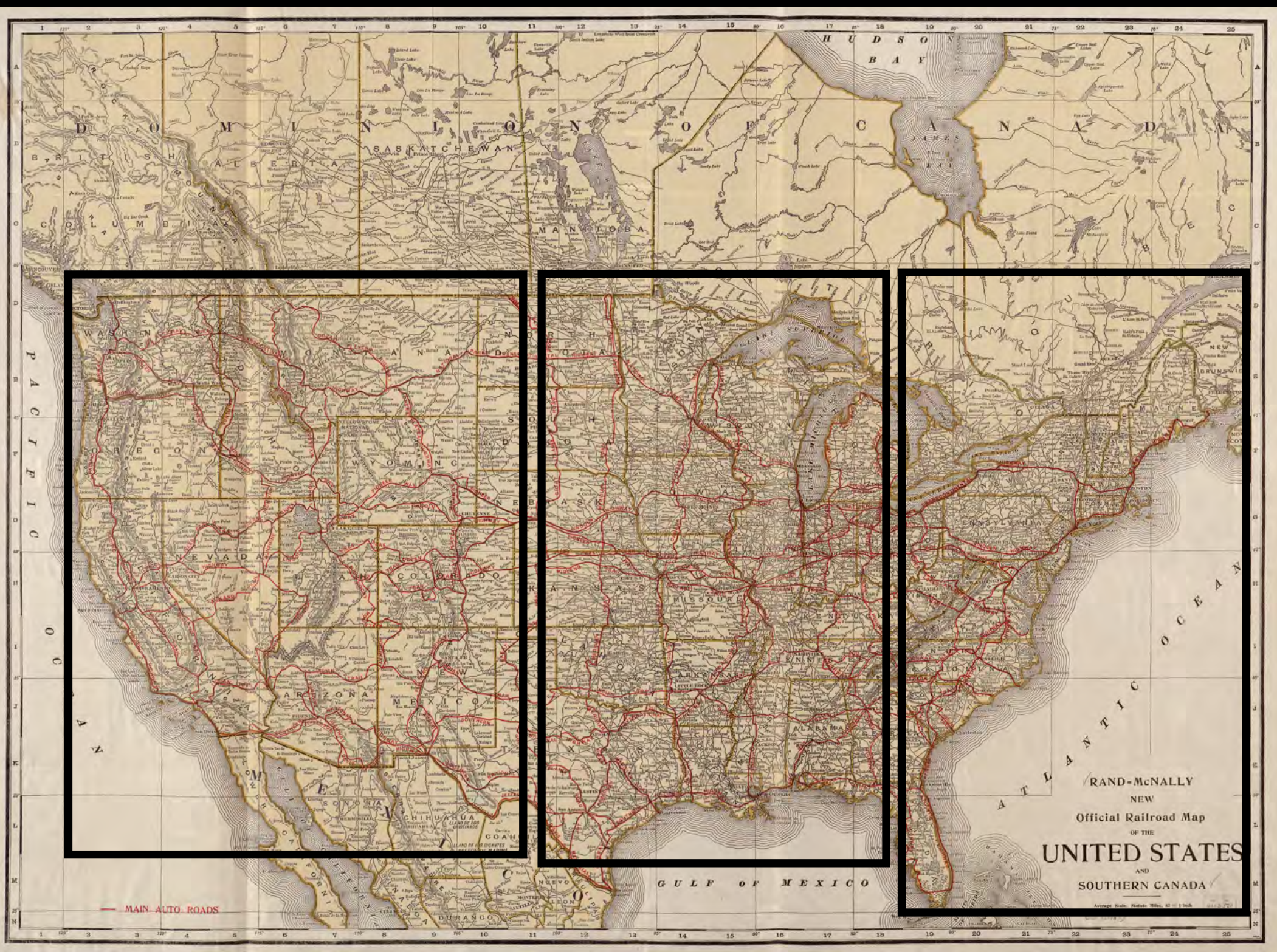
Olmsted Firm values:

1. Connect people to nature within the city
2. Design regionally by responding to the natural conditions of the site
3. When possible, affect environmental restoration *through* the design



Malaga Cove School
Palos Verdes Estates, 1920s





Los Angeles projects + consults 1903 - 1950 (232 in California)

Catalina Island
Beverly Arnaz Land Company
Torrance
Los Angeles Major Traffic Plan
East Side Organization
John Cravens Estate, Pasadena
La Cienega Playground, Beverly Hills
William Mead Estate, Hollywood
Edwin Janss subdivision, Los Angeles
Bear Lake Subdivision
Pacific Palisades
Gaffey Canyon, San Pedro
Santa Cruz Park, Long Beach
Bluff Park, Long Beach
City of Long Beach
Vanderlip Estate, Palos Verdes

Benmar Hills, Burbank
T.W. Warren Estate, Pasadena
Pioneer Park, Burbank
Malibu Park
Alta San Rafael Subdivision, Pasadena
Angeles-Mesa Pkwy System, Los Angeles
Malaga Cove and Miraleste Schools, Palos Verdes
Hollywood-Palos Verdes Pkwy System
E.W. Gard Estate, Palos Verdes
Portuguese Bend Beach Club, PV
California Club, Los Angeles
Bloch Estate, Palos Verdes
Del Norte State Park
Burbank Civic Center
Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden
Leimert Park, Los Angeles
Sherman Oaks Subdivision

New park typology suited for Southern California

PANAMA-CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, 1915



71655 PUENTE CABRILLO AND CALIFORNIA BUILDING

4051-53

Balboa Park
San Diego

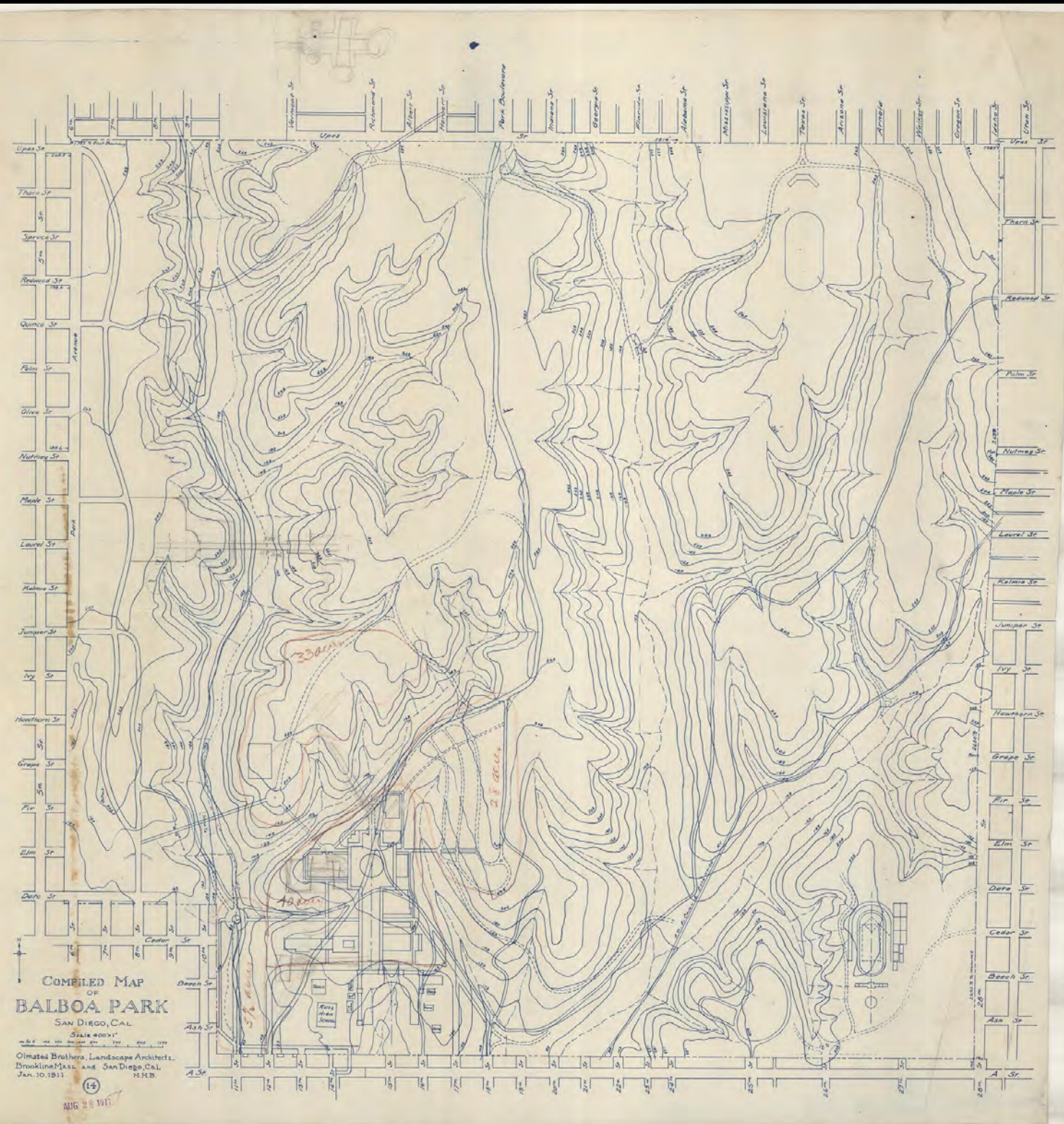


Columbian World Exposition
1893: focus on Columbus

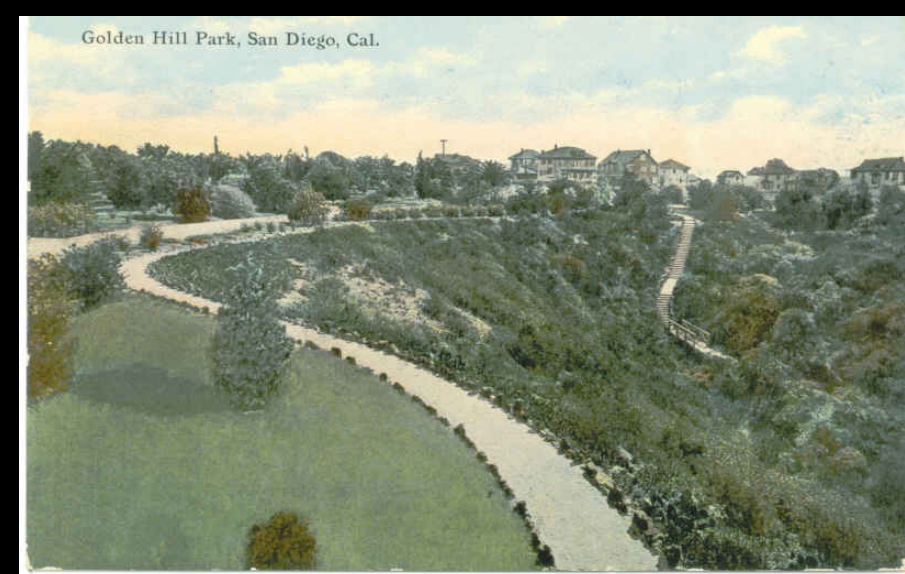


Panama-California Exposition
1915: focus on regionalism

Alhambra, Granada, Spain



Balboa Park
San Diego



Landscape architect Samuel Parson's
substitution of ground covers for turf



John D. Spreckles

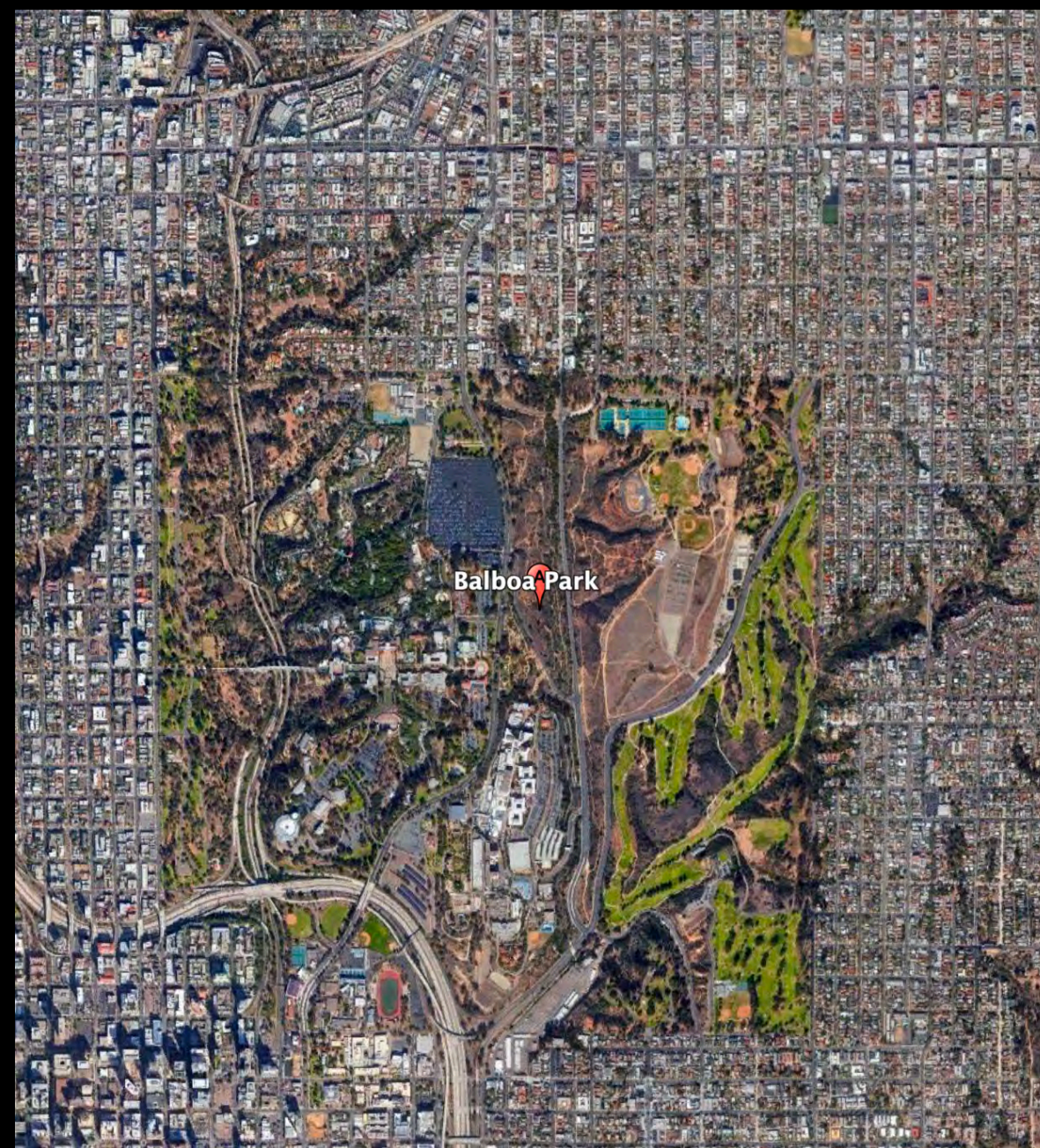
Balboa Park
San Diego

PANAMA-CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, 1915



71648 FOREIGN ARTS AND COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES BUILDINGS FROM LAGUNA DE LAS FLORES

4051-64



Balboa Park
San Diego

New towns built around natural systems,
with the community focused on walkability
and outdoor recreation



Palos Verdes Estates



La Venta Inn, Palos Verdes Estates
1920s

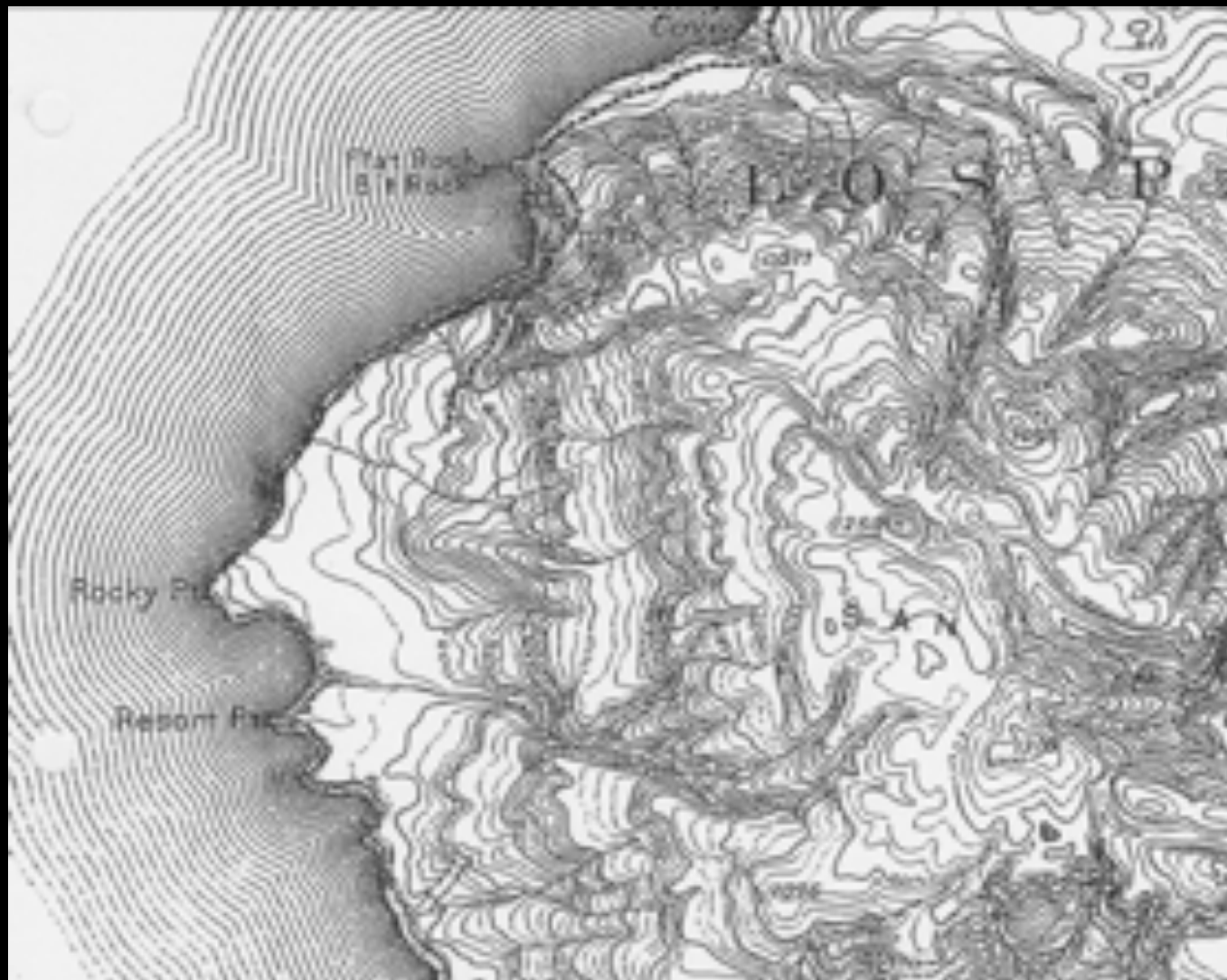


Palos Verdes Estates



Balboa Park

Topographical survey and microclimate studies



Hydrological studies and expert advice
on low water plants



On-site nursery



Road layout and grading





Frank Vanderlip:
Developer



Myron Hunt:
Chief Architect



Amalfi Coast, Italy



California Architecture



Palos Verdes Estates



Ravello, Italy



Charles Cheney:
City Planner



Palos Verdes Estates



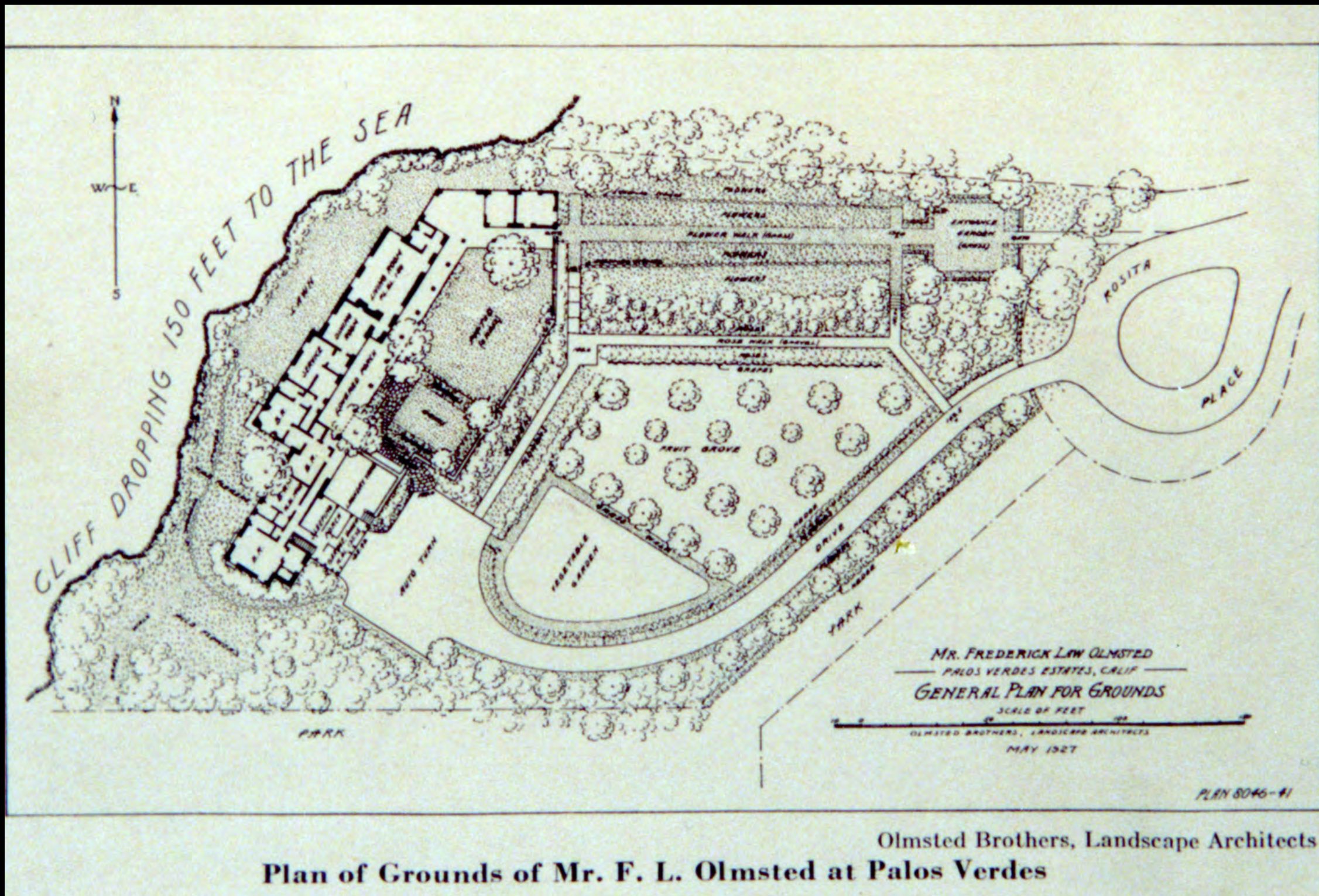
Malaga Cove



Palos Verdes Estates



Frederick Law Olmsted's personal home



Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects
Plan of Grounds of Mr. F. L. Olmsted at Palos Verdes





Palos Verdes Estates

Planned open space



Palos Verdes Estates

Drainage to open space



Palos Verdes Estates

Open space had recreational value



Palos Verdes Estates



Downtown Los Angeles, 1920s

Multiple circulation on streets:
cars, electric railway, equestrians and pedestrians



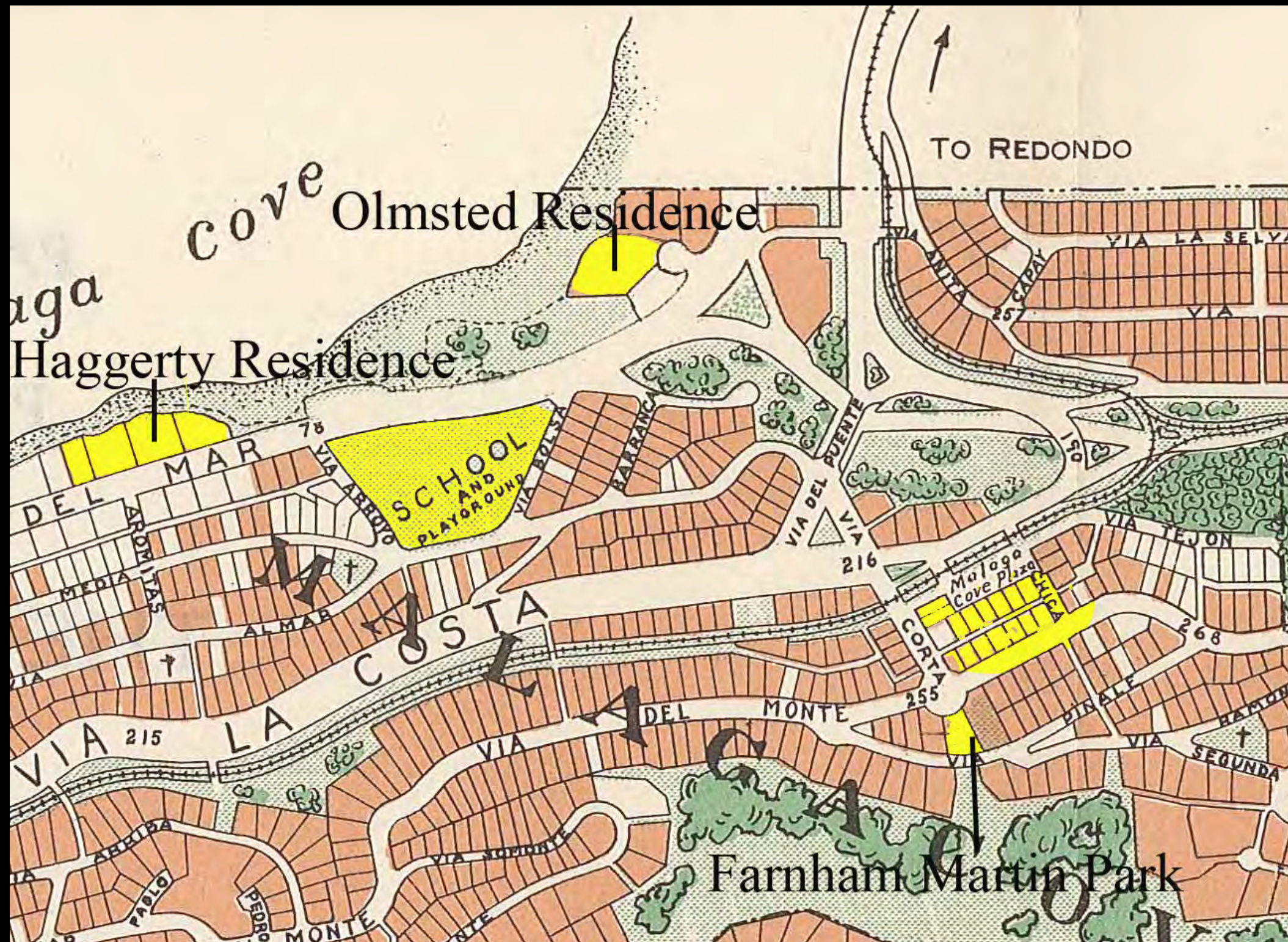
Streets manage stormwater



Self-sufficient villages



Walkable design



Design works with topography in streets
and non-uniform lot layouts



ALY NATIONAL TRUST
ASSOCIATION, Trustee
angeles, California



Palos Verdes Estates

Design works with topography within each lot



Largest un-irrigated
development in the country
at the time



Palos Verdes Estates

Parks minimized use of lawn
with planting designing
blurring into the native
landscape



Farnham Martin's Park



Palos Verdes Estates



Farnham Martin's Park



Malaga Cove commercial center

Palos Verdes Estates



Palos Verdes Estates





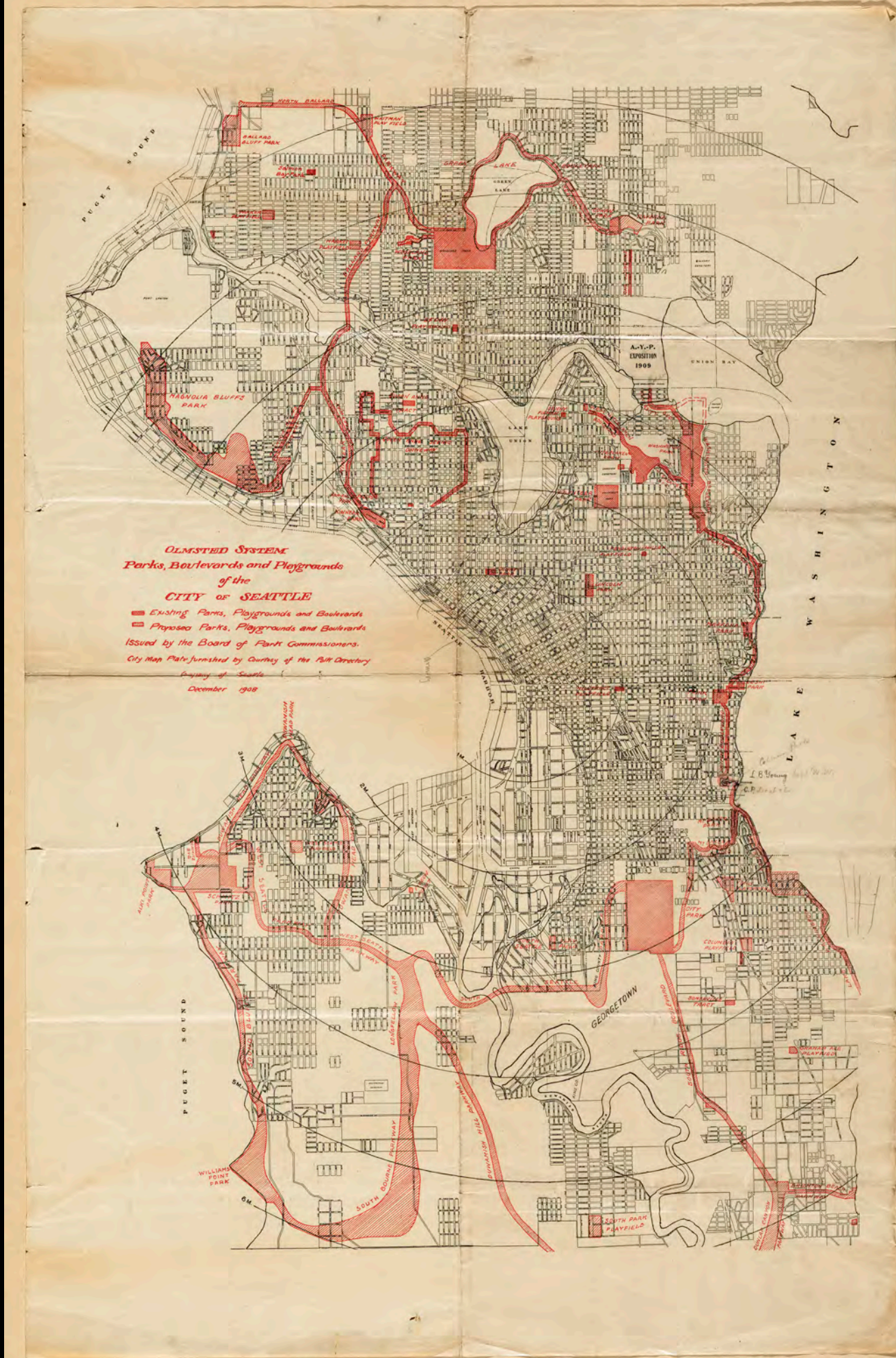
Palos Verdes Estates

Multi-functional parkways provide infrastructure
while also managing stormwater,
linking many cultural heritage sites



Central Park, New York City





Seattle Park System, Seattle 1903-1908

Mattoon Act or Acquisition and Improvement Act, 1925

For Better Highways

The new Mattoon Act is expected to hasten the broad program of highways and other improvements for the Los Angeles Metropolitan district, outlined by the Regional Planning Commission. The upper picture at the left shows a grade separation project at Telegraph Road and Atlantic avenue where the Union Pacific tracks cross. At the right, above, is an example of voluntary setting back by property owners of buildings to allow for widening of streets. This is along Telegraph Road. This widening project has already been started. Below is a view of Atlantic avenue north of Whittier Boulevard, which is to be extended to Pasadena. The park was donated by the subdivider and improved by the county forestry department.

NEW LAW AIDS HIGHWAYS

Mattoon Act is Expected to Facilitate Extensive and Needed Program of Regional Planning Body

A system of highways, carefully planned to care for the traffic radiating out from the city of Los Angeles through all of the metropolitan district of the county, parks that will afford beauty spots and recreation grounds in the communities which are springing up with such amazing rapidity, business streets of adequate width in the local centers and street improvements in the various residential districts in county territory—all of these desirable things have been greatly assisted by the passage of the Mattoon Act, or Assembly Bill 688, which was signed by the Governor last week.

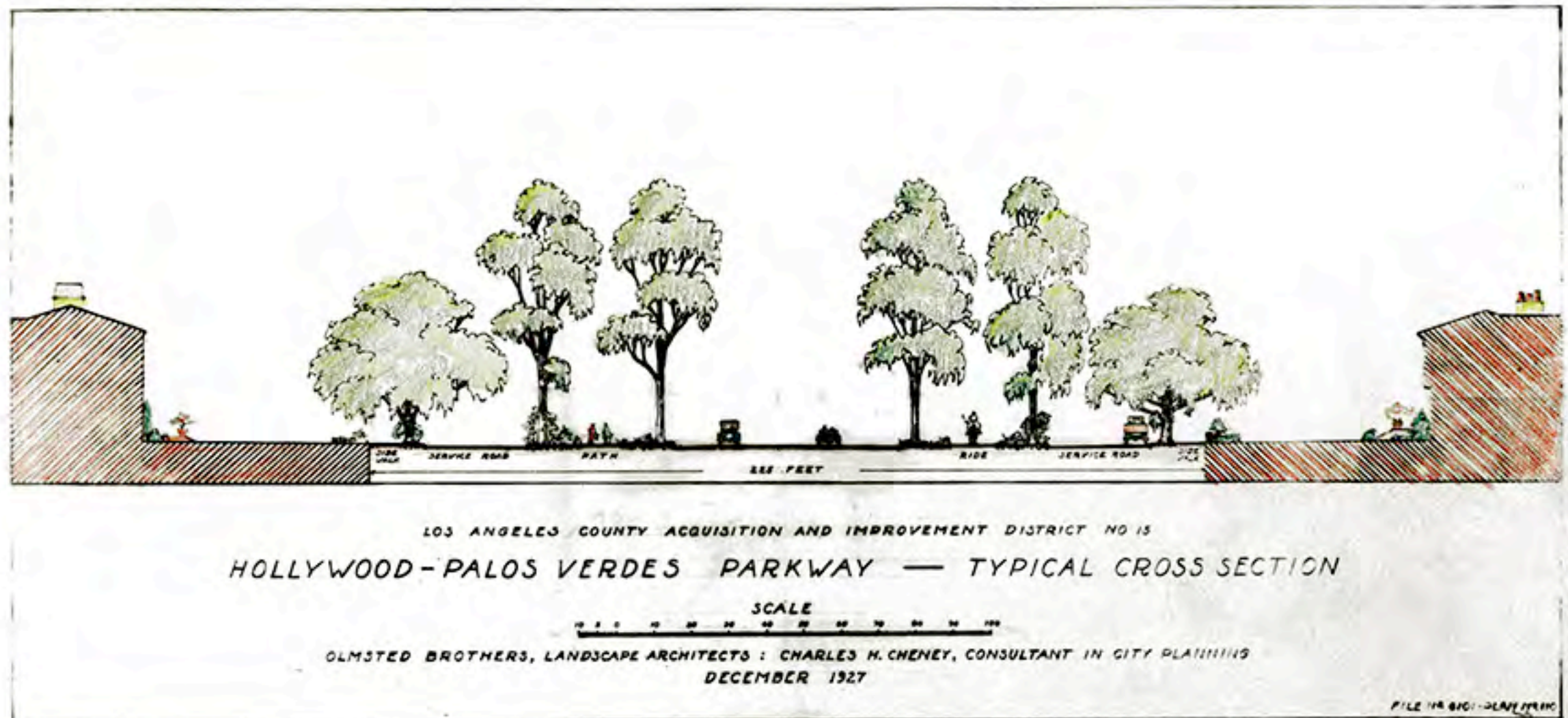
Crowded roads, where one travels at a snail's pace behind heavily loaded trucks, business districts first of its kind to be appointed in the whole United States, has been doing splendid pioneer work



Southwest Organization: Hollywood-Palos Verdes Parkway

Los Angeles region

Road as a park





Los Angeles region

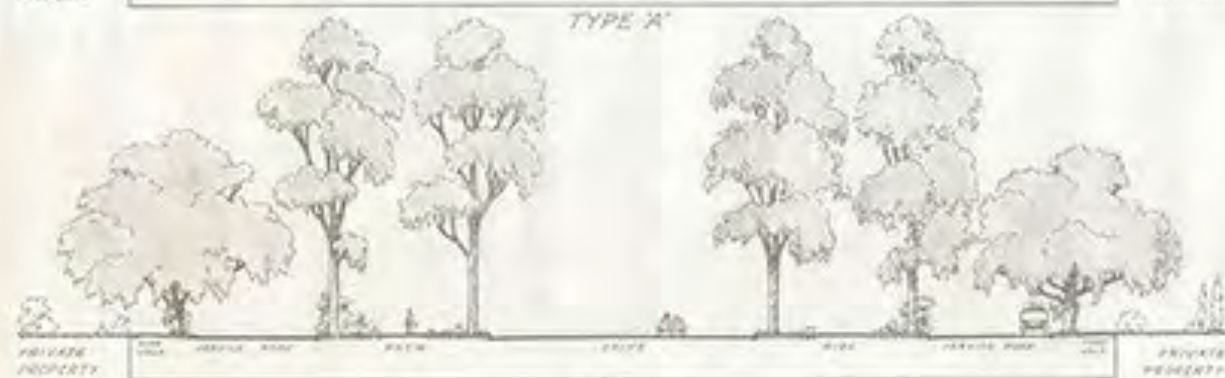


Digitally reproduced by the USC Digital Library; From the California Historical Society Collection at the University of Southern California

Los Angeles region



TYPE A



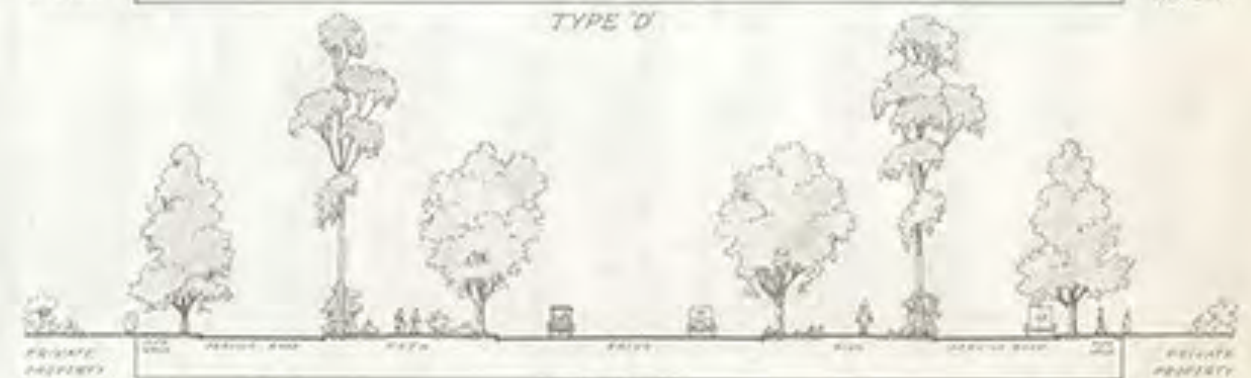
TYPE B



TYPE C



TYPE D



TYPE E

LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL AND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS
CROSS SECTIONS SHOWING TYPES OF PLANTING
FOR
HOLLYWOOD-PALOS VERDES PARKWAY

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

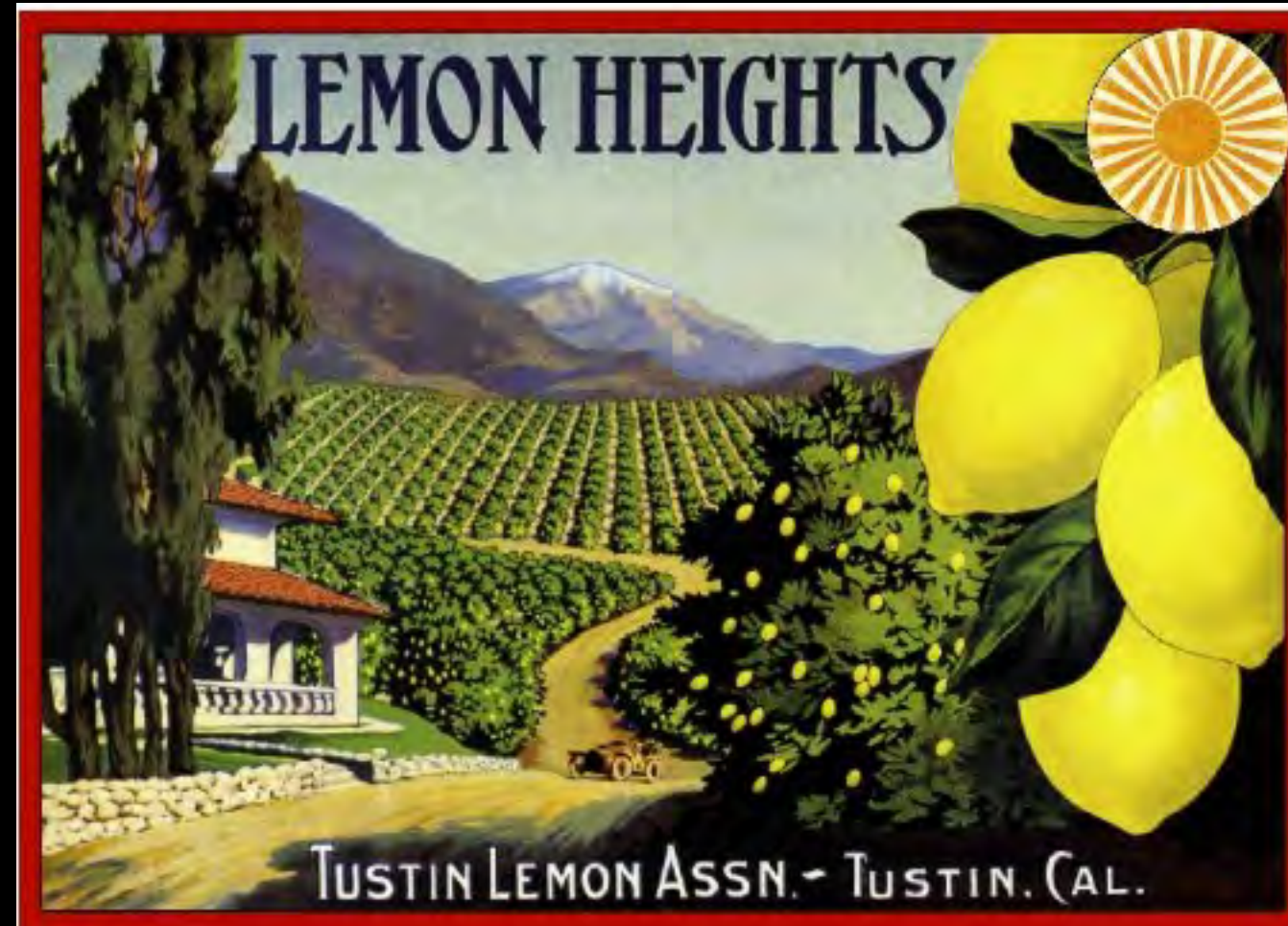
DESIGNED BY: [illegible] LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
ENGINEER: [illegible] CONSULTANT IN CITY PLANNING
DATE: [illegible]
FILE NO. [illegible] PLAN NO. [illegible]

Road as destination for tourism



Los Angeles region

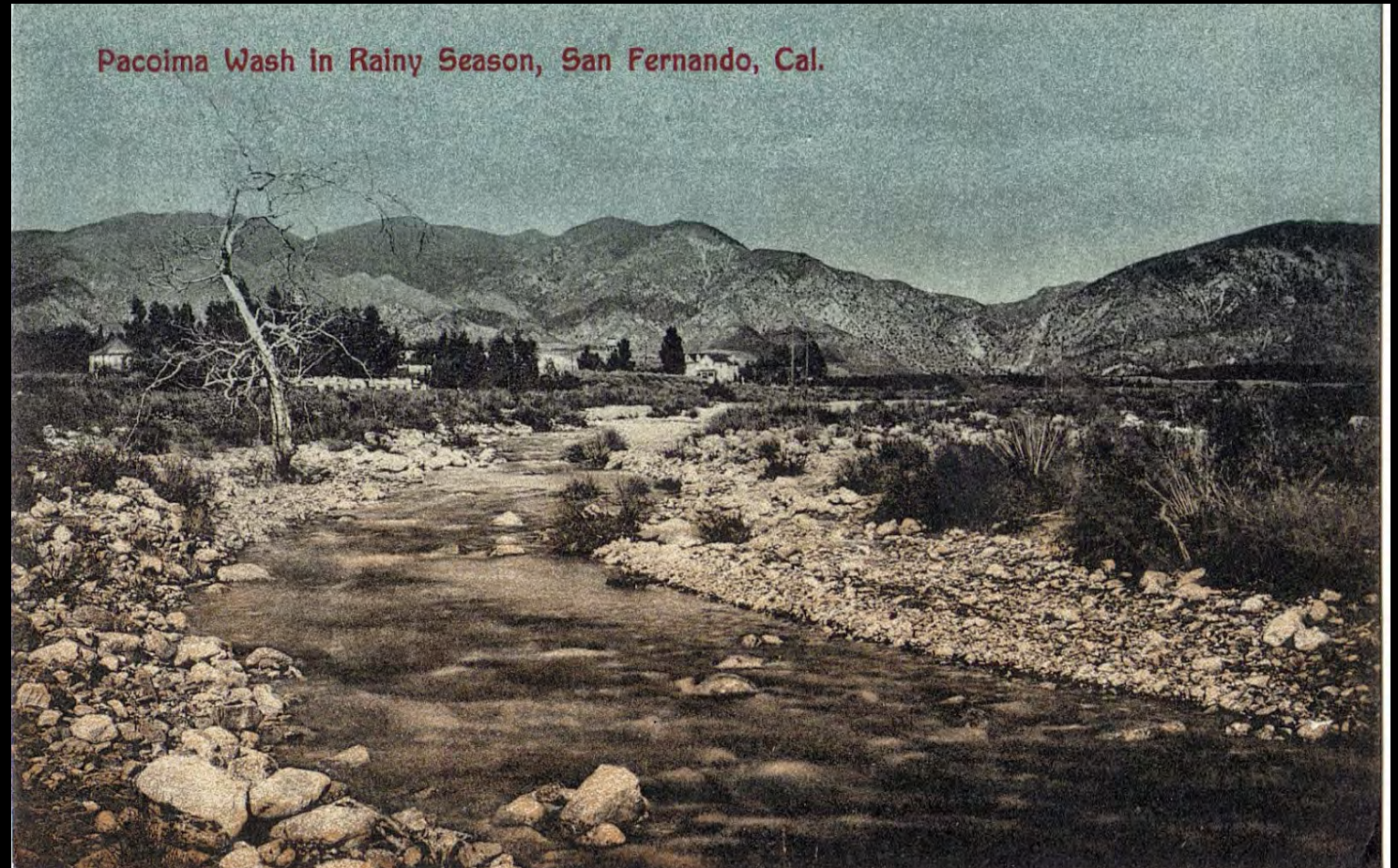
MUSEUM, EXPOSITION PARK, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



San Fernando Pleasureway



Reservoir near San Fernando, L.A. city water. Los Angeles: 1932-33 by Anton Wagner; PC 17, California Historical Society.



Los Angeles region

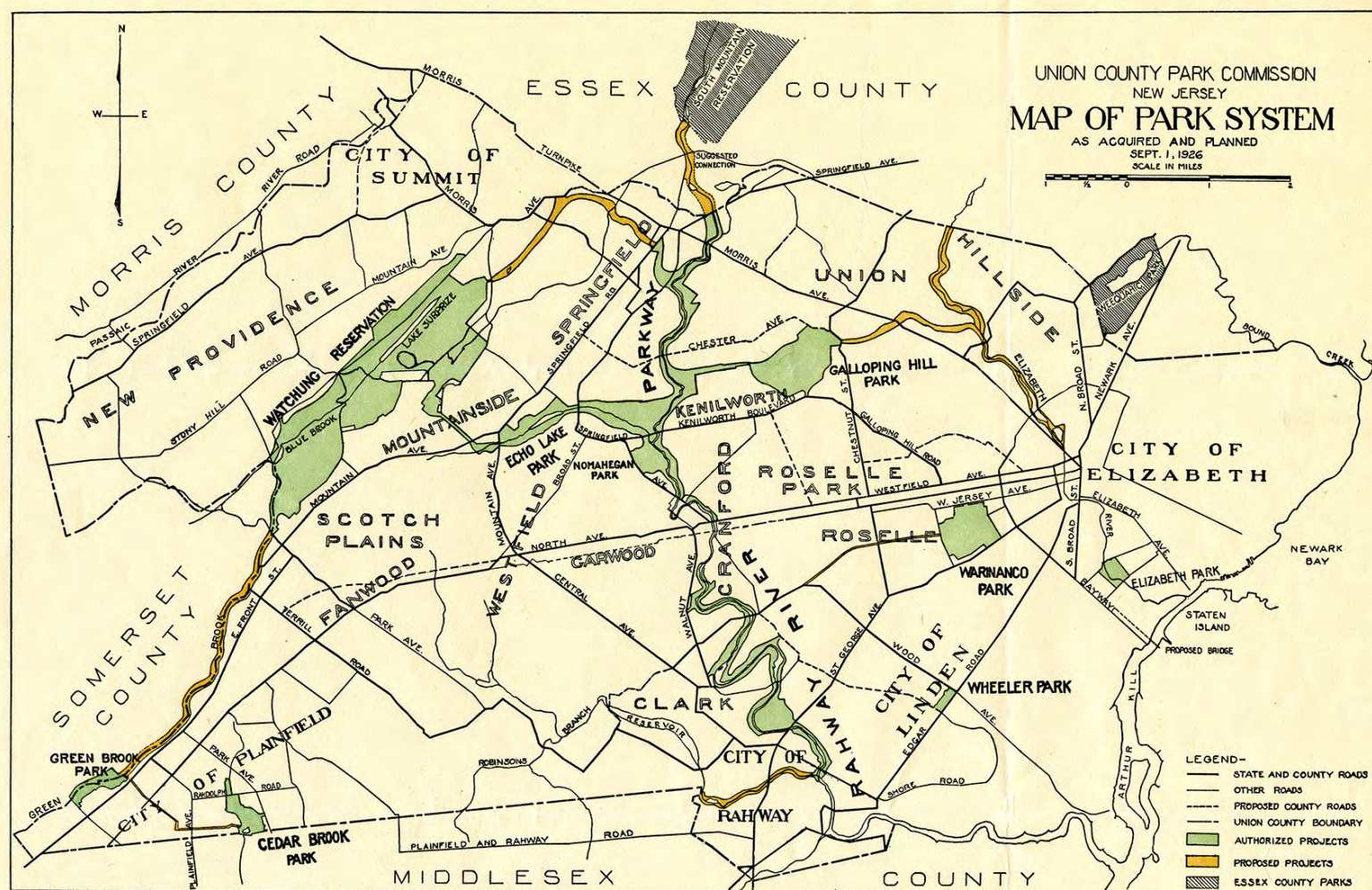
San Fernando Mission



Los Angeles region

Road that manages stormwater





	ACRES
Watchung Reservation	1,800
Rahway River Parkway	900
Warinanco Park	204
Echo Lake Park	128
Cedar Brook Park	78
John Russell Wheeler Park	20
Elizabeth Park	40
Nomahegan Park	85
Green Brook Park	54
Galloping Hill Park	300
TOTAL	3,609

The development of a Park System in Union County is based on the fact that the greater part of this County is now and is destined to be in the future a residential area. This is due to the attractive topography of the County and its proximity to the Metropolis of New York.

As the County develops and the number of homes increases, the existing open spaces and wooded areas will disappear so that it is most essential to acquire now the lands necessary for park and recreational purposes commensurate with the ultimate requirements.

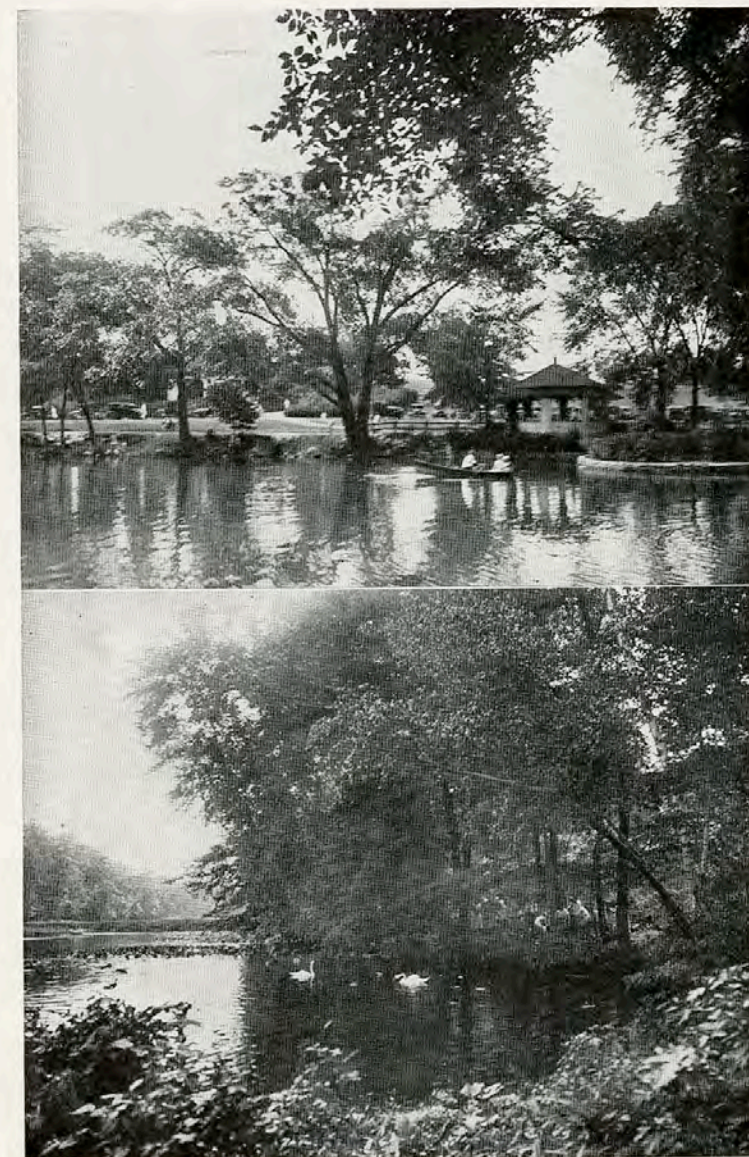
This is one of the main objects of the Union County Park Commission and the above map shows the location and size of 10 projects totaling 3,609 acres now under way and proposed extensions.

September, 1926.

COMMISSIONERS
 HENRY S. CHATFIELD, *President*
 CHARLES HANSEL, *Vice-President*
 CAXTON BROWN, *Treasurer*
 ARTHUR R. WENDELL
 CHARLES A. REED

Engineer and Secretary
 W. RICHMOND TRACY
Counsel, DAVID ARMSTRONG
Consulting Landscape Architects
 OLMSTED BROTHERS

Office Administration Building
 Acme and Canton Streets
 Warinanco Park, Elizabeth, N. J.



VIEWS AT ECHO LAKE PARK

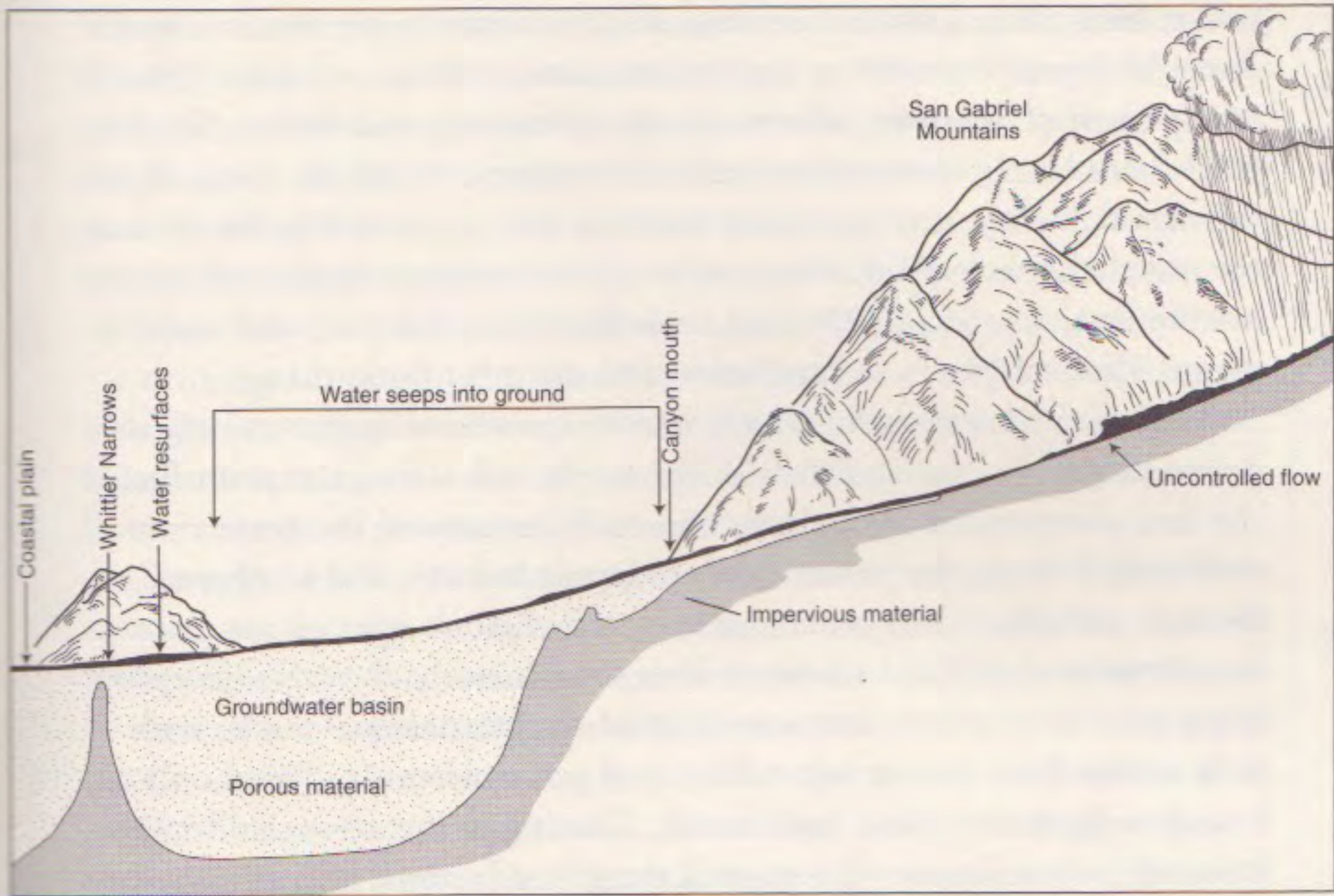
Water is almost always attractive but for effectiveness it requires a setting in proportion to its expanse, here bounding tree masses. Note in the upper view how the open lawn echoes the effect of the open water.

Union County Parkways, New Jersey
1921-1971



About 50 miles (80 km) across

Los Angeles region



Los Angeles region



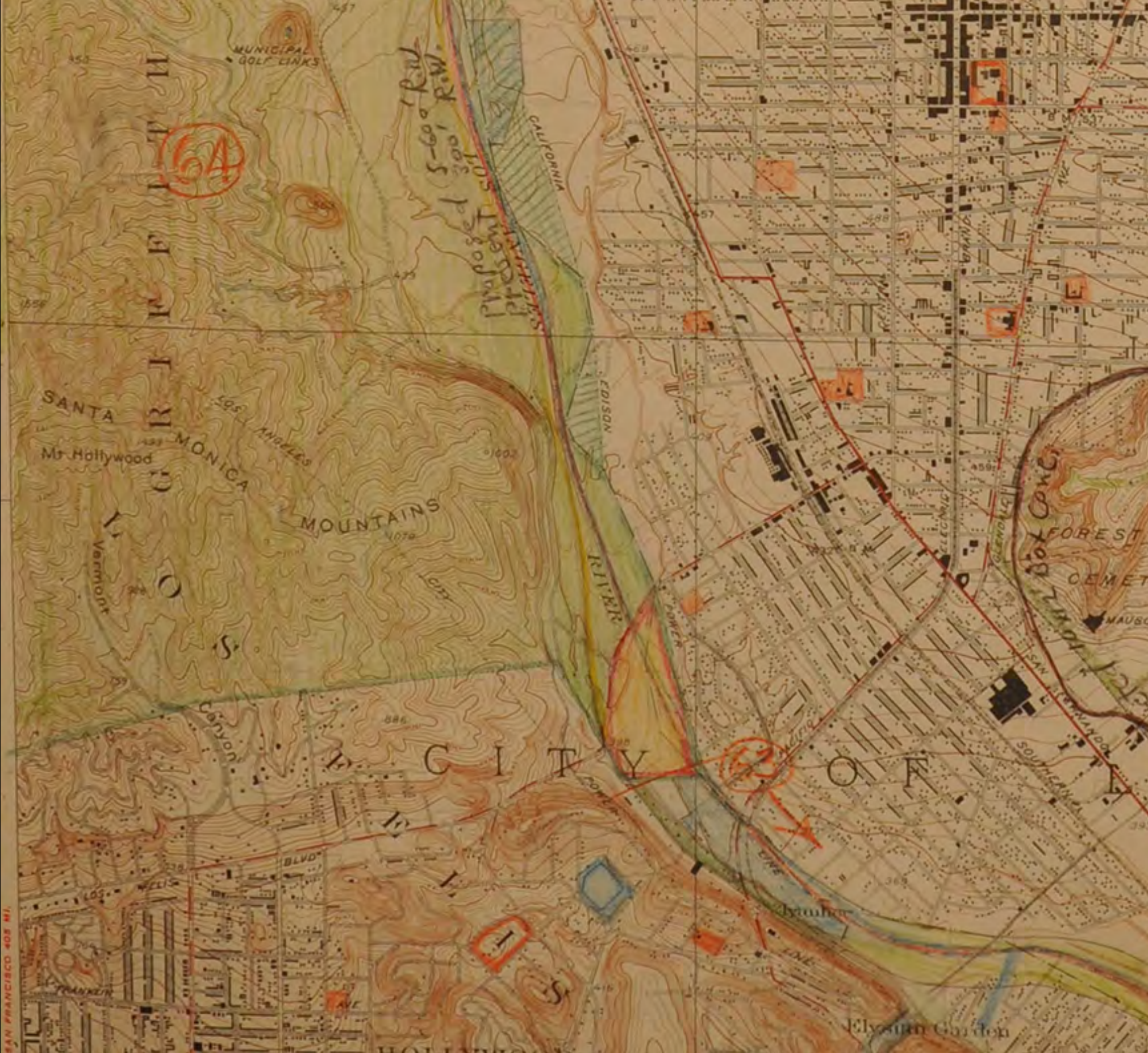
Los Angeles River near
Studio City, 1937



Los Angeles River near
Pasadena, 1938



Los Angeles region



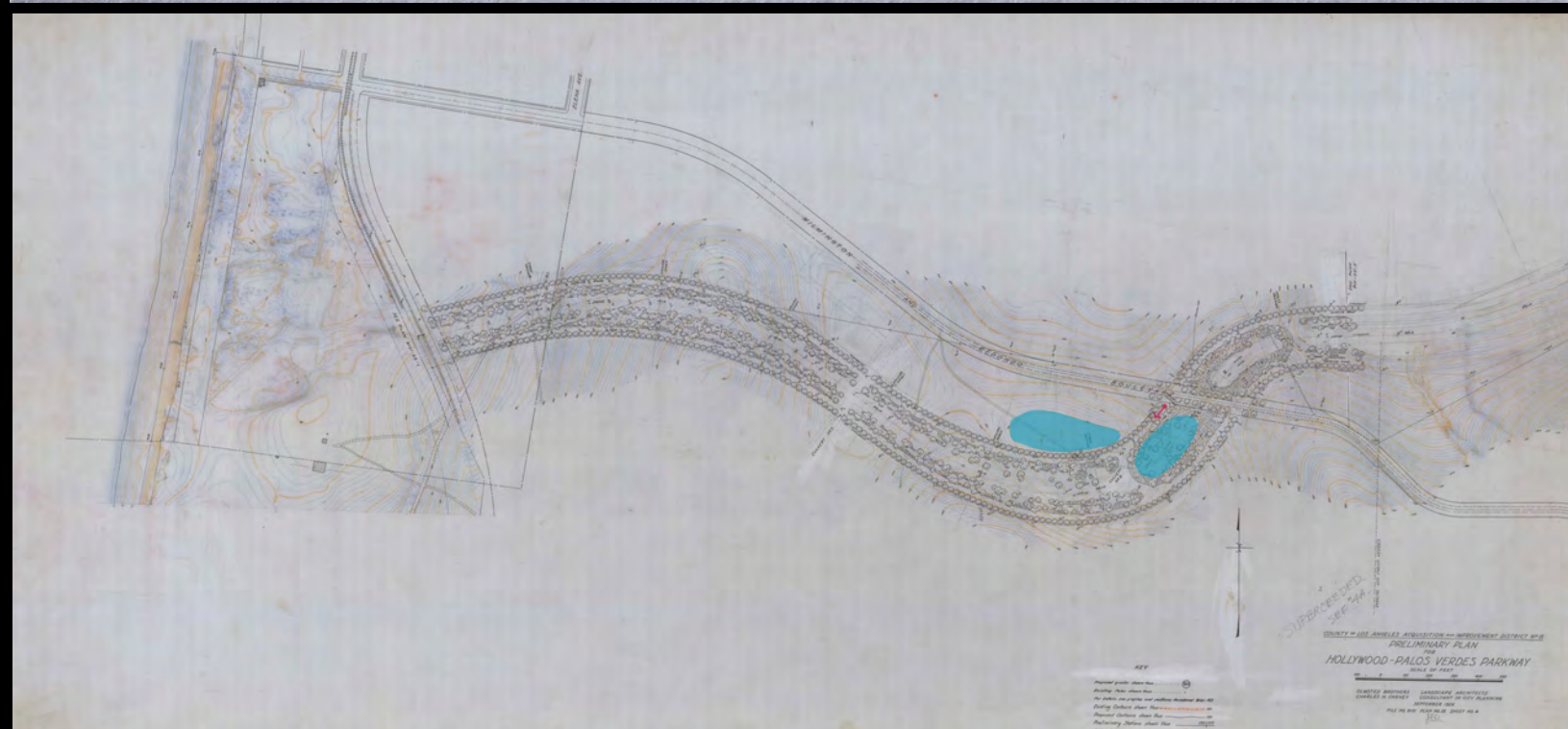
Los Angeles River Parkway

Los Angeles region

Drainage plan for the parkways



Los Angeles region



Redondo Beach

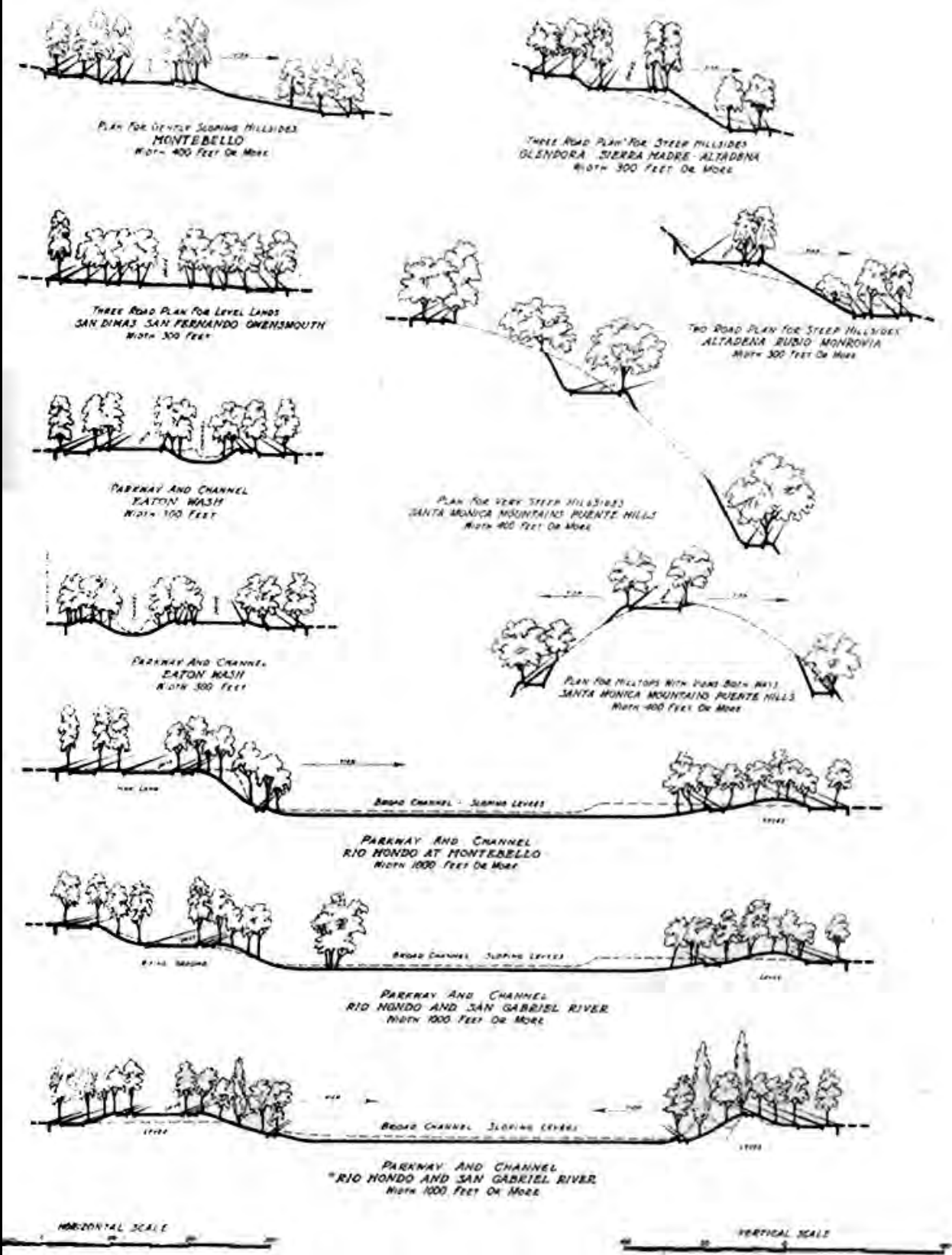
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Los Angeles region



PLATE 60. San Gabriel River near the Narrows, showing area needed for drainage that has park value, especially if the border vegetation can be preserved. (*Photo by Fiss.*)

Los Angeles region

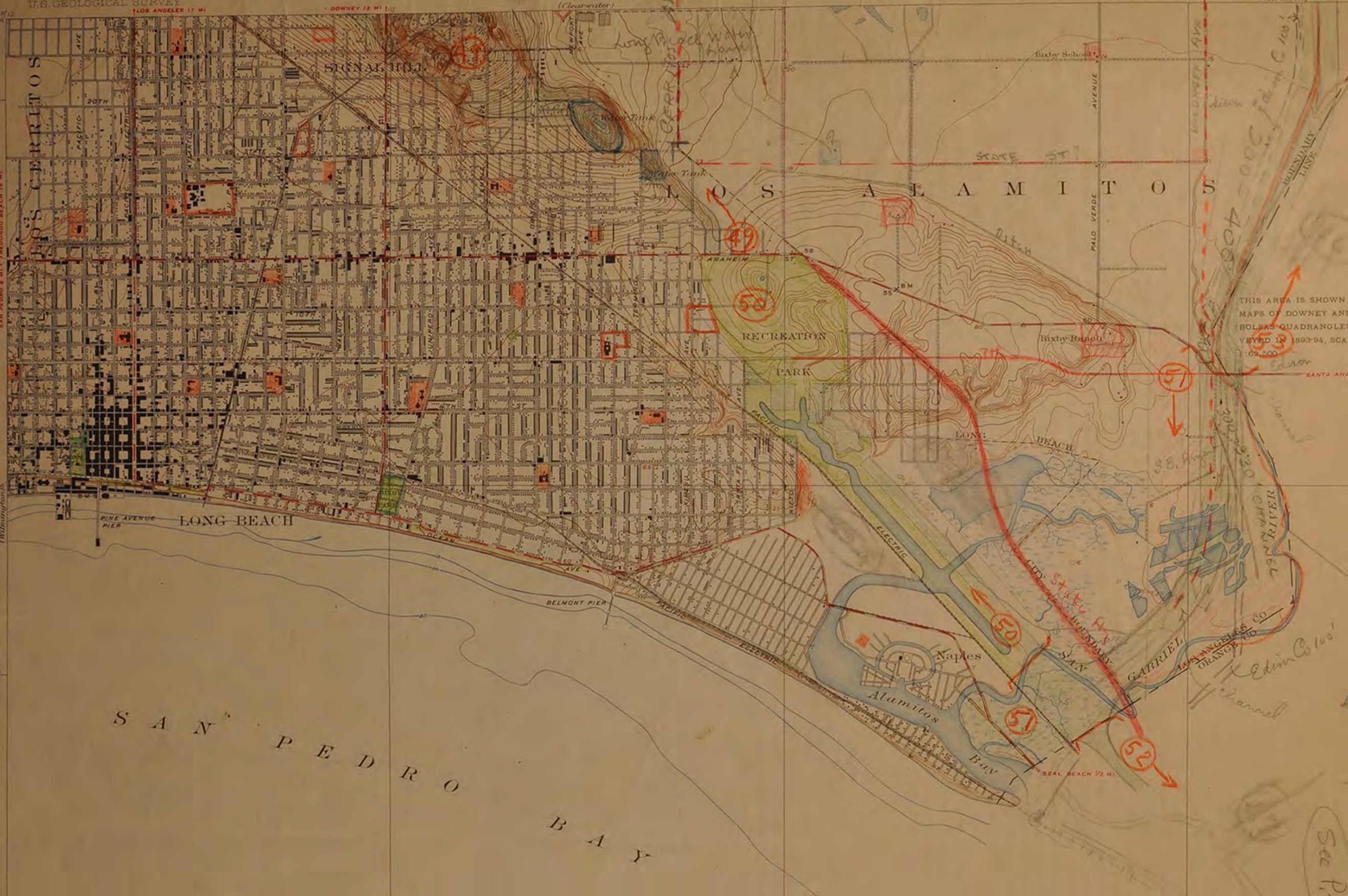


Los Angeles region

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

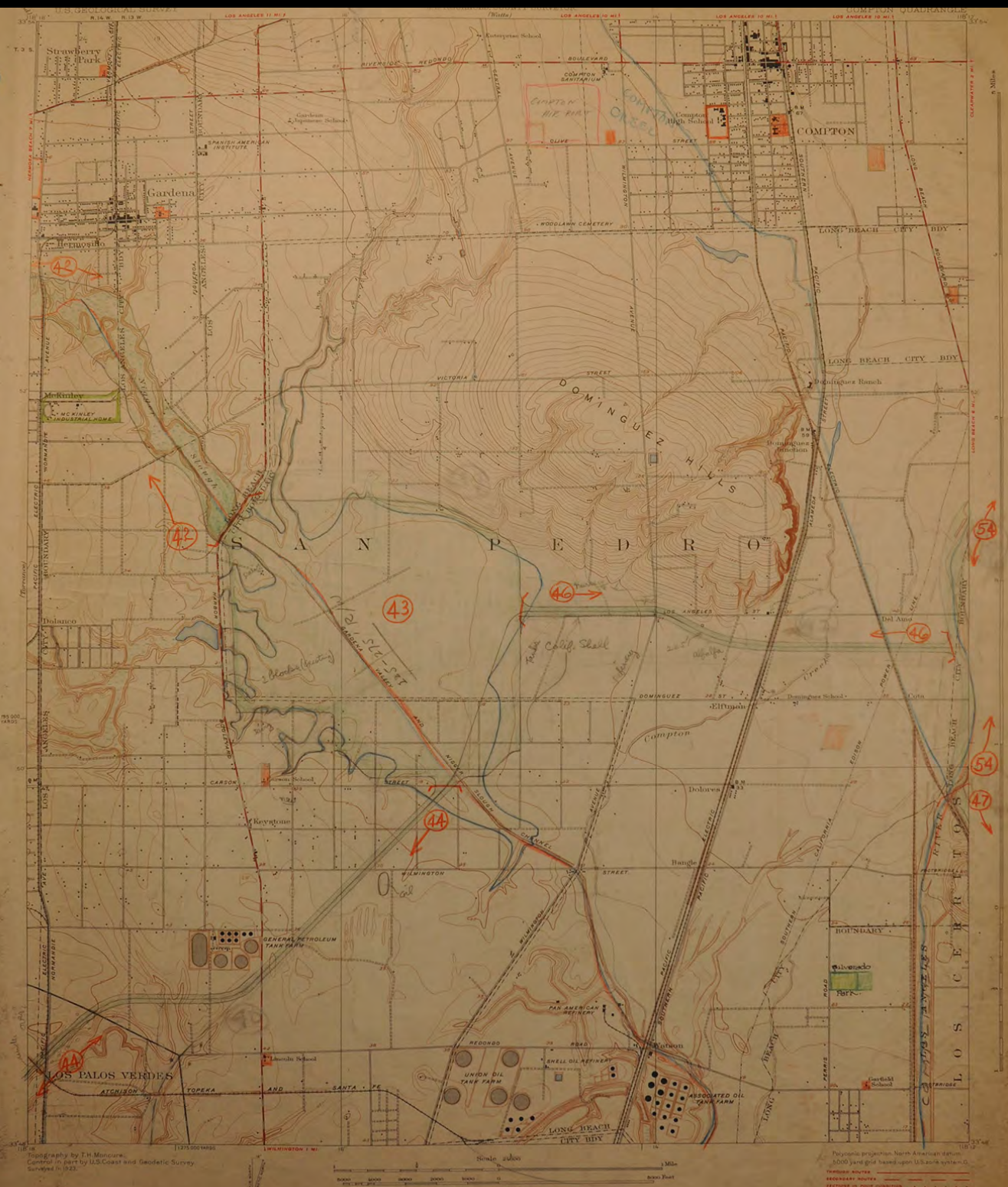
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
R. F. McCLURE, CHAIRMAN
J. E. ROCKHOLM, COUNTY SURVEYOR

CALIFORNIA
(LOS ANGELES COUNTY)
LONG BEACH QUADRANGLE
(Artesia)

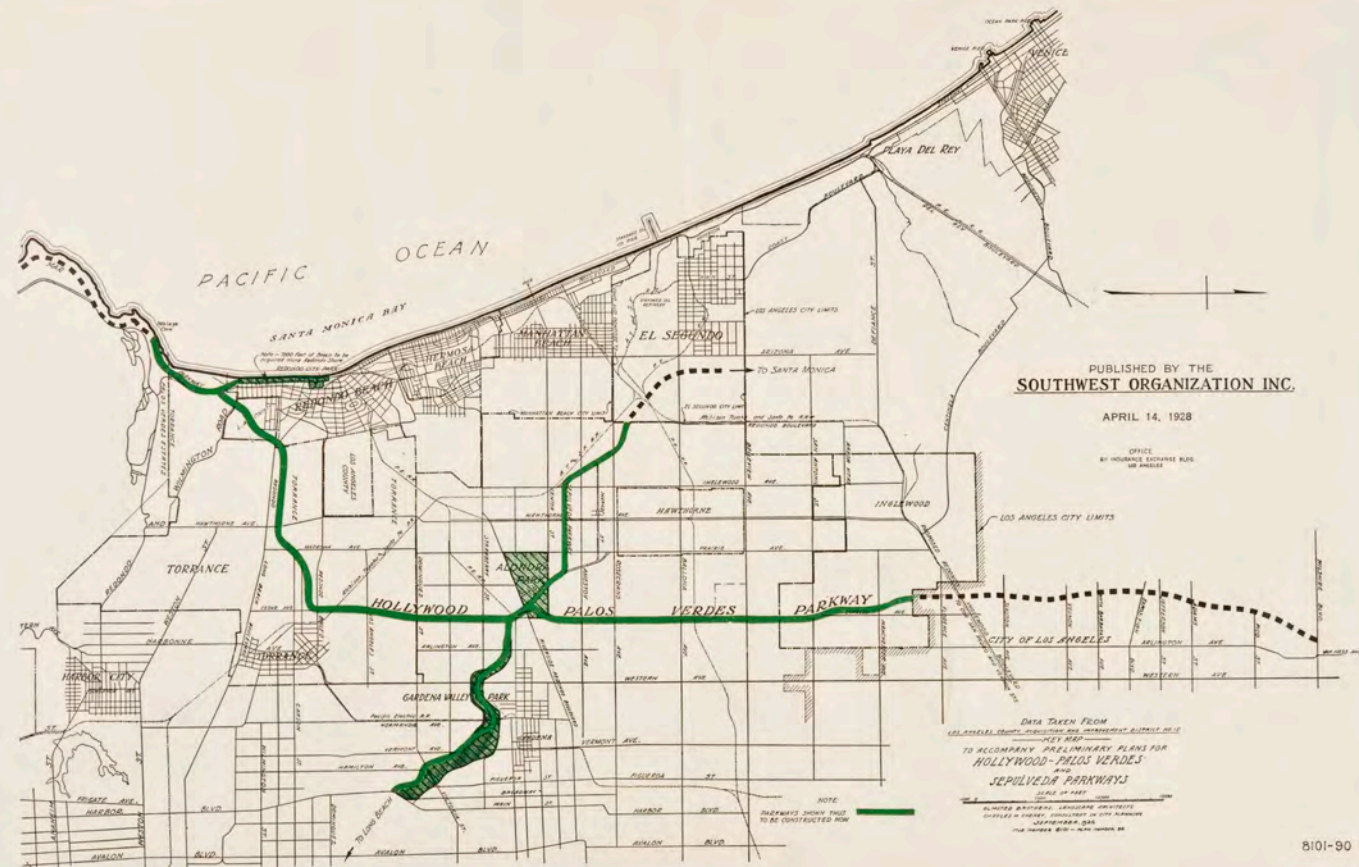


THIS AREA IS SHOWN
MAPS OF DOWNEY AND
BOLSA QUADRANGLES
VEYED IN 1893-94, SCA
1:62,500

Long Beach

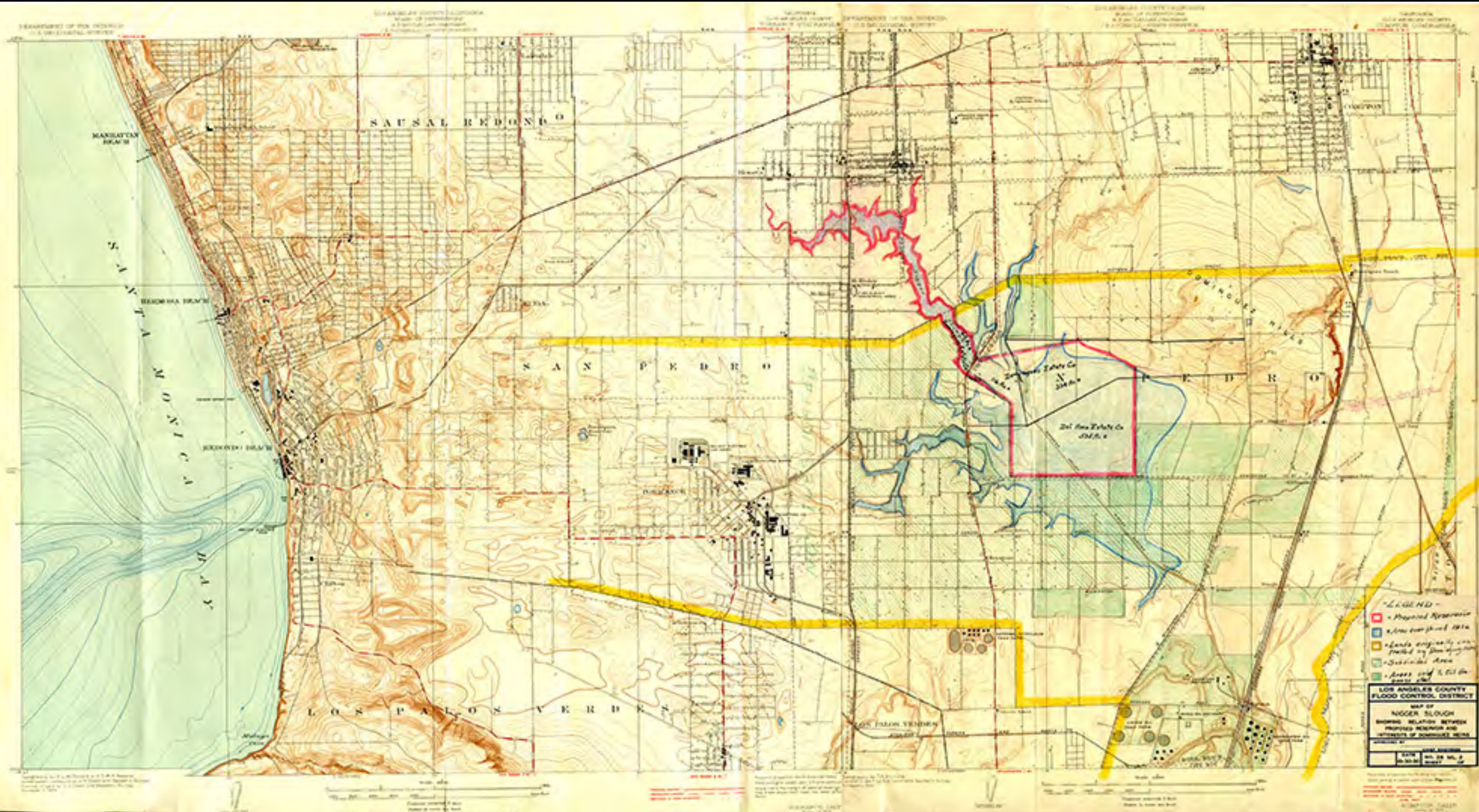


Gardena Slough

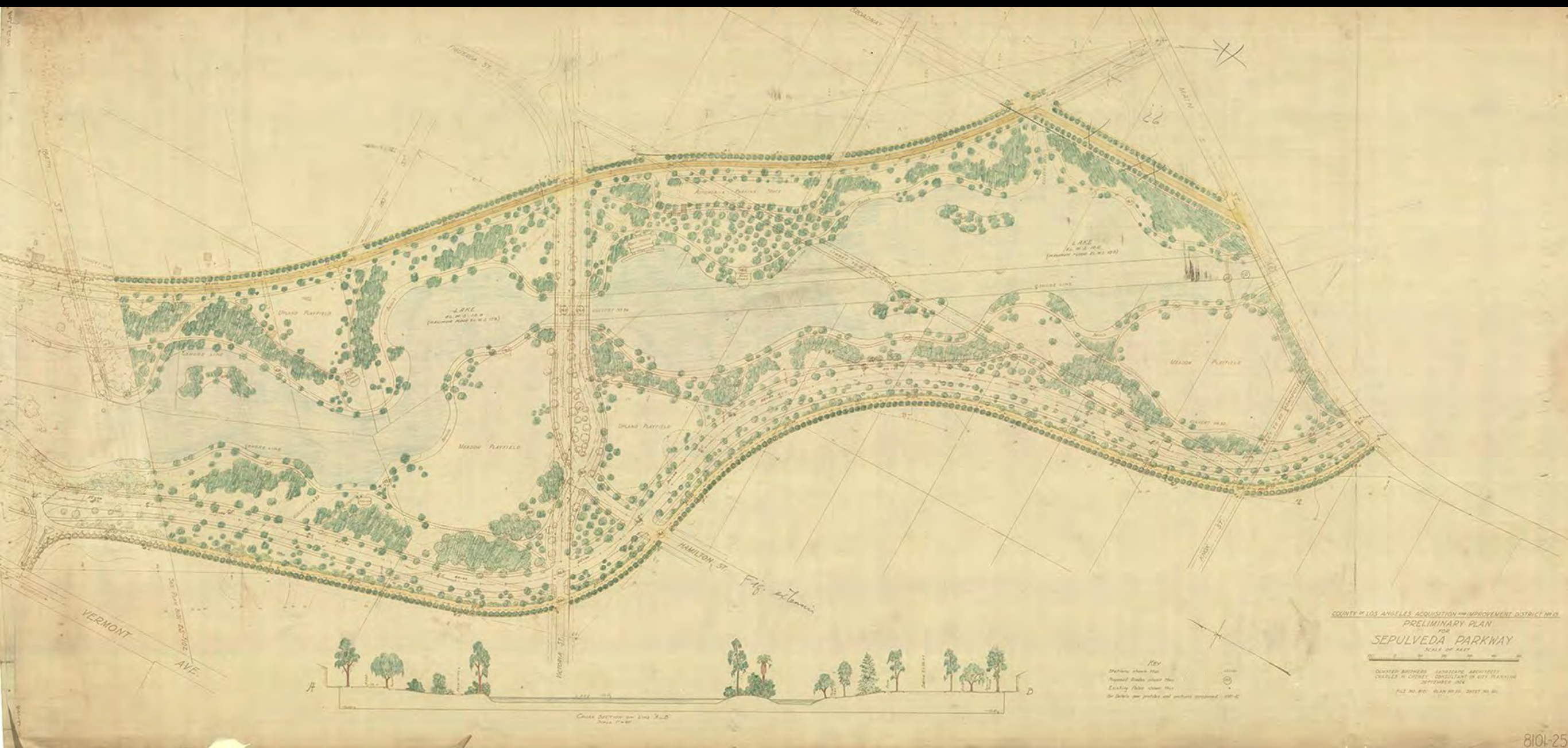


Los Angeles region

Gardena Slough



Gardena Valley Park and Parkway Reservation





Los Angeles region

Planned open space protects fragile ecosystems
and mitigates wildfires

California State Park System



Legend

- * Some types of trees
- W - water
- U - upland
- P - plateau, full of trees
- O - side of road - broadleaved
- E - thickets of young trees and small ones
 - 1 - young trees
 - 2 - small trees
- L - large of old trees
 - 1 - large trees
 - 2 - small trees
- A - thickets of young trees
- F - thickets of young trees

FIELD NOTES

Type of forest
 Type of forest
 Designation of trees and shrubs
 etc.

Feb 1903 May 1903 - B

Bluff, New York 1" x 10"

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Tabulation Sheet, 1928

QUANTITATIVE DATA	QUALITATIVE DATA
County	
Divisions of Project	
Approximate Acreage	
Indications of Probable Cost: Estimate, <u>Ass'D</u> Valuation	Indications of Probable Cost: Guess
	Feasibility of Curtailment
Topography (slope) by Project type (see below)	Rating and scale of scenery
Water (lakes, reservoirs, streams) and their scale and potability	
Plant and Animal Life	Activities, both passive and active, (camping, picnics, field sports, hiking, fishing, bathing, boating, winter sports, landing fields)
Coastal Projects: Shore Conditions, Inland topography,	Character of vegetation (cultivated, grazing, chaparral, open woods, dense forest, notable undergrowth, mixed <u>br'h</u> (brush?) and trees)
Forest Projects: Vegetation (Redwood, Big Trees, NW mixed coniferous, semi-Sierra, semi- arid), Topography (mountain, canyon, foothill)	Scientific and educational value (historical, archeological, geologic, botanic, zoologic) ³⁵
Desert Projects: Topography (buttes, mesa, mountains, dry basin, lake)	Danger of Loss, Local inability, <u>Gen'l</u> support, Financial support, Income pos.
Land ownership: city limits, National, County, Local, Highway, Fish and Game (noted as categories for elimination)	



Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

Morro Bay State Park



Along center of Del Norte Highway 8300-1
thru Hobbs-Wall Cut just beyond
Graves Grove. Good example of de-
struction of natural forest. Jan. 1934

Del Norte Highway

Save-the-Redwoods League

250 Administration Building, University of California, Berkeley 9, California

BULLETIN FOR THE MEMBERS — SUMMER, 1944



Illustration by Andrew Smith

Two giant Redwoods on the south side of Maple Creek, near Crescent, Humboldt County, show what great bulk California's Coast Redwoods can attain. The diameter here from ground level is 10 feet. The timber volume of this tree has been estimated at 300,000 board feet, worth \$20,000. This tree is the property of the Humboldt-Lassen State Redwood Company. The largest living tree in the world is in its height, but about 10 feet in diameter, is in the forest park. The forest park is 100 feet high. The world's tallest tree, 300 feet high, is in North Olympic Park, Humboldt Redwoods State Park.

Parks were categorized by areas along the ocean, in the redwoods and other big tree areas, along lakes and waterfalls, in the mountains and in the desert



8072-13



(n.d.)^{^^} – View looking down at Angeles Crest Highway as it winds its way through the scenic Angeles National Forest.



Sacramento River

Sustainable master plan that conserved water,
with the city connected by a verdant park system
along un-channeled rivers

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS
AND BEACHES
FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION

*A Report submitted to the Citizens' Committee on Parks, Playgrounds,
and Beaches, by Olmsted Brothers and Bartholomew
and Associates, Consultants*

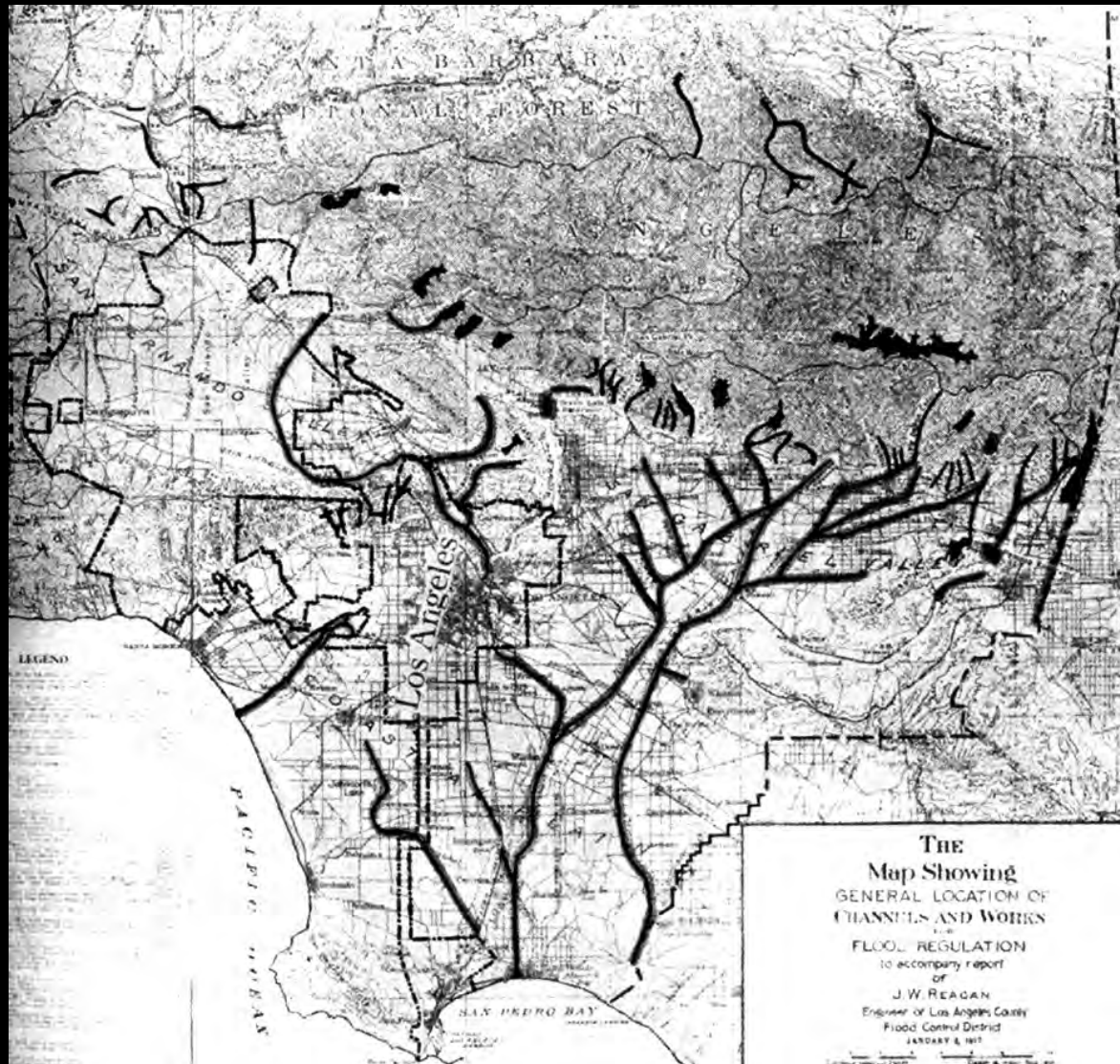
1930
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles Park and Parkway System



Source: Historical map of the City of Los Angeles, California, showing the Park and Parkway System. The map is a reproduction of the original map published by the City of Los Angeles in 1908.

Los Angeles Park and Parkway System

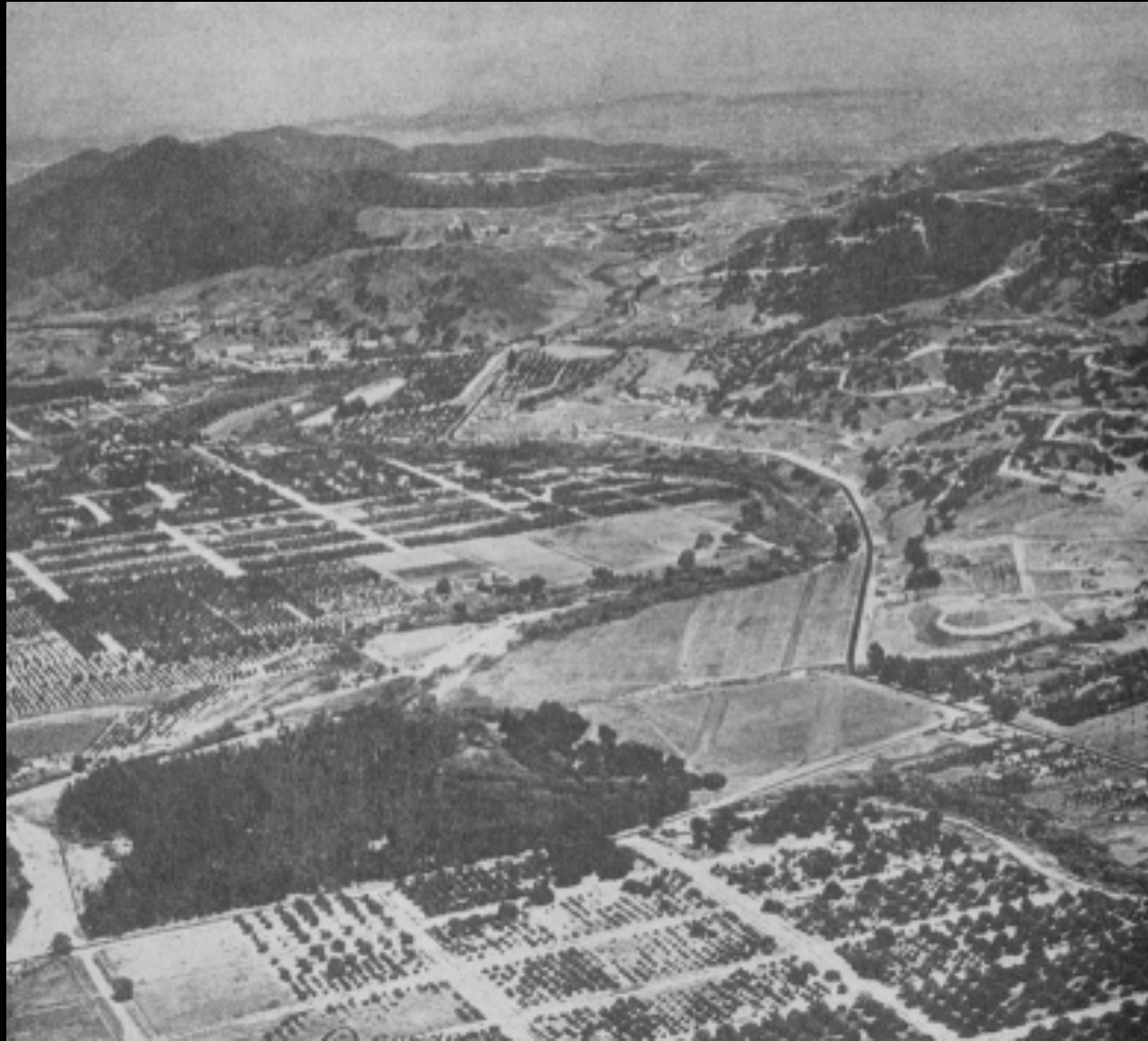


Flood channels



Railroad lines

Los Angeles Park and Parkway System



Citrus orchards



Oil derricks





Active Recreation



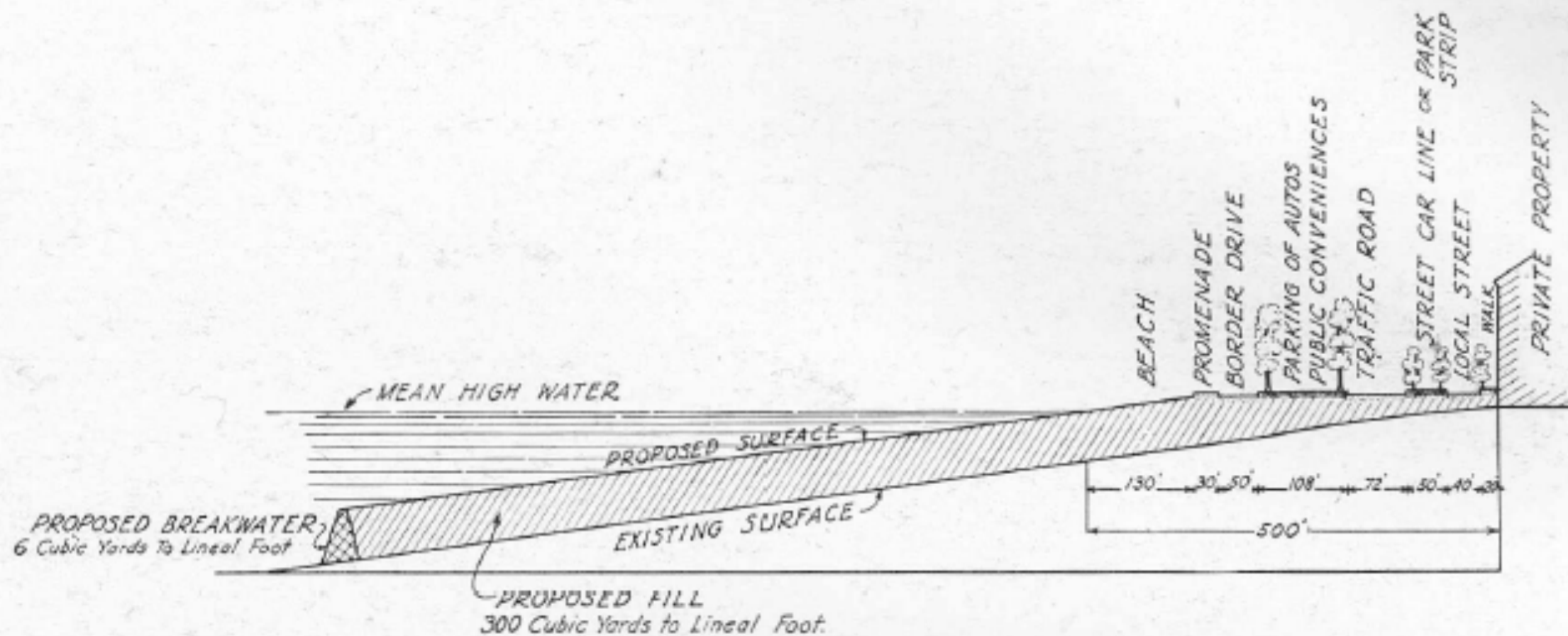
Boston Back Bay tidal marshes



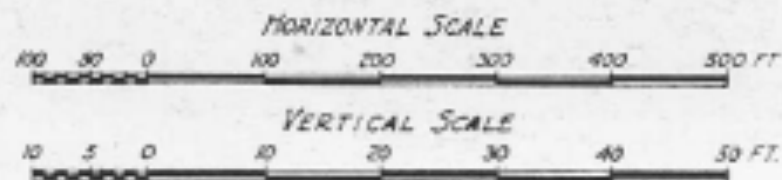
Del Rey Lagoon



PLATE 54. Large area in Tujunga Wash that is subject to occasional flooding and is likely to be made



CITIZENS COMMITTEE ON PARKS PLAYGROUNDS AND BEACHES
POSSIBLE PROFILE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF BEACH ON TIDAL LANDS



SURVEY CONSULTANTS
 Olmsted Brothers — Bartholomew & Associates
 NOVEMBER, 1928

PLATE 31. Possible profile for construction of beach on tidelands.

Parks with multi-function



Treatment of riverfront, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



Keeny Park, Hartford, Connecticut



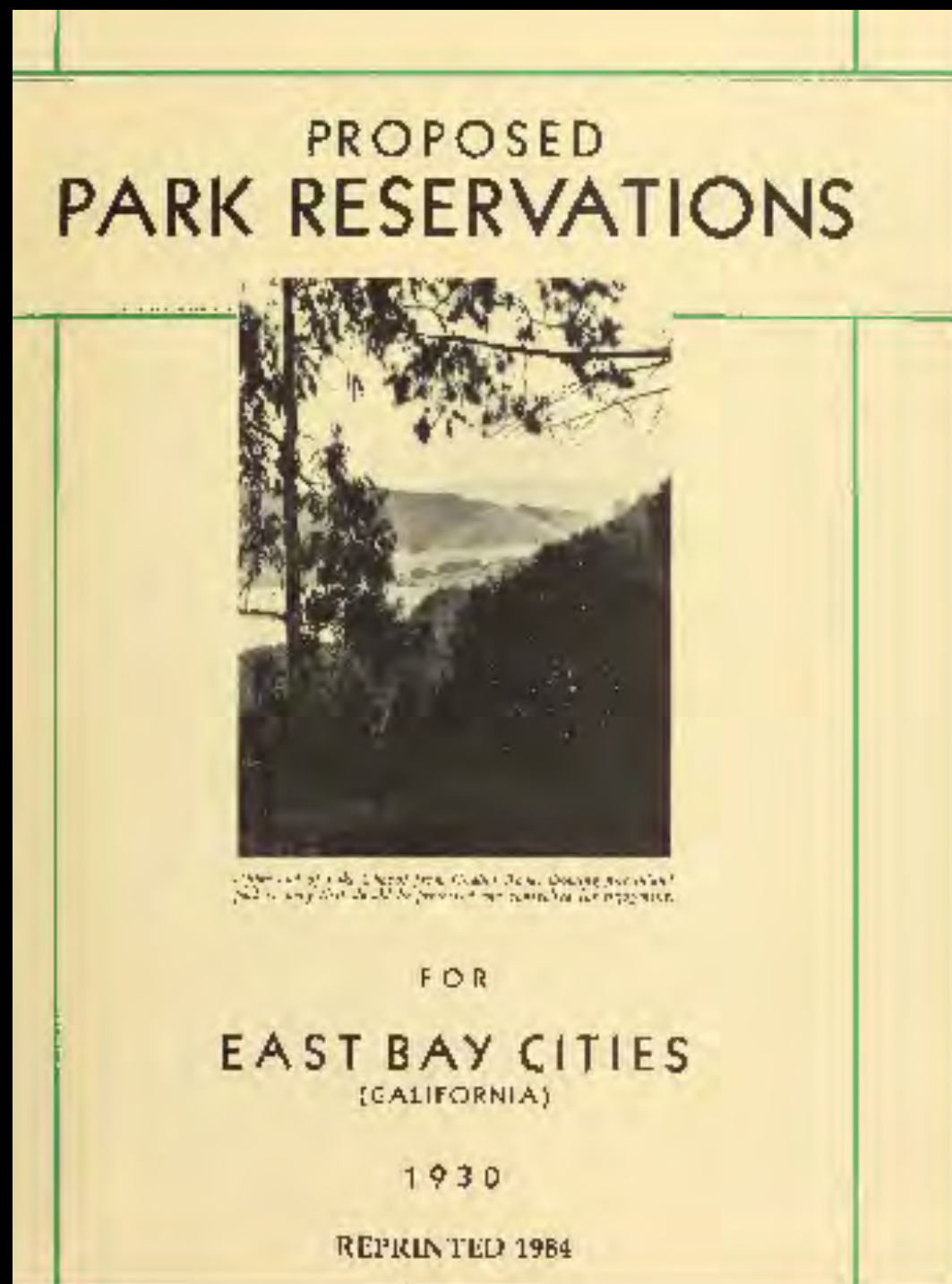
Bolsa Chica in Huntington Beach



Los Angeles Park and Parkway System

Master plan included their own projects and open space from the State Parks Survey





Round Valley Regional Reserve

East Bay cities



A panorama from Round Top in the Oakland hills, looking west to the Bay, from a 1930 publication on proposed East Bay parks.

1930 view from Oakland hills

East Bay cities

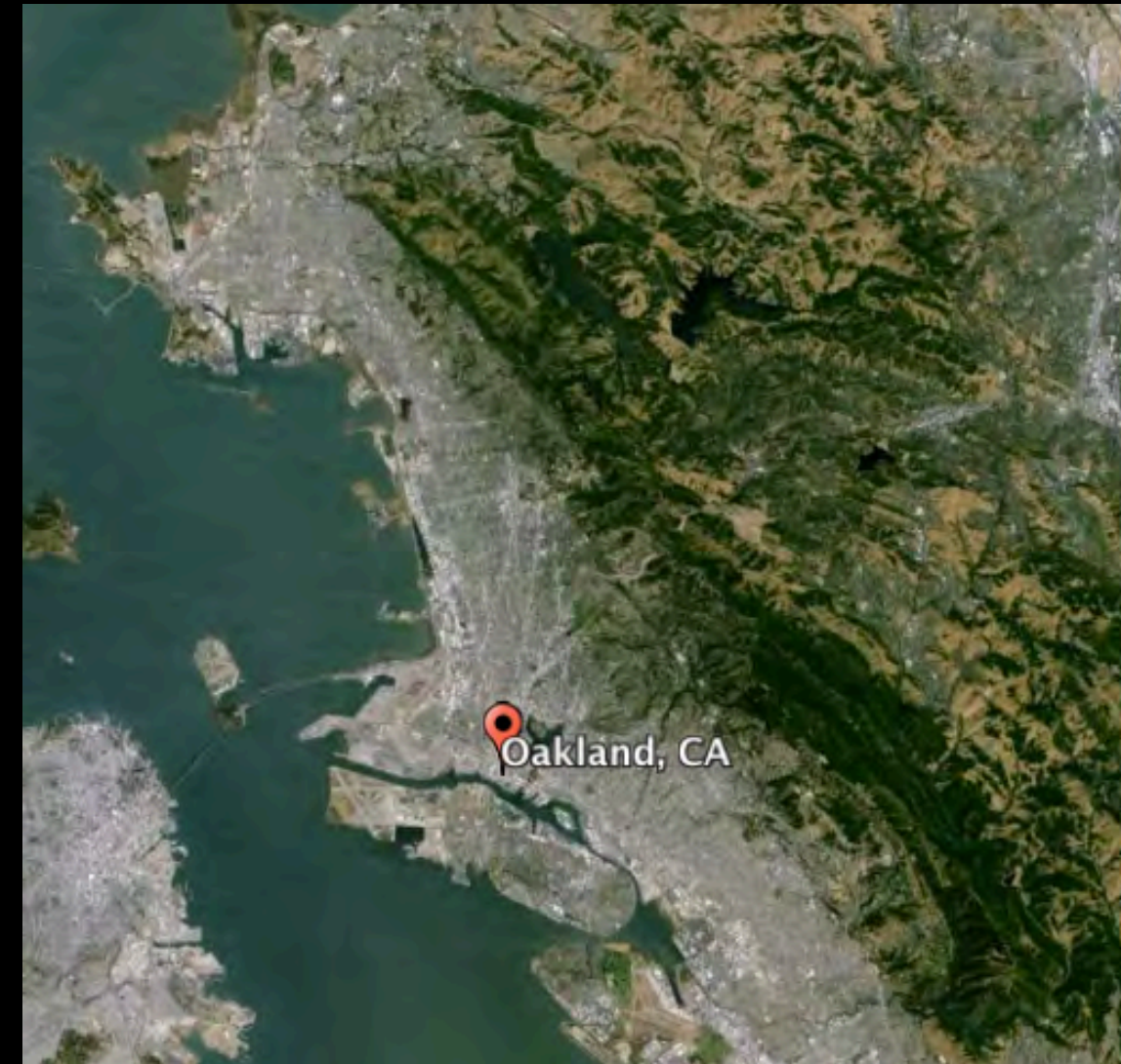
KEY

- Main Highways.
- - - Existing Roads or Trails.
- - - Proposed Roads or Trails.
- - - Boundary Lines (Existing or Proposed).
- - - Municipality boundaries.
- ▨ District lands reserved for Reservoirs and Watersheds.
- ▨ District lands recommended for Park Reservations.
- ▨ District lands not included in proposed Reservations.
- ▨ Private lands needed to complete boundaries of Park Reservations and Parkways.
- ▨ Public Parks, Country Clubs, Cemeteries, Institutions, and other areas of somewhat general use.
- ① Photograph location
- ① Land parcel as described
- A, Approach to park lands
- Ⓡ Site for "service center"





San Pablo Reservoir, Tilden Natural Area



Original ridgeline parks



Tilden Regional Park



Wildcat Canyon

© 2004 Blackwell Publishing Ltd, *Journal of Internal Medicine* 255: 111–118



A photograph of a coastal wetland area. In the foreground, there is a wooden structure made of vertical posts and horizontal rails, partially submerged in water. The water is blue and reflects the sky. The background shows a vast expanse of green and yellow marshland, with a line of trees and hills in the distance under a clear blue sky.



Santa Monica Mountains Task Force

Questions?