Park & Restoration

The newsletter of the Balboa Park Committee of 100

Working to preserve Balboa Park's historic architecture, gardens and public spaces since 1967.

www.balboaparkcommitteeof100.org

Creating the New Permanent Grizzly Bear Sculptures



Kevin and Mike Matson in their studio with a grizzly. Photo Roy deVries.

by Ross Porter, C100 President

n restoring elements of the Palisades buildings to their original 1935 appearance, the Balboa Park Committee of 100 has been faced with the challenge of creating permanent building features in the place where only temporary pieces had stood before.

To bring back the two grizzly bear statues that stood on the rooftop corners of the one-time California State Building (now the Automotive Museum), sculptor Mike Matson and his son, Kevin, had to start with only a few grainy photos. The original bears, like party piñatas, had long since disappeared.

Here's how they did it.

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Laub Gift Tops Off Funding for Muni Gym Facade



Municipal Gym circa 1935. Balboa Park Committee of 100 Archive Collection.

by Roger Showley, C100 Past President

he Laub Family Trust has pledged a \$75,000 donation for the Municipal Gym restoration.

The generosity of donor Dorothea Laub has been directed to many places in Balboa Park as well as to other San Diego arts organizations.

The Laub Family support will help pay for the installation of amazing ornamental features that are now being made at the San Diego studio of Bellagio Precast. These include a monumental relief sculpture and Art Deco ornamental blocks

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FEATURING

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President's message



n recent months and years, we have grown more grateful for everyday sights and sounds that had so often been taken for granted in the pre-Covid era. Some deprivations have been temporary; some people and experiences are gone forever.

With deeper appreciation for life's simple pleasures, I have realized that it's important to create my future with greater intention. A too-casual approach to life can occasionally result in disaster. As an example of this, consider Balboa Park.

At a meeting not long ago, I heard a member of the public say, "don't do a thing – not one single thing" to make the park better. Most of us have a differing view – we are concerned about the park's health, the viability of its institutions, the long-term welfare of its many tribes. Though we can fantasize that the park is a wilderness inside a city, it's more of a jewel box of collected memories and artifacts in constant need. For me it's impossible to agree that our best form of park stewardship would be to do nothing.

In 1967, to do nothing would have meant the loss of one more great exposition building. In the more than 50 years since, the Balboa Park Committee of 100 has been the volunteer voice urging that San Diego do something more for Balboa Park.

Those who want to safeguard the health of the park and keep alive its history have relied on C100 to advocate for historic preservation, reasonable planning and for the park's sustained grandeur and beauty.

C100 will continue to speak up about the aspects of our park that need attention. It will pursue projects that help introduce San Diegans to the stories of the past and visions of its future.

C100's work on the Palisades area is a window to the vast challenges that the 1930s presented to an earlier generation. In Balboa Park, the teamwork that they summoned to launch a great exposition – the creation of a multi-faceted experience of pleasure and awe – remains a tangible gift from the spirit of one generation to the next.

Today we work to create a future for ourselves and for those who will follow – burnishing the Art Deco detail of a past era to celebrate the human spirit of inspiration that persists, always.

Ross Porter (858) 789 - 0986 rossporterster@gmail.com

Editor's Note: In the Fall 2021 newsletter, Robert S. Wohl should have been included on the Life Members Donor List

...Laub Gift continued from cover

originally placed on the gym facade when it opened as the Palace of Electricity and Varied Industries for the 1935-36 California Pacific International Exposition.

With this gift, the Balboa Park Committee of 100 reaches its funding goal for the Municipal Gym project, though it's possible that structural complications or price hikes could require additional funding.

Other major donors for the project include Nancy and Douglas Barnhart, Barbara Brown, Lynn and Frank Silva and Mike and Marilyn Kelley.

The historically accurate additions to the Municipal Gym will depict elements of electrical power plant equipment and other symbols of the wheels of industry.

Bellagio Precast is fabricating the new pieces. The studio, headed by Mike Matson, also created the ornamental blocks that grace the Auto Museum.

After structural analysis during May, construction on the gym should begin this fall under the direction of architect Robert Thiele, aided by the C100 project committee chaired by Kevin Carpenter. Barnhart-Reese Construction will oversee the final installation.

In 2021, C100 partnered with the city to paint the Municipal Gym in the historic "Bagel" color, the 1935-era hue that was also used for the recent re-painting of the Auto Museum and the Federal Building/Comic-Con Museum.

Balboa Park & C100 Happenings Calendar

Friday, May 20

Architectural Heritage Walking Tour begins 11 a.m. at Visitors Center; C100 docent (free to all).

Saturday-Sunday, May 28-29

Ethnic Food Fair, House of Pacific Relations (free to all). Info at www.sdhpr.org/index.html

Friday, June 3

Architectural Heritage Walking Tour, 11 a.m. at Visitors Center; C100 docent (free to all).

Monday, June 6

The "June Bloom" reception for C100 members will be held at the Automotive Museum, 4 to 6 p.m. (free ticketed event). Info at www.BalboaParkCommitteeof100.org

Friday, June 17

Architectural Heritage Walking Tour begins 11 a.m. at Visitors Center; C100 docent (free to all).

Note: Architectural Heritage Walking Tours continue on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month at 11 a.m.

Starting June 20

Summer Camps for kids at Balboa Park's museums.
Full-day and half-day options, plus many more.
Enrollment and info at www.balboapark.org/plan/summercamps

Monday, July 4

Independence Day Concert, 7:30 p.m. at Spreckels Organ Pavilion (free to all).

Saturday, July 9

Patrons of the Prado "Under the Desert Sun" Spreckels Organ Pavilion (ticketed event). Info at www.patronsoftheprado.org

Friday, September 9

C100 Celebration of California Admission Day in the Palisades. Details TBA.

Saturday, October 8

Vroom! The Automotive Museum Gala, 5 to 10 p.m. **(ticketed event).** Info at www.sdautomuseum.org/event/party-park-vroom

Friday-Saturday, December 2-3

December Nights, 3 to 11 p.m. on Friday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday. (free to all).

Still to Come

A summertime tour schedule for the life-size bear sculpture. We look forward to announcing one soon.

Mark your calendar!
"June Bloom" Annual Meeting
See you at the Auto Museum!



Tributes to C100's **Cub Parker and Dick Lareau**

by Roger Showley, C100 Past President

ong-time Balboa Park Committee of 100 board members, Cub Parker and Dick Lareau, died within one week of each other in April. Both also served on the C100 Advisory Council until their deaths.

CULVER PARKER

Culver "Cub" G. Parker, who died April 4 at age 81, joined C100 in 2009 and worked on restoring many artifacts for public display. He also helped clean up the fountains in the Alcazar Garden.

Besides C100, he served on the boards of the American Lung Association of California; Connect, UC San Diego's early-stage business accelerator; and San Diego Tech Coast Angels investment group. He consulted with the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico on early-stage technology commercialization, where he also founded a startup life science company. Professionally, he spent 25 years in commercial and technology banking.

He was born in San Jose, earned a business degree at Cal Poly Pomona and a law degree at California Western School of Law. Hobbies included art, cars and coins.

He is survived by his wife Elisa and her son Josh Cohen and grandson Jack Cohen, stepchildren Scott and Molly McIntyre and five nieces and nephews.

RICHARD J. LAREAU

Richard J. Lareau, who died April 10 at age 94, was a noted mid-century modernist architect in San Diego. He moved with family to Chula Vista as a young child and played on the tennis team at Sweetwater High School, a sport he carried on his entire life. He received bachelor's and master's architectural degrees from UC Berkeley and worked on the El Cortez Hotel glass elevator, said to be the world's first when it opened in 1956. The next year he opened his own firm, specializing in institutional architecture until it was closed in 2021.

Projects included schools, college campus and law school buildings and libraries. Local landmarks with his signature circular design include the Mission Bay Park visitors center, Pacific Beach Community Church and a Nairobi, Kenya, campus adaptation of native tribal designs.

Lareau joined C100 in 1998 and worked on the arcades reconstructions along El Prado. He was active in the Point Loma Association, a long-time board member of the San Diego Air & Space Museum and a cofounder of the Junto Group, modeled on Benjamin Franklin's Junto club of civic leaders. He was a founding director of Peninsula Bank and joined many civic boards and commissions.

Hobbies included sailing, sport fishing, golfing and gardening, wowing his Point Loma Community Garden friends with growing a record-size, 2.5-pound tomato.

He is survived by his wife Victory, two children – Vikki Lane and Lance Lareau by his first wife, Jeanne Doyle, and two children by Victory – Lisa Traylor and Mark Lareau and nine grandchildren.



Left, Cub Parker. Photo Cub Parker Family.



Right, Dick Lareau. Photo Stu Hartley.

County Supervisors Honor C100 for its Mural Project

by Roger Showley, C100 Past President



From left to right. C100 President Ross Porter, county Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher, poster contest winner Antonio Musico, Supervisors Vice Chair Nora Vargas and C100 Past President Roger Showley. Photo County of San Diego.

n April 5, at one of its first live meetings since the outbreak of COVID, the county Board of Supervisors honored the Balboa Park Committee of 100 for completing the four tile murals at the San Diego Automotive Museum. The supervisors supported the C100 project with a series of grants totaling \$68,000.

To thank the supervisors, C100 President Ross Porter and Past President Roger Showley presented the board with signed copies of the winning poster designed by graphic artist Antonio Mustico, a resident of Eastlake in Chula Vista.

"I am honored to have been picked as the winner of the (poster) contest," Mustico said.

"I am just thrilled to be part of a program that's helping revitalize Balboa Park to its former glory and help it live up to its future potential."

Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher and Vice Chair Nora Vargas presented C100 with a proclamation commemorating the accomplishment.

THE BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE OF 100 **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** & ADVISORY COUNCIL

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PARK & RESTORATION NEWSLETTER

Editor: Sonja Helton Designer: Kaylee Drexel

Printer: Cathy Paddock, Missing Ink Printing & **Graphics**

Editor's Note: In the Fall 2021 newsletter, Cathy Paddock's business name should have been noted as Missing Ink

... Grizzly Bear Sculptures continued from cover

From the photo, drawings are prepared. Dimensions for the finished sculptures are developed by using the building's measurements as a reference.

The first clay model, about a foot long, was closer to an actual grizzly than the photos showed. "We needed a streamlined 1935 bear," Mike says, laughing at the pot-bellied look of the first clay model. Added Kevin,

"loyalty to historic precedent is the main design criterion in a restoration project. The aesthetics aren't our decision."

The second clay model was a better match for the old photos. With the project team's approval, this model was dubbed the maquette – the original sculpture in miniature.

Scaling it up to full size was the next step, to be followed by the creation of a silicone rubber mold of the full-sized creation. From the large mold, two finished grizzly statues would be cast and colored using permanent materials.

Each of these steps involved weeks of work.
The maquette was soon banded with black
stripes, allowing for cross-section measurements and
upscaling of the model, section by section.

To create a full-sized bear, thick plywood was attached to a central spine to establish the varying dimensions of the large object. "We made the wood framework one inch smaller all around than what we needed in the finished piece," Mike explains. "That leaves one inch to create the skin and surface."

To create a surface that will eventually look like a bear, the wooden pieces are clad with cloth or paper and fixed in place to resemble a muscled body. On this inner skin, sculptural clay is applied and then combed



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.

and shaped to form paws, claws, jaws, ears, eyes and fur. (The specific materials used for these steps are a trade secret for these chefs of sculpture.)

At the end of the process, deep grooves are incised on the whole sculpture to show the coarse fur. "The sun is going to show those grooves beautifully and from the viewing distance it really will look like fur," says Mike with a smile.

The whole surface of the bear sculpture is sealed so that it will not flake or chip while being molded.

The full-size bear appears to smile in surprise when visitors come to the Matson studio. It's the original, soon to be molded by a silicone rubber wrap.

There will be two molds, one each for the left and right sides of the full-size finished grizzly. To hold the silicone in place against the sculpture, a wrap of fiberglass is applied that will offer a stiff and durable container for the wobbly silicone.

After the mold is made from the full-sized sculpture, the large-size original is dismantled to clear the workspace. The two molds become the center of attention as the Matson team prepares to create casts that will be installed on the building.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.

By the time they're complete, each bear will weigh about 700 pounds. Architect Robert Thiele and structural engineer Tony Court have specified that a set of steel plates will be affixed to the roof, and a steel framework inside each bear – with matching footer plates – will be part of the cast that's made.

First they waited for the silicone, then for the steel framework. COVID-induced construction delays pushed the final installation out for weeks, then months.

To create a cast, the Matsons first apply materials by hand to the inside of each mold, then tilt them into place on either side of the central steel framework, resting on the steel footer plates. Then the molds are joined together and sealed, with small tubes along the top of the bear, where liquid urethane will be poured into the remaining interior space.

Applying the first coat of glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) to the interior surface of the mold is a critical step, requiring hand work to completely fill the mold and ensure that the desired bronze color is present, since this coat will become the surface of the finished sculpture.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.



Photo Kevin Matson, Bellagio Precast.

Once the molds are properly coated with GFRC laminate, they can be sealed together and the interior of the sculpture filled up with urethane, a lightweight compound that will develop strength as it dries, bonding the steel frame into place and supporting the surface coat that lies against the silicone molds.

The urethane is poured in through hollow tubes and fills up the inside cavity.

Note: The tubes are threaded so they will accept massive eyehole screws. When the sculpture is ready to move, these screws will function as handles for the crane and rigging.

Once all material has dried, the molds can be removed one-by-one from the right and left sides of the bear and reused for another casting.

The newly cast sculpture gets a surface polish and shine. To shade and age the piece, a bronze patina of green can be developed quickly by the application of a fast-oxidizing treatment coat. Then, the final sealing coat halts the oxidation and the bronze/patina color is permanently fixed.

Grab a selfie! Pretty soon this bear is taking a trip on a crane to the top of the Auto Museum.

Design Review Group

by Ross Porter, C100 President

Better Design for Park Improvements

t its monthly March meeting, the Balboa Park
Committee (BPC) offered encouragement to
Balboa Park Committee of 100 volunteers Mike
Stepner and René Smith after learning about
their idea for a better process of reviewing proposed park
improvements.

Learn more: Check out the C100 website for links. You can also attend the public meetings of the Balboa Park Committee via Zoom, held the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m.

As the city's official advisory body for park management, the Balboa Park Committee may test the process as early as this summer by appointing a Design Review Subcommittee.

The subcommittee would consist of BPC members who are professional architects, designers, engineers and planners. It would apply design standards to new Balboa Park projects in a public process, whether a project is designed on the desk of a city staffer or on the dining-room table of a community volunteer.

Equally important, the subcommittee would offer professional, park-focused expertise at the early stages of design development – reducing uncertainty over eventual city approval and eliminating the cost of late-stage design changes that might otherwise be required.

To stave off disrepair and cultural irrelevance and remain a joyful destination for world visitors and neighborhood families, Balboa Park requires steady improvement. But in recent years, construction projects or new ideas have often come to grief from the added expense, uncertainty and delay that result from multi-layered levels of approval that still may not meet the unique design needs of Balboa Park.

Realizing the need for a new way to treat proposed park improvements, Stepner and Smith convened an exploratory group of park stakeholders during 2020.

The exploratory committee defined a process to guarantee that the unique nature of the park will be considered in all future project proposals. Drawing upon recent planning experience, they envisioned a uniform process for project initiation and approval that would increase efficiency, clarity, transparency and predictability.



Design Review Process in Balboa Park: An Update

by Mike Stepner, C100 Board Member

he Balboa Park Design Review exploratory committee proposal for the reestablishment of a design review and assistance process for Balboa Park continues to move forward. At its March meeting, the Balboa Park Committee heard a presentation on the process proposed by the exploratory committee. Co-chairs Connie Matsui, René Smith and I described the proposals and recommendations and why this is critical for the park.

On Thursday, April 7 the Balboa Park Committee held a workshop on the proposals. Andy Field, Director of the Park and Recreation Department, led the workshop and presented the staff report which included all of the exploratory committee's recommendations. I joined Field in the workshop discussion. As part of his comments, Field noted that the proposed process for Balboa Park is the prototype for the reestablishment of the citywide design review process for parks. The citywide process is an implementation recommendation of the recently adopted Parks Master Plan.

The Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously to move the process forward. It will be scheduled for adoption consideration at a later Balboa Park Committee meeting.

Ending the Vendor Free-For-All in Balboa Park

by Ross Porter, C100 President

Starting in June, sidewalk vendors will no longer be allowed to set up or sell in Balboa Park's National Historic Landmark District (equivalent to the old exposition grounds).

On March 1, the San Diego City Council passed an ordinance to put controls on sidewalk vending that follow the rules set by the state; these allow vendor regulations if they're based on health, safety or aesthetic protections. The Balboa Park Committee of 100 and other park organizations made public comments in support of the ordinance.

In 2018 a new California law removed most local restrictions on sidewalk vending. Since then, San Diego's parks, beaches and popular pedestrian zones have become a free marketplace almost without restriction – and park lovers have noticed.

Without regulation, more and more pop-up booths have crowded the pedestrian areas of the Prado and nearby plazas, with occasional fires, arguments, safety violations and crowding. As the number of vendors grew during 2021, visitors to the city's beaches and other entertainment areas found similar challenges.

The vendor ordinance, which passed with only a single dissenting vote, will be enforced by park rangers beginning June 1.

Sidewalk vendors are not only prohibited from doing business in Balboa Park's historic center, but also barred each year from Memorial Day through Labor Day from all other sidewalks in Balboa Park that are outside the central zones.

The new city rules, drafted by the office of Councilmember Jennifer Campbell, define what a sidewalk is, what stationary or mobile vendors are and where they can set up that is safe. The ordinance requires street vendors to:

- register with the city as businesses
- carry California sellers' permits
- comply with applicable health codes
- renew business permits annually

One exception to these obligations is that of liability insurance; sidewalk vendors don't have to have it.

The new ordinance also allows for entrepreneurial zones where vendors could sell, but no zones have yet been created.

While sidewalk vendors will exit the park, musicians, buskers and others who carry on free-speech activity will remain, not subject to the ordinance in accordance with state and federal law.



Vendors in the Heart of Balboa Park 2021. Photo Roger Showley.

Juan Larrinaga: The Creative Genius of 1935 Expo

by Bob Wohl, C100 Board Member

ichard Requa, the legendary architectural director of the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition, said that Juan Larrinaga was "a lovable personality, a constant source of inspiration to me and to all...of invaluable assistance in my work...Juan Larrinaga could do everything in art and decoration. His was a natural talent developed in the Hollywood motion picture studios to a great versatility and technical accuracy."

Who was this ingenious and protean artist whose name is known by so few people? He was designated the "chief art and technical director" for the entire 1935 expo.

"Juan Larrinaga is here to wave his magic wand and bring villages and scenes of distant lands and romantic places to life in San Diego," the *Evening Tribune* reported in September 1934.

Juan was a member of a small coterie of evolving, diversely talented artists. As the *Tribune* said, "Larrinaga, an internationally known artist and designer, is a pioneer and leader of an art born of the modern stage, the motion picture, and the exposition... mammoth undertakings...on the grand scale."

Larrinaga was born in 1885 in Cananea, Baja California, Mexico, of Basque parenthood, and arrived in the U.S. around 1900. For 10 years he traveled and painted sets and scenery and curtains for touring opera companies and theaters throughout Latin America and worked on Los Angeles' 150th birthday celebration.

In 1910, he joined Universal Studios and trained his younger brother Mario in the art of painting huge scenic backdrops and curtains for theater and opera productions. Mario joined Universal in 1916 and became a technical artist. They worked together on everything from huge cycloramas to detailed miniatures.

The competition for the theatre ornamentation and painting of the sets and curtains of the Shrine Auditorium was announced in the mid 1920s. The Larrinagas won the lucrative creative contract for America's largest auditorium.

The *Los Angeles Times* headlined their success in February 1926 as "Local Artists Achieve Triumph In Shrine Decorations."

The Larrinaga brothers worked out of the Los Angeles Scenic Studio, where Juan was the art director from 1925 to 1935, and created hundreds of sketches, storyboards, miniatures and watercolors for globally popular films.

Their movie projects included 1920s silent film epics like Cecil B. DeMille's "The King of Kings" and, in 1932-33, the blockbusters "King Kong" and "Son of Kong." Mario became the chief of the art effects department at Warner Bros., and later retired to Taos, N.M., to become a full time accomplished artist and painter.

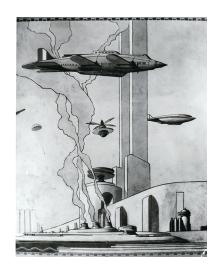
When you wander around the Palisades section of Balboa Park, most of the exterior building design work was Juan's personal creation. Besides the exquisite designs he created for the California State Building (now the San Diego Automotive Museum), he also invented the method of

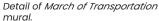


Juan Larrinaga painting of the 1935 expo before the final designs were completed. All Photos Balboa Park Committee of 100 Archive Collection.



Spanish Village 1935 Expo.







Section of March of Transportation mural above railroad car.



Juan Larrinaga and Orville Goldner review plans for *March of Transportation* mural. Evening Tribune clipping, January 1936.

construction for the tiles and art, literally overnight. Richard Requa's delightfully enthusiastic book, *Inside Lights on the Building of San Diego's Exposition*, 1935, on his team's fervid construction of the 1935 expo, describes Larrinaga's ingenious and timely process.

Larrinaga's Maya style for the Federal Building – now home to the newly opened Comic-Con Museum – carries all his motifs. He also designed the painted glass triangle above the door showing a Maya priest or warrior, an art element the Balboa Park Committee of 100 would like to bring back in some form.

In 1936 he conceived and designed a remarkable art piece – the immense "March of Transportation" mural, 468 feet long and 18 feet high, inside the sweeping rotunda of the Ford Building, today's San Diego Air & Space Museum. It was said to be the largest indoor mural ever painted. With two designers helping him to block it out and a team of painters filling in his illustrations, they completed this work in record time for the 1936 expo's second-year opening ceremony. It was restored in 1979.

Juan Larrinaga died in Los Angeles in 1947 and was honored with the Balboa Park Committee of 100's Bertram Goodhue Award in 2018.

What was he like? Requa wrote, "Juan was involved with it all. Music, lighting, landscape and ornamentation. He would accomplish a task with the speed and artistry of a man inspired. The work seemed to flow from his brushes."

In his own words, Juan Larrinaga said in 1934 after his expo position was announced,

"I anticipate great pleasure in this work here. It is such an ideal spot, such a setting of natural beauty. And right in the center of the city. You don't find such a setting to work with in other places, you know."

The 1935-36 California Pacific International Exposition was Juan Larrinaga's masterwork.





Balboa Park Committee of 100

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Working to preserve Balboa Park's historic architecture, gardens and public spaces since 1967

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Keeping Up Your C100 Membership

If you're not a lifetime member and it's been a year or more since your latest contribution, please renew today!

Those who contribute \$1,000 or more beginning January 1, 2022, will receive a unique piece of art — a

miniature of a section from the bas relief sculpture that will again grace the space above the entry marquee of the Muni Gym (pictured here). This pair of "towers" will be mounted on stone or marble.

Use PayPal online at the website: www. BalboaParkCommitteeof100.org. Or mail a check to Balboa Park Committee of 100 at 1649 El Prado, Suite 2, San Diego CA 92101.

Don't Discard, Donate!



Ford Bowl under construction 1935. Photo contributed by C100 member Jim Milch.

These photos of construction of the Ford Building in 1935 was among several donated by long-time Balboa Park Committee of 100 memeber Jim Milch, an avid student of San Diego history. Board member Tom Jackson came across some historic postcards on a recent trip and passed them along. So, when you clean out your attic or garage and come across something historic relating to Balboa Park, let us know. We'd love to add it to C100's archives.

Send pictures and documents to: Balboa Park Committee of 100, 16249 El Prado, Suite 2, San Diego, CA 92101. Or scan them and email them to president@c100.org. For objects, tell us about them at the same contact points.

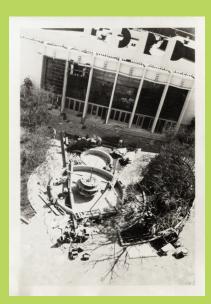


Photo contributed by C100 member Jim Milch.