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A stereoscopic slide of the newly-built Conservatory of Flowers at Golden Gate Park, ca. 1880.
Photo by George D. Gardner. Courtesy California State Library, California History Section Picture Catalog.

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Sand into Gold

One Hundred and Fifty Years of Golden Gate Park

CHRISTOPHER POLLOCK
On April 4, 2020, the City and County of San Francisco's Recreation and Park Department will launch a year-long celebration commemorating the sesquicentennial of the city's premier playground: Golden Gate Park.

Early city chronicler Frank Swale recounted in his 1855 book, The Annals of San Francisco, that “over all these square miles of contemplated thoroughfares, there seems no provision made by the projectors for a public park—the true ‘lungs’ of a large city.” This would become a clarion call to a rapidly growing town for breathing space. By the 1860s, the new port city of San Francisco yearned to be the West Coast’s cosmopolitan star. (San Francisco ballooned from a population of 34,776 in 1852 to 149,473 residents in 1870.) One of the elements necessary to fulfill that aspiration was a public park like some other cities had created in New York City, that “over all these square miles of contemplated thoroughfares, there seems no provision made by the projectors for a public park—the true ‘lungs’ of a large city.”

In the meantime, the city was still trying to sort out land claims within the San Francisco Peninsula and got assistance from the federal government who administrated the land. This land acquisition process made available a roughly 1000-acre tract for use as a city park. It was sited in what was ominously called the Outside Lands, a vast landscape of mostly sand dunes on the west side of the peninsula’s northern tip—a long way from downtown proper.

A major step occurred on April 4, 1870, when California Governor Henry H. Haught signed into being Order 800, “an act to provide for the improvement of Public Parks in the City of San Francisco,” marking the commencement of the park’s creation. With this instrument signed, the boundaries of the 1,013-acre park were circumscribed, and a state-administered commission was created to oversee the park’s construction. The governor appointed a Park Commission board of three local men to oversee the park’s creation: Samuel F. Butterworth, David W. Connolly, and Charles F. MacDermott, with Andrew J. Moulder as secretary, the only compensated position. This board not to be confused with those who ran the city department known as the Department of Public Streets, Highways, and Squares, managed locally by the Board of Supervisors, whose Park Commission and superintendent oversaw the rest of the city’s few existing parks.

The Park Commission’s first task was to finance the venture by selling bonds. While many residents were on board with the concept of the park, there were detractors, too. The following statement, published by the Sonoma Democrat in 1875—often misquoted—sums up some of the opposition: “The project was an impossible task: the creation and early days. It will explore how Hall, thoughtfully shepherded what was thought an impossible task: the creation of one of America’s best urban parks from sand dunes. The essay’s second part, which will appear in the subsequent issue of Eden, will focus on Hall, who is responsible for the park’s initial topographical survey, its design, and was its first superintendent.
detritus' sentiments: “Of all the elephants the city of San Francisco ever owned, they now have the heaviest in the shape of Golden Gate Park.” A dreary waste of shifting sand hills, where a blade of grass cannot be raised without four posts to support and keep it from blowing away.”

The press did not deter the city from moving forward, and in August of 1870 bids for a minute survey of the future park were opened. William Hammond Hall, who was the lowest bidder in the amount of $4,800, was awarded the project. The 24-year-old Hall completed the task, including a preliminary plan, in six months. Hall had prior knowledge of the terrain, which was an enormous help. Having proven his abilities, he was appointed superintendent on August 14, 1871, at a salary of $250 a month.

Within the established framework, Hall provided a suggested plan. The tract’s eastern third, nearer to downtown, was to be the most cultivated portion of the park’s design, while the western portion that ended at the Pacific Ocean would be a wilder forested area. Hall’s ideas were akin to those of his mentor, Olmsted: to work with the land’s natural attributes and honor the “genius of the place.” Hall stated in the First Biennial Report of the San Francisco Park Commissioners, published in 1871 that the work should be tailored “to fit a graceful curvature to the natural topography, in such manner, that the rules of tasteful landscape gardening be combined with the requisites of good engineering principles, that much of it might be sheltered from the prevailing northwest winds of summer, while yet taking advantage of the more prominent features from which to produce striking effects in the landscape.” Some of the amenities would include lakes and informal undulating roadways following the diverse topography. (This is in contrast to much of hilly San Francisco, which was overlaid with a series of orthogonal street grids, regardless of the topography.) Hall’s plan for the east end called for a lawn, flower garden with conservatory, baseball or cricket ground, botanical garden, croquet (and other such games), children’s playgrounds, wooden ramble paths, and a carriage course. The area’s focal point was to be an elevated terrace café overlooking a lake, a feature similar to Central Park’s Bethesda Terrace.

Hall was keenly aware that such an effort needed infrastructure. His first thoughts were toward creating a nursery, an elemental part of the park’s creation. Without it, the shifting sands could not be clothed in greenery at a reasonable cost. The park commission heeded the advice of surveyor Hall who suggested, even before he was hired, that a suitable supply of trees and shrubs be on hand by the time the grounds were ready to be planted. A greenhouse and hot bed were constructed in November 1870 in the area where today’s McLaren Lodge stands.

Transformed or not, the arid, sandy environment of the park couldn’t sustain these plans without a constant supply of fresh water. The First Biennial Report of the San Francisco Park Commissioners, published in 1871, stated that “an abundance of water is to be had throughout the eastern portion at a depth of 25 to 35 feet in the valleys.” The commission report of 1872 noted that a steam pump was lifting water from a 50-foot-deep well and that water was stored in a 30,000-gallon tank at a point 150 feet above the park’s east end; from this, an irrigation system branched to 40 hydrants. Despite the in-park availability, three years after the park’s inception, 100,000 gallons of water a day was being purchased from the private monopoly of Spring Valley Water Company, supplying the park’s livelihood for its first seven years. The park commission finally sought a more abundant water supply within the park. Two earnest attempts, the first in 1876 and another in 1885, were carried out to pump groundwater from within the park’s boundaries, but each proved problematic due to the lack of sand filtering technology, which was eventually overcome. Later, a seemingly ridiculous solution was to drill wells near the salty Pacific Ocean—the first successful one in 1888 was a test. The Dutch Windmill started operation in 1902, and with its success, the Murphy-Windmill followed soon after. (Much later it was discovered that the park sits on an underground formation, known as the Westside Groundwater Basin, which due to its unusual geologic formation, has freshwater storage close to the ocean.)

Using construction materials sourced at the site helped to keep costs down. An onsite quarry was established to provide road building base material in the form of chert, a common rock found on the San Francisco Peninsula. (That quarry was later turned into an ornamental lake now known as the Lily Pond.) Fertilizer was also sourced from within the site; after the park was created, its roads were traversed by horses or horse-powered vehicles, which naturally produced droppings that went to good use. The San Francisco Chronicle newspaper euphemistically called these “street sweepings” and plentiful additional supplies were transported from downtown to fertilize the park’s growing landscape.

With the nursery established in 1870, thousands of trees were reared in the first year, including eucalyptus, acacia, pine, and...
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fast-growing plants. Over time a sequence
Initially, the shifting sands are anchored with
vert the sand dunes into an arable landscape.
approach of plant succession was used to con-
like alchemy. In fact, the known scientific
medium for plants, shrubs, and trees sounds
rounded by lupin, grasses, iris, and tule.
end was a series of natural seep ponds sur-
and a few red-berried elder. At the park's west
end was a series of natural seep ponds sur-
rrounded by lupin, grasses, iris, and tule.
The development of sand into a growing
medium for plants, shrubs, and trees sounds
like alchemy. In fact, the known scientific
approach of plant succession was used to con-
vert the sand dunes into an arable landscape.
Initially, the shifting sands are anchored with
fast-growing plants. Over time a sequence
of larger plants with deeper roots is utilized.
Yellow broom was Hall's choice for the begin-
mning of the process, but it would not take. He
then experimented with using barley as the first
layer, as it was fast-growing. Serendipity
played a part in this Plan B; while he was sur-
veying the Outside Lands' dunes on horseback
with colleagues, some horse's feed spilled onto
the sand. Upon finding sprouted seedlings
soon after, he determined that barley would
be the answer to this problem.
The park's earliest landscaping took place
in the Baker Panhandle. In eight-block length
by one-block width was the product of shrewd
bargaining by the land's owners. The earli-
est plans for the parks layout were that of a
simple rectangle. However, the land closest to
downtown was considered too valuable not
to build on. The rectangle was thinned on its
east end for several blocks to create the Pan-
handle, while a nearby peak and another site
to the Presidio became an acreage tradeoff
in the form of Buena Vista Park and Moun-
tain Lake, which were developed as part of
Order 803. An indelible mark was left by the
Outside Lands committee, who selected the
location of the park. The committee members
are commemorated as adjacent street names:
C. H. Stanyan, A. J. Shadrer, R. Beverly Cole,
Charles Clayton, and Monte Ashbury. These
streets intersect both sides but do not cross the
Panhandle as an uninterrupted group west of
Masonic Avenue.

The Panhandle became the welcome mat
to the park. In 1870, work began on the 270
acres located at the tract's eastern end, includ-
ing the Panhandle. A $15,000 contract to fill
swales and level the site to street grade was
awarded to contractor B. Kenny by the Park
Commission in May 1871. Drainage was an
immediate infrastructure need as the Pan-
handle was at the bottom of a slope on its
south side, dealing with this unseen element
became crucial to the park's success. Running
the Panhandle's length was The Avenue Drive,
a roadway that undulated within the narrow
length, highlighted by three interspersed
islands.

In the 1873 annual report to the park
commission, Hall deftly noted, “These enter-
prises are found to pay—to yield to the city a
direct moneied return on her investment.” B.
E. Lloyds Lights and Shades in San Francisco
notes that just four years after opening, the
park, “traversed by promenades, bridle paths
and drives, invites the pedestrian, equestrian,
or driver to follow their mazy windings into
the labyrinths of hedges and borders.” Some
15,000 people visited the park that year. By
1876, development of the parks landscape
reached Conservatory Valley to the west.
With the parks success, the surrounding real
estate became a valuable commodity.
Hall resigned as superintendent on April
30, 1876, when his salary was cut in half as
part of a larger effort to slash the parks overall
budget due to a spurious investigation. But
not giving up on the park, Hall continued to
consult on behalf of Golden Gate Park pro-
bono, and regained an official title when a
governor, George Stoneman, appointed
him consulting engineer to Golden Gate Park
in 1886, keeping the position until 1889. In
the intervening time, three superintendents
passed through the poorly funded park's col-
fers. Hall used his time to search for and find
just the right person to carry on as super-
intendent. He recommended, and the Park
Commission hired, gardener John McLaren,
who worked on Peninsula estates of important
captains of industry. As assistant superinten-
dent, McLaren was initially assigned the job
of landscaping the Sharon Children's Quarters,
designed by Hall. With some time under his
belt, McLaren was then designated as super-
intendent in 1889—Hall's work directly with
the park was completed.

With some grading and landscape
improvements complete, attention could be
turned to park amenities. The Conservatory
of Flowers, the parks first public building, was
opened without ceremony in 1878. The
pre-
laminated wood framework (not iron as was
usual in the day) and glass greenhouse was
originally made for native son James Lick's
San Jose estate. With Lick's death, the still-crated
greenhouse was purchased by a group of 27
public-spirited and influential men who, in
turn, gifted it to the Park Commission.

Due to lack of funding, for ten years the
park's development languished, but in 1888
several structures were dedicated near the
Conservatory; On July 4th a grand celebration
marked the opening of the Second Music
Stand, a shell-shaped structure set into a
Opposite, Top: Detail from family portrait of
William Hammond Hall in 1870, the year he was
hired to survey the Golden Gate Park tract in the
Outside Lands. Source: Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. #BANC PIC
1986.009-PIC.

Opposite, Bottom: View looking north at the
Sharon Quarters for Children pre-1882 with its
earliest rudimentary carousel under a tent
structure located at right. In the distance on the
extreme left is the Francis Scott Key Monument.
Source: A.J. McDonald stereoview, collection of
the author.

Above: The park's first aerial had a cross-
shape plan and was exclusively for the display
of pheasants. With its success a gigantic
freeform plan version for all kinds of birds was
constructed nearly just two years later: Source:
Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of Park
Commissioners of San Francisco, for the year
ending June 30, 1890. Sacramento: State Office,
J.D. Young, Supt. State Printing,1890.

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stepped basin with decorative landscaping and staircases. Part of the site included the monumental bronze and white travertine Francisco Scott Key Memorial, a gift from the James J. Hill Estate. Also dedicated at the end of 1888 was the nearby Sharon Quarters for Children, which included a playground and a picturesque Richardson Romanesque building for indoor activities, which was a gift from the estate of tycoon William Sharon. Soon after, the first of two windmills, the Dutch Windmill, pumped water from the parks' irrigation from freshwater wells located next to the ocean.

A significant change occurred when the administration of the park became part of a broader City Charter Reform in 1899. The Park Commission was now a City-administered body, no longer controlled by the state. One of the new commission's projects was to issue their Rules and Regulations Governing Automobiles in Golden Gate Park. It allowed autos to enter the park only on the east at Waller Street and travel west along South Drive to the Great Highway. This unique privilege was only granted to those who had applied for a driving permit (the forerunner to today's drivers license) and had passed a vehicle inspection, which required a minimum of equipment (today's vehicle registration).

According to Superintendent Hall, a park should not be a catch-all for almost anything which misguided people may wish upon it. Hall considered the park to be a place to enjoy nature without the trappings of the city, a place that did not include a lot of structures, particularly ones that did not contribute to the true park experience. Yet in the 1873 annual report to park commission about the state of the park, Hall noted, “Some of the park scenery are fitting settings for works of art, such as statues, monuments, and architectural decoration.”

From the park's earliest days, the public directly influenced what “furnishings” the park would contain. All of the many statues in the park, maybe unwanted by its designer, were funded by either individuals or groups. Although unwelcome, the public usually got its way. A few proposals were turned down. The earliest statue was to slain President James A. Garfield, its cornerstone was laid in 1884. Funding was by general subscription through the efforts of the Garfield Monument Association, whose membership of 22 men were Masons. Well-heeled individuals funded buildings to their own memory while they were living or they might leave a bequest to the park with specific direction as to its use. The largesse of Michael H. De Young, publisher of the Chronicle, probably tops all other donations collectively. After bringing the 1894 California Midwinter International Exhibition to the park, De Young made it possible for the fair's Fine Arts Building to be retained as an art museum. He donated collections for the building, including an estate and curators cottage, to open in 1896 as the Memorial Museum. With that facility outgrown, he then funded a new building, which was opened in 1921 as the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. Through the years dozens of statues were placed, buildings constructed, and gates built at important park entries.

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, the Golden Gate Park was well established. Programmed primarily for passive recreation in its earliest stages, as the 20th century progressed, facilities for more active recreation have proliferated, and over time, changing social movements would exert their force. No one of the 20th century could have imagined today's skateboard park or disk golf course nestled within its acreage. Even harder to imagine is, under the park's thin veneer of greenery, lies only sand.

Christopher Pollock

In 2016 Chris was tapped by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to be their first Historian-in-Residence for all of the city’s parks. With this, Chris brings a layer of history to the department. His initial project was to research and record the history of the department’s some 230 holdings.

With the 175th anniversary of Golden Gate Park in 2020, he will launch the latest version of his book, first published in 2001, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: A Thousand and Seventeen Acres of Stories. The publication by Norfolk Press is a hybrid of a history and a guide park of the many features. This was preceded by another book, Real San Francisco Stories: An Annotated Filmography of the Bay Area, published in 2013, which is about some 650 movies filmed in the Bay Area since the beginning of talkies.

Chris started his career as a designer specializing in interior architecture. With this expertise, he changed gears to focus on historic preservation, specializing in historic research. A native of Connecticut, Chris has resided in San Francisco since 1979.

Resources


Sometimes Leadership

Is Planting Trees Under Whose Shade You Will Never Sit

In Memoriam of Pamela Seager, 17 July 1944 – 14 September 2019
Executive Director of Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Ranch & Gardens for 33 Years.

PAMела YOUNG LEE

Ranch House with Moreton Bay fig tree in foreground. Photo by David Wakely Photography.
Many Eden readers will have known Pamela Seager personally and professionally. For those who did not have that privilege, perhaps this article will give you an introduction to this forward-thinking, inspiring, and yet unassuming leader in the field of cultural land- scape preservation who would work ceaselessly and friend on September 14, 2019. Pamela’s career in the preservation and interpretation of California’s built environment spanned more than four decades and touched many lives. Pamela was a nationally respected pioneer in the field of cultural landscape preservation. When she took on the role of Executive Direc-tor at Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Ranch & Gardens in the mid-1960s, she began a little practical scholarship on the restoration and preservation of gardens. Undaunted, Pamela thoughtfully and methodically persevered.

At Rancho Los Alamitos, Pamela was responsible for a 7½-acre historic site with eight original buildings and four acres of nationally significant historic gardens. The Rancho’s gardens had their beginnings in the mid-1800s when Abel Stearns and his wife Arcadia Bandini occupied the adobe ranch house and began cultivating a modest hand-watered patch on the north side of the house, which included a California pepper tree (Schinus molle). In the last decades of the 19th century, subsequent owner Susan Hathaway Bixby expanded these gardens, fencing them off from marauding livestock. She planted even more pepper trees, as well as palms, roses, flowering vines, and a pair of Moreton Bay fig trees (Ficus macrophylla). But it was Susan’s daughter-in-law, Florence Green Bixby, who created the gardens seen at the Rancho today and who became Pamela Seager’s inspiration.

In the early decades of the 20th century, Florence Bixby reworked the Rancho’s gardens beginning with those abutting the ranch house and enclosed by a circular drive. As the family became more prosperous, largely due to oil strikes on ranch land, Florence expanded the Rancho’s gardens beyond the circular drive with the aid of some of the horticultural world’s luminaries, including the Olmsted Brothers, William Herritched, Florence Yoch & Lucille Coonrad, Paul J. Howard, and Allen Chickerling. Bixby and her designers created a series of garden rooms, each distinctive and more beautiful than the last, which drew the visitor from one entrancing vista to the next. This horticultural legacy was gifted to the City of Long Beach by the Bixbys, along with the rest of the site, on September 14, 2019.

When Pamela arrived at Rancho Los Alamitos in the middle of winter 1986, she carefully took stock of what she would oversee. Before touching a thing in the gardens, Pamela spent countless hours combing through the photo-graphs, oral histories, plot plans, and other historical documents in the site’s archives. She sought out and interviewed ranch work-ers, family members, relatives of landscape designers, anyone who could inform her about the gardens and their development. Pamela’s approach to garden restoration was careful, methodical, conservative, patient, and cre-ative. She created an award-winning Master Plan, one of the components being a Garden Plan. (Other volumes detailed an Architectural Plan, the Interpretive Plan, and the overall Master Plan Project.) After an exhaustive selec-tion process, Pamela chose David S. Streatfield of the University of Washington and Russell A. Beatty of UC Berkeley as consultants to collab-orate on the Garden Plan and to guide and inform the gardens’ restoration.

Russ Beatty credits Pamela with helping him launch a new professional direction in landscape and garden preservation. Her insis-tence on detail and accuracy in the discovery of the evolution of the gardens established the standards of excellence in garden preservation. At the Rancho, she helped us dispel some early preconceptions as we worked through a few false assumptions about the original design.

The resulting condition of the gardens and site is a testimony to her steadfast leadership.

David S. Streatfield, who wrote the defini-tive history of the Rancho’s gardens for the Landscape Plan, recognized Pamela’s commit-ment to authenticity and research. He recently wrote, “Rancho Los Alamitos is one of the most beautifully conserved historic sites in California. In an exemplary fashion, it displays sensitive site interpretation and management based on careful historical research. By any standard, this is a remarkable achievement: that is a testament to Pamela Seager’s long and passionate commitment to and understanding of this place.”

Restoring and preserving a landscape has challenges beyond those of preserving a his-toric building. Gardens are living things that by their very nature are ever-changing; plants mature and die, light levels change as trees and shrubs grow, microclimates shift, precipita-tion levels and water sources rise and fall. Pamela found herself becoming an expert on plant materials available in Southern Californ-ia in the early decades of the 20th century, as well as familiarizing herself with the historic designers’ intent in terms of color, texture, and proportion – even scent and movement. If shade patterns changed over the last 70 years and the original planting material could no longer be sustained in a given location, what plant material available in 1928 could provide the same color and texture as the no longer viable plant? If a tree succumbed to Armil-via or fire blight, what resistant tree giving the same effect could be planted in its place?

Like the gardens she cared for and preserved, one of Pamela’s strengths and virtues was patience. She never gave up. She was relentless in finding solutions that aligned with her vision. Pamela was particularly protec-tive of the site’s historic trees: the century-old Moreton Bay fig trees, the California pepper tree, the stunning Italian stone pine. She even had the site’s heritage trees individually toured. In 2007 she had the Moreton Bay fig trees regist-ered on the Cultural Landscape Foundation’s list of historically significant trees. Pamela sought out and surrounded herself with expert arborists, horticulturalists, and botanists. Like a protective and proactive family member, if Pamela received a disappointing prognosis on a tree’s viability, she sought out 2nd and 3rd opinions. She never took recommenda-tions on the removal of a tree at face value. She relentlessly pursued options that would sustain the site’s trees, testing soil moisture, soil levels, and pathogens and vectors. And in most cases, her perseverance paid off.

Pamela’s dedication to the site’s historic trees was dramatically demonstrated during the restoration of the Rancho’s barnyard, which entailed the onsite relocation of six original

outbuildings, including three barns, a working blacksmith shop, and an eighty-foot-long feed shed. Historical California pepper trees were relocated throughout the barnyard. Moving buildings is extremely difficult. Moving his-toric buildings without damaging plants and trees is almost impossible. As each of the Rancho’s barnyard buildings was relocated, Pamela had an arborist and tree trimmers on hand to ensure that no branches or root was damaged. Moreover, as workers excavated the new founda-tions, Pamela insisted that any digging near a tree be done by hand to avoid damage to the root systems. When trees were unearthed, they were carefully wrapped in burlap and kept damp twenty-four hours a day.

The Rancho’s horse barn proved extra-ordinarily challenging. A venerable pepper tree located very close to the structure had roots extending far beneath the building. Pamela was told she needed to remove the tree to complete the renovation. Instead, she worked with the engineers to redesign the building’s foundation and basement, and in doing so, was able to keep the tree in place. Pamela was always fiscally responsible, but she never let the bottom line be the determining factor in the preservation strategies for the site. Ulti-mately, Pamela decided what she believed was right for the site and then strategized how to execute it a reality.

Pamela’s philosophy for the presentation and interpretation of the Rancho’s gardens was that visitors should experience them in...
the same way that Florence Bixby’s family and guests experienced them in the early decades of the 20th century. Pamela insisted that they were not botanical gardens, but very personal and unpretentious historical gardens providing a quiet refuge for guests and reflecting a Southern California lifestyle and aesthetic. Pamela spent her first years at the Rancho removing hundreds of small plastic signs scattered throughout the gardens identifying each plant and tree by its botanical name. There are no directional signs, tributes, or memorial plaques in the gardens. Signage would not have been used in the gardens when the family lived on the Rancho. Pamela’s vision for the interpretation of the Rancho’s gardens to the public relied heavily on knowledgeable, engaging docents, as well as informative and richly illustrated brochures, and it still does today.

The interpretation Pamela insisted on required excellent training, and she shared her extensive knowledge with the Rancho’s volunteer docents and staff. Pamela also generously shared her knowledge and experience in garden restoration with the broader preservation community. She was a presenter in the area of historic sites and cultural landscapes for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, and the American Alliance of Museums. Pamela invested in the future as a regular lecturer for the preservation and landscaping classes at the University of Southern California and Cal Poly Pomona. She regularly took on interns anxious to learn more about the emerging field.

Pamela’s devotion to landscape preservation and her vision for the Rancho broadened our understanding of the possibilities in the field. It launched careers and changed lives. Christine O’Hara, one of the foremost authorities on the Olmsted brothers and professor in the Landscape Architecture Department at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, began her career as an intern at the Rancho working under Pamela’s direction. Janet Brown Becker, a landscape architectural professional who graduated from UC Berkeley, was one of Pamela’s early hires who decided to change her career direction from landscape design to preservation. According to Becker, “Pamela truly blazed a totally new era of historic landscape architectural work. Under Pamela’s leadership, the restoration team was able to make steady progress towards one of the first, and most authentic, garden restoration projects in California.” Pamela was generous with her experience, knowledge, and abilities. And while the Rancho’s gardens were her passion, she worked tirelessly for other organizations as well, including the Governor’s California Heritage Task Force, the California Preservation Foundation, the California Historical Society, and Long Beach Heritage. Although she was quiet and unassuming, her contributions to the broader preservation and cultural communities did not go unrecognized. She received numerous awards and honors, not least of which was the Outstanding Contributor to the Preservation of Historic Landscapes from the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Pamela often characterized Rancho Los Alamitos as an island in a sea of change—a place to actively experience connections with the past, to understand the present, and to imagine the future. She also valued its serenity as a place to reflect and renew. It became Pamela’s life’s work to ensure that the opportunities and riches offered by the Rancho, and its incomparable gardens, were available to all. Through careful planning and hard work, creative strategies, relationship building, and often sheer stubborn determination, Pamela succeeded beyond her wildest dreams. Pamela was a visionary who understood the value—and accepted the risk—of investing in the future.

The award-winning master plan Pamela and her team created for the Rancho was all but complete at the time of her passing. She oversaw and implemented 166 of the plan’s 167 recommendations over her 33-year career at the Rancho. The only recommendation remaining to be carried out is the restoration of the site’s first garden, appropriately named the Old Garden. It is one of the oldest continuously tended residential gardens in California, and the Rancho is currently raising funds for its restoration in Pamela’s memory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Pamela Young Lee was one of Pamela Seager’s first hires at Rancho Los Alamitos back in early 1980s. Lee was hired as the Rancho Los Alamitos Foundation’s first curator. Before working at the Rancho, Lee graduated with a Masters in American History and museum studies from UC Riverside and was the curator at the historic Mission Inn. After working with Pamela Seager at Rancho Los Alamitos for nearly a decade, Lee left to work for Walt Disney Imagineering as a director in their Creative Resources division, and later as the Chief Curator of the California Historical Society. After leaving the Historical Society, Lee returned to Southern California and was re-hired by Pamela Seager, who promoted her to the position of the Rancho’s associate director. Lee became executive director of the PLA Foundation after Pamela Seager’s retirement. Lee had the privilege of working with Pamela Seager on and off for 22 years, and but more significantly, enjoyed Pamela Seager’s friendship and thoughtful counsel for 34 years.
The golden glint, was that the retreating light of sunny summer? Or perhaps the tawny hue of oncoming autumn? On the approach from the south, oaks swarmed the hills, and I assume the scene was mirrored coming in from the north.

Conference settings varied: old mission, contemporary hotel, vintage town, and classic California surf beach.

Friday saw our first Great Meet-Up in the conference hotel lobby with faces known, faces still to meet, and a sense of reunion. I recognized my favorite National Parks Service lady from Charlotte, charter members, former board members, current movers and shakers, in a healthy mix of genders and ages. I listened to greetings right and left and comments on the beautiful drive into Lompoc. Conference packets were handed out and carpool groups formed for a short trek east to the mission.

La Purisima Mission, restored by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the thirties, is a place simple and pure. Huge oaks and sycamores tower amidst outlines and remainders of the built environment once here. Our visit came at the right time of year to see the location, with a low slant of sun in the sky lending an amber quality which emphasized antiquity. A tour with docents of mission buildings gave a sense of interior use both of larger communal spaces and those smaller and more intimate.

Afterward, we sat at tables under spreading tree canopies, the space centered by a large round basin with plashing fountain as the simple, graceful centerpiece. Land and setting together gave a sense of place and flowing time both of past and current seasons.

Words of welcome delivered by conference convener Judy Horton and President Christy O’Hara gave us the design of our evening. A volunteer dressed in friar’s robes also gave welcome and introduced his companion volunteers dressed as novices.

The docent group, trained in keeping the mission’s story alive, prepared and served a light dinner of cheese, crackers, salad, raw fruit and vegetables. Star of the meal was posole, a broth of pork pieces and hominy with dry hot salsa, chopped onions, radish bits for crunch, and cilantro to add to taste. All was delicious and traditional to the mission period, local wines, red and white, along with beer and water also were on offer.

Carrying instruments, five students from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo arrived. After setting up, they played three-of-the-era musical movements ending in a fandango. The leader read a short description of an actual three-day fandango celebration from Richard Henry Dana’s travel account Three Years Before the Mast.

Into the early evening dusk, we started back to our hotels with cookies and CDs on the mission’s history plucked from baskets offered by volunteers.
The exhibition was named "An Overview of the Local Community and an Invitation to Tour the Museum." Lompoc Museum Director Dr. Lisa Renken’s overview of the local community and an invitation to tour the museum.

Brian Tichenor — Part 1, “At the Cusp: The Collision of Pre- and Post-Columbian Landscapes in Southern California.” My new intellectual crush, a well-read analyst and synthesizer. Turns out Southern California was the rancho era. For me, this was the revelation of the conference. We’re not so pure as I previously thought.

Nancy Carol Carter — “Inventing Regional Romance: Two California Myth-Makers.” Helen Hunt Jackson wrote a novel exposing the unjust treatment of California Native Americans and ended up with a best-selling romance, luring tourists eager to visit various adobes all claiming to be the true “Ramona’s Marriage Place.” Maverick and adventurer Charles Lummis walked from Cincinnati to Los Angeles, hand-built his house from local stone, wrote for and edited the L.A. Times, collected native artifacts and promoted the preservation of California missions. He fiercely advocated for the rights of Native Americans, Carrier, historical researcher and experienced lecturer, wove facts into engaging stories and insightful profiles which reinforced her theme of a shaped narrative exploiting the history of California landscapes and history.

Kristina W. Foss — “Heritage Plants in the Cultural Landscape.” A fun speaker with academic backbone has taken what she has learned in archives of mission-era landscapes and gardens and had applied her research in a hands-on approach. No hydrangea need apply!

We enjoyed an ample box lunch under a sweep of trees in the side yard of Stone Pine Hall. Most of us made time for a pass through the adjacent museum.

Bob H. Carter, founder and director of the Library of American Landscape History, developer of books about American landscape history since 1992, hosted us by journeying from Massachusetts. She generously made available copies of View, the Library’s annual journal. Her book on country house landscapes, Genius for Place, has a central spot in my home library. Carter came to share the news that in the future the Library intends to shine a bright focus on California landscapes and history.

Brian Tichenor completed his presentation with “At the Cusp” in the same high caliber as his earlier talk.

David Lemon, retired veteran researcher and floral industry leader, served as our on-the-ground expert in the going-on in greenhouse and field when it counted. He shared memories of Lompoc’s once innovative, now vanished flower seed commerce. Accompanying photos told the story, their faded timeworn quality lending a nostalgic air of an era passed.

Before we were released to stroll the town, Lompoc Mayor Janelle Osborne bounced in to deliver a high energy, up-to-the-minute city report.

Our gala dinner was at Sally’s, a resto-bountifully housed in the living room of the residence building. Here Michael Hardwick shared a retro view of a topic I remembered from fourth grade—“Mission Horticulture: Orchard, Garden, Vineyard, Plant Introduction and Water Systems then and now.”

Horticulture: Orchard, Garden, Vineyard, Plant Introduction and Water Systems then and now. Gedney Christensen the Lompoc Valley, by Bess Gedney Christensen was delectable.

It all started around 1907 with sweet peas, which revel in the local soil and weather conditions, and expanded to include hundreds of flower and vegetable varieties. Burpee, Ferry-Morse, Bodger, Denholmen, and other mail-order companies all had operations in the valley, but the industry began to decline by the 1980s. This book uses oral histories, written records, and lots of period photos to follow the changes that occurred and, along the way, it entertains with items such as the attempt to get marigolds named as the national flower, and a description of the 12 acre partriotic “floral flag” created in 1942.

The seed fields are now mostly gone but plant breeding and research still take place in greenhouses, and some land is planted for cut flowers. This book is an easy and entertaining read, so if you are in Lompoc, I recommend you stop by the museum and pick up a copy.

At our now-hygienic table during what should become a traditional after-conference jaunt—somewhere for a cheeseburger—talk fell naturally into conference evaluation. Opinions emerged.

My view is that conference organization was superior—no doubt there are backstories—and the program excellent. As has become the CGLHS norm, speakers were great in varied ways. The weekend gave attendees, I feel, a sampling of life at a remote mission property and of Lompoc in flourishing years. The smart attendee will pay attention to the admirable bibliography attached to the schedule. Finally, I applaud the choice of hotel with spiffy breakfasts and helpful staff.

Word is CGLHS has slated our next conference for Los Angeles and its changeable, changing river. See you in 2020 for a Great Meet-Up down by the riverside!
Conference attendees saying goodbye under the old Mission olive trees. Photo by Steven Kajon.
Cape Cod National Seashore and Point Reyes National Seashore: Two seashores, two coasts, two books new and old, to explore this winter.

The Cape Cod National Seashore on the Atlantic coast, and the Point Reyes National Seashore on the Pacific, share distance and recent histories including both coasts presently preserved.

Both the Cape Cod and the Point Reyes National Seashores were created by Congress and signed into law by President John F. Kennedy in the early 1960s, at a time when seashores were emerging as larger landscape “units” within the U.S. National Park Service. Only 10 National Seashores exist today – just the one in Massachusetts and just one in California – amid the greater network of more than 400 National Parks, Monuments and Lakeshores, throughout the United States and on its coasts. The two seashore books included in this review cover both the Massachusetts and California iconic landscapes. While each is valuable on its own, together the two books give a broader view of the early national seashore preservation movement in America.

The Greatest Beach: A History of Cape Cod National Seashore by Ethan Carr

(2019 Library of America Landscape History, University of Georgia Press)

Ethan Carr’s The Greatest Beach: A History of Cape Cod National Seashore (Library of American Landscape History, 2019) describes the landscape, cultural, and political preservation efforts that led to the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore on August 7, 1961. Professor Carr is on the Landscape Architecture faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is a well-known scholar on the history of the National Park Service. His latest book is handsome, hefty, and an essential read for American landscape, cultural, and political preservation scholars.

The author weaves the Cape Cod story deftly into that of the broader national parks movement. Early “visitors” are given full due in Carr’s book, both for their pro-preservation culture back to life to admire today. The author points out the critical link between the Cape Cod story and the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Carr relays the public and private struggles that provided financial rescue in the 1950s for the Cape Cod National Seashore and the citizen committees, carefully planning and managing the preserved Outer Cape.

Carr provides a rare inside look into the National Park Service and its citizen committees, carefully planning and managing the preserved Outer Cape. Readers wishing for a more comprehensive history of the national parks movement may wish for a more lengthy history of the Cape Cod National Seashore. However, The Greatest Beach provides a critical perspective on the history of the celebration of the first national seashore and will remind us of the earliest sailors, ships, explorers, and writers who came to call (or stay).

In his introduction, Professor Carr gives the reader a full view of the evolving history of the Cape, with postcard images presented alongside contemporary photographs. The author points out the critical link between the Cape Cod story and the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Early “visitors” are given full due in Carr’s book, both for their pro-preservation stance back to life to admire today. The author points out the critical link between the Cape Cod story and the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Carr relays the public and private struggles that provided financial rescue in the 1950s for the Cape Cod National Seashore and the citizen committees, carefully planning and managing the preserved Outer Cape.

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Peninsula’s blanket of cool summer fog coming
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Point Reyes Peninsula emerges like lost Atlantis from
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Island to Corpus Christi are dedicated to public
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Written by San Francisco Chronicle envi-
ronmental columnist Harold Gilliam, and first
published by the Sierra Club in early 1962
with a foreword by the Secretary of the Interior
Stewart Udall, Gilliam sleek and slim Island
in Time book emphasized the natural envi-
ronment of the isolated peninsula more than
the political or personal events of the era.
Although not intended as such, Gilliam’s book
was a prelude to preservation.
San Francisco Chronicle reporter Carl Nolte wrote
soon after Gilliam’s death in 2010, “Gilliam’s
work had widespread influence. His 1962
book, Island in Time, for example, was
presented to every member of Congress and had
an important role in the creation of the Point
Reyes National Seashore;” Nolte wrote on SF
Gate December 19, 2016.

In his foreword, the Secretary of the Interior
Udall wrote in his Forward to Gilliam’s first
edition: “As I write at the dawn of 1962, only 240 miles
out of 3700 miles of shoreline from Mount Desert
Island to Corpus Christi are dedicated to public
purposes. The National Park Service administers a
marine 55 shore miles along the 1720 miles of Pacific
Ocean coast. In face of a clamoring national need.
Point Reyes Peninsula emerges like lost Atlantis from
the deeps. It is verily, an island in the nick of time.”
Gilliam’s brief chapter on wind, fog and
sun unravels the mystery of the Point Reyes
Peninsula’s blanket of cool summer fog coming
in from the colder Pacific waters followed by
surprising winter warmth.

“The promontory of Point Reyes itself, thrust-
ing boldly into the ocean beyond the general
shoreline, is the scene of some of the most spec-
tacular weather in the nation.” Gilliam writes.
“Jutting out into this coastal fog bank Point Reyes
is often enwrapped in rolling white mists and
the resonant buzz roar of the foghorns sends a
warning out to passing ships miles at sea. At
other times, particularly in late afternoon, the
fog drifts inland...in masses and wreaths of mist
that envelope the upland pines and firs, tree by
tree and grove by grove.”

“Oddly,” Gilliam continues, “although the
point itself is one of the coolest places in the
U.S. (outside Alaska) in summer, it is unusu-
ally warm in winter.”
Far away from Cape Cod, on the isolated Point
Reyes peninsula along the California coast just
north of San Francisco, the 1950s rolled on
peacefully. The thick summer fog rolled in, as
usual, to cool off the ranches and cows along
the northern coast. Soon, however, develop-
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sea captain Sir Francis Drake, the 16th century diary of his chaplain provided vital information for Gilliam’s book about the landscape and inhabitants well before its seashore status.

In Gilliam’s later 1973 lightly-revised Island in Time book, written 11 years after the seashore was established, only then did he hint at the political aftermath in his brief preface: “When the first edition of Island in Time was published by the Sierra Club in 1962, one of the purposes was to call attention to the existence of this nearly pristine peninsula near San Francisco. Another was to demonstrate a need to preserve the peninsula. I would like to think that the book played a role in the passage of the legislation creating the Point Reyes National Seashore.” His revised book carries a photograph of President John F. Kennedy at the White House signing ceremony, with California Congressman Clem Miller casually holding a copy of Gilliam’s Island in Time book inches away from the president’s signing pen. Gilliam also reminds us in his 1973 preface, that an even newer National Park created next door protected the boundary of Point Reyes. “As a result of the grass-roots campaign similar to that which created and protected Point Reyes Seashore, Congress and the Nixon Administration established the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) adjoining Point Reyes on the south and east—39,000 acres of superlative shoreline, on both sides of the Golden Gate.”

The irony of course, is that, unlike the early English Pilgrims landing in 1620 on Cape Cod, the English visitors to the California coast 21 years earlier, in 1579, never intended to stay among the friendly Indians with more bountiful food and a hospitable climate of warmer winters mostly free of frost or snow. Instead, Sir Francis Drake left us a six-week snapshot in time of the cool California Pacific coast, before sailing back home to tell the Queen. Harold Gilliam, four centuries later, has left us his Island In Time as an ode to nature and to the California landscape then and now, while Cape Cod writer Ethan Carr has left us his Island In Time as an ode to nature. Both books are worth savoring for the bounty of this century of landscapes preserved and to the California landscape then and now, among the friendlier Indians with more bountiful food and a hospitable climate of warmer winters mostly free of frost or snow. Instead, Sir Francis Drake left us a six-week snapshot in time of the cool California Pacific coast, before sailing back home to tell the Queen.

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About the Author: Joan Hockaday is the author of The Gardens of San Francisco (Timber Press, 2009) and Greenscapes: Olmsted’s Pacific Coast (Princeton University Press, 2008) and the co-author of The Gardens of San Francisco (Timber Press, 2009) and Greenscapes: Olmsted’s Pacific Coast (Princeton University Press, 2008). She is a scholar and writer in the field of landscape architecture and urban history. Her writing has appeared in Landscape Architecture Magazine, the Landscape Journal, and in several books, including The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume 5, The California Passage (University of California Press, 1995) and The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume 5, The California Passage (University of California Press, 1995). She is currently at work on a book exploring the 400th anniversary of Sir Francis Drake’s landing on the California coast in 1579 and her book, Island in Time: 50 Years as Point Reyes National Seashore, is under contract with Island Press (Fall 2020).
The Cultural Landscape Foundation Excursion to Rancho Mirage

MELISSA RICHE
AUTHOR OF MOD MIRAGE: THE MIDCENTURY ARCHITECTURE OF RANCHO MIRAGE
PUBLISHED BY GIBBS SMITH, 2018
On November 14, 2019, The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) held its annual excursion, this time focusing on the gardens and homes of Rancho Mirage, a few miles from Palm Springs. Incorporated in 1973, Rancho Mirage’s fame dates to the early 1950s when two country clubs opened, Thunderbird and Tamarisk, which offered innovations in site planning and featured luxurious homes by leading designers lining the fairways. This new lifestyle attracted the rich and famous, and the membership soon read like a “Who’s Who.” Entertainers like Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Frank Sinatra, the Marx Brothers, Hoagy Carmichael, and Bing Crosby partied at the clubhouses with industrialists such as Leonard Firestone, Robert McCulloch, Earle Jorgensen, and Peter Kiewit. Thunderbird, where President Eisenhower played golf in 1954, was the site of the 1955 Ryder Cup and was where Dwight D. Eisenhower played golf in 1954, was the home of the British Royal Family, including those attending private retreats that were master-planned and designed by famed desert modernist architect William F. Cody.

The club is considering demolishing them for redevelopment, and this has become a local preservation issue.

The next stop was Tamarisk Country Club and the immediately restored 1957 Charney Residence, designed by Wexler & Harrison and featured on the cover of Riche’s book Mod Mirage. The house was purchased in 2016 by New York architect Steven Harris and interior designer Lucien Rees Roberts. Its poor condition threatened its survival. Fortunately, the new owners understood its quality: They located original blueprints, vintage photographs, and the landscape plans by Eckbo, Royston & Williams, all of which informed their award-winning restoration. David Kelly, the landscape architect and partner at Rees-Roberts Design, was on hand to answer questions, while architect Steven Harris described the challenges of bringing the house back from the brink. It was a memorable visit to a shining example of mid-century modern design adjacent to the verdant Tamarisk Country Club fairways.

As the buses drove through the private gates of Thunderbird Heights for the last stop, Riche explained that President Obama often stayed there at the home of the Obamas’ interior designer, Michael S. Smith. The final destination was ‘White Shadows,’ designed in 1957 by Henry Eggers for the heir to the Weyerhauser fortune, Thomas B. Davis. The house was known as the ‘Persian Palace’ both for its Modern Moroccan architecture and for Dottie Davis’s collection of ancient Persian artifacts. From the street, the house presents a decep- tively simple facade, but the magic of this house soon unfolds as you see a marble-lined arcaded courtyard that resembles something from the Alhambra. The hillside house looks out across the Coachella Valley from an arcaded terrace around the swimming pool. The surrounding landscape, designed by C. Jacques Hahn, features marble pools, runnels, and fountains next to an elaborate copper-roofed pergola. Before the current owners bought the house, the previous owner had stripped the house of every fitting, including screens by designer T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. During their restora- tion, they retrieved everything—at a cost—and brought the house back to its glory.

Many thanks to those who made this enjoyable day such a great success!
2019 Annual Report

Dear CGLHS Members,

Because of your support, the California Garden & Landscape History Society achieved significant progress and accomplishments on a number of projects in 2019. Here are some of the year’s highlights.

Our flagship journal *Eden* continues to thrive with original scholarship, colored imagery that showcases projects, a dedicated editor, Steven Keylon, and an equally dedicated Eden Editorial Board. Archived copies of this robust publication are located on our website, and we have been told directly from scholars, practitioners, and students that they use this information to inform their work. Because of the value of Eden, we also began working on a new book *Essential Eden: The First 20 Years*, a compilation of the top essays from the past 20 years of publication. This book will be updated with high-quality digital images and newly-commissioned photographs. We are about halfway through this project and have begun seeking a publisher.

Other events this year included the California Garden & Landscape History Lecture Series, in our on-going partnership with the Huntington Library. In June, architectural historian Barbara Lamping lectured on “Richard Neutra, Landscape Architect.” Our August lecture by architect Marc Appleton, “California Ranches: Lands in Transition,” was followed by Garden Conservancy president James Brayton Hall speaking on “Outstanding American Gardens: What Are They, Where Are They, and How Can They Be Saved?” Thank you to Judy Horton for organizing this series. Board members Libby Simon and Ann Scheid organized two Tours & Talks in Pasadena on Busch Gardens, splitting the event into the upper and lower arroyo, as remnants of this expansive historic garden are located in private gardens today. Thank you to Matthew Berkley, of deasy penner poole, who sponsored the design of maps for these tours. Lastly, Ann Scheid and I presented a talk at the Glendale Historical Society Restoration Expo, “Discovering History in your Garden,” offering methods to conduct historical research on a landscape, unusual as most talks at this event focused on architecture. We are very excited that new board member Janet Graczyk will be organizing a robust program of events in Northern California in 2020.

The new California Garden & Landscape History logo was unveiled in April, created by Bill Smith of designSimple. Bill explained that the cropping and spacing of the letters were inspired by garden design plans, a common way to examine landscapes. Colors were taken in large part from native California plants and flowers, the most identifiable being the warm yellow/orange of the California poppy; greens from sagebrush, and though not native, abundant lavender that grows so easily here. With a range of colors as part of the core identity, on occasion we will vary logos, colors, like the way colors change in a garden over the seasons. The general spirit of the identity and brand also derived from garden design—creative, but orderly, favoring gentle visual relationships. Typography used fonts that would be at home in the pages of a Victorian book, borrowing too from the font used for Eden, thus tying together our journal and organizational identity. We were also committed to outreach this year to better promote CGLHS and keep members aware of events and activities in our organization. Additional content, including past conference information, was added to our website and board member David Laws has been adding new blogs and content to our Facebook page. Libby Simon designed tabling items from runners to handouts for our Northern and Southern California events. Robin Karsen, Executive Director for the Library of American Landscape History, generously shared View with all members, as their organization’s annually published magazine was focused on historic California landscapes. Because of this outreach, 46 new members joined CGLHS.

For the first time in 10 years we increased our membership dues to keep our small nonprofit organization financially sound, especially with increased production and postage costs for Eden. We are grateful for the members who renewed and many who increased their membership to a sustaining one.

Thank you to the numerous volunteers who help with writing and editing Eden, host, speak, and organize events, and serve on the Board of Directors and Eden Editorial Board. On behalf of the Board, we are truly grateful for your support.

Best regards,
Christine O’Hara
CGLHS President
Donors, new members, Eden contributors, event organizers and volunteers:

**Honorary Life Members**

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Rich Freitas
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Joan Hockaday
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<td>Paul Althouse</td>
<td>Antonio Adezo</td>
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<td>JC Miller</td>
<td>Tony Alphonse</td>
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<tr>
<th>Tom Brown</th>
<th>Nancy Carol Carter</th>
<th>Susan Chamberlin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly Comras</td>
<td>David A. Laws</td>
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<td>Meghann Ray</td>
<td>Libby Simon</td>
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**Hosts, Speakers and Volunteers**

**Speakers**

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Kristina W. Voss
Michael Hardwick
Robin Carson
David Lemon
Janelle Osborne
Nancy Carol Carter
Susan Chamberlin
Prelado de los Teseros
Lompoc Museum
Lompoc Valley
Huntington Botanical Garden

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Nancy Carol Carter
Jadie Horton
Karen Paskie
Lompoc Valley
Elisabeth C. Miller Library

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Call Polly Symphony string quartet

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Front Cover: Detail of an 1892 lithograph looking west from the east end of Golden Gate Park. Courtesy Helen Crocker Russell Library, San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum.

Back Cover: A wide variety of trees, shrubs and other plants surround a water feature in Golden Gate Park’s historic Japanese Tea Garden. The garden, created for the 1894 California Midwinter Exposition, showcased the exotic culture. The Japonesque craze began in 1853 when trade relations were opened with the West. This was followed by a stunning display of Japanese art and architecture shown at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. Photo by Christopher Pollock.