

# Even





Above: The Fuss Garden's later front cactus garden that may have replaced the lawn planted when the garden was built in 1951. 1983 photo, Courtesy Garrett Eckbo Collection Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

# Eden

JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN & LANDSCAPE HISTORY SOCIETY

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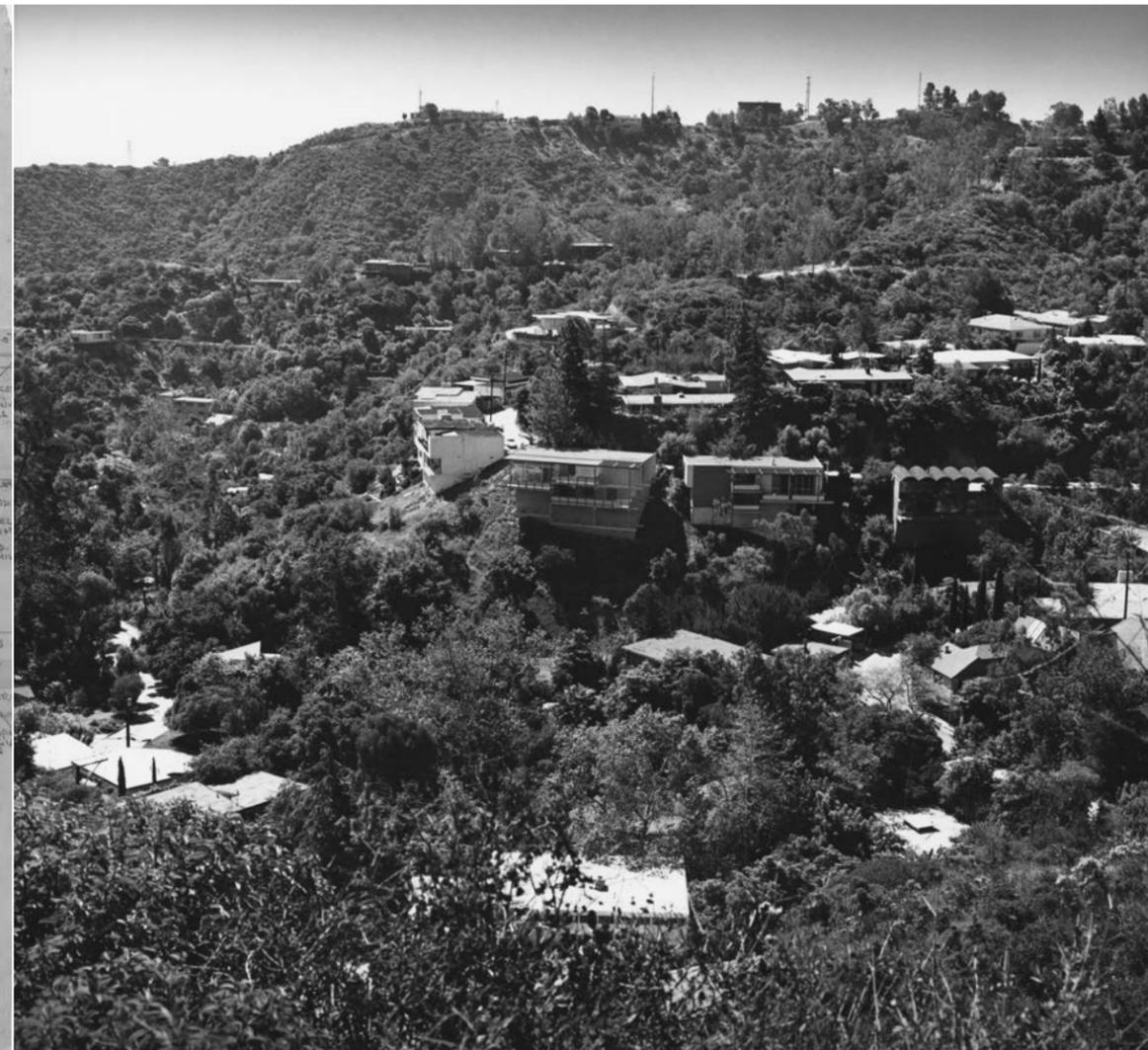
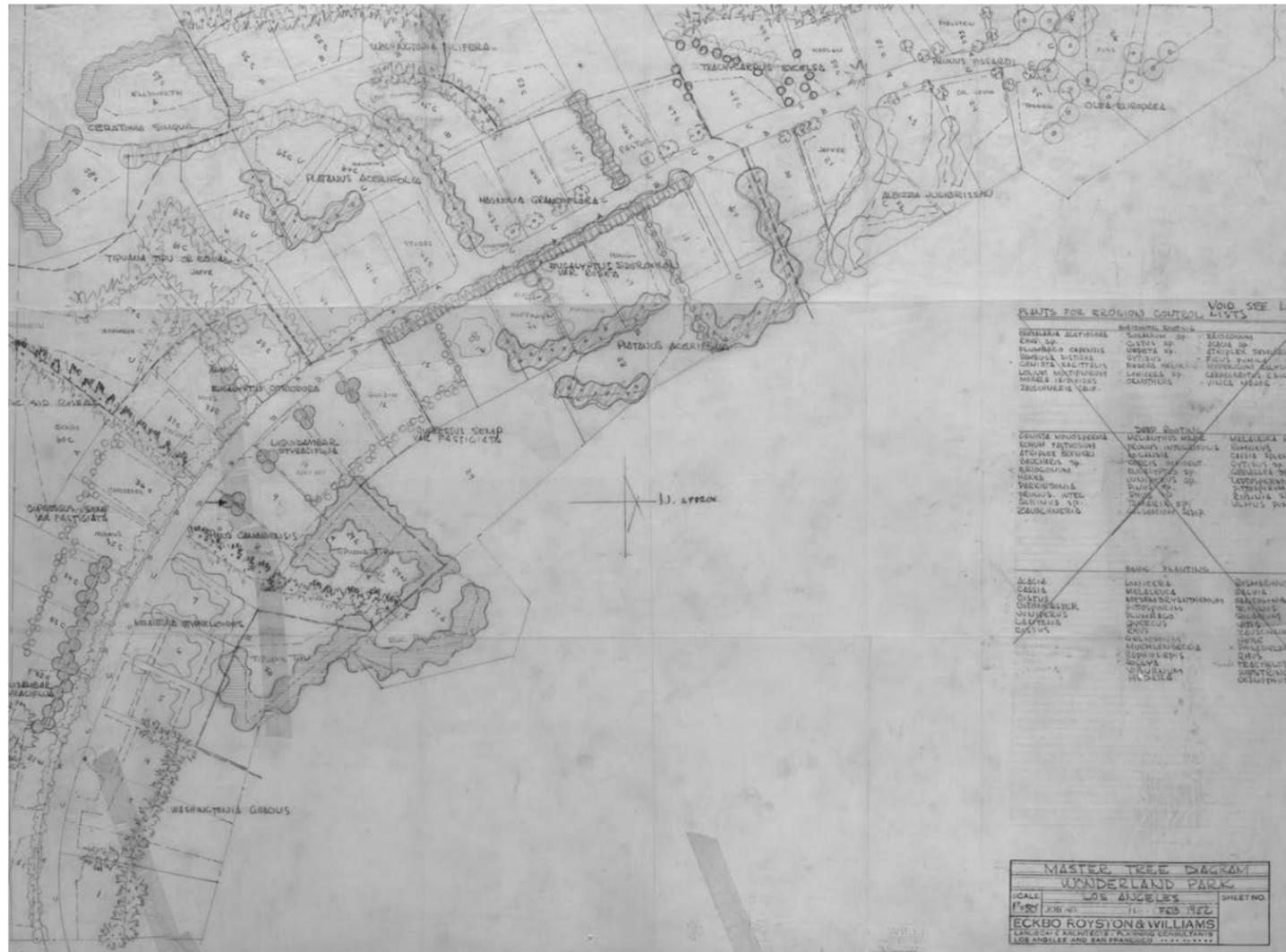
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Portrait of Garrett Eckbo with model for fountain. Photographer Julius Shulman. Courtesy Getty Research Institute.

# ECKBO in WONDERLAND

HOUSING and  
LANDSCAPING  
for the PLANNED  
COMMUNITY  
BY LIBBY SIMON





In 1952, the maverick modernist landscape architect Garrett Eckbo and his family moved into their new home in a section of the Hollywood Hills called Wonderland Park, a development that Eckbo himself had meticulously master-planned in the preceding years. The story of Wonderland Park lies not just in the beauty of the trees, streetscapes, and landscaped environs as the street snakes up to the top of the canyon, but also in the shared experience of a core group of homeowners there who loved the arts, had a common political and community ethos, and had weathered – along with Eckbo – an earlier set of aspirational storms. They stuck together, and Wonderland Park is still vibrant today, nearly 70 years after it began.

#### COMMUNITY HOMES (FIRST PLAN)

The success of Wonderland Park only came about due to the failure of a previous plan; the Community Homes project. In 1946, a group of 15 returning veterans and their families, many of them in the animation business, banded together to come up with a solution for their own housing needs.<sup>1</sup> The postwar housing boom made building materials scarce; it was to their advantage to develop plans and acquire materials as a group. They were young, creative, and politically-minded, with progressive ideals about the type of community they desired. Aware that well-known modernist architect Gregory Ain had similar forward-thinking ideas about community living, they worked with him to come up with a plan. Ain had spent part of his childhood in Llano del Rio, an “important non-religious farming colony” in the Antelope Valley, an experience

that had left an indelible impression.<sup>2</sup> It was these community-based ideas on architecture as a social tool that shaped his later architecture concepts.

Led by architects Ain and Reginald D. Johnson, a collaborative design group formed which included landscape architect Garrett Eckbo and planner Simon Eisner. As Marc Treib writes in his book, *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*, the group was a perfect match with the “liberal and communitarian spirit of the Cartoonist and Screenwriter’s Guild members.”<sup>3</sup> In 1946, Community Homes, Inc. purchased 50 acres at Vanowen Street and White Oak Avenue in Reseda from pioneer rancher Bernard Schmitz. For a price \$750 for WWII veterans and \$1,500 for non-veterans, a family could buy into Community Homes as shareholders, and the group soon expanded to 280 families.<sup>4</sup>

In line with the group’s progressive collective beliefs, the community was intended

to be racially diverse: “There were four black families, several Asians, and many Hispanic artists,” writes Tom Sito in his book on animation unions, *Drawing the Lines*. The loans to purchase the properties were to be processed through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a proponent of restrictive covenants, which allowed arbitrary neighborhood restrictions on the sale or rental of a home to non-whites and people of Jewish descent. Once established in a neighborhood, these covenants were passed from owner to owner, spelled out in each of their deeds.<sup>5</sup>

After attempting for years to work with the FHA on acquiring the loans, the group eventually enlisted the help of congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas. Being sympathetic to their cause, Gahagan Douglas tried to appeal the decision to the commissioner of the FHA, but to no avail—the FHA eventually denied the housing loans because of the already existing racially restrictive covenants in this area.<sup>6</sup>

Previous spread: At the Goldin residence, a section of the polygon-shaped concrete patio, set in lawn with a short ivy hedge. In the recent remodel, the lawn has been replaced with a native bent grass, and *Dymondia margaretae*, which was planted between the pavers. 1987. Courtesy of Diana Hunter.

Opposite page: Master Tree Diagram Wonderland Park. This is the master plan showing Garrett Eckbo’s placement of the tree groves and groupings. February 1952. Eckbo Royston & Williams. Courtesy UC Berkeley.

Above: Only the lower section where the rooftops are lined up in a curve, is what is considered Wonderland Park. Photographer Julius Shulman. Courtesy UC Berkeley.

The development was never built, the Community Homes group lost their deposits, and according to Garrett Eckbo: "As of September 1949 this project will remain permanently on paper. A coalition of real estate-financed FHA interests forced its cancellation."<sup>7</sup>

## WONDERLAND PARK LANDSCAPE

After the failure of the Community Homes project, many of the members moved on to purchase and build their own individual homes, some working with Gregory Ain and Garrett Eckbo. In 1949, an offshoot development called "Crestwood," a cooperative community in a canyon of Brentwood, was created for a group of studio musicians, many of whom had been previously involved in the Community Homes development.<sup>8</sup> Another branch of the Community Homes investors formed the Modern Housing Association, establishing a new community in the as yet undeveloped upper hills of Laurel Canyon near Mulholland Drive, naming it Wonderland Park. Eckbo later explained: "About half of the (67) houses were built and were occupied by friends and acquaintances of the original fifteen" from the failed Community Homes development.<sup>9</sup>

Wonderland Park, in the Laurel Canyon neighborhood of Los Angeles' Hollywood Hills, is known for its woody, folksy feel. It was mostly developed in the 1910s to the 1920s, but the upper areas of the Canyon, including Wonderland Park, were built up later, from the mid-1940s through the 70s.

With Garrett Eckbo as the lead, the Northern California firm of Eckbo, Royston, Williams, which included Eckbo's brother-in-law Edward Williams and Robert Royston, was retained. Garrett and his wife Arlene moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco in 1946 to work on the firm's Southern California projects. Eckbo also began teaching landscape architecture at the University of Southern California School of Architecture.<sup>10</sup>

Though Eckbo preferred to design in natural hillsides that were not yet plotted and laid out, the 67 building pads in the new development had already been terraced. Wonderland Park Avenue was designated as the central spine of the development, curving uphill and terminating at a dead-end, with one through street and one cul-de-sac radiating from it.<sup>11</sup>

Writing about his strategy on the overall master plan for the communal landscaped spaces, Eckbo explained that he had: "two key principles (1) The unity and continuity of the street as a park-like setting for all homes in the area; and (2) the privacy and individuality of the rear gardens as extensions

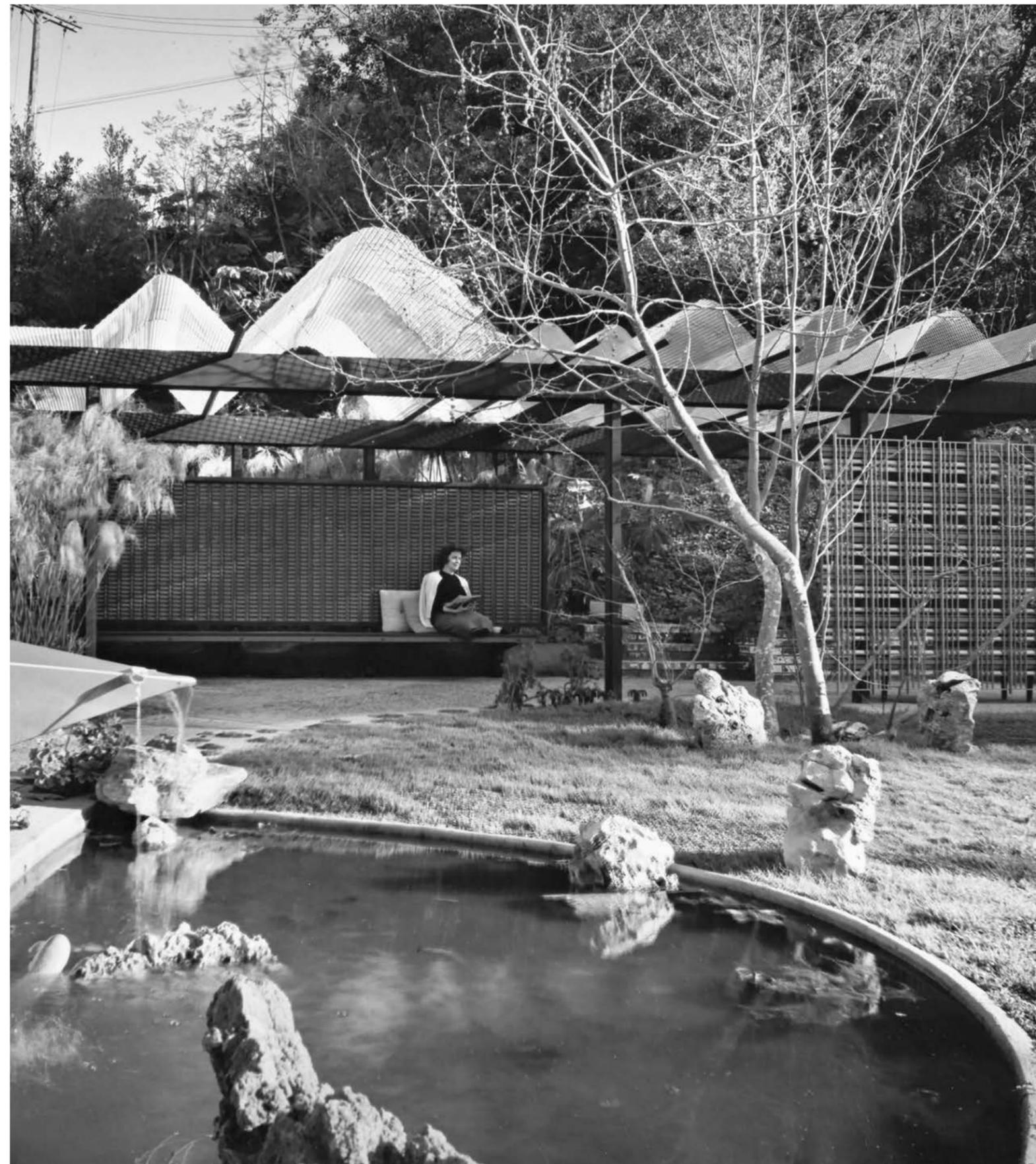
of the intimate enclosed living space in each home."<sup>12</sup> He continued, "A variety of trees were carefully coordinated in size and form. The idea was to minimize the steepness of the valley by planting taller and more upright trees, such as Lemon Gum, Italian Cypress and Canary Island Pine in the lower third, lower and more spreading trees such as oaks, olives and camphor in the upper third, and intermediate forms in the middle third."<sup>13</sup> He emphasized: "Every tree can be seen by more than one family; every boundary fence has two sides; every front yard is a part of the landscape of the street."<sup>14</sup> Groves of trees start on one property and continue to the next, crossing property lines. In his "Master Tree Plan" for Wonderland Park, Eckbo included *Cedrus deodora*, *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Eucalyptus sideroxy-lon* var. *rosea*, *Olea europaea*, *Platanus racemosa*, *Tipuana tipu*, and *Washingtonia filifera*.<sup>15</sup>

When the development was relatively new and only 16 or 18 of the 67 planned homes had been built, sporadic but heavy rains caused the empty lots and their eroding hillsides to become a problem. Eckbo described the community's response.

An Association was formed, with the committees known as The Brain (to survey and identify), and The Brawn (to provide tools and muscle). Picks, shovels and sandbags were maintained at the ready. It may hardly ever rain in sunny Southern California, but when it does, it pours. There was no way to stop the flow when it started. Diversion was the only way.<sup>16</sup> They trenched and diverted the runoff down the street or within each garden, but away from the homes.

Eckbo's solution for hillside plantings and slope stabilization was to carefully plan each property's groundcovers. Separating the list of lots by their sun exposure, he suggested plants suited for slopes – Crimson-spot Rock-rose, Senecio, Prickly Moses (*Acacia verticillata*), Sumac, Japanese Mock Orange, and varieties of Ceanothus. Small ground covers were *Santolina chamaecyparissus*, *Sedum praealtum*, with seeds of Rye, Mustard, Clover, Castor bean, Anise, and Wildflowers. For slopes facing west he used *Lantana sellowiana* combined with Plumbago, Echium, Rosemary, Ceanothus, and *Melaleuca nesophyla*.<sup>17</sup>

Eckbo elaborated on his streetscape philosophy by stating: "These close relations between the private home and its neighborhood are many-sided and inescapable. For instance, the front yard is the direct physical connection between each private home and its neighborhood. Even though privately owned and individually developed, it is nevertheless part of the overall street picture, which runs from house front to house front across the street. The landscape is everything seen by an individual from any particular spot, or from



Right: Rear view of the Arlene and Garrett Eckbo home, with the aluminum fountain in the foreground. Wavy, perforated aluminum serves as a shade protection on top of the overhead structure in the "ALCOA Forecast Garden." Julius Shulman photographer. Courtesy Getty Research Institute.



Top left: At the front of the Goldin residence, variegated ivy was planted on the slope. Three liquidambar trees placed in a cluster were part of Eckbo's Master Tree plan installed prior to the individual property landscapes. The garage was recently remodeled into a 'granny flat' with a kitchen and bathroom. There is now a one-vehicle carport to the left of the remodeled garage. Courtesy of Diana Hunter.

Top right: Rose Goldin sitting in a chaise lounge on polygon-shaped concrete patio sections. In this photo, the entrance and street are at the left. The short retaining walls still exist. Courtesy of Diana Hunter

Bottom left: Another view of the Goldin garden, towards the rear of the property. 1987. Courtesy of Diana Hunter.

Bottom Right: At the Goldin residence, this three-tiered hedge no longer exists. The rear tier appears to be a wall of ivy climbing on a fence, Nandina hedge planted as the middle tier, and ivy again kept very low for the front tier. 1987. Courtesy of Diana Hunter.

any path he may follow. Furthermore, since we remember the things we have seen, as we travel down a street the continuous picture, which when it unfolds, adds up to a continuous impression in our minds."<sup>18</sup>

## ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Many of the previously subdivided properties were large, at 75 x 150 feet. An architectural review board consisting of Garrett Eckbo, Robert Minkus, Clemons Roark, Jeanne Ellsworth, and Raymond Hutton, all Wonderland Park property owners (and earlier investors in the Community Homes development), reviewed all proposed plans. A property owner had to comply with the "Protective Covenants" or design guidelines that were established by this review board. Some of the guidelines specified that the properties were to be single-family residences, contemporary in design, with a required 15-foot setback.<sup>19</sup> All plans had to be approved by the review board prior

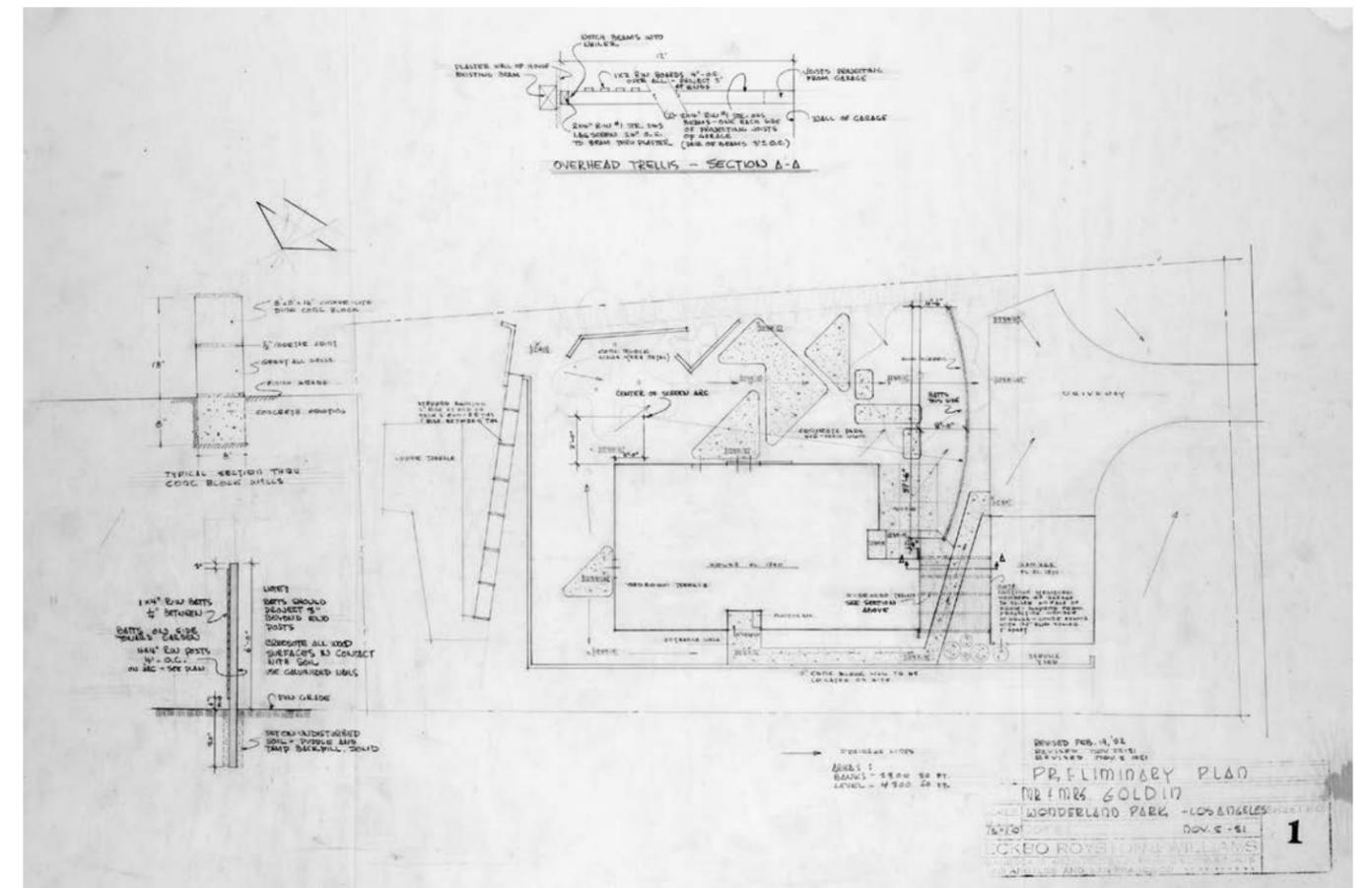
to building and had to include: "conformity and harmony of external design with existing structures in the subdivision."<sup>19</sup>

The advantage of this new group of investors was that they could afford to buy into the community without having to rely on federal loans and were therefore not restricted by the discriminatory covenants that the FHA required. Many of the original investors in Wonderland Park were well-known architects at the peak of their careers. They built homes for themselves and others in this new neighborhood. Gregory Ain designed several of the Wonderland Park houses, and a few of these were designs revised from those he had done for the defunct Community Homes project.<sup>21</sup>

Built in 1952, Eckbo's own single-story, post-and-beam house was designed by architect Josef Van Der Kar on a flag lot off Wonderland Park Avenue. In turn, Garrett Eckbo designed the garden at the Van Der Kar family home in a neighboring canyon. The Eckbo family home had a striking modernist garden that became an often-photographed

showpiece for the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), as it employed their materials for landscape structures in what was called the "ALCOA Forecast Garden."

In 1959, to promote using aluminum materials in the garden, Eckbo was commissioned by ALCOA to experiment with mesh sheeting, tubes and textured aluminum. An abstracted open-flower fountain was the main attraction. Overhead aluminum pyramid trellises with various mesh perforations were designed and built. The shadows throwing delicate patterns on the "pebbly concrete"<sup>22</sup> added another dimension to the landscape. On a graded lot, the rear of the home opened up to the hillside, as it was there that had the best views. The landscape plans went through several iterations; specimen trees of Jacaranda, Liquidambar, and Melaleuca, strategically planted providing shade. Extending out from the home were planting beds of Bird of Paradise, Philodendron, and Papyrus. *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* and *Pinus canariensis* lined the long driveway and still do to this day.



Above: Preliminary Plan (Hardscape plan) for Mr. & Mrs. Goldin, Wonderland Park – Los Angeles. Revised Feb. 19, 1952. This is the plan used by Diana Hunter to restore the house and garden built by her grandparents, Rose and Meyer Goldin. The original architect was Gregory Ain with Garrett Eckbo as the landscape architect. Courtesy of Diana Hunter.



For the Stubbs' upper deck with a view, Brown Jordan Tamiami vinyl-strapped patio furniture was placed under the Garrett Eckbo designed overhead structure. This could be the deck that was built in 1980, and mentioned in a letter found in the archives. Courtesy UC Berkeley. Garrett Eckbo photographer.

## POLITICAL, COMMUNIST, PROGRESSIVE CONNECTIONS — AND THE BLACKLIST

Along with the commonality of the desire for community living, the original investors lived intermingled lives, had progressive political beliefs, supported union organizations, and took part in idealistic Communist-style activities - all of which now seem innocent in comparison to their portrayal in the reactionary press and government reports of that era.

Garrett Eckbo connected politically with many of the original developers of the community, who taught at and were members of the Arts Advisory Board at the Communist School (California Labor School in Los Angeles) in 1945. During the hearings in the cases of blacklisted screenwriters Dalton Trumbo and John Howard Lawson, Eckbo spoke to US Attorney Ernest Tolin in Los Angeles in support of the writers to request a new hearing for them in 1950. Eckbo was a sponsor of the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, in August of 1952.<sup>23</sup>

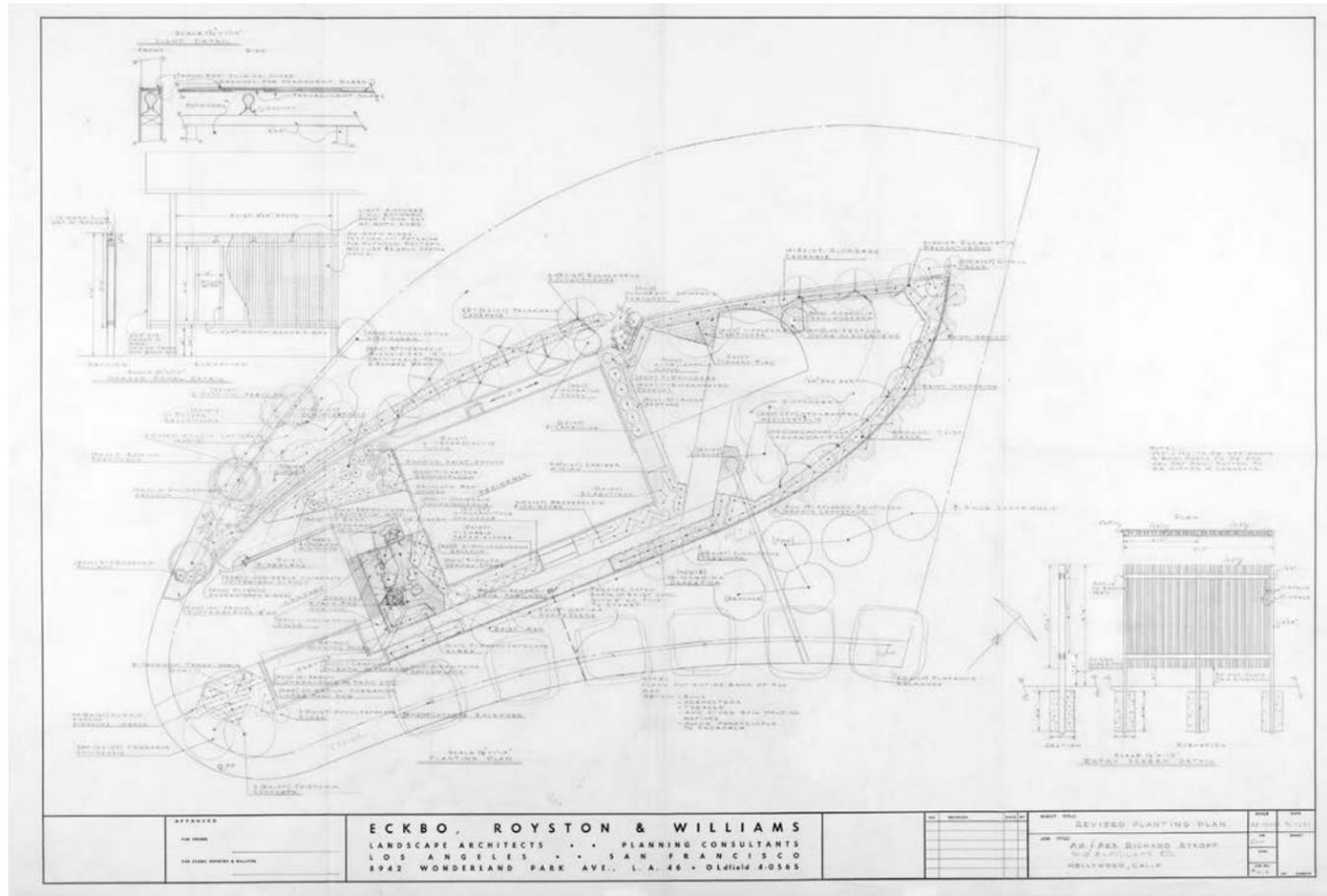
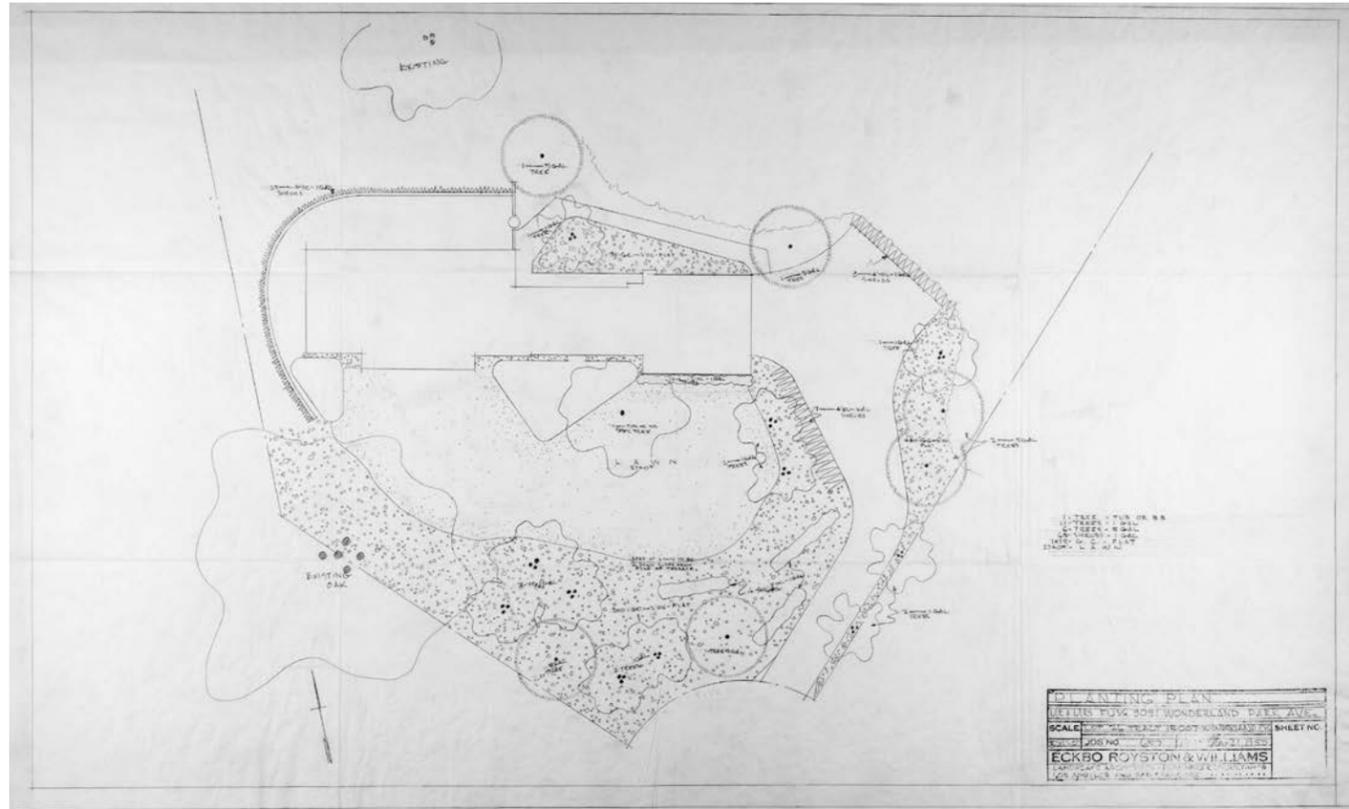
Gregory Ain—called the country's "most dangerous architect" by J. Edgar Hoover—was mentioned at least four times in the 1949 Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California (SUAC), as a critic of the Committee, or as a suspected communist. He was in good company—one list that Ain was on also contained the names of Albert Einstein and Langston Hughes.<sup>24</sup>

Meyer and Rose Goldin, whose home in Wonderland Park was designed by Gregory Ain, were involved in the Community Homes development previous to purchasing the property on Wonderland Park Avenue. Their granddaughter, Diana Hunter, who now owns the home, describes her grandparents as being communists, as was her father, architect Richard Hunter. Diana Hunter has possession of her father's very thick FBI file.<sup>25</sup>

Diana Hunter has just undertaken the task of restoring the home and garden. The property is split down the middle with the home at the left and the front yard at the right as you enter. The rear of the property is an uphill slope. The home is a simple rectangle built on a concrete slab, constructed with the garage at the front separated from the house with a wood-slatted overhead trellis installed in the 1980s. Garrett Eckbo designed the exteriors, placing pavers at the entry, a patio built using rounded-corner triangle-and-polygon shapes of concrete, and a surrounding lawn. Short walls of concrete block were used as screens, planting areas, and retaining walls.

Another home designed by Gregory Ain was Ethel and George Stubbs' residence on the





The Fugg Garden's later front cactus garden that may have replaced the lawn planted when the garden was built in 1951. 1983. Courtesy UC Berkeley.

“Garden Plan,” shows a row of eucalypts - Silver-Leaf Mountain Gum (*Eucalyptus pulverulenta*) and Mottlecah (*E. macrocarpa*) in pairs of one of each along the right side of the driveway that heads uphill in a curve. Visible just behind the gate today is a sixty-foot eucalyptus, which could be the *E. pulverulenta*. The house is sited at the rear of the lot with a large oak tree at the front border of the property. Viewed through the gate, much of the foreground planting appears to be modern, and not as on the original Eckbo plan.

Attorney Richard Rykoff, who resided for many years on one of the cul-de-sac streets, co-authored the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms which was formed to oppose the HUAC, was included in the Senate committee report of 1943. He was the representative of the Hollywood “Unfriendly Nineteen”, which comprised the “Hollywood Ten” plus nine lesser-known people in Hollywood. He was also brought up before the HUAC.<sup>31</sup> The landscape architecture at his home is an Eckbo creation. The house is tucked back on the triangle-shaped narrow lot, but visible from the street. Two Brisbane Box trees mark the entrance. Cape Honey-suckle covers the sloped hill at the street, with five *Platanus acerifolia* in a row just above the curb. A row of *Eucalyptus torquata* Coral Gum was planted just outside of the property line, and they still remain. The existing trees are all on both the original Eckbo “Planting Plan” of 1955, and the “Revised Plan” of 1957.

Irving Zeiger, whose single-story home was designated Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #1083 in 2015, was designed by African-American architect Robert Alexander Kennard and landscaped by Garrett Eckbo in 1958. Zeiger was known to have given blacklisted writers jobs on the assembly line in his business “manufacturing and distributing electronic components for aircrafts.”<sup>32</sup> The wood-frame Ranch-style house is on a flag lot and not visible from the street. Built on a slab, many of the rooms open onto private trellised patios, shallow pools with fountains, and a swimming pool. Seen in photos from the historic structure report and still existing, the shallow pools are lined in small square tile, with round aggregate pavers used as stepping-stones across them. On the Eckbo “Master Tree Plan,” Italian cypress border the properties to the north of the Zeiger’s, with *Pinus canariensis* at the south end.<sup>33</sup>

## TV AND MOVIES, ARTS

Many of the original owners of the Wonderland properties were involved in the film and TV business. Ted Ellsworth, union representative for the Screen Cartoonist Guild, and his wife Jeanne, had invested in the failed Community Homes project, and were original property owners in the Wonderland Park community.<sup>34</sup> Ted’s wife Jeanne served on the Architectural Review Board of Wonderland Park and was very involved in the community. Ted began in the film business in the costume department for motion picture studios and was the first president of the Motion Picture Costumers Union Local 705, serving as its business agent from 1942-1952. Ted was also called upon to speak to the HUAC, refusing to answer questions and frustrating the interrogator to such a degree that Ted was dismissed from the hearing early.<sup>35</sup> Ted’s focus later in his career was on the health and welfare of the aging. After Ted’s death, Gray Davis, then lieutenant governor of California, wrote: “Ted made outstanding contributions to his community and the State of California as Chairman of the Commission on Aging, a leader of the Congressional Committee on Education and Labor for Problems of the Aged and Aging, and the first administrator of the Motion Picture Industry Health and Welfare Fund. Ted brought a strong and much-needed voice to the area of labor, and issues affecting seniors.” Friend and neighbor Garrett Eckbo designed the landscaping for the Ellsworth’s home. Staggered rectangular pavers lead to the front entrance of the home. In the Ellsworth family archives at Northridge College’s Oviatt Library are snapshots of Mr. Ellsworth planting his own trees. One of the higher elevation properties at the end of Burroughs Road, it is now behind a gated driveway. With their connection going back to the late 40s, the Ellsworths hosted Garrett and Arlene Eckbo’s neighborhood “moving away party” in 1965.

Lifelong best friends, Diana Hunter and Lisa Gollin grew up two houses away from each other on Wonderland Park Avenue. Diana’s home was designed by her father, architect Richard Hunter, and Lisa’s home was designed by her parents, graphic designer Norm Gollin, and her artist mother, Pat Gollin.<sup>36</sup> Norm Gollin and his partners Keith Bright and Milt Zolotow were prominent in the graphic design field as creators of album covers, billboards, and ad campaigns, and their company (Gollin, Bright & Zolotow) was called “one of the hippest design firms”.<sup>37</sup> Pat Gollin did design work for the above mentioned Women’s Strike for Peace. Although Lisa’s parents did not use Garrett Eckbo to landscape their garden, Lisa remembers the eucalyptus that Eckbo planted

as part of the original “Master Tree Plan” along the perimeter, along the driveway, and in the hillside above their home.

From the late 50s, Lisa and Diana grew up as “feral” or, as Lisa describes it, “free-range” children with other like-minded kids in the neighborhood. They roamed around in the hills behind their homes, building forts and making mud-puddles in the yards. Engaging with the plants and trees, they used the ivy as a “player” in their games. They climbed all the trees, and ate the avocados, tangerines, and loquats from them.

## ECKBO AND WONDERLAND PARK AFTER 1965

After living in Wonderland Park for close to 13 years, in 1965 Garrett and Arlene moved back to Northern California, settling in Oakland.<sup>38</sup> Eckbo joined the landscape architecture faculty at the University of California at Berkeley, serving as department chair until 1969, and continuing as a professor until 1978. During this period, Eckbo worked with Francis Dean, Don Austin, and Edward Williams as the landscape architecture practice known as EDAW.

Eckbo wrote fondly: “Wonderland Park in Los Angeles is one somewhat special example of a neighborhood which has grown with a great deal of resident participation. Actually, the upper end of Wonderland Park Avenue in the Laurel Canyon section of the city, this was a small valley filled with native brush – chaparral, California Holly (for which Hollywood was named), wild lilac, live oaks, and elderberry – in 1950.”<sup>39</sup>

Twenty years after he left Wonderland Park and Los Angeles, Eckbo still remained involved in the community and wrote to many of the original owners - his clients in Wonderland Park. He sent a questionnaire asking them how they liked their gardens and how they liked living in Wonderland Park. He requested that they tell him their experiences with the history and the growth of the neighborhood. “How well had it succeeded and where had it failed?” were his questions from the correspondence discovered in his UC Berkeley archives. Writing to Eckbo about how much she loved her neighborhood, home, and garden, Beatrice Zeiger responded, “When I’m away, as soon as I come back into the canyon, I feel I’m coming home. It’s a good feeling. And the closer I get to home, (especially the last block after turning into the tract) the better it gets.”<sup>40</sup>



Top left: Early view of Wonderland Park Avenue. View from Jeanne and Ted Ellsworth’s property looking north. The Ellsworth home is on Burroughs Road. Only two homes or structures are shown in the view, and they are on Wonderland Park Avenue, dating this photo to the early 1950s. Theodore “Ted” R. Ellsworth Collection, Oviatt Library Special Collections & Archives, California State University, Northridge. Courtesy of Alexandra Kindell.

Top right: Front entryway of the Ellsworth home on Burroughs Road. Staggered concrete rectangle pavers lead the way to the front door. Oviatt. Courtesy of Alexandra Kindell.

Middle left: The rear of the Ellsworth home with landscaping under construction. Oviatt. Courtesy of Alexandra Kindell.

Middle right: Ted Ellsworth planting his own tree in his front yard. Oviatt. Courtesy of Alexandra Kindell.

Bottom: A later view from the Ellsworth property showing most of the terraced pads with homes built on Wonderland Park Avenue. The hillside was planted with roses. Oviatt. Courtesy of Alexandra Kindell.



Left: Going away party for Garrett and Arlene Eckbo at the home of Ted and Jeanne Ellsworth. The Eckbos left Wonderland Park Avenue and Los Angeles in 1965, returning to Northern California. 1965. Oviatt.

Right: Garrett Eckbo relaxing in a director's chair in the Ellsworth's garden. Oviatt.



## PRESENT CONDITION

The mature trees of deodar cedar, Italian cypress, Canary Island pine, *Corymbia citriodora*, and *Platanus acerifolia* still wind throughout the properties of Wonderland Park, and there are still no sidewalks. The neighbors are proud of living there and are active in their community. The majority of original and communal landscape plantings, trees, and shrubs still exist, having grown to tremendous heights.

From Garrett Eckbo's book, *The Art of Home Landscaping*, in 1956:

"Trees are the primary neighborhood amenity. Mature trees in good locations are priceless assets. This value is often realized only after the trees have been lost through carelessness, thoughtlessness, or even dire necessity. Comparison of any new tract on raw land with an old neighborhood full of well-grown trees is enough to prove this point. Almost every tree, whether in front or back yard, can be seen from more than one home. Therefore, it affects the lives of more than one family. The overall pattern of trees in a neighborhood of detached houses is the single most important visual element. It can integrate the neighborhood; give it identity and character and a sense of unity. Too often it is haphazard, accidental, confused, spotty, or nonexistent."<sup>41</sup> The development of Wonderland Park and Garrett Eckbo's time there from 1946 to 1965, was a period of great modernist innovation in architecture and landscape architecture in Southern California. Overlapping with Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler were

architects Gregory Ain, Raphael Soriano, J. R. Davidson, and Josef Van der Kar. Eckbo's accomplishments in Los Angeles were equal to those, and he was proud of his involvement in establishing Wonderland Park as a vanguard community. From Garrett Eckbo's obituary in 2000, "The years I spent there (Los Angeles) were the best years of my professional life."<sup>42</sup> **E**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*A native Angeleno, Libby Simon spent 30 years as an animation artist and producer, before turning her sights to the world of landscape design and historic preservation. She is presently serving on the Board of CGLHS, is on the Editorial Board for Eden, and chairs the Southern California Events Committee. She has also been involved in historic preservation with the completion of Historic American Landscape Surveys (HALS) of the San Gabriel Mission, the Los Angeles Ebell garden by Florence Yoch and Lucile Council, and the Old Zoo in Griffith Park. A graduate of UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program, she is now designing and installing residential gardens in the Los Angeles and Pasadena areas.*

## Endnotes

1. The returning veterans were members of both the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonist Guild and the Screenwriters Guild. Many of the original 15 members of Community Homes were well-known in the animation world. A Community Homes letterhead from July of 1947 lists, as board members many of the artists from the award-winning animation studio UPA (United Productions of America). Along with Director William Hertz as the president of Community Homes, the board was filled with artists and directors: John Hubley, Paul Julian, David Hilberman, and Llewellyn Keller. Anthony Denzer has written extensively about this subject in his articles "Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles," in "The Green Braid – Community Homes," as well as in his doctoral dissertation, "Gregory Ain and the Social Politics of Housing Design". He was so generous as to send the author a Community Homes letterhead and other lists. The author, in her previous career in animation, knew many of these mentioned animation artists.
2. Anthony Denzer "Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles." *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 269-285. doi:10.2307/41172271
3. Marc Treib, Dorothee Imbert. *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1997.
4. *The Los Angeles Times*. "Reseda Projects to Provide 400 Homes for Veterans." June 6, 1946. Accessed June 20, 2017. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/159710869>
5. Amy Taxin. "Calif. Bill Aims To Strike Racist Housing Language." *San Diego Tribune*, March 14, 2009. Accessed May 7, 2018. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-racist-covenants-031409-2009mar14-story.html> Illegal since 1968, some covenants still remain on original home deeds. In 2008, State Assemblyman Hector De La Torre of South Gate proposed a bill to strike racially restrictive covenants from the public record. There was strong opposition, as Los Angeles County officials stated that it would cost nearly \$7 million per year to remove the covenants from the deeds.
6. Denzer. "Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles." As soon as the investors realized that they might be refused loans because of the interracial make-up of the group, the families who were deemed ineligible for loans volunteered to withdraw from the group to allow the majority to proceed with their loans. The other members of the cooperative refused their offer to withdraw, and after a delay of three years, the FHA eventually denied the loans because of the racially restrictive covenants in this area.
7. Garrett Eckbo "Group Housing Landscape Developments." In *Landscape for Living*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.

8. *The Los Angeles Times*. "Music Group Buys Acreage for Homesites." December 31, 1946. Accessed July 20, 2017
9. The Garrett Eckbo Collection at the Environmental Archives at UC Berkeley holds many loose pages of type-written and unnumbered notes by Eckbo. There were 67 lots in the Wonderland Park development, including flag lots with private roads leading to larger and more secluded properties well off the street.
10. While living in Los Angeles, Eckbo wrote his books *Landscape For Living* in 1950, and *The Art of Home Landscaping* in 1956. Eckbo, Royston and Williams dissolved in 1958; Eckbo continued to work with Francis Dean and Edward Williams in Southern California until moving back to Northern California about 1965.
11. One cul-de-sac, Burroughs Road, branches off of Wonderland Park Avenue to the west. Another street to the east, Greenvalley Road (at the time called Muir Ridge Road), connects Wonderland Park Avenue to neighboring developments as well as to Mulholland Drive.
12. The Garrett Eckbo Collection at the Environmental Archives at UC Berkeley.
13. Esther McCoy, "Garrett Eckbo." *Arts & Architecture*, 1981 Reprint. Vol. 1 No. 4. 44.
14. Vera Williams, "Southland Art: Garrett Eckbo." *Independent Press Telegram* (Long Beach), March 14, 1954. Accessed July 21, 2017.
15. "Master Tree Plan" Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley.
16. Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley.
17. "Suggested Bank Plants for Wonderland Park". Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley.
18. Garrett Eckbo, "Public Planning." In Eckbo's, *The Art of Home Landscaping*, 265. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1956.
19. Theodore "Ted" R. Ellsworth Collection. Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.
20. Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley.
21. Pierre Koenig's Case Study House #21 for the Bailey family is on Wonderland Park Avenue. Lucille Bryant Raport, one of the few female modernist architects at the time and practicing in the San Fernando Valley, designed a house on Wonderland Park Avenue. Architect Daisuke "Dike" Nagano designed a house there, as did Phillip Kimmelman for his own family. Pasadena modernist architect Leland Lewis Evison designed two houses in Wonderland Park. Architect Tom Ballinger designed Ruth and Paul Jaffee's home. Robert Kennard, one of the first African-American architects in Los Angeles, and his partner, Robert Marks, designed the Zeiger House, recently designated (March, 2015) as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1083. Conrad Buff and Donald Hensman built a home for the Kennedy family on one of the flag lots, with Eckbo as the landscape architect. Architect Richard J. Hunter built a home for his own family on Wonderland Park Avenue as well as designing the

- Mulholland Tennis Club with Eckbo as the landscape architect. Prior to their marriage, Hunter's wife, Mildred Goldin moved as an adult to a house with her parents, Meyer and Rose Goldin in 1951. The house was built using a Gregory Ain plan from the Community Homes project and had a garden designed by Garrett Eckbo. This house has just undergone restoration by the original owners' granddaughter, Diana Hunter, Richard and Mildred Hunter's daughter.
22. "Pebble concrete" a term used by Eckbo written in Marc Treib's "The Eckbo Garden: Designing an Aluminum Garden." *The Donnell and Eckbo Gardens: Modern Masterworks*. 146.
  23. California. Legislature. Senate. Fact-Finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities, no. 11. *Infiltration and Control*. 193-197. Calisphere, UC Libraries, California Digital Library: Regents of the University of California, 1961.
  24. California. Legislature. Senate. Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities. *Fifth Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities*. Calisphere, UC Libraries, California Digital Library: Regents of the University of California, 1949.
  25. Hunter, Diana. Personal interview. Wonderland Park Avenue, Los Angeles. September 2, 2018.
  26. *The Los Angeles Times*. "Ethel Moment Stubbs Obituary." August 25, 1998. Diana Hunter and Lisa Gollin. Personal interview. Wonderland Park Avenue, Los Angeles. September 2, 2018.
  27. Chazanov, Mathis. "20-Year Campaign for Women's Organization: Billboard Shuns Usual Ads to Make Pitch for Peace." *The Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 1987. Accessed Sept. 22, 2018
  28. Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley. According to a proposal from Eckbo's office, his hourly rate at this time was \$7.50, with a cap of \$125.00 for most of his Wonderland Park project designs.
  29. Fact-finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities (SUAC), 1943, 1949.
  30. The "Sleepy Lagoon Murder" was what Los Angeles newspapers coined for the death of Mexican farmworker Jose Gallardo Diaz, who was found unconscious and near death in a swimming hole known as Sleepy Lagoon in what is now Maywood, California on an August morning in 1942.
  - Diaz died shortly after being taken to LA County General Hospital with blunt head trauma. Though one medical examiner stated that his injuries were consistent with car accident injuries, 24 young Mexican-American men were quickly arrested. 17 of them were put on trial in January of 1943. Nine of the defendants were convicted of second-degree murder, the others were charged with lesser offenses. The youths were not allowed to change from their "Zoot Suit" clothing during the trial nor speak to their lawyers. The case is considered the precursor to the "Zoot Suit Riots". To this day, the cause of death is still unknown.

- A defense committee formed, "The Citizens' Committee for the Defense of Mexican-American Youth" which a Senate Joint Fact-Finding Committee named as a Communist front organization. An appeal led to the reversal of convictions because of bias, mishandling of the case, and insufficient evidence. On the committee, along with Orson Wells and Vincent Price, were Oscar Fuss and Ben Margolis, homeowners of Wonderland Park residences.
31. *The Los Angeles Times*. "Richard Lee Rykoff; Attorney Fought McCarthyism." December 18, 1994. Accessed July 25, 2017.
  32. Besides Ted Ellsworth and his brother Elmer, also in the costume department of Warner Bros., many of the WPA residents were in the motion picture business. Joseph Morhaim, screenwriter of the 1957 film *The Happy Road*, and Sam Jaffe, character actor and actor's agent, were residents. Hy Freedman and Robert Dwan, writers of Groucho Marx's *You Bet Your Life*, were long-time residents. Saul Halpert, forty-year veteran journalist for KNXT and KNBC, lived on Wonderland Park Avenue. Publicist and playwright Ben Irwin owned property on Burroughs Road. His clients included Nat King Cole, Clark Gable, Jack Lemmon, Humphrey Bogart, and Dorothy Dandridge. Byron Morrow, a well-known television character actor owned property on Wonderland Park Avenue. Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank, screenwriters of *Hud*, *The Long Hot Summer*, and *Norma Rae*, were long-time residents of Wonderland Park.
  33. Nelson, Valerie J. "Irving Zeiger, 89; executive and longtime Dodgers fan." *The Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 2017. Accessed July 6, 2017.
  34. Theodore "Ted" R. Ellsworth Collection. Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.
  35. *Journal of the Senate, California Senate Fact-finding Sub-Committee on Un-American Activities*, (University of California, Documents Division, (1947).
  36. Diana Hunter and Lisa Gollin. Personal interviews. Wonderland Park Avenue, Los Angeles. September 2, 2018. Lisa's mother, Pat Gollin, was involved in the creation of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, the early 1960s brain child of another Wonderland Park area woman, Phyllis Patterson.
  37. *The Los Angeles Times*. Norm Gollin obituary. October 15, 2006. Accessed October 18, 2018.
  38. An ad in Arts & Architecture Magazine in 1965 offers the Eckbo Wonderland Park Avenue home for sale at \$60,000.
  39. Garrett Eckbo Collection. Environmental Archives, UC Berkeley.
  40. Ibid
  41. *The Art of Landscaping*, 266, "Master Tree Plan" Garrett Eckbo Collection.
  42. Woo, Elaine "Garrett Eckbo; Landscape Architect." *The Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2000. Accessed February 11, 2015.

# Gardens of the California Missions



Reprinted from *PACIFIC HORTICULTURE*, Spring 1988

*The author was inspired to look more deeply into the topic of California mission gardens by a paper prepared in 1978 by Cynthia Roberts, then a student in the landscape architecture program at the University of California, Berkeley.*

BY TOM BROWN

**M**ention of California mission gardens evokes romantic images of jasmine blooming under arcades, geometric beds of exotic flowers, and balconies smothered in bougainvillea. Yet, despite the Spanish origins of the mission padres and the widening availability of exotic plants in the late 1700s when most of the California missions were built, the early mission gardens in no way resembled the elaborate pleasure gardens of the Spanish tradition.

A padre tends his garden at Mission Santa Barbara, photo ca. 1920. The romantic myth of the Mission garden fueled tourism in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.



This 1936 map shows the locations of the 21 California Missions along El Camino Real, "The Road the Famous Fathers Trod."

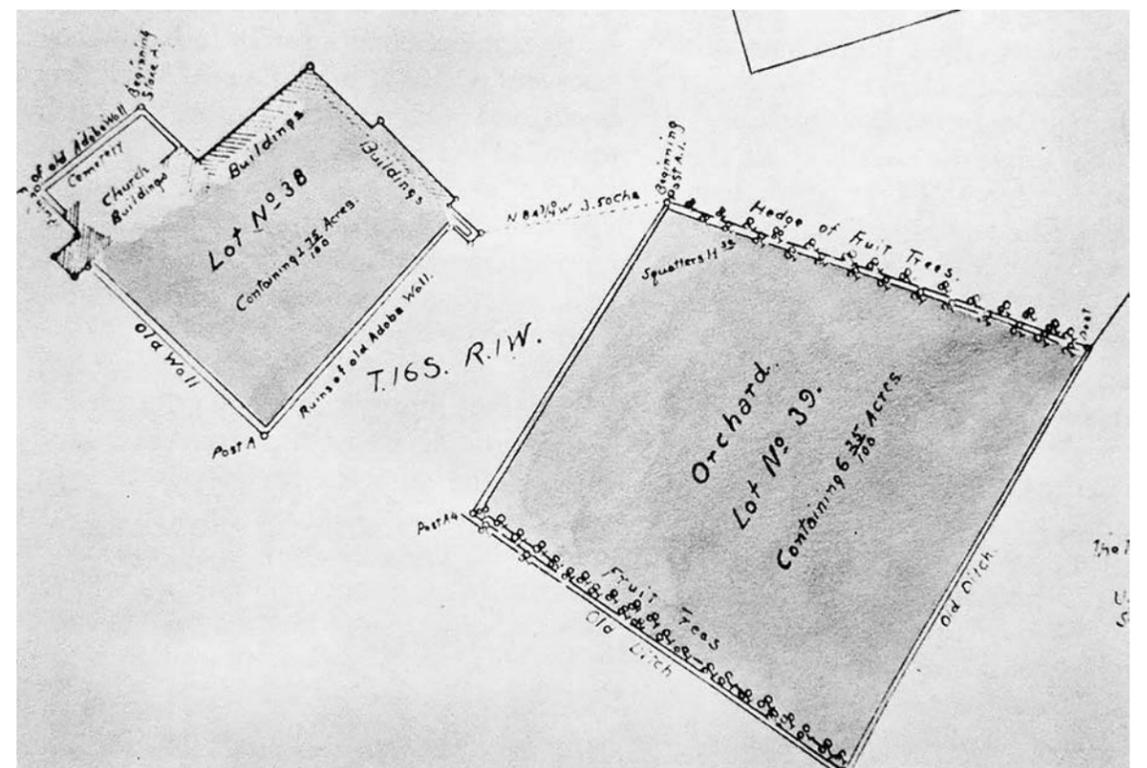
The vagaries of climate and the preeminent need for agricultural crops to supply the largely self-supporting missions probably dictated that the orchard or food garden (*huerta*) would be given preference over the ornamental or pleasure garden (*jardin*). Life at the missions was often difficult, as contemporary records show. There were droughts in 1800, 1807, and 1809, heavy rains and flooding in 1816-17, drought in 1820-21, and flooding again in 1824-25 and 1827-28. Following a severe drought in the winter of 1828-29, crops were the smallest for the entire period from 1796 to 1834. In addition to regional difficulties, there were also more local problems. Each mission had its catalog of sorrows. In 1827, even with a dam and aqueduct, the mission at San Fernando Rey was generally producing what was necessary for its inhabitants, but "neither of corn nor of beans can more than one *fanega* [bushel, or the acreage needed to plant one bushel], be planted on account of lack of water; and even this *fanega* must be sown outside the regular time, otherwise the *chapulines* [grasshoppers] will devour them." The situation at San Juan Capistrano was worse. In late 1827 it was reported: "When there are no rains, the arroyos run dry. In that case, the little land now cultivated cannot be irrigated; but what is worse, the herds die of thirst, as has happened the last five or six years in which, on account of the extraordinary drought, all the sheep and many head of cattle perished."

The difficulties experienced by mission residents cannot be blamed on climate alone. The early mission padres were not skilled farmers and apparently not very good at selecting sites. Of the first four missions founded, three had to be moved later to sites with better soil, more water, or protection from flooding during winter rains. Mission San Carlos was originally founded in 1770, and

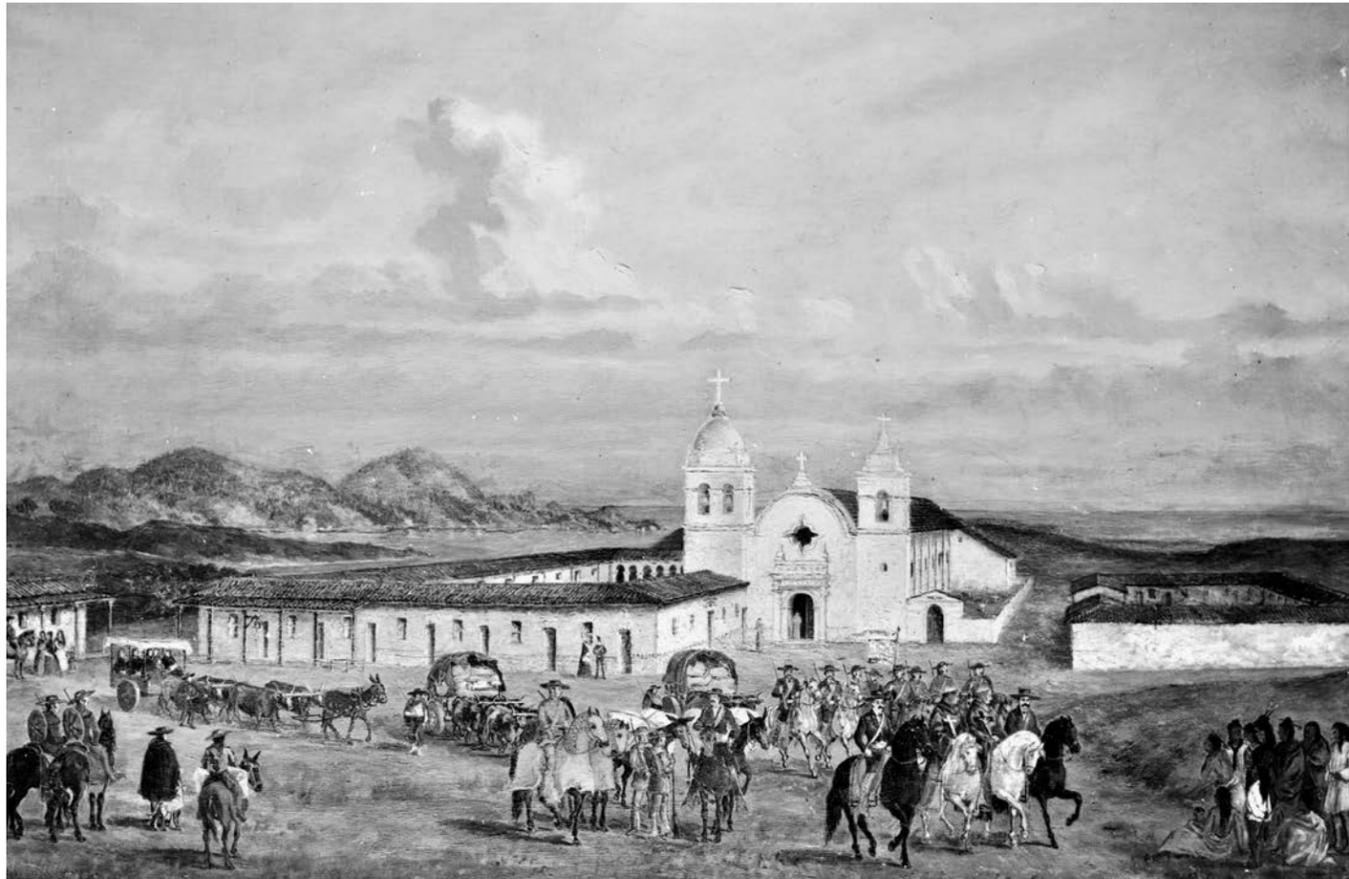
crops were planted the following year. Everything grew, but nothing reached maturity because the soil, which at times was inundated by saltwater from the bay, was "fit for nothing but nettles and weeds." At the end of that year the mission was moved to a new site where it was hoped that crops would do better.

Technology was a limiting factor in the development of the California mission gardens. Most of the construction and horticultural technology available to the padres came from Spain, via Mexico, and Spain at the time was behind even the rest of Europe in many ways. The padres had to construct dams, reservoirs, and aqueducts much in the manner of the Moors or the ancient Romans; only a few decades later, in 1854, Americans succeeded in drilling over a hundred feet to artesian wells in San Jose, while in 1856 a steam pump was used to draw 300 gallons a minute from the American River, enough to irrigate 150 acres. The padres also had access to few reliable books on plants, soils, or cultivation. Most of the Spanish texts on horticulture, what few there were, were translations of French works with marginal applicability to conditions in California, or even to large parts of Spain, and many still drew heavily from ancient Roman writers.

Yet plants of many kinds were grown, and the results were often impressive enough to inspire visitors to write glowingly of their observations. The English explorer George Vancouver, who visited San Buenaventura in 1793, wrote: "... the garden of Buena Ventura far exceeded anything I had before met within this region, both in respect of the quality, quantity, and variety of its excellent productions... not one species having yet been sown, or planted, that had not flourished, and yielded its fruit in abundance, and of excellent quality." In 1827, French sea captain and trader Duhaut-Cilly described the walled garden, vineyard,



This site plan of Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo in Carmel shows the relationship of the buildings to the "Huertas," or orchards.



“Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad,” by Oriana Weatherbee Day, 1877-1884. Courtesy Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

and orchard at Santa Barbara as “large, well cultivated and planted with trees. Very fine olive trees shaded the straight paths, and you could see fruits of the temperate and torrid zones at one and the same time. The Adam’s figs spread their broad leaves between the apples and pears, and the gold of the oranges mingled with the red of the cherries.”

These observers, however, were referring not to ornamental gardens such as are seen today by visitors to the remaining California missions, but to enclosed *huertas*, near but not generally attached to the mission itself, where food crops were grown to meet the needs of mission residents. When we talk about mission gardens, we cannot ignore the context in which they arose or the place they held in the scheme of things at the mission. Though many plants were grown, apparently with some success, the romantic image of the ornamental garden at the heart of the California mission has no basis in fact, at least until after the missions were secularized in 1834.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSIONS

California missions were founded over a fifty-four-year period, beginning with San Diego in 1769 and ending with Solano in 1823. Alta California had been largely ignored by Spain, but when Russian fur trappers began venturing south along the coast from Alaska, the Spanish government authorized Franciscan padre Junipero Serra to go north to found the first of what would become a string of twenty-one missions intended “to guard the Dominions from invasion and insult.”

The missions of California developed in response to varying local conditions, but a composite account may be constructed. A site first was selected, one that appeared to have good growing land, a water source, and, above all, a large number of Indians in the vicinity, for these were to be lured to the mission partly by the promise of a more stable food supply. Indians also were the labor force that built the missions under the direction of the padres and to whom, at least in theory, the assets of the missions belonged.

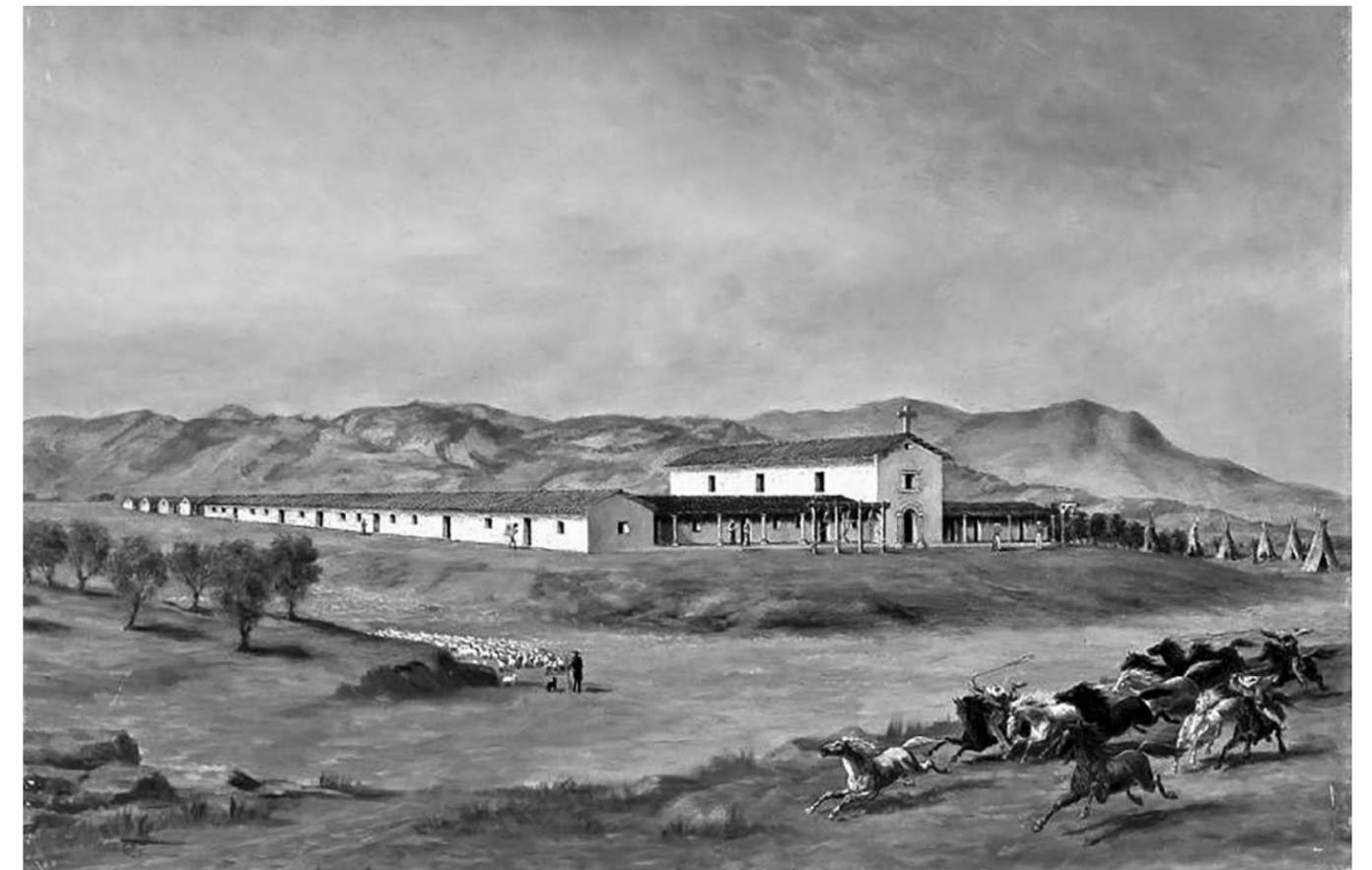
The first constructions usually were rude huts for the padres and the small military guard that accompanied them. Next came the beginnings of what would eventually include

a number of adobe buildings, grouped to enclose a quadrangular open space or patio, a word that seems to derive from the Latin *patere*, to lie open. The church formed one side of the quadrangle, and at right angles to it another block of rooms housed the padres, guest quarters, offices, and storage areas. This wing often faced south and, with the church facade, served as the “front” of the establishment. Arcades often were added to the south-facing fronts, as they gave protection from the hot sun and the rain. Arcades or colonnades were affixed to the sides of the interior of the quadrangle for the same reason. The area between the building wall and the arches was paved, giving good footing in wet weather and protected storage or workspace. Young men often slept there, wrapped in blankets.

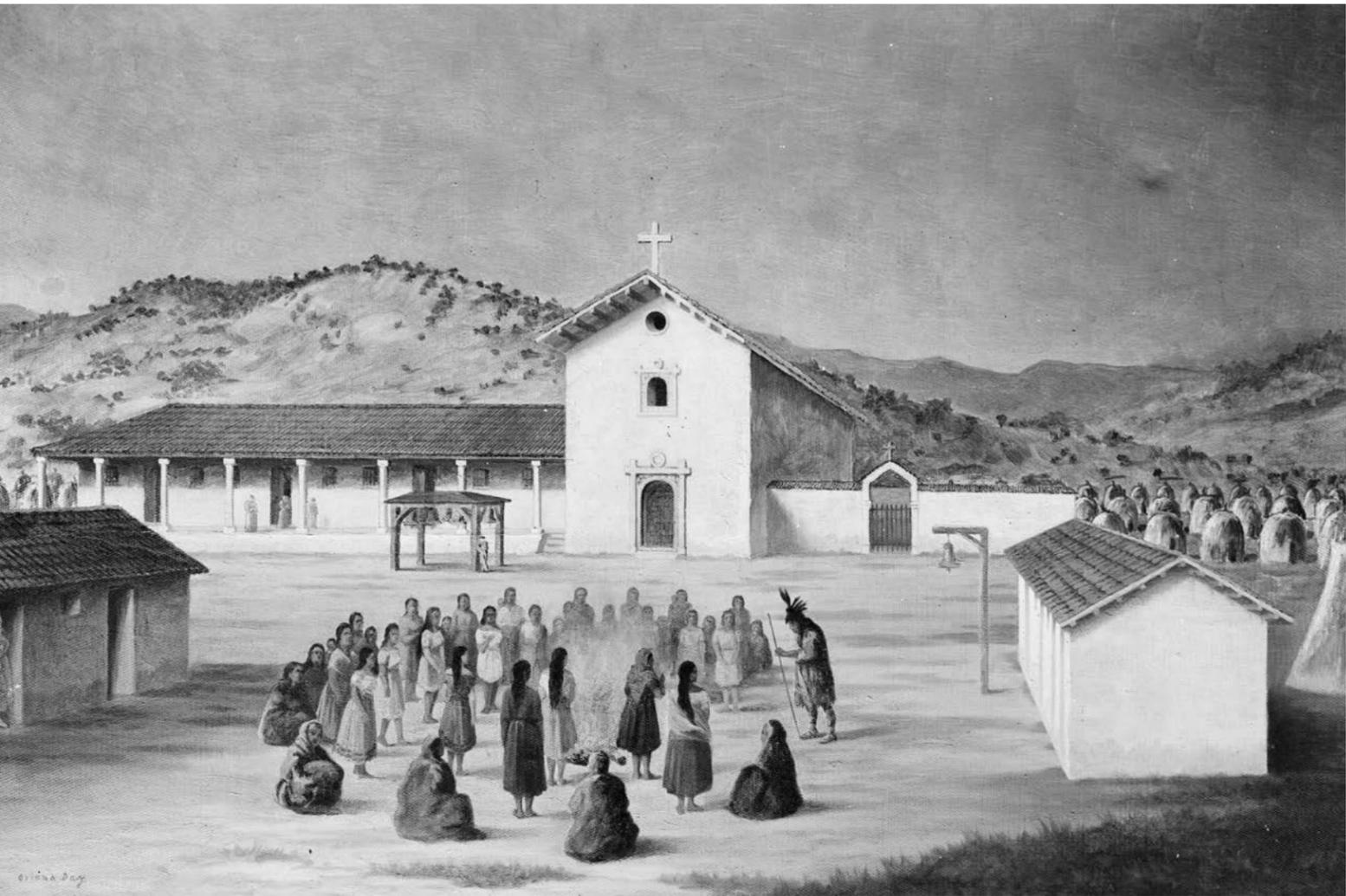
The quadrangular form was basically a defensive one. Exterior walls had few windows, placed high and kept small. There were one or two gated entrances to the central open area or patio through which carts and animals could be driven for safety. The patio, with its arcaded verandas, resembled the cloisters of European monasteries, themselves an adaptation of the ancient Roman peristyle. Both the peristyles of the ancient Romans and the cloisters of the European monks contained

small pleasure gardens with ornamental plants. The patios of the California missions shared this architectural form but were developed to accommodate different functions and much more activity. A well or fountain in the patio served domestic needs, but plants are mentioned only at San Luis Rey, where a few California pepper trees (*Schinus molle*) were grown from seeds brought from Chile about 1825. No mission patio was planted as a pleasure garden before secularization in 1834. A visitor to San Luis Rey in 1829 wrote: “The building occupies a large square, of at least eighty or ninety yards each side, forming an extensive area, in the centre of which a fountain constantly supplies the establishment with pure water... In the interior of the square might be seen the various trades at work, presenting a scene not dissimilar to some of the working departments of our state prisons.”

There were cultivated gardens nearby, however, and it was these *huertas* that weary travelers praised after long rides through a landscape that was, for much of the year, hot, dusty, and, for long distances, devoid of shade. These gardens were enclosed with high adobe walls or hedges of densely planted trees or prickly pear (*Opuntia*) cactus. Most missions had two such enclosures: an orchard and a vineyard. The plants they contained were



“Mission San Carlos Borromeo,” by Oriana Weatherbee Day, 1877-1884. Courtesy Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



"Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma," by Oriana Weatherbee Day, 1877-1884. Courtesy Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

somewhat interchangeable; fruit trees, for example, were planted in vineyards as well as in orchards, and grape vines were set out in gardens that also had flowers and fruit. Mission orchards ranged in size from three to forty acres; vineyards, from seven to 120 acres.

Further away were the outlying cattle ranches or grain fields, run by Indians who did not want to live at the mission. Wheat, corn, beans, and other crops were grown in scattered unwalled locations wherever adequate groundwater or periodic inundation made cultivation possible. The introduction of cultivated grain crops changed the lives of the Indians, who had long maintained a stable population with a hunting-and-gathering culture. Wheat, cooked as polenta and flavored with vegetables and a little meat, became their staple food. Wheat stored well, and even in years of drought, the missions were likely, at least at first, to have sufficient food. If the drought was prolonged, the grain ran out, the cattle and sheep died, the vegetable patches withered, and the orchard trees might drop

their fruit or even die. At such times the Indians reverted to hunting for food.

The missions also changed the landscape that surrounded them, setting in motion a process that continues to this day. Grazing cattle ate tree seedlings and native bunch grasses down to the dirt, and their hooves compacted the soil surface. With less moisture in the soil, introduced annual grasses such as rye and oats were favored and replaced the native perennial grasses. Trees were cut down for wood and the clearing of fields. The transformation was gradual, but by the time Americans and other foreigners began filtering into the state, the landscape had already begun to change.



## THE EARLY MISSION HUERTAS

While the cattle ranches and outlying fields were the mainstays of most missions, it is the enclosed food gardens or *huertas* that are of most interest here. Information on what these gardens contained and how they were laid out is sparse and must be gleaned primarily from the accounts of visitors to the missions, since the padres were required to keep records only of grain crops and not of the products of orchards and vegetable gardens.

The *huertas*, generally walled or surrounded by impenetrable hedges of prickly pear to protect their contents from cattle and other animals, were a welcome relief from the barren California landscape. A visitor to San Fernando Rey in 1846 wrote of "two extensive gardens, surrounded by high walls," noting that "a stroll through them afforded a most delightful contrast from the usually uncultivated landscape we have been travelling

through for so long a time." Another visitor to the same mission ten years later wrote: "On turning the point of a hill, we came suddenly in sight of the Mission buildings, which, with the surrounding gardens, stood isolated in the seemingly deserted plain, and produced a most beautiful effect." It is perhaps from such accounts that the notion of paradisiacal mission gardens derives.

A remarkable document came to light a few years ago in the National Historical Archives in Madrid. It is a combined list of the personnel and materials of the first expedition to Alta California, in 1769, sent to establish the mission at San Diego. The expedition comprised three packet boats, one of which was lost at sea, and two land forces. The ships arrived in April, several days apart; the land division of Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada arrived in mid-May and that of Governor Don Gaspar de Portola at the end of June. Of horticultural interest in the list of supplies are, in round numbers, 2,600 pounds of rice, 4,700 pounds of chickpeas, 3,000 pounds of lentils, 3,000

With the advent of automobiles, California tourism got a boost from the country's fascination with the romantic myth of Old California.

The return of the swallows every year to Mission San Juan Capistrano inspired the 1940 song "When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano."

pounds of beans, 3,500 pounds of dates, figs, and raisins, 600 pounds of garlic, and 565 bushels of new corn (probably wheat, not *maize*). These items evidently comprised the dietary staples of the expeditionary forces, but they also may have been used as planting seed. A further entry tantalizes by its vagueness: "Two drawers with diverse seeds, vegetables, beans (chickpeas, lentils, etc.) and flowers to plant." How large was a drawer? Which flowers? Unanswerable questions, but later accounts establish that importations continued by means of an annual supply ship sent from San Blas.

The Franciscans introduced dozens of plants to Alta California from Mexico, many of which had initially come from Spain. In the mission orchards thus were found oranges, lemons, figs, and olives. Grapes were grown successfully, as were apples, walnuts, pecans, plums, quinces, apricots, peaches, and pears. Captain George Vancouver found in the garden of San Buenaventura "apples, pears, plums, figs, oranges, grapes, peaches, and pomegranates, together with the plantain, banana, cocoa nut, sugar cane, indigo, and a great variety of the necessary and useful kitchen herbs, plants, and roots." At San José, one of two *huertas*, a fifteen to twenty-acre plot enclosed by high adobe walls, was described as containing, in addition to grape vines, "about six hundred pear trees, and a large number of apple and peach trees, all bearing fruit in great abundance and in full perfection." Unfortunately, names of these fruits often were not provided, though we know from French texts of the period that hundreds of cultivated varieties were available. Where names are mentioned, tracing them is no easy task. Pears known by name at Mission San José, for example, included *Presidenta*, *Bergamota*, *Pana*, *Lechera*, and *Pera de San Juan*. The last of these is the French *Pome de St Jean*, also known as *Madeleine* and first described about 1625 as *Citron de Carmes*, from a Carmelite monastery near Paris. Still in commerce in Spain today, it was reintroduced into California before 1850 by Americans as *Madeleine*.

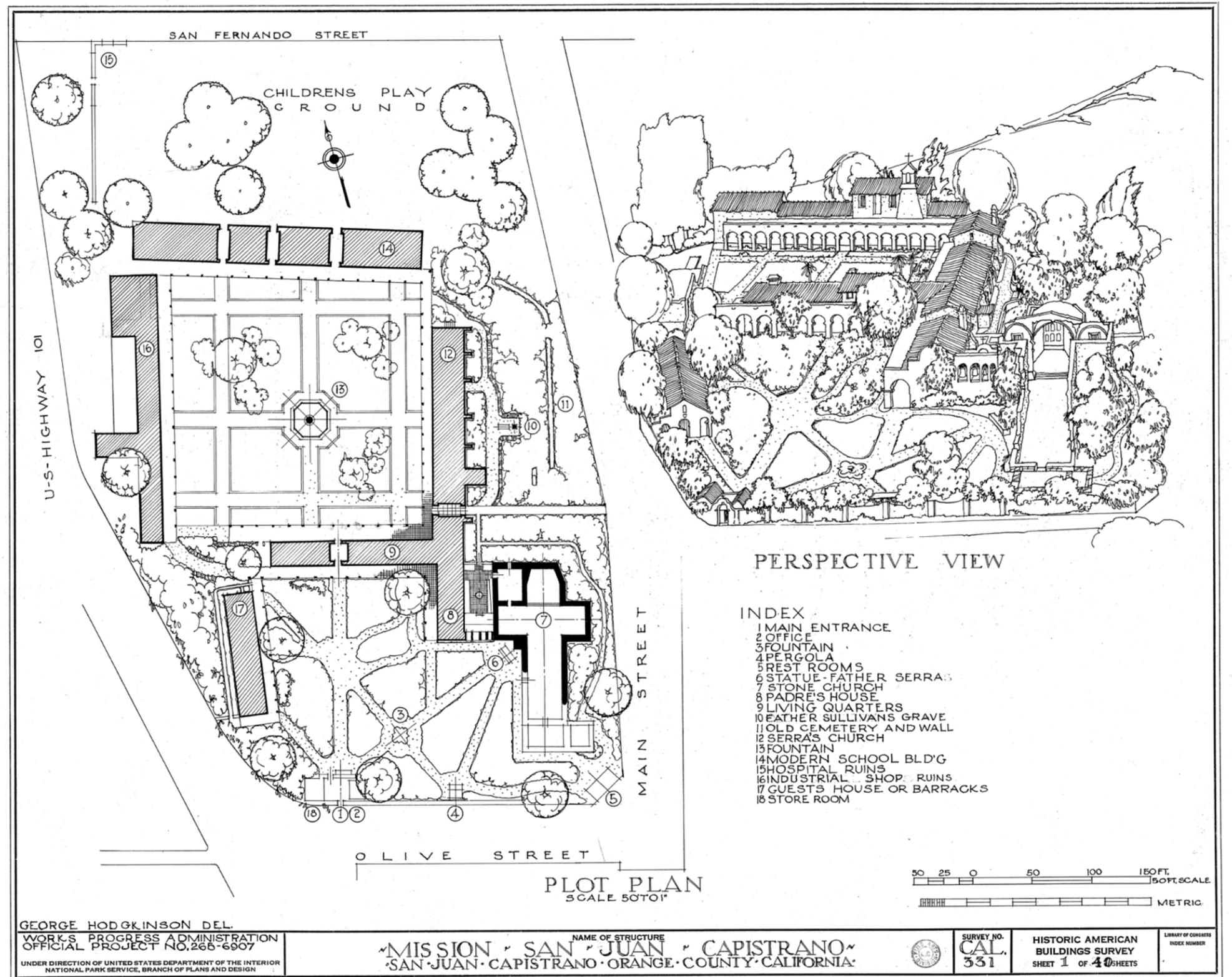
Many plants and seeds also came from ships that put in along the coast of Alta California. Monterey, only three miles from Mission San Carlos, was made the capital of Alta California in 1777 and remained so under both Spanish and Mexican rule. All vessels were required to call there for inspection of papers and cargoes. As the principal point of entry, the town and mission profited horticulturally.

In 1786 Jean François Galaup, Comte de La Pérouse touched at Monterey on his voyage around the world. He was charged with taking European plants and seeds to French colonies in the South Seas and bringing back to Europe "such as may enrich this quarter of the globe."

His manifest included a great variety of fruit tree seeds, grains, roots, herbs, vegetables, and fifty-nine living fruit and nut trees and vines. The flowering shrubs included *Rosa centifolia*, lilacs, and tuberose. Supplies were taken on board at Brest, and plants were added at Santa Catarina, an island a few hundred miles south of Rio de Janeiro. Apparently, still more items were added as the ship made its way north along the coast of Chile. In Monterey, wrote La Pérouse, "We enriched the gardens of the governor and the missions with different grains which we had brought from Paris, which were in perfect preservation, and will add to the sum of their domestic enjoyments." The manifest says the grains were to be procured at Brest and included various kinds of wheat, *maize*, barley, buckwheat, piedmont rice, rye, and oats (other plants may have been included, as *graines* is the French word for seeds). "Our gardener," La Pérouse continues, "gave to the missionaries some potatoes from Chile; perfectly sound; I believe this is not one of the least of our gifts and that this root will succeed perfectly around Monterey." His optimism may have been misplaced, for the Rev. Walter Colton, U.S.N., writing of his visit to San Carlos in 1849, remarked: "In its soil were raised, in 1826, the first potatoes in California. So little did the presiding padre think of this strange vegetable, he allowed the Indians to raise and sell them to the whalers that visited Monterey, without disturbing their profits."

Although the *huertas* were food-producing "kitchen" gardens, the padres could not have been immune to the pleasures of sight and scent that such gardens can provide. At San Gabriel, one of the richest missions agriculturally, early plantations of fruit trees were made by Padre Zalvidea. By the end of his tenure in 1826 the gardens are said to have contained 2,333 fruit trees — oranges, figs, pomegranates, peaches, apples, limes, pears, and citrons — while the four vineyards held more than 160,000 vines. A settler in the area wrote of Zalvidea and his gardens: "He it was who planted the large vineyards, intersected with fine walks, shaded by fruit trees of every description, and rendered still more lovely by shrubs interspersed between..."

Ornamental plants also were grown, though most had practical uses. Ornamentals introduced by the Franciscans prior to secularization included jasmine, nasturtium, calla lily, rose of Castile, musk rose, four o'clock, lavender, pennyroyal, sweet pea, lemon verbena, Madonna lily, hollyhocks, stock, carnations and pinks, sweet scabious, delphinium, larkspur, pink valerian, iris, narcissus, poppy, and French marigold. Loquat, oleander, and the California pepper tree also were planted. *Acacia farnesiana* reportedly was grown at San Fernando Rey "for the perfume



In the 1930s, as part of President Roosevelt's WPA programs, the Missions were documented in Historic American Building Surveys (HABS). Here is a site plan for Mission San Juan Capistrano.



of their flowers, which are the sweetest of the large family." Native plants used by the Franciscans prior to 1834 included virgin's bower, matilija poppy, toyon, hollyleaf cherry, elderberry, California bay, California fan palm, and Monterey cypress. At least one palm (usually the Canary Island date palm, *Phoenix canariensis*) was planted at every mission, and fronds were used in religious ceremonies during Holy Week.

The essentials of a pleasing garden, at least in hot, dry parts of the world, are shade, water, food, and the soothing green of foliage to contrast with the dust and glare outside the walls. Water was supplied to the *huertas* by irrigation systems, laid out at different times at different missions but in general not fully developed until about 1800. By this time there had been sufficient experience with drought to demand more permanent solutions to the problem of providing a constant water supply than the ditches that led from unreliable streams and springs. Dams and aqueducts were constructed to store and carry water to the mission gardens, as well as to washhouses, reservoirs, and the fountains shown on most mission plans. The most highly developed irrigation system was at Santa Barbara, where water traveled by aqueduct for two miles from a dammed creek to a storage reservoir and thence to a settling basin and another reservoir before making its way to the orchard, gardens, and the famous fountain in front of the monastery. It was irrigation that turned the mission

gardens, created out of barren landscape, into legendary oases, images of which, however misleading, survive to this day.

### DECLINE OF THE MISSIONS

Around 1821 the missions generally had reached their most prosperous point, after which the system began an irreversible decline. In that year, after a ten-year struggle, Mexico gained her independence from Spain. The annual supply ships from San Blas, interrupted in 1811 and 1817, came no more. The now Mexican military garrisons were forced to rely increasingly on requisitions from mission stores, accounts for which were regularly kept but seldom paid. Material goods became more scarce, and the number of Indian converts declined as well.

The lack of labor at the missions was acute. Some Indians, mistreated by soldiers, fled to distant rancherias. European diseases, particularly smallpox, claimed thousands. At San Carlos, in 1825, Father Abella informed the superior that the adobe garden walls had fallen down and it was not possible to rebuild them due to a lack of hands. In 1837, when Abel du Petit-Thouars visited San Carlos, the garden showed "scarcely any signs of cultivation. Formerly very fertile, the garden produced in abundance all the vegetables and fruits necessary not only for the establishment, but also

for the town of Monterey and for vessels in port. At present it is entirely abandoned, the fence no longer remains, and the few fruit trees which are still to be seen here yield scarcely any produce ..."

After independence, Mexico had more pressing concerns than her distant province of Alta California, and Mexican governors, poorly supported from Mexico, had to govern and defend the territory as best they could. In 1822 instructions came from Mexico that the missions were to be turned into secular villages or *pueblos* and the Indians liberated, with land granted to those who could maintain themselves. These instructions were not much observed until the Mexican Congress passed a law of secularization in 1834. Ten of the missions were secularized in 1834, and six more the following year. Many padres left or took up residence at the *pueblos*. The remaining Indians were encouraged to leave the missions, in effect being tricked into giving up their rights to land grants, which went to Mexican civilians and the military.

The crowning blow was delivered by Governor Pio Pico, who held an auction on December 24, 1845, at which those missions already decayed or without lands would be sold, while those that had lands or otherwise might be partially salvaged were to be rented. Only church structures then in use were reserved. Thus, were sold San Diego, San Juan Capistrano, San Gabriel, La Purisima, San Luis Obispo, San Miguel, and La Soledad; San

Fernando, San Buenaventura, Santa Barbara, Santa Inez, and San Luis Rey were rented. The northern missions had never been particularly profitable and, except for San José, had no takers.

Unattended missions were looted and plundered for building materials, roof tiles being especially in demand. Some roofs caved in from lack of maintenance. Then the adobe walls, exposed to abrasion by wind and to softening by rain, began to crumble back to clay. The padres who stayed on had all they could do to keep a roof over their heads and perhaps keep up the church a little longer. It was in this sorry period that the patios, bereft of their Indian populations and even, in some cases, their buildings, were made over into orchards and gardens for the remaining clerics.

Of these later patio gardens, that of Santa Barbara has survived best. It dates from around 1840, when Francisco Garcia Diego y Moreno, first Bishop of the Two Californias, chose it as his residence. It was he who planted the famous cypress in the patio near the fountain, which blew down in a storm in 1909. The garden was a series of geometric paths and planting beds, edged with rocks, as is shown in photographs from the turn of the century. Similar developments are evident from plans of the patio gardens at San Luis Obispo and San Buenaventura, which show them also to contain plants not available to the original builders of the missions

It is ironic, perhaps, that the mission courtyard or patio should have become more beautiful as the mission system itself decayed. A few padres, no longer able to cultivate souls for God, turned instead to cultivating gardens. The great land grants, carved out of the formerly vast holdings of the missions, became the source of wealth for those Mexican families who stayed on and the source of a new mythology in California. The era of the rancho, roughly 1820 to 1845, is commemorated in the fictional stories of Zorro and of Ramona. Significantly, in both of these works, an increasing number of Europeans and Americans figure as an ominous shadow of change. It was these interlopers who would write the next chapters in the story of the missions, and it was they who ultimately would endow the humble missions with gardens the like of which few padres had ever dreamed. **E**

Opposite page: "Mission San Gabriel in the 1930s. Courtesy Keystone-Mast Collection, UCR/California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside.

Below: Two different stereograph views of the Santa Barbara Mission Garden, ca. 1925. Courtesy Keystone-Mast Collection, UCR/California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside.

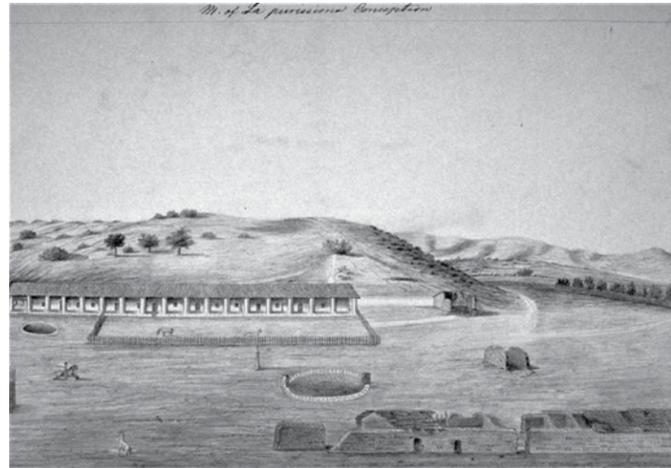
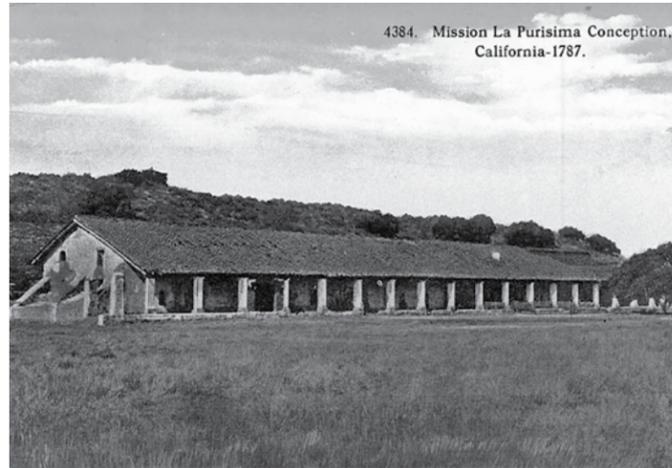


23039—Beautiful Patio (Courtyard), Mission Santa Barbara, Calif.



(38)-5968—A pleasant retreat from the world—Santa Barbara Mission gardens, Cal. Copyright Underwood & Underwood.

# 2019 CGLHS Annual Conference



## Early California Landscapes and Gardens: Romance and Reality

*Lompoc, home of Mission La Purisima Concepción*

*Friday, October 4-Sunday, October 6, 2019*

This fall's CGLHS Annual Conference will focus on the landscapes of early California, telling the story of the Missions and the early agricultural practices of the region. We will explore the authentic history of the pre-Spanish era and post-Spanish settlements, along with the myth-making reinvention in the 19th century of these working landscapes as idyllic places of pastoral enchantment. We will also look at the late 20th century cultural shift to a more authentic telling of these stories.

The Conference will begin **FRIDAY AFTER-NOON** at Mission La Purisima in Lompoc. Because of its accurate reconstruction by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s, Mission La Purisima is known as the "Williamsburg of the West." The Mission's volunteer group, Prelado de los Tesoros (Keepers of the Treasures) de la Purisima, will tour us in small groups through the Mission and its grounds. Following the tours, we will all gather for a welcome reception. Prelado will serve us posole, a Mission era soup.

**SATURDAY**, we will spend the day in Old Town Lompoc. We'll begin with a series of talks at historic Stone Pine Hall, our lunch break will be next door in the Victorian garden of Lompoc Museum. In the afternoon we will visit the museum, take a walking tour of Old Town with its many historic buildings and colorful murals depicting scenes of Lompoc's heritage, flower industry, and scenic beauty.

**DINNER** will be at Sissy's Uptown Café in Old Town.

**SUNDAY MORNING**, we will return to Mission La Purisima to learn about the orchard, garden, and vineyard. Speakers will discuss plant introductions and early agriculture including water systems.

The conference will officially end at 11:30 Sunday.

For those who can stay a few more hours there will be an optional carpool excursion to Jalama Beach County Park for a "World Famous Jalama Burger" at the Jalama Beach Store and Grill. The scenic 30-minute drive from Lompoc will take us by working ranches, vineyards, and a few of the remaining flower fields.

For those of you arriving Thursday or early Friday, we are looking into a Friday tour of Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Details and registration information will be sent via email shortly. If we don't have your email, we will mail you the information.

### Reserve your hotel room now!

*A block of rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn in Lompoc has been reserved at a discounted rate of \$139.00 a night.*



CALIFORNIA GARDEN  
& LANDSCAPE  
HISTORY SOCIETY

## Presenting the inspiration for our new CGLHS logo in branding and identity

The new California Garden & Landscape History logo was unveiled in April 2019, created by Bill Smith of designSimple, the graphic design firm that also designs Eden. Bill explains that the cropping and spacing of the letters were inspired by garden design plans, a common way to examine landscapes. Colors were taken 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 logo colors, like the way colors change in a garden over the seasons.

The general attitude of the identity and brand also derives from garden design—creative, but orderly, favoring gentle visual relationships. Typography uses fonts that would be at home in the pages of a Victorian book, borrowing too from the font used for Eden, tying together our journal and organizational identity.



CALIFORNIA GARDEN  
& LANDSCAPE  
HISTORY SOCIETY

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**Address Correction and Forwarding Requested**



Front Cover: The fountain and water feature at the Eckbo home and garden, "ALCOA Forecast Garden". One of the many pieces built of aluminum as a showcase for the material's many applications, this abstracted open-flower fountain was the main attraction. Photographer Julius Shulman. Courtesy Getty Research Institute.

Back Cover: Looking out from the Fuss home to the cactus garden. UC Berkeley. 1983.