



CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE _____ IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8)

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

A N D / O R

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE _____ WAS BUILT IN _____
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT YEAR BUILT

NAME OF FIRST OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER WAS IMPORTANT TO THE

DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE _____

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT _____
2. STREET ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ ZIP CODE _____ COUNCIL DISTRICT _____
3. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. _____
4. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT _____
BLOCK _____ LOT(S) _____ ARB. NO. _____
5. RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY _____

6. PRESENT OWNER _____
STREET ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____ PHONE (____) _____
OWNER IS: PRIVATE _____ PUBLIC _____
7. PRESENT USE _____ ORIGINAL USE _____

DESCRIPTION

8. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE _____
(SEE STYLE GUIDE)
9. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET)

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT _____

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: FACTUAL _____ ESTIMATED _____

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER _____

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER _____

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS _____
(8X10 BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY)

14. CONDITION: EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR DETERIORATED NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

15. ALTERATIONS _____

16. THREATS TO SITE: NONE KNOWN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT VANDALISM PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT
 ZONING OTHER _____

17. IS THE STRUCTURE: ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE MOVED UNKNOWN

SIGNIFICANCE

18. BRIEF STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSON ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITE (SEE OPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET)

19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) _____

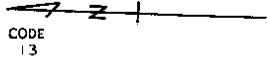
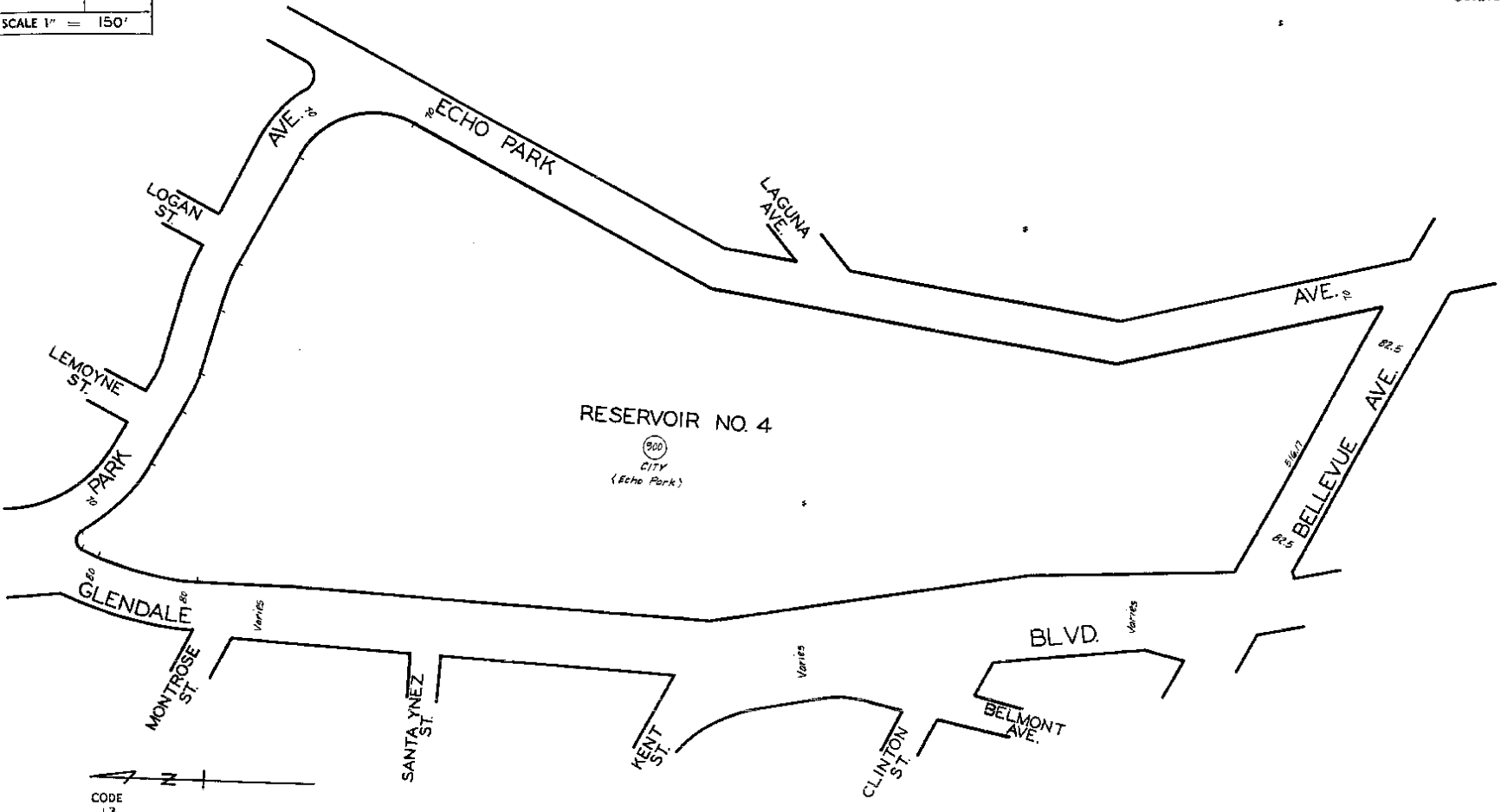
20. DATE FORM PREPARED _____ PREPARER'S NAME _____

ORGANIZATION _____ STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____ PHONE (____) _____

5404 15
SCALE 1" = 150'

REVISED
600206



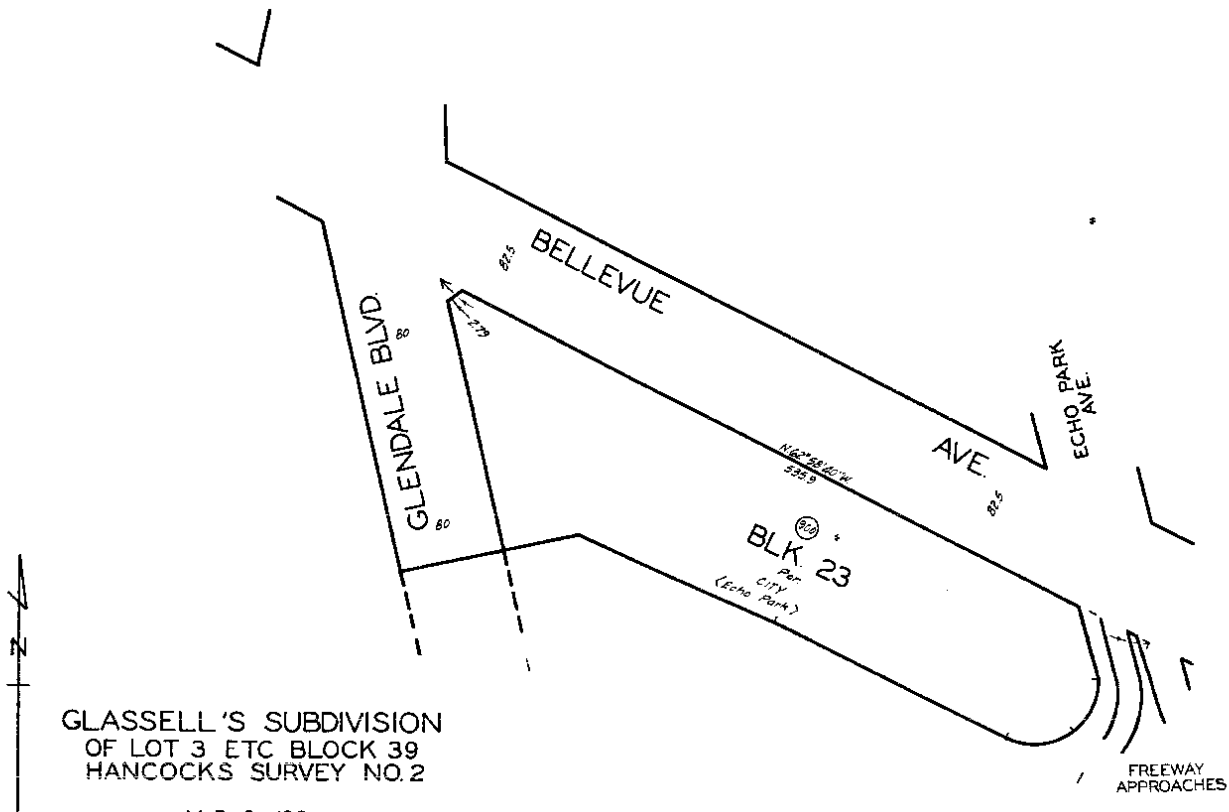
HANCOCK'S SURVEY
M. R. 2 - 108

FOR PREV. ASSMT. SEE: 564 - 31

5404 14

SCALE 1" = 80'

REVISED
680206



GLASSELL'S SUBDIVISION
OF LOT 3 ETC BLOCK 39
HANCOCK'S SURVEY NO. 2

M. R. 6 - 139

CODE
13

HOLLYWOOD

FRWY.

FOR PREV. ASSM'T. SEE: 967 - 17

4. Complete Legal Description:

Southern Part of the Montana Tract, Block 3, Fractional Lots 3 to 6 and Lots 7 to 10; Block 4, a Portion of an Unnumbered Lot; Hancock's Survey, Block 40, Fractional Lots 3, 5 and 6, and a part of Lot 4; and Glassell's Subdivision of Lot 3 etc., Block 39 Hancock's Survey No. 2, Block 23, Fractional Lots 9 and 10, and a Portion of Lots 11 to 20. APNs: 5404-015-900 and 5404-014-900.

9. Description.

Echo Park is a thirty-three acre municipal park located in the Echo Park community of Los Angeles. The park features a sixteen-acre lake and numerous park and recreation facilities. The property is generally bounded by Glendale Boulevard on the west, Park Avenue on the north, Echo Park Avenue on the east, and the 101 Hollywood Freeway on the south. The southern portion of the park is transversed by Bellevue Avenue, which separates a parcel of land containing the Echo Park Recreation center from the rest of the park property.

The park's design, including the lake's existing shape, were first established in 1892 when a previously existing reservoir was re-designed as a picturesque English style park. Echo Park contains several elements that are characteristic of this park type, which was intent on the creation of 'natural' landscapes. These include the use of the long lake and middle-distance plantings to create appealing vistas and the illusion of great distance, and open lawns defined by groves of trees with some set apart to emphasize their features, undulations in ground form, and winding, peripheral paths and drives to create interesting natural settings.

Bellevue Avenue extends across a fabricated ridge of land that was originally constructed as a dam within what was once a well-defined natural arroyo. The area south of the dam was later filled-in to established the existing grade. A lake extends north from this land mass forming an elongated body of water. At its northern end, the lake is split by a triangular peninsula that creates two extending arms of water to the northeast and northwest, respectively. The lake's edges are wrapped with riprap consisting of cut, regularly-coursed, rough-faced stone. The riprap extends nearly the entire circumference of the lake, and has been capped by a layer of cement.

A bed of Asian lotus plants (*Nelumbo nucifera*) occupies the end of the lake's northwest arm. Lotus plants were also once located in the lake's northeast arm, but occasional draining of the lake presumably has curtailed their further growth. The plants grow up from the mud of the lake bottom with long thick stems to which the leaves and flowers are attached several centimeters above the water. The plants have large circular leaves, and are characterized by white, pink-tipped flowers when in bloom. The flowers can grown as much as a foot wide and smell like cinnamon. The fruit is a conical shaped pod with the seeds arranged in holes.

An irregularly shaped island is located in the lake's northeast arm. It was constructed in 1895 using 5,000 yards of dirt excavated from the lake bottom and about 275 loads of riprap rock from quarries in Elysian Park. The island is accessed via a rustic-style bridge from the park's triangular peninsula.

The existing bridge, installed sometime between 1930 and 1950, is a fixed arch bridge with an open spandrel and an angled deck. The span consists of riveted steel construction anchored in mortared masonry abutments. It supports a deck of wood planks and a simple wood balustrade. The bridge replaced the park's original bridge, which was constructed of wood with a similar design.

A system of paved concrete pathways extends from the bridge onto the island and throughout the park grounds. The pathways are curvilinear in character and vary in width and placement. Several pathways meander through the landscape of the island and peninsula, providing access to the park's various sections, including the existing picnic and playground areas. One wide pathway encircles the entire circumference of the lake, serving as a single uninterrupted circuit for walkers and joggers.

A number of permanent concrete landscape features have been installed along the encircling pathway. These include four poured concrete staircases on the lake's west side, which serve as formal entrances to the park from Glendale Boulevard, and a series of masonry benches and retaining walls in the dam area. A fifth staircase is located on the east side of the park, rising to Echo Park Avenue, near the Echo Park Boathouse. The staircases each have a similar design, consisting of a single flight of poured concrete stairs with black metal railings. The Glendale Boulevard staircases also feature low rectangular pillars that mark the location of each entrance at the street.

Where the encircling pathway passes the lake's south end, the area between the water's edge and Bellevue Avenue is terraced with several masonry retaining walls. The construction of the retaining walls is similar to the riprap surrounding the lake and consists of mortared, semi-coursed, cut rough-faced stone. Three built-in stone benches are located in the lowest retaining wall, which abuts the encircling pathway at that location.

Trees, bushes, and other vegetation mark the course of the Echo Park's various walking paths and provide shade and visual aesthetic to the park's picnic and playground areas. Many of the existing trees date to original plantings in the 1910s and 1930s. They are regularly spaced in rows along the pathways and adjacent streets, and in small groves or clusters around structures and on the island and peninsula area at the park's northern end. Common tree types include palm, pine, cedar, eucalyptus, magnolia, and willow trees, among many others. Some of the park's more unique trees include specimens of the African Wattle (*Peltophorum africanum*), the Chinese Wingnut (*Pterocarya stenoptera*), the Primrose Tree (*Lagunania patersonii*), the Italian Cypress (*Cypressus sempervirens*), the Brazilian Coral Tree (*Erythrina falcata*), the Cape Chestnut (*Calodendrum capense*), the Montezuma Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and the

American Elm (*Ulmus americana*). All have been classified as “heritage trees” by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

Echo Park’s principal picnic and playground facilities are located on the north side of the lake within the area of the triangular peninsula. A circular play area, consisting of a large sandbox enclosed by poured concrete retaining walls and a metal balustrade, exists in an open space located northwest of the bridge. The play area is outfitted with plastic composite playground equipment and painted concrete benches. Just north of this feature are several groupings of painted cast concrete picnic tables and benches, anchored to poured concrete slabs. A second playground is located south of Bellevue Avenue adjacent to the Echo Park Recreation Center.

Other park facilities include two restroom buildings, a pump house, and a park office building. The park office building, constructed sometime before 1916, is a small one-story structure with a side-gable roof, red brick exterior cladding, and a concrete foundation. It is positioned east of the lake’s northwestern arm near Park Avenue. The pump house, constructed in the late 1980s, is a small, rectangular concrete block structure with a flat roof. It is located at the tip of the peninsula, where the Lady of the Lake sculpture was originally placed.

The park’s two restroom buildings have nearly identical designs. Each consists of a rectangular one-story structure with a clay-tile clad side-gable roof and a combination of stucco and brick wall cladding. One of the restroom building’s is located on the north side of the lake adjacent to the park’s picnic and playground areas. The second is positioned southeast of the boathouse on the lake’s east side. A long, one-story concrete block structure is located south of the latter.

Lady of the Lake Sculpture & Jose Marti Monument

Two sculpture monuments have been placed in the park – the Lady of the Lake sculpture and the Jose Marti monument. The Lady of the Lake, sculpted by Ada May Sharpless and placed in the park in 1935, consists of an Art Deco stylized cast stone figure of a woman in a long dress standing on pedestal with three steps. Each side of the pedestal contains a highly-detailed bas-relief: on the front is City Hall and downtown Los Angeles; on proper left face are ships, smokestacks, and fields or waves; on proper right face is a mission and a sun burst – a large bow shape could be the Hollywood Bowl; and on the rear face are stylized depictions of mountains and the ocean. The sculpture was removed from its original location at the tip of the peninsula in 1986. It was relocated to its present position just north of the boathouse in 1999. A local Cuban American arts and culture group, Patronato Jose Marti, erected the Jose Marti monument at a location in the northwest corner of the park near the intersection of Glendale Boulevard and Park Avenue in 1976. The monument consists of a bronze bust set atop a large, rectangular cast stone base.

Echo Park Recreation Center

The Echo Park Recreation Center is a two-story community center building in the southern portion of Echo Park on the parcel of land between Bellevue Avenue and the 101 Hollywood freeway. Built in 1925, the structure sits on a sloping grade with a rectangular plan and is constructed of a combination of poured concrete and masonry. The building was designed in brick clad representation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It has a hip roof with red clay tile shingles and red brick masonry wall cladding. The primary (north) facade is one-story high and punctuated by a series of regularly-spaced window and door openings across its length. The main entrance contains a pair of decorative wood doors set back from the elevation and framed by an ornate cast concrete surround. A non-original wheelchair ramp has been constructed at a secondary entrance on the same elevation and several of the windows contain decorative concrete block inserts.

The south elevation is two stories high. It contains an arched brick colonnade on the first floor that projects from the elevation and a wide balcony on the second floor. The balcony extends the length of the facade, providing an exterior space accessible from a series of double doors across the elevation from the building's gymnasium. The sets of double doors are separated by simple brick pilasters, and two sets of exterior stairs lead to the ground level. The building's fenestration primarily consists of original multiple-light double-hung wood sash windows. A number of fences and masonry walls have been added to the area immediately surrounding the building, and a swimming pool has been constructed adjacent to the east elevation.

Echo Park Boathouse

The Echo Park Boathouse is a one-story building located on the lake's eastern shore near the northeast arm. Built in 1932, the boathouse consists of a combination of wood-frame and poured concrete construction, and has a rectangular plan. It was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Positioned over the edge of Echo Park Lake, only a small portion of the building's principal massing is founded on the shoreline, while the rest extends over the open water. The building has a hip roof covered with asphalt shingles and decoratively-carved exposed rafter tails. The building's exterior walls are clad with rough stucco.

The building's primary (east) facade is characterized by a central three-quarters width shed roof canopy that extends from the pitch of the west roof rake to form an open porch. The porch roof is supported by an original horizontal hand-hewn structural beam set on four heavy masonry piers. A recessed portal is located in the elevation's center, serving as the building's main entrance. The entrance is fit with a pair of paneled wood outer doors and a pair of wood inner doors with a screened opening over a single panel. The building's most prominent feature is an eight-sided light tower that rises from the north elevation at the building's northwest corner. The tower is topped by a heavy metal cornice with decorative frieze cut scalloped pattern and a crowning, eight-faceted, banded lantern with a hipped roof.

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The building's boat dock and a nearly full-width flat roofed canopy distinguish the boathouse's west elevation. The boat dock consists of framed redwood construction along the elevation's entire length, including a series of wood catwalks that extend westward to form four double-wide boat slips. The dock wraps around both the north and south elevations, and two narrow sections extend beyond the building's width to the north and south. The canopy's flat roof is constructed of wood with exposed full-length rafters, and supported by hand-hewn wood beams and columns.

18. Significance.

Summary

Echo Park is eligible for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument for its close association with the history of Los Angeles and the characteristics of its cultural landscape and architecture. Several contextual themes have characterized the development of Echo Park through its history. These include the property's use as Reservoir No. 4 in Los Angeles' early water system, and its later transformation into a municipal park and recreation area.

Echo Park is historically significant as a remnant of Los Angeles' early water system and the trends and policies that shaped the city's distribution and use of public lands in the late nineteenth century. It is also significant as one of Los Angeles' earliest city parks and as the location of the city's second established, and oldest remaining, municipal playground. The history of the Echo Park's creation and development represents significant trends in the provision of municipally funded parks and recreation facilities in Los Angeles during the early twentieth century.

Echo Park garners further significance as an intact cultural landscape and from the prominent architecture of several of its character-defining features. The Echo Park Boathouse and Echo Park Recreation Center are intact examples of 1920s and 1930s municipal recreation buildings erected in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and are part of a much larger thematic grouping of recreation facilities found throughout the City of Los Angeles.

Early Development

The development of Echo Park through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is directly related to the early history of the City of Los Angeles and its growth and development. The land encompassing Echo Park was apportioned to the city in 1850, when Los Angeles was formally established as an American municipality. The city's boundaries set at that time were the same as those of the original Spanish land grant that had first established El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles, or the original founding of Los Angeles, in 1781.

With its incorporation in 1850, the City of Los Angeles gained possession of vast areas of public land. Much of this land remained wholly undeveloped, or was marginally used for agriculture and ranching. The acquisition and subsequent distribution of this land provided the city government with a means to foster and control future development in the area, while at the same time providing a stable source of revenue to support public improvements and municipal services.

The first auction of town lots for these purposes was held in 1849. The allotment of public property continued through the 1890s until nearly all of the apportioned public lands were distributed. In 1852, for example, Major Henry Hancock was commissioned to survey city lands in the southern portion of the original land grant. Known as the “Hancock Survey,” this effort divided the area into thirty-five acre tracts, separated by cross streets named Washington, Adams, and Jefferson.¹ These tracts, as well as those elsewhere in the city, were gradually sold by the city as Los Angeles grew and the demand for development in the outlying areas increased.

The creation of what is now Echo Park was the direct result of the City of Los Angeles’ sale of public land to private investors, the formation of the city’s early water system, and the later recapture and transformation of private property into a municipal park.

Water System

Providing water for irrigation and domestic consumption has always been one of the City of Los Angeles’ most important public services. In contrast to the well established infrastructure that exists today, Los Angeles’ early water system relied heavily upon the natural flow of the Los Angeles River. Wells tapped pockets of ground water and a system of irrigation ditches, or *zanjas*, conveyed diverted river water to various sections of the city.

An October 1883 account in the Los Angeles Times describes the city’s early water system:

“There are seventeen *zanjas* used at present to convey water to irrigators, and their names and length in feet are given as follows: Zanja Madre, 10,500 feet; zanja 1, 13,200; zanja 2, 13,200; zanja 3, 13,200; zanja 4, 21,120, zanja 5, 25,080, zanja 6-1, 11,880, zanja 7, 19,800, upper 7, 6,000; 8, 14,520, 8R, 31,680; 9E, 68,640; 9R, 10,560; OR, 31,680; Nicholl’s ditch, 7,020; main supply, 15,810; woolen mills ditch 9,286.

“The total area irrigated by these ditches amounts to 7,366 acres. Eight ditches are already partially piped, and the total length of pipe laid amounts to 21,906 feet. Under the present system the length of pipe required to complete the work is 802,214 feet, and the total cost of construction is estimated at \$292,319.”²

Los Angeles’ system of *zanjas* and irrigation ditches provided enough water to sustain a small population, but city leaders soon recognized that additional facilities were necessary for future growth. To foster this growth, the city government enlisted the help of private interests, who contracted with the municipality to construct and operate much of Los Angeles’ domestic water system. These arrangements removed the burden of providing public utilities from the city

¹ William A. Spalding, *History and Reminiscences: Los Angeles City and County* (Los Angeles, CA: Finnell & Sons, 1930), 125.

² “Our Water Supply,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 October 1883.

government, and at the time were considerably less expensive than establishing a new municipally-owned water system.

In 1857, William Dryden was given the first city franchise to supply water from springs located in the upper part of the town. This contract entitled him to erect a water wheel on the Zanja Madre, from which water was extracted and stored in a new brick reservoir in the Plaza. The water was thence distributed through pipes laid along Main and Los Angeles Streets.³ Frequently destroyed by heavy rains and flooding, this early system was supplanted by similar enterprises on a regular basis.

The City of Los Angeles' first stable water system was established in 1867. In that year, the "Los Angeles City Water Company" purchased the right to distribute city water, and committed to provide this service under a thirty-year contract. A joint venture of Dr. John S. Griffin, Prudent Beaudry, and Solomon Hazard, the City Water Company agreed to improve the waters works, to build a fountain in the Plaza, and to supply domestic water to Los Angeles residents in exchange for revenue earned from monthly rental fees. This arrangement remained in place until the City of Los Angeles again assumed control of water distribution in 1902, and began construction of the city-owned water system that exists today.⁴

Los Angeles Canal & Reservoir Company

At the same time as the City Water Company's creation, the City of Los Angeles initiated a separate contract with the Los Angeles Canal & Reservoir Company for development of a new canal and water storage system in the western section of the original land grant. Headed by George Hansen, J. J. Warner, and Alfred Solano, the Canal & Reservoir Company agreed to construct a new canal system that diverted water from the Los Angeles River (at a point above the Feliz Ranch near present day Griffith Park) and convey it through a meandering irrigation ditch in what was then known as the Arroyo de Los Reyes and into a new reservoir.⁵

As compensation for this effort, the City of Los Angeles granted the Canal & Reservoir Company concession of an undivided third of the city's original land grant. The Company later agreed to re-convey much of this acreage back to the city, minus that required to construct the canal and reservoir. The latter remained in private ownership until 1891, when the City of Los Angeles regained full control of thirty-three acres of the former concession.⁶ This thirty-three acre tract is what formed the basis of Echo Park and Echo Park lake.

³ Spalding, *History and Reminiscences*, 145.

⁴ Spalding, *History and Reminiscences*, 171.

⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1868 and "Reservoir No. 4: Facts About the Proposed Park Site," 26 March 1891. Spalding, *History and Reminiscences*, 172

⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1868 and 26 March 1891.

The Los Angeles Canal & Reservoir Company completed work on the new water works in October 1870. Besides the canal, which was later used to supply the city's Silverlake Reservoir, construction of the reservoir included the erection of a twenty foot dam across the Arroyo de Los Reyes and a large basin at the present location of Echo Park lake. Referred to as Reservoir No. 4, water in the new basin came from two sources: the diversion at the "upper flows" of the Los Angeles river, which was its principle source; and a spring-fed stream emerging at Baxter Avenue, which flowed down the natural arroyo along what is now Echo Park Avenue.

The water in Reservoir No. 4 was used to generate power for the first woolen mills established in Los Angeles. From the dam, the "woolen mill ditch" carried the water through the "lakelet" of Second Street Park to the Coulter Woolen Mills at the corner of Sixth and Pearl (now Figueroa) Streets.⁷ After doing service at the mills, the waste water was then conducted through a zanja along the west side of Figueroa Street, and on to other ditches, to provide irrigation for various orchards and vineyards in that section.⁸

City Re-Acquisition

The Canal & Reservoir Company leased Reservoir No. 4 and its associated canals and ditches back to the City of Los Angeles on July 20, 1872. The provisions of the lease specifically granted the city the right to raise the existing dam's height to a maximum of forty feet and to flood the surrounding property within that elevation. The lease also provided the city with an option to purchase the land outright within a twelve month period for \$5,000, and within thirty months for \$6,000.

Within the period of the city's option to buy, the Canal & Reservoir Company sold the property to a group of investors that included: Thomas Kelley, I.W. Hellman, William L. Willis, William Wright, J.W. Potts, and John Mansfield. The transaction preserved the city's rights to overflow the tract, and the city reportedly had full knowledge of arrangement.⁹

In a desire to regain some control of the water system, the City of Los Angeles eventually purchased the Canal & Reservoir Company and its water rights in 1878. The Canal Company transferred its remaining rights to overflow sixty-six acres encompassing Reservoir No. 4 to the City of Los Angeles at this time, although the existing twenty-foot high dam only flooded a portion of the area.

Use of Reservoir No. 4 remained much the same through the late 1870s and into the 1880s as residential development began to flourish in the surrounding area. However, a surge in immigration in the mid-1880s resulted in rapid expansion of the city's population and a real estate boom that reached its peak 1886-1887. With this growth, new residential subdivisions

⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 15 February 1887.

⁸ Spalding, *History and Reminiscences*, 171-172.

⁹ "Letters to the Times," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 1889; and 26 March 1891.

began to emerge in outlying areas to the west and northwest of downtown Los Angeles, in the vicinity of Reservoir No. 4, as affluent residents began to relocate outside the city center. The West Lake Park, Angelino Heights, Echo Park, Elysian Heights, Solano Valley, and Bellevue neighborhoods were just few of the developments constructed in the area during this period.

To capitalize on the 1880s real estate boom, Thomas Kelley, William L. Willis, William Wright, J.W. Potts, L.W. Hellman, and the estate of John Mansfield made application to the Los Angeles City Council in June 1888 for issuance of a quit claim deed to undeveloped property adjoining Reservoir No. 4.¹⁰ The investors, who acquired the property from the Canal & Reservoir Company in 1872, had begun subdividing and improving it as a residential subdivision called the Montana Tract. By the time of their request, they had already sold several housing lots and constructed a new streetcar track into the area.

At first the investor's application appeared to be ordinary request for a quit claim deed, which was quite common at the time. As events unfolded, however, a number of serious legal complications were revealed. According to the July 1, 1888 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*:

“The application was passed on by the City Attorney favorably, went through the Land Committee, who referred it to the Council, which voted to give Mr. Kelly and his associates the deed asked for, only three members voting in the negative . . . The deed was made out and sent to the Mayor for his signature, but, contrary to the usual rule, was not accompanied by the legal opinion of Mr. Daly as City Attorney, nor an abstract of the title. As the amount of land was very large, and the Mayor and other older members of the Council having some doubt as to whether they could lawfully give the deed, His Honor decided to withhold his signature until such investigation could be made as would satisfy him in the premises . . .”¹¹

The ensuing investigation uncovered the fact that the City of Los Angeles retained the overflow rights to the approximately thirty acres included in the quit-claim deed, plus the rights to overflow a total of about sixty-six acres provided by the elevation of a heightened dam.

The situation created a legal dilemma. On the one hand, the land was valueless for development due to the city's overflow rights. On the other, the property owners had laid out a tract, subdivided it, and improved upon the property. The improvements, including an embankment constructed by the Los Angeles County Railroad, were particularly problematic as they actually reduced the acreage subject to overflow by the city.¹² After several years in court, Kelley and his fellow investors agreed to forego further litigation. In March 1891, the investors entered into a

¹⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, 4 March 1891.

¹¹ “City Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 1888.

¹² “City Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 1888; and “City Council,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 February 1891.

settlement agreement with the City of Los Angeles over ownership of Reservoir No. 4 land and the accompanying water rights.¹³

Originally, the Canal & Reservoir Company had owned the right to overflow sixty-six acres of the property by constructing a forty-foot dam. However, only a twenty-five foot dam ever existed. Under the agreement, the City of Los Angeles deeded the northern half of the property to the group of investors, while the investors transferred the southern half (approximately thirty-two acres) to the City of Los Angeles with a stipulation that it be used for park and reservoir purposes.¹⁴

Creation of Echo Park

Following this transaction, the City of Los Angeles formerly established Echo Park as a city park in 1892. There were seven public parks within the Los Angeles city limits at the time, comprising approximately 600 acres. These consisted of Westlake Park (MacArthur Park), Eastside Park (Lincoln Park), Prospect Park, Elysian Park, Sixth Street Park (Pershing Square), and the Plaza.

The transformation of Reservoir No. 4 into a park was an addition to this inventory. However, Echo Park was not the only new park under consideration by the city Parks Commission. Other potential public parks included the twenty acres of land in Boyle Heights that became Hollenbeck Park and the site of St. James Park in the southwest portion of the city.¹⁵

A number of factors influenced the City of Los Angeles' efforts to establish more municipal parks in the late 1880s and 1890s. Among these were the perceived benefits of park land on residents, inspired by the dictates of emerging progressive movements, combined with the rapid growth and urbanization of the Los Angeles area.

In 1892, these factors were particularly pressing to city officials as Los Angeles was often criticized for not having park land sufficiently in proportion to the city's size and population. One contemporary account, for example, described that it was "a matter of surprise to many visitors that Los Angeles did not have more in the way of public parks," but that "a beginning was being made in park improvement" and "the people are awakening to the importance of the question." The acquisition of Reservoir No. 4 as a public park had even greater importance in this regard, as an illustration of the city's efforts to re-acquire land for public use. The account continued:

¹³ *Los Angeles Times*, 9 November 1899.

¹⁴ Quit Claim Deeds, 13 and 18 March 1891; *Los Angeles Times*, 9 November 1889; and 17 February; 24 and 26 March 1891.

¹⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, 30 August; 21 October 1892.

“The city has given away enough land to make a dozen large parks, and now has nothing more to give. Whatever is further acquired must be by purchase or donation.”¹⁶

City Beautiful Movement

The development of Los Angeles’ public parks was part of a larger national movement aimed at city beautification and urban revitalization. Known as the City Beautiful Movement, concern for city beautification began in the mid-nineteenth century with the creation of large municipal parks in many eastern and midwestern cities.¹⁷ The creation of New York City’s Central Park in 1858, for example, inaugurated this movement as a conscious effort to control urban growth.¹⁸ The movement later turned to preserving the natural environment, effecting the creation of the national and state park systems, and was promulgated at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition in Chicago.

Los Angeles’ leaders long perceived the dangers of the city’s rapid commercial and industrial growth, and continually looked for ways to regulate development and improve the quality of life for its citizens. In 1910, for example, Colonel Griffith J. Griffith, benefactor and principal supporter of Griffith Park, argued in a self-published book entitled *Parks, Boulevards and Playgrounds*:

“That there must be an outlet for the population that chokes in the streets and alleys of our cities; that fresh air, communion with nature and amusements other than those afforded by the cheap theater, moving picture show or saloon, are requisites of public health, and is worth spending money on – all this has become a settled conviction among those who think at all.”¹⁹

Los Angeles developed somewhat slower than the rest of the country in this regard, primarily due to its small size and vast supply of readily available natural open space. Much of the city remained semi-agricultural through the turn of the twentieth century and an image of urban arcadia prevailed. Nevertheless, the City of Los Angeles pursued the dictates of several progressive movements over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The city established a Department of Parks in 1889, the first in the United States, to administer Los Angeles’ existing municipal parks, and established a Department of Playgrounds and Recreation in 1904 to promote social policies through a series of city playgrounds and recreation centers.

¹⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 14 October 1892, 4.

¹⁷ For more specific information about the City Beautiful Movement as it existed nationally, see William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹⁸ For more information on New York’s Central Park see Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

¹⁹ J. Griffith Griffith, *Parks, Boulevards and Playgrounds*. Los Angeles: Prison Reform League Publishing Co., 1910. excerpted from Mike Eberts, *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* (Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1996).

Park Design & Development

Named after a reported echo in the arroyo over the water, Echo Park's original design is attributed to landscape architect Joseph Henry Tomlinson.²⁰ Tomlinson served as Los Angeles' first superintendent of the Department of Parks from 1889 to 1909, and is also responsible for the design of Westlake Park, Eastlake Park, and Hollenbeck Park.

Said to have been modeled after a park in Tomlinson's hometown of Derbyshire, England, improvements to Echo Park began in 1892.²¹ The reservoir was shut down, the stream capped, and a sixteen acre lake created in the former reservoir basin. The park was landscaped by planting eucalyptus on top of the dam, and willow trees, shrubs, and other picturesque plantings were installed around the edges of the lake.

In 1893, work crews further altered the form of the former reservoir by excavating 5,000 yards of dirt from the lake bottom to build the existing island. About 275 loads of rock from quarries in Elysian Park were used as riprap, and remnants of this material may account for some of the stone work that exists today.²² A driving lane for excursions around the lake and a small Victorian style boathouse were also erected, adding to the park's available attractions.²³

A bridge to the island was first constructed in 1895. Located where the existing bridge sits today, the original bridge was constructed of wood, and had a gradual arch and rusticated natural wood railings made from cut tree branches. A shorter, similarly designed flat-span bridge was also erected across the lake where the lotus plants are now located.²⁴ The park's original arched bridge was removed and the existing bridge installed sometime in the 1930s or 1940s, possibly as part of the many capital improvements during that period.

Further development was immediately hampered by a lack of funds. Money for the upkeep and maintenance of Los Angeles' parks was provided through an assessment in the general tax levy.²⁵ Not until a new City Charter was passed in 1925, which provided the Parks Department with its own allocation, did the city's public parks have sufficient funding. Instead, parks were often passed over in favor of other general fund sponsored initiatives. During the fiscal year 1892-1893, the Los Angeles City Council allocated \$5,000 towards the maintenance of Echo Park, not even enough to cover the costs of regular maintenance.

²⁰ Victoria Padilla, *Southern California Gardens: An Illustrated History* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1961), 295.

²¹ Padilla, *Southern California Gardens*, 295.

²² *Los Angeles Times*, 17 December 1893.

²³ *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May; 24 July; 15 November 1895.

²⁴ Los Angeles Parks Department, "Echo Park: Constructed by Park Dept." Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Electronic Vault, Index No. UNL-27606, 1916. Los Angeles Parks Department, "Echo Park Bridge: Over Echo Park Lake – Plan & Details (Original)," Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Electronic Vault, Index No. UNL-24985, 1895. California Section Photograph Collection, Los Angeles Co.: Los Angeles: Parks: Echo Park, Accession Nos. 1989-134; 1989-138; and 1989-180, California State Library.

²⁵ "Our Public Parks," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1896.

Nevertheless, Echo Park's first boathouse opened with fanfare in June 1896.²⁶ Announcements in the *Los Angeles Times* encouraged city residents to visit the park via the Temple Street cable car at Spring Street, where they could enjoy free rental of a sailboat or one of the boathouse's six rowboats in celebration. Open daily between from 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., the boathouse also housed a small concession stand stocked with candy, nuts, lemonade, and other sundries for purchase.

Recreational activities commenced soon after the Echo Park's establishment in 1892. Boys from a local private school (formerly located on North Union Avenue) utilized the boathouse facilities, and the park and the boathouse were often the setting of formal parties and gatherings.²⁷ The *Los Angeles Times* society pages regularly reported on groups of young people, young affluent women in particular, hosting boating parties and picnics at the lake. On one occasion an evening boating party was announced. It featured an hour of moonlight rowing, followed by refreshments served in the boathouse. Yet another event consisted of a luncheon served after a driving excursion in a tally-ho horse-drawn carriage.²⁸

In the early 1890s, recreation activities at Echo Park were appropriate to the genteel sensibilities of residents in the surrounding area. Frequented by affluent residents living in nearby upper-class Victorian neighborhoods, such as Angelino Heights, Echo Park was often a place to socialize and be seen by other members of "society." Excursions, such as outings on the lake or drives in horse-drawn carriages through a rustic setting, were popular activities at the time, and the facilities at Echo Park catered to both. Early plans for the park even called for the extension of Alvarado and Reservoir Streets to the park in order to create an uninterrupted rustic drive, starting on 7th Street, passing through Westlake, Echo, and Elysian Parks, and returning downtown through Chavez Canyon.²⁹

Similar plans persisted into the early twentieth century. In 1899, discussion centered around the extension of the park to Sunset Boulevard on the north in order to help make it "known to thousands of Los Angeles people who are at present not even aware of the existence of this park."³⁰ In 1903, Lake Shore Boulevard (now Glendale Boulevard) was referred to as the first installment of a new parkway system that envisioned a park running from Sunset Boulevard all the way to Temple Street.³¹ The Los Angeles Parks Department later formalized this plan, called the Silver Lake Parkway, in a 1911 proposal linking the city's existing parks – Griffith, Westlake, Exposition, Echo, Central (Pershing) Square, the Plaza, Elysian, Sycamore Grove, Eastlake, and Hollenbeck – with a series of new or enhanced roadways.³²

²⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 28 June 1896.

²⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1892; and 3 July 1898.

²⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 1896.

²⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, 5 May 1891; and 1 November 1895.

³⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, 21 April 1899.

³¹ *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 1903.

³² Greg Hise and William Deverell, eds., *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Regional Plan for the Los Angeles Region*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 27-28.

Echo Park Playground

The character of recreation activities at Echo Park began to evolve around the turn of the twentieth century. Whereas Echo Park was once a relatively isolated locale on the outskirts of the city, by 1903 three major streetcar lines directly connected Echo Park to downtown Los Angeles and the population of the area was dramatically rising. New residential housing tracts were established, and increasing numbers of lower and middle class residents began supplanting the more affluent denizens of the area's older neighborhoods.³³

The focus of recreational activities at Echo Park shifted to meet the needs of these new constituents.³⁴ Spurred by the progressive-era Parks and Playgrounds Movement, the City of Los Angeles established a separate Department of Playgrounds and Recreation in 1904, and opened the city's second public playground at the southern end of Echo Park on May 18, 1907.

An outgrowth of the larger City Beautiful Movement, the Parks and Playgrounds Movement was popularized by East Coast reformers in the late 1890s and formed the basis for organizations such as the Playground Association of America, established in 1906. This organization and others emphasized the social role that parks played in society and called for the creation of new active recreational facilities in public parks across the country. In particular, reformers urged municipal governments to construct playgrounds in locations physically separated from the perceived dangers of the urban environment, where children could play under supervised, controlled conditions. Proponents believed that such supervised play improved a child's mental, moral, and physical well being, and aided them in becoming responsible, well-adjusted citizens.

For adults, organized recreation was seen as having similar benefits. Contemporaries believed that the psychological benefits of disciplined health and exercise led to greater happiness among workers and, especially among immigrants, provided a means to more quickly enter main stream American culture. Improved production in the workplace, increased buying power, and a stronger local economy all were perceived benefits; as demonstrated in an oft quoted motto at the time, "The test of whether a civilization will live or die is the way it spends its leisure."³⁵

³³ There was a Pacific Electric line down Temple Street that looped along, Spring, California, Alpine and Bellevue Streets; the Los Angeles Pacific Railway's Hollywood line running down Sunset Boulevard branched up Echo Park Avenue; and the Los Angeles Inter-urban Railway Company's Glendale line extended along Lake Shore Drive. Lynn Stewart, "History: Silver Lake-Echo Park Plan Area," (Los Angeles Public Library California Index, 1979); *Los Angeles Times*, 1903.

³⁴ For more information on the Parks & Playgrounds Movement, see: Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); and Galen Cranz, "Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space," *San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association Newsletter* (http://www.spur.org/documents/000601_article_01.shtml), June 2000.

³⁵ Lawrence Culver, "From Paradise to Parking Lot," Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design Forum Issue 5: Parks (http://www.laforum.org/issues/more.php?id=98_0_15_0_C), 5 June 2003.

At Echo Park, the effort to establish the city's second playground began with the purchase of an additional parcel of land south of the park between Park and Temple Streets in 1899.³⁶ This parcel, considered a marshy hole located below the former dam (where the 101 Freeway now runs), was filled in with dirt in 1904. It provided the basis upon which the Echo Park Playground was constructed.³⁷

The four-acre playground consisted of a number of facilities intended to promote the health and welfare of the community. The playground initially consisted of a ball field, basketball, tennis and croquet courts, box swing sets, and a children's wading pool. Two small wood-frame structures, built in 1906, provided space for showers, dressing rooms, and storage. These were replaced by a large one- to two-story clubhouse building in 1908. Later improvements to the playground included an outdoor gymnasium and a summer house (a thatched canopy structure) used by visiting parents.³⁸ A separate residence for the playground's director was likewise constructed in 1911.³⁹

Officially opened on May 30, 1908, the clubhouse was considered the pinnacle of the Echo Park Playground activities. Designed by the architectural firm of Hunt, Eager & Burns, the structure stood on the ridge separating the lake from the reservoir and housed a 32' x 48' auditorium with a raised stage extension in addition to multiple club rooms, dressing rooms, administrative offices, and a kitchen. The structure's lower level also contained a workshop and box bowling alley. On the exterior, the "rough rustic style" building was finished with darkly-stained Oregon pine. Weathered oak finished the interior, and several of the structure's spaces were notably bedecked with a fireplace, built-in bookcases, window seats, and banks of windows on three sides.⁴⁰

The clubhouse supported the Echo Park Playground's myriad of physical and social activities. Organized sports teams competed with groups from other city playgrounds, and an extensive music program featured boy's and girl's bands and multiple orchestras. Drama productions, including an annual Christmas pageant, were also regularly staged at the facility.

In addition to these programs, the playground sponsored a youth program known as the "Playground Republic." Established in 1906 and consisting of the playground's regular children and youths, the organization elected its own officers and was generally responsible for setting and enforcing playground rules. Monthly dues went towards the purchase of athletic supplies,

³⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 1903.

³⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 27 May 1904; and 19 May 1907.

³⁸ City of Los Angeles, "Annual Report of the Playground Commission, 1907-1908," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1908), 13-21.

³⁹ City of Los Angeles, "Annual Report of the Playground Commission, 1910-1911," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1911), 4.

⁴⁰ "Clubhouse Like Bungalow," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 April 1908; City of Los Angeles, "Annual Report of the Playground Commission, 1905-1906," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1906), 6-7; and City of Los Angeles, "Annual Report of the Playground Commission, 1906-1907," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1907), 15-16.

and supplemented the city Playground and Recreation Department's regular allocation of funds.⁴¹

The original Echo Park Playground was demolished in the 1943 to make way for construction of the 101 Hollywood Freeway.⁴² Playground facilities were later constructed on the parcel of land remaining south of the freeway at Temple Street.

At the bequest of Frances "Fanny" Wills, sister of W. Lemoyne Wills, the original clubhouse was relocated to its present location at 1004 Echo Park Avenue in 1925 to make way for the construction of the existing Echo Park Recreation Center. Writing to the city, Wills offered to provide a lot that she owned on Echo Park Avenue so the building could be used by the Echo Park Mothers Club. The city agreed and on June 2, 1925 granted a permit for the building to be moved to the east side of the park. The structure was eventually acquired by the Angelus Temple, and is currently owned by the St. Paul Episcopal Center.⁴³

1920s & 1930s

Under the supervision of Frank Shearer, who served as the Superintendent of Parks from 1910-1936, the City of Los Angeles experienced a heightened interest in the construction and improvement of parks and recreation facilities during the early twentieth century. Many of the city's existing parks were established in this period, and the Department of Playgrounds and Recreation erected a large number of new recreation facilities throughout the city during the 1920s and 1930s. The North Hollywood Recreation Center (1927) in Lankershim Park, the Sun Valley Recreation Center (1930), the Stonehurst Recreation Center (1930), the El Sereno Recreation Center (1931), and the Cabrillo Beach Bathhouse (1932) are just a few of the many structures constructed during this period, and for much the same reasons.

Derived from concepts originating in the aforementioned progressive-era movements, the allocation of public space for parks and recreation reached a level of maturity in Los Angeles in the 1920s and 1930s. Recreation was well established as a municipal responsibility, and proponents viewed it as an accepted function and no longer as a means for social reform. Emphasis was placed on active recreation and the construction of parks and recreation facilities for this purpose.

Until 1925, both the Department of Parks and the Department of Playgrounds and Recreation relied on allocations from the city's general fund for ongoing maintenance and new projects. A

⁴¹ City of Los Angeles, "Annual Report of the Playground Commission, 1905-1906," (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1906), 6-7.

⁴² Laurie, Michael, "Changing Prospects: Echo Park, Los Angeles," *Landscape*, Volume 23, Number 1 (1979): 35.

⁴³ "Historic Echo Park Landmarks & Monuments: Echo Park Clubhouse," Echo Park Historical Society, <http://www.historicechopark.org/id33.html>, 2003.

new City Charter in 1925 changed this by establishing separate department funding and allowed a more aggressive approach to public improvements. The Great Depression also provided funding for the city's parks and playgrounds in the form of unemployment relief bonds. In 1931, the Los Angeles City Council allocated \$2 million dollars in bond funds to improve existing parks and to pay for the construction of many new recreation facilities throughout the city, including expenditures at Echo Park.⁴⁴

After assuming his post as superintendent, Shearer initiated a series of improvements at Echo Park. Shearer himself characterized the park as having fallen into disrepair, and various neighborhood groups were actively petitioning the city for needed maintenance. In response, Shearer introduced extensive landscaping throughout the park, added fish to control waterweed and algae in the lake, and constructed four poured concrete staircases along Glendale Boulevard to serve as formal entrances to the grounds, among other improvements. Much of the park's present form, its vegetation and landscape, and many of its existing features were first established during this period.⁴⁵ The last major planting in the park was carried out in 1931.⁴⁶

These initial changes were accompanied by a series of capital improvements in the 1920s and 1930s. Most notably, the Los Angeles Department of Playgrounds and Recreation replaced the original 1908 Clubhouse with the existing Echo Park Recreation Center in 1925; the Parks Department erected the existing Echo Park Boathouse in 1932 on the site of its predecessor; the 1934 New Deal-era sculpture "Lady of the Lake" by Ada May Sharpless was placed in the park; and the lake's renowned lotus plants appeared for the first time.

Echo Park Recreation Center

Initially called the Echo Park Playground Community House, the construction of the Echo Park Recreation Center was intended to be an expansion of the facilities provided by the older clubhouse. Designed by the Allied Architects Association of Los Angeles in a brick clad representation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the structure contained a 48' x 71' auditorium on the main floor, capable of seating 600 people; a fully equipped stage; a "moving picture" project room; a lounge; kitchen; and another large room for banquets and club meetings. Two bowling alleys, a billiard room with three tables, a children's playroom, and men's and women's showers and dressing rooms were located in the basement.⁴⁷

The Allied Architect Association of Los Angeles was a cooperative society of thirty-three architects formed in 1921. Members included most of Los Angeles' most prominent architects,

⁴⁴ "Plans Outlined For Bond Funds," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 February 1931, 10.

⁴⁵ Los Angeles Parks Department, "Echo Park: Constructed by Park Dept."

⁴⁶ "Changing Prospects: Echo Park, Los Angeles," *Landscape*, Volume 23, Number 1 (1979): 38;

⁴⁷ City of Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety, Building Permits, 1925; "Annual Report of the Department of Playground & Recreation, 1925-1926" (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 1926), 15; "Clubhouse Work Nears Completion," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 1925.

and the association's mission was to serve the public by designing civic buildings at the lowest possible cost. The association's founding members included: Octavius Morgan, president; Edwin Bergstrom, vice president; D.C. Allison, second vice president; Myron Hunt and Reginald Johnson, directors; Henry M. Patterson, treasurer; and John James Backus, secretary. The Los Angeles Civic Center (1924), the Hall of Justice (1925), Patriotic Hall (1926), the Hollywood Bowl (1931), and the Los Angeles USC Medical Center (1928-1933) are just a few of the structures credited to this illustrious group.

Echo Park Boathouse

The existing Echo Park Boathouse was designed and constructed by the Department of Parks in 1932. It is one of the last historic boathouse facilities remaining in the City of Los Angeles. Once regular features of the city's park-based lake and ocean-front recreation areas in the early twentieth century, only three such historic boathouses still exist today. The Lincoln Park Boathouse (1912), the only other comparable structure remaining, is located in Lincoln Park (formerly Eastlake Park). Other municipal boathouses included those at MacArthur Park (formerly Westlake Park) and Cabrillo Beach (no longer extant).

A movement towards the construction of a new boathouse began in the 1910s, in connection with a proposed project by the Los Angeles Railroad.⁴⁸ This trend continued into the 1920s with reports of the Angeleno Heights Improvement Association and others petitioning the city for the construction of a new boathouse in 1928.⁴⁹

Constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the 1932 Echo Park Boathouse was also an improvement over its predecessor.⁵⁰ The boathouse provided expanded canoe and boat rental services, and was outfitted with a full kitchen and concession area. These amenities further supplemented the attractions already present in the park. The old boathouse was retained for a use by the Echo Park Canoe Club for a short time.⁵¹

Both the boathouse and recreation center are representative of the Spanish Colonial Revival style as it was applied to Los Angeles municipal facilities in the 1920s and 1930s. Especially popular from the late 1910s through the 1930s, the Spanish Colonial Revival style emerged from a conscious effort by architects to emulate older Spanish architectural traditions. The style first received wide attention at the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego and through the designs of the well-known architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Well suited to Southern California's hot dry climate, the style's exotic appearance, attractive use of colors, and sense of

⁴⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, 4 February 1915.

⁴⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, 29 July 1926; and 29 May 1928.

⁵⁰ City of Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety, Building Permits, 1932; *Los Angeles*, 22 February 1932; and 2, 5 July 1933.

⁵¹ *Los Angeles Times*, 14 and 28 November 1932.

historical depth appealed to many new Los Angeles residents, particularly those relocating to the city from other locales across the country.

Lady of the Lake

Officially named “Nuestra Reina de Los Angeles,” the Lady of the Lake sculpture was commissioned by the Depression-era Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) in 1934. The PWAP was one of many national relief efforts initiated under President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal plan; one specifically intended for working artists. Ada May Sharpless, a prolific local artist, applied for work at the PWAP’s 14th Regional District office. The Los Angeles program was known to have awarded commissions based on artistic ability and financial need, and the executive committee included such notables as Los Angeles Times art critic Arthur Millier and architect Millard Sheets.

Ada May Sharpless was born to Mr. & Mrs. B.H. Sharpless on August 16, 1904 in Hilo, Hawaii, but grew up in Santa Ana, California. Sharpless graduated from the University of Southern California in 1922. She attended Otis Art Institute and possibly the Chouinard Institute in Los Angeles. In 1925, she moved to Paris to study with Emile Antoine Bourdelle. While in Paris, Sharpless maintained a studio on Rue Boissonnade and exhibited at the Tuilleries and the Salon des Independents, where she was a member. She returned to Los Angeles in 1929, the same year as Bourdelle’s death. Upon her return to California, she became a member of the California Art Club and the Los Angeles Art Association. She is known to have exhibited at many local museums and galleries, where several of her pieces remain installed.

From 1934-1935, Sharpless received two commissions from the PWAP, including the “Lady of the Lake” sculpture and another entitled “Government Protecting Home and Industry. Originally intended to be a cast bronze statue, the Lady of the Lake consists of an Art Deco stylized cast stone figure of a woman in a long dress standing on pedestal with three steps. Each side of the pedestal contains a highly-detailed bas-relief: on the front is City Hall and downtown Los Angeles; on proper left face are ships, smokestacks, and fields or waves; on proper right face is a mission and a sun burst – a large bow shape could be the Hollywood Bowl; and on the rear face are stylized depictions of mountains and the ocean.

The Los Angeles Parks Commission accepted the sculpture as a gift on June 28, 1934. In January of 1935, the Lady of the Lake was exhibited at the Art Salon of the Ebell Club, and later permanently installed in Echo Park in a prominent location at the peninsula between the lake’s two arms on the north side. In 1986, the sculpture was removed from its site, placed in storage, and the existing pump house constructed on the original site. Through community involvement,

the sculpture was restored and re-installed at its present location on the lake's east side on May 6, 1999. It was re-dedicated the following October.⁵²

Lotus Plants

Echo Park has long been noted for its landscaping and vegetation. The park's first comprehensive landscape plan was established in 1892. This original plan has evolved over the years with the growth, addition, and removal of various plants over time. The park's most notable landscape feature is the stand of Asian Lotus plants that currently occupy the lake's northwest arm.

The exact origin of Echo Park's lotus plants is unknown. However, they are the impetus for the park's annual Lotus Festival, which takes place in July when the plants are blooming. The plants, *Nelumbo nucifera*, which flourish naturally in Asia and Australia, have white, pink-tipped flowers that blossom as much as a foot wide and smell like cinnamon. Their roots are edible and traditionally used for food, and the hard seeds can be polished and used for ornaments. In China, the leaves are also used to wrap vegetables and are sometimes dried and smoked like tobacco.⁵³

Several local legends speak to the possible origin of the lotus plants in Echo Park lake. One comes from a letter received by the park's Senior Director in 1976. In it, a man claimed his father had dropped lotus seeds into the lake several decades prior, and he wanted to know if anything had grown from them. Another involves Aimee McPherson, the founder of Angeles Temple (1923) located across the street from Echo Park at Glendale Boulevard and Park Avenue. Known for her extensive travels abroad and missionary work, some believe that the park's original lotus plants were a gift to McPherson on one of her many trips to China in the 1930s, and that she planted them in Echo Park lake upon her return.⁵⁴

It is also possible the lotus plants were purposely placed in Echo Park by the city Parks Department, or an allied organization. A Los Angeles Times news story dated October 26, 1889 reported that J.C. Harvey, an amateur horticulturist involved in the Botanic Garden Committee, planned to donate "Egyptian lotus from the Nile" for use in the city parks.⁵⁵ The article did not specify where the lotus were planted. However, the acquisition and cultivation of exotic plants was a popular pastime for many Los Angeles residents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

⁵² "Historic Echo Park Landmarks & Monuments: Lady of the Lake," Echo Park Historical Society, <http://www.historicechopark.org/id34.html>, 2005; "Sharpless, Ada May," Echo Park Historical Society, 1999; and "Sculptress' Work Exhibited," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 January 1935, B6.

⁵³ *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1984.

⁵⁴ *Northwest Leader*, 22 Nov. 1977.

⁵⁵ Echo Park's lotus plants were frequently referred as Egyptian lotus during the 1920s and 1930s or as water lilies – neither of which is accurate. The former, in particular, was likely due to the plants' resemblance to Egyptian lotus and the popularity surrounding the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922; *Los Angeles Times*, 26 October 1889;

The creation of water gardens, in particular, was a fashionable trend in Los Angeles. Edmund D. Sturtevant's Cahuenga Water Gardens in Hollywood was a well known attraction, and contemporary newspaper articles attest to the popularity of the garden type.⁵⁶ An article in the Los Angeles Times on February 11, 1891, for example, reported a discussion of the Floral Society concerning "aquatics plants and water gardening." According to the report, "Natural ponds and lakes [in the L.A. area] are rare, but a few such exist, and it is believed that they are suitable for the naturalization of the famous Egyptian lotus." The article went on to say that, "One of the city parks has a fine lake, and it is expected that in the near future a beginning will be made in the culture of water plants."⁵⁷

Although the plants' origins are unknown, two lotus beds existed in the Echo Park lake by 1928 and, according to at least one account, water gardens were beginning to appear in other city parks. The beds were located in the northwest and northeast arms of the lake, and encompassed much of the island by the 1940s.

Conclusion

Echo Park continues to serve the community by facilitating a wide range of recreational activities. The park has been the focus of numerous events and celebrations through the years, and area residents regularly use the park for a variety of activities, including walking, biking, and fishing. The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks has installed modern playground equipment, picnic tables, and public restrooms, and the boathouse continues offer boating on the lake, in the form of paddleboat rentals, to visitors. Despite these changes, Echo Park remains a highly intact designed cultural landscape from the early 1890s and contains a number of features that reflect the history of local land use policy, water development, and public recreation in Los Angeles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁵⁶ Padilla, *Southern California Gardens*, 1961.

⁵⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 1891.

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