

Los Angeles:
Metropolis despite Nature

by

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Preface:
Choosing Los Angeles

“Why did a town spring up here and why has it grown so big?”
- Morris Markey, 1932

My thesis, as initially conceived, was predicated upon the premise that urban development within California was facilitated by transcontinental railroads and their associated resort hotels, particularly in the southern part of the state. Just before the turn of the 20th century, the rapid expansion of the leisure and tourist industries coincided with a growing, urbanized middle class. The extension of those industries to California through the railroads and hotels was instrumental to attracting capital investment and development. While these industries constituted only one factor in the development of urban California, they played a significant early role in exposing large numbers of easterners and midwesterners to California. Moreover, they largely determined the regions of the state where the majority of travelers would visit and potentially settle.

In the process of researching this early thesis, I identified a substantial body of historic promotional materials catering to Southern California tourism, especially to Los Angeles, as well as extensive and varied booster materials about the region. I began to question my original topic; it became increasingly evident that the relationship between significant urban development, the railroads, and their luxury hotels was tenuous. At the same time, my review of promotional material for Los Angeles from around the turn of the 20th century led me to a new proposition regarding the nature and extent of the human contribution necessary to grow a major metropolis in arid and unreceptive terrain. Los Angeles’ explosive growth, both in

population and in commerce, between 1880 and 1932, appears, on its face, to be counterintuitive. In 1880, Los Angeles was a little town surrounded by high mountains that seriously hindered travel into and out of the city. Its only water supply was a tiny river that amounted to barely a trickle for most of the year. Yet, by 1932, Los Angeles was the host of the Summer Olympics and had become the dominant city in Southern California and was one of the largest cities in the United States. Its pattern of growth, overcoming an array of serious natural barriers, was highly unlikely.

The urban development charted in my thesis roughly parallels William Cronon's analysis of Chicago's growth in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991). Cronon, however, advances a paradigm for nature-facilitated urban growth while I explore a case where nature impeded development. Despite a close correlation in themes, our respective histories diverge along the axis of geological abundance and scarcity.

In the preface to *Nature's Metropolis*, Cronon noted that he could have written about any aspect of Chicago's history, such as labor, architecture, or politics, but instead devoted his book to the critical linkages between the city and the natural world.¹ Cronon concentrated on economic interactions in the Chicago area between humans and their environment, paying special attention to the constant changes that humans precipitate in the environments in which they reside. Cronon encouraged his readers not only to view the growth of Chicago as a human conquest of nature, but

¹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), xvii-xviii.

also to examine the relationships that people develop with their natural environment.² His study highlights the natural advantages that provided Chicago's residents with the necessary raw materials and economic capital to fully develop into a metropolis.

In contrast to the city of Chicago, endowed with a surfeit of advantageous geological features and resources, the city of Los Angeles was formed on a largely inchoate and uncertain terrain. Its potential was realized through the convergence of human capital and creativity.

By the 1880s, Manifest Destiny, a term coined in the antebellum years to denote a belief that the United States was destined to stretch from ocean to ocean, was considered to be almost fully realized. The United States spanned the continent as the advocates of Manifest Destiny had anticipated; however, the specific direction and trajectory of that expansion was unpredictable and it certainly did not ensure that Los Angeles would become the major city in Southern California.

Manifest Destiny represents the American extension of the concept of *translatio studii et imperii*, a Latin phrase used to describe the transfer of power and knowledge from one civilization to another, generally in a westward movement. In Europe, it indicated the transfer of power over time from the Greek city states, to the Roman Empire, and then to Northern Europe. In the United States, Manifest Destiny translated this concept of the westward flow of civilization into an ideological language. The logical extension of Manifest Destiny from *translatio studii et imperii* meant that there was bound to be a major city on the west coast of the United States but, by the 1880s, San Francisco had already filled that role. There were few signs that any other city could rival it in size or economic importance, let alone a minor city

² Ibid. 18-19.

like Los Angeles. It appeared far more likely that San Diego, a city primed with natural advantages similar to Chicago's, might compete for the position of the most important city in Southern California.

Until the 1990s, much of the scholarship on the history of California, such as Kevin Starr's multi-volume work, frequently overlooked Los Angeles, focusing much more intently on the northern part of the state and the Gold Rush. *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (1973), Starr's book on California's history at the turn of the 20th century pays scant attention to Los Angeles and its accomplishments.³ While Starr's *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (1990) recognized that, by the 1920s, Los Angeles had become a city of importance, the book focuses much more on the social and cultural history of Los Angeles than on how it grew and developed.

For a long time scholarship on the history of Los Angeles concentrated on the city's growth into a cultural center and on its material culture. A few books have been written that pertain to my topic but those which most closely parallel my work tend to stay away from drawing conclusions about the growth of Los Angeles, while others cover one or two topics extensively but their concentrated focus causes them to lose sight of the broader picture. Robert M. Fogelson's book, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles* (1967), provides an excellent depiction of the city at the turn of the 20th century, covering many of the topics in my thesis; however, Fogelson neglects to tie all of his subjects together in a cohesive manner in order to describe the overall growth and development of Los Angeles. Tom Zimmerman's tome on Los Angeles

³ Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

boosterism at the turn of the century, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (2008), provides an introduction to booster materials, but is fundamentally an illustrated coffee table book that lacks a critical analytical approach.

Only in the last ten years have historians begun to more fully investigate the environmental history of Los Angeles. Some of the newest works, such as William Deverell and Greg Hise's *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles* (2005) and Mike Davis' *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998) discuss the history of Los Angeles with regard to its environment. However, they tend to examine the city's relationship with its environment using a forward-facing lens.⁴ This new scholarship largely looks at the consequences of the man-made improvements on Los Angeles' environment from the perspective of the present day.

I consider my research to be a natural extension of the scholarship that has already been conducted on the environmental history of Los Angeles. It utilizes many of the earlier works, especially those that highlight the city's natural resource deficits, and advances several of the concepts from the scholarship of the 1990s. In contrast to previous works, my thesis critically examines the relationship between the city's inherent environmental constraints and the nature of the human and financial capital which effectuated its enduring cycle of growth.

⁴ William Deverell and Greg Hise, editors, *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998).

In preparing to write this thesis, I compiled a significant “archive” of primary source materials about Los Angeles and its development into a metropolis. The majority of these materials, including pamphlets and magazines, are promotional in nature, coming from a wide range of booster groups. While promotional materials make up the greater part of my personal “archive,” the use of government documents from the city of Los Angeles, the state of California, and the United States were invaluable in the understanding of the context of the time.

These materials, representing the backbone of my thesis, were sourced from archives and libraries all around Southern California, including: the Special Collections and Archives at the University of California at Irvine, the Sherman Library in Corona Del Mar, the Braun and the Autry archives in Los Angeles, the Pasadena Museum of History, the Special Collection and Archives at the University of California at San Diego, the Special Collections and Archives at San Diego State University, the San Diego Historical Society, the Special Collections and University Archives at Stanford University, the Special Collections and Archive at the University of California at Berkeley, and the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. The archives at the Huntington Library in Pasadena are unfortunately not open to undergraduate researchers.

In 1850, California joined the United States as the 31st state and with it came a sleepy little agricultural village with 1,610 residents, minimal public improvements, no natural harbor, and a single water source that amounted to barely a stream for most of the year. That village was Los Angeles and in the next eighty years it would grow to become the largest city in the state, boasting more than 1.2 million people.

Despite its apparently slim chance of becoming a major metropolis, by the 1930s Los Angeles was a sprawling megalopolis. In order to make such a dramatic transformation, it had to overcome a gross lack of natural geographic advantages through the creation of man-made improvements and employ superb promotional tactics in order to generate large-scale migration and sustained commercial growth. Two main geographic obstacles stood in the way of Los Angeles growing into the largest city in California: its inadequate water resources and its inaccessibility.

While most major cities in the United States, by the 1880s, had, quite logically, been established within resource-rich geographies, the trajectory of growth for Los Angeles required a new calculus. Since vital natural resources were noticeably absent in Los Angeles, its residents, with the help of several important people and companies, had to provide the city with man-made equivalents. However, such infrastructural improvements were not able to instigate an explosion in migration and commercial activity on their own; major booster and promotional campaigns were necessary to “sell” the location. Without the work of boosters and city promoters from almost every industry and interest group, Los Angeles would not have been able to grow and prosper in the rapid way that it did between 1880 and 1932.

My thesis argues that between 1880 and 1932 Los Angeles’ growth in the absence of natural geographic advantages was primarily due to its attractiveness to boosters, entrepreneurs, and capitalists. Through my thesis, I hope to demonstrate how Los Angeles was able to surmount and circumvent formidable environmental limitations and fuel an expansion built largely on the desire and ingenuity of its

residents. Not nature's metropolis, Los Angeles is a metropolis despite nature, a marvel of imagination and engineering and greed.

Chapter 1: Quenching a City's Thirst

“Either you bring the water to L.A. or you bring L.A. to the water.”
- *Chinatown* (1974)

Water is a crucial natural resource for human population growth. Both individuals and societies have endeavored throughout the centuries to find ways to increase their ability to acquire and distribute water resources. This was certainly true in Southern California where, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the city of Los Angeles managed to grow and prosper despite natural limitations on its water resources. Southern California is a semi-arid desert. One observer in the early 20th century, J. Russell Smith, commented that “rain makes possible the homes of man where otherwise there would be only jack rabbits, pastures, a little extensive farming, and a few irrigated oases.”¹ From the beginning of Spanish settlement in Los Angeles, its inhabitants recognized their need for water; “they had a desert to fight.”² Until Los Angeles decided to acquire a new water supply from the Owens River Valley in the early 1900s, its only source of water came from the Los Angeles River watershed.³

The Los Angeles River watershed spans about five hundred square miles surrounded by the San Gabriel Mountains, the Santa Susana Mountains, and the Santa Monica Mountains. The San Fernando Valley, just north of Los Angeles, functions as a natural reservoir for the Los Angeles River. Its soil is made up of pervious gravel cones and alluvial deposits, making it excellent at storing water; “it has been

¹ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 6.

² Harry Carr, *Los Angeles: City of Dreams* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), 205.

³ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 5.

estimated that in a one-hundred-foot zone, fifty feet above and fifty feet below the water table, there is a storage capacity of 994,000 acre-feet of water in the San Fernando Valley.”⁴ Additionally, the relatively fault-free bedrock of the San Fernando Valley creates an impermeable underground barrier allowing the area to form a subterranean lake. The reservoir under the San Fernando Valley functions as a holding tank for the Los Angeles River. Water flows down into the valley’s underground reservoir from the surrounding mountains, principally the San Gabriels. The water first surfaces as the Los Angeles River at the Encino rancho but is not capable of maintaining a continuous surface flow throughout its length except during flood conditions.⁵

Los Angeles has cyclical variations in precipitation, moving from very dry years to wetter ones; “during the eleven year period from 1893 to 1904, annual precipitation varied from a maximum of 19.32 inches to a low of 5.59 inches. Five years within that period had an annual precipitation of less than nine inches.”⁶ This drought at the turn of the 20th century would lead Los Angeles to the realization that it needed to find alternate sources of water in order to protect its growing population from future droughts.

During the dry cycle of 1893 to 1904, the population of Los Angeles grew from around 50,000 to nearly a quarter of a million people.⁷ The city’s first response was to supplement the flow of the Los Angeles River through the sinking of wells and

⁴ George B. Gleason, *South Coastal Basin Investigation: Overdraft on Ground Water Basins* (Sacramento: California State Print Office, 1947), 21.

⁵ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

⁷ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 78.

the expansion of underground galleries. These measures provided an average flow of 28.5 second-feet, giving the city around forty-six million gallons a day.⁸ Normally, this amount of water would have been able to support around 300,000 people, but during heavy summer consumption there was a “daily drop in reservoir capacity of 3,494,000 gallons.”⁹ The reservoir would eventually refill once the heightened patterns of use during the summer months ended, but if the city’s growth rate continued unabated or it did not acquire new water resources, Los Angeles was bound for disaster. William Mulholland, the superintendent of the Los Angeles City Water Department at the turn of the 20th century, is rumored to have said that “Los Angeles is living on the top of a huge bowl of water. You are taking out water faster than it is flowing in. Some day you will strike bottom.”¹⁰ Even if it is just a rumor, it is certain that in 1908, Mulholland did comment in his *Third Annual Report* to the Los Angeles City Department of Public Works and its Bureau of the Los Angeles Aqueduct that “the time has come...when we shall have to supplement its [the Los Angeles River’s] flow from some other source.”¹¹

Prior to Los Angeles coming under American dominion, both the Spanish and the Mexican governments also had to contend with the issues surrounding water distribution. The Spanish founded Los Angeles in 1779 as a pueblo with specific rules governing the distribution of land and water. In 1779, Don Filipe de Neve, Governor of California, issued a decree describing the regulations for the colonization of

⁸ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 9-10.

⁹ Ibid. 10.

¹⁰ Harry Carr, *Los Angeles: City of Dreams* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), 206.

¹¹ City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works, Bureau of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, *First Annual Report* (Los Angeles, 1907), 23.

California.¹² Under these laws water was considered to be the common property of everyone in the pueblo and in return the residents were expected to “build a house in the best way they can...and likewise open the principal drain or trench, form a dam, and other necessary public works for the benefit for cultivation.”¹³ In concert with the regulations governing colonization, the citizens of Los Angeles built a main irrigation ditch, the *Zanja Madre*, off the Los Angeles River. Water diverted by this irrigation ditch was used for domestic needs and for crop irrigation.¹⁴

As Spanish rule over Los Angeles transitioned smoothly to Mexican rule in the 1820s, the regulations concerning water resources were also transferred. The general governing body of the pueblo, the *Ayuntamiento*, had a specific committee that supervised the system of irrigation ditches or *zanjas*.¹⁵ Additional water for domestic use was distributed by Indian women who sold jugs of water door to door. Under both Spanish and Mexican rule, the distribution of water for irrigation in Los Angeles was under public control. Only with the onset of American control in Los Angeles after the Mexican-American War did problems arise with respect to the concept of community control of water resources.

Under American control, increased development of Southern California and Los Angeles led to competition over rights to the water in the Los Angeles River.¹⁶ When Felipe de Neve created his decree pertaining to the colonization of California,

¹² Felipe de Neve, “Reglamento Para Gobierno de la Provincia de Californias, Aprobado por S.M. en Real Orden da 24 Octubre de 1781.” in “Documents pertaining to the founding of Los Angeles,” in *Annual Publication* (Southern California Historical Society, XV 1931), 188.

¹³ John W. Dwinelle, *The Colonial History of the City of San Francisco*, (San Diego: Frye & Smith, 1924), 5. This text refers to regulations throughout Mexico, not only San Francisco.

¹⁴ Southern California Historical Society, XV, “Documents Pertaining to the Founding of Los Angeles” (in *Annual Publication*. 1931), 150.

¹⁵ John W. Dwinelle, *The Colonial History of the City of San Francisco* (San Diego: Frye & Smith, 1924), 30.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 31.

he granted common control over the Los Angeles River to the pueblo, but in American jurisprudence “public domain was quite different from securing a prior and exclusive right.”¹⁷ Whereas, Mexican law had granted Los Angeles total municipal control over water distribution, under American law water rights could be bought and sold with the property adjoining the river, though the city retained distribution rights for municipal services such as irrigation and drinking water. Seeking to prevent conflict over Los Angeles’ water resources, in 1873, the California State legislature passed an act protecting “all the liabilities and obligations created by the Ayuntamiento of said Pueblo [Los Angeles].”¹⁸ This granted control over the water supply of the Los Angeles River to the city. In the 1890’s, the California Supreme Court extended Los Angeles’ control over its water not only to the *zanjas* and the above ground flow of the river but also to the subterranean flow of the river.

During the 1860s, early American Los Angeles made several attempts to control the distribution of its water for both irrigation and domestic use, but in the end it failed. Thus, in 1868, the city council decided to lease the right to the distribution of water from the Los Angeles River. They sold a thirty-year lease to John S. Griffen, Solomon Lazard, and Prudent Beaudry in exchange for \$1,500 a year and the promise to “construct a reservoir for the city, lay twelve miles of iron pipe, install fire hydrants at the major street crossings, provide free water to public buildings, and erect a \$1,000 ornamental fountain in the city plaza.”¹⁹ Griffen, Lazard, and Beaudry formed the Los Angeles City Water Company and began to charge the city’s residents

¹⁷ Ibid. 32.

¹⁸ William McPherson, *Charter and Revised Ordinances of the City of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Star Print, 1873), 7.

¹⁹ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles’ Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 9.

for water distribution under the terms of their lease. Throughout its tenure, the water company had a tense relationship with the city. The residents of Los Angeles and the city government were displeased with how the Los Angeles Water Company administered the distribution of the Los Angeles River's water; "many users [are] unable to obtain a flow in their hydrants...not to mention the extra labor and difficulty attendant upon irrigation of lawns and flower gardens when the pressure is too low."²⁰ The water company also overcharged for its services. All of these issues turned control over the city's water rights into an important issue in the city elections leading up to the end of the Los Angeles City Water Company's 30 year lease.

In 1898, with the Los Angeles City Water Company's lease ending, there was a campaign to return the distribution of Los Angeles' water to municipal control. One of the mayoral candidates, a Republican and former superintendent of the water works for the Los Angeles City Water Company, Fred Eaton, made municipal control of Los Angeles' water distribution one of his platform planks.²¹

In the years just prior to when the lease would expire, Los Angeles' city authorities began negotiations with the company for the sale of the company's waterworks to the city. The company estimated the infrastructure's worth at \$3,000,000 whereas the city was only willing to pay \$1,300,000. This conflict was not resolved until 1901 when a compromise committee was formed and decided on the price of \$2,000,000.²² Actual control of the waterworks and distribution system

²⁰ Los Angeles Times. December 4th, 1898. in Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953).

²¹ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 46.

²² *Ibid.* 48.

was not given to the city until February 13th, 1902, approximately four years after the lease expired.²³ At this time, the city of Los Angeles amended its charter to include a passage forbidding the disposal of the city's water rights without a two thirds majority of electors voting for the proposition.²⁴ Fred Eaton, who had been elected mayor, made it his goal to establish a municipal water distribution system more efficient than the old one and able to provide for more people.

From his time as superintendent of the Los Angeles City Water Company, Fred Eaton staunchly believed that the capacity of Los Angeles River could not support a growing population. Two potential sources of additional water for Los Angeles were the Colorado River and the Kern Rivers, but both were considered far too distant to be feasible. The only possible source of water that Eaton thought suitable was the Owens River, a mere 250 miles away from Los Angeles.²⁵

Los Angeles' first response to its growing need for increased water resources was not to acquire additional sources, but to attempt to increase the yield and reduce the waste of Los Angeles River water.²⁶ It was estimated that the river held enough water to support a city of 300,000 people and that reducing waste could help support additional needs. But, in 1904, after an investigation into the growth rate of the city and its water resources, the Los Angeles Board of Water Commissioners made the

²³ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 17.

²⁴ City of Los Angeles, *Charter as Adopted January, 1889 and Amended January, 1903* (Los Angeles: Southern California Printing Company, 1903), 57.

²⁵ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 63.

²⁶ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 97.

decision to seek an outside source of water.²⁷ William Mulholland, the successor to Fred Eaton as the superintendent of water distribution in Los Angeles, disagreed with Eaton's desire to acquire the Owens River as a new water source until a severe drought hit Los Angeles. Between 1900 and 1904, as the population of the city doubled, a drought caused Mulholland and other city officials to reconsider Eaton's way of thinking about the necessity of additional water resources and the Owens River Valley.²⁸

In 1902, the United States Government created the Reclamation Service to oversee water diversion, delivery, and dispersal throughout the country. They named J.B. Lippincott to run its program in California; the Owens River Valley project was his first major project.²⁹ Prior to his appointment to the Reclamation Service, Lippincott had a close relationship with the city of Los Angeles; he had been a consultant for the city during its campaign for municipalization and had worked closely with Fred Eaton. When attempting to ascertain its options for new sources of water, Los Angeles hired J.B. Lippincott to prepare a report. In exchange for his services, Lippincott was paid \$2,500, more than half of his salary from the Reclamation Service. While he was in charge of the Reclamation Service's projects in California, Lippincott also gave tours of the Owens Valley to Eaton and Mulholland, discussing with them the dynamics of the Reclamation Service's projects involving

²⁷ William Mulholland and Lippincott & Parker Consulting Engineers, "Report of Water Supply," in *Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, California* (1903), 4-5, 9-10.

²⁸ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 65.

the Owens River.³⁰ Lippincott's position in the Reclamation Service helped Fred Eaton and the city of Los Angeles in several ways, including creating delays in the Reclamation Service's projects to give Eaton the time to acquire the purchase rights to all of the land in the valley with water rights.

One of the Reclamation Service's projects in the Owens Valley was to decide between two applications from power companies wanting to build hydroelectric dams on the Owens River. To aid him in making this decision, Lippincott hired Fred Eaton as an outside consultant; this gave Eaton access to information on deeds, water rights, and stream flows.³¹ Using this information, working covertly on behalf of the city of Los Angeles, Eaton was able to acquire the right to purchase almost all of the land with water rights in the Owens Valley. Eaton, pretending he wanted to become a cattle rancher, approached land owners in the Owens River Valley offering them large sums of money for their land.³²

The last holdout in selling a right to purchase to Eaton was T.B. Rickey, a large cattle rancher in the Owens Valley. Rickey was also a partner in one of the power companies hoping to have its application to build a hydroelectric dam on the Owens River approved. Eaton was able to use his position working for Lippincott to recommend that Rickey's company, the Nevada Power Mining and Milling Company, receive the right-of-way necessary to build their dam. With his power of approval for the dam, Eaton was able to leverage Rickey into selling him the purchase

³⁰ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 60.

³¹ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 67.

³² *Ibid.* 70.

rights to his land.³³ On March 23rd, 1905, Fred Eaton received the purchase rights to the last piece of land necessary for Los Angeles to secure the water rights to the entirety of the Owens River. Until this point, most of Eaton's dealings had been secretive, but on July 29th, 1905, the *Los Angeles Times* broke the story, "Titanic Project to Give the City a River...Stupendous deal closed."³⁴ Working through Fred Eaton, Los Angeles had acquired the right to buy almost all of the water rights in the Owens River Valley, but still needed a means to transport to water to the city. They needed to build an aqueduct and for that they needed to raise funds through bonds.

After the first *Los Angeles Times* article advertising the land purchase, the city began to push for a bond issue to raise the funds to build an aqueduct. In order to obtain the necessary funds and rights to build an aqueduct, the city had to appeal to two separate groups. The Los Angeles public needed to approve of the bonds to finance the project, and the United States government needed to open up public lands for the aqueduct to go through.

Before the public could vote on the bond issue, the United States government had to be convinced that Los Angeles needed water and that the only place they could get it from was the Owens River Valley. Working with his friends in Congress, William Mulholland was able to convince one of President Theodore Roosevelt's closest advisors, Gifford Pinchot, the director of the newly created Forest Service, that Los Angeles needed the water. Pinchot and California Senator Frank P. Flint convinced President Roosevelt to approve the sale of the lands that Los Angeles had

³³ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 65.

³⁴ "Titanic Project to Give the City a River," *Los Angeles Times*, July 29th, 1905.

to purchase for the aqueduct. President Roosevelt stated that it was vastly more important for the water from the Owens River Valley to support the growth of Los Angeles than for it to remain in the valley strictly for irrigation.³⁵ By declaring almost all of the land in the Owens Valley to be in the newly created Inyo National Forest, Gifford Pinchot cut off much of the opportunity for recourse that the residents of the Owens River Valley might have previously had. By July 1907, Los Angeles had acquired the rights to all of the water and land it needed, and the Reclamation Service no longer had anything to do in the Owens Valley since it was now a national forest.³⁶ The only thing that could stop Fred Eaton and William Mulholland's dream from becoming a reality was the citizenry of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles city council convinced the city to vote for a \$1.5 million bond issue to buy all of the land options that Fred Eaton had acquired, but that only covered the purchase of the land itself. A lot more money and persuading of the Los Angeles' public had to occur before construction on the aqueduct could begin and the city could reap the rewards. A group of engineers estimated that the cost of constructing a 225 mile long aqueduct, connecting the Owens Valley to the San Fernando Valley would cost \$24.5 million.³⁷ A major conflict arose in attempting to get this bond passed over where the water in the aqueduct would flow. It had been decided that the aqueduct would end in the San Fernando Valley where the ground was porous and could store the water coming from the Owens River Valley, but there

³⁵ Roosevelt to Hitchcock, July 25th, 1906, reprinted in Elting E. Morrison ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, volume V* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1952), 315-316.

³⁶ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 87.

³⁷ Los Angeles Department of Public Works, *First Annual Report of the Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles Aqueduct to the Board of Public Works* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Department of Public Works, 1907).

was a rumor that a group of wealthy Los Angeles investors with inside knowledge about the Owens Valley land deals had bought most of the land in the San Fernando Valley, knowing that it would prosper once the water from the aqueduct arrived.³⁸ Despite public concern about insider corruption, several of the larger newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, with help from the wealthier citizens of Los Angeles, exerted their considerable influence to get the bond issue passed. The *Times* declared “cast a vote and prove that you are fit to be a citizen of Los Angeles.”³⁹ The bond issue passed by a margin of more than 10 to 1; Los Angeles was finally going to get the new source of water it desperately required.

The dedication of the Los Angeles aqueduct took place six years later on November 5, 1913. The Owens River watershed was topographically higher than Los Angeles so the entirety of the flow was downhill.⁴⁰ For a number of years most of the water that came through the aqueduct did not go to Los Angeles, but instead irrigated the San Fernando Valley.

From the time that water first spilled out of the aqueduct, the residents of the San Fernando Valley began to make plans for how to use their newly gained ability to irrigate. The residents of the San Fernando Valley made an informal deal with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors allowing the Los Angeles water bureau, whose chief engineer was William Mulholland, to control the planning and construction of the water distribution system in the valley. Mulholland’s goal was to control the distribution of all of the surplus waters from the aqueduct; he moved a step closer

³⁸ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 78.

³⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1907.

⁴⁰ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles’ Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 234.

with this control of the distribution system in the San Fernando Valley. On May 4th, 1915 Mulholland and the city of Los Angeles annexed the San Fernando Valley and the Palms. This annexation increased the physical size of Los Angeles from 107.62 square miles to 284.81 square miles.⁴¹ Other annexations in 1916 and 1917 increased the total land area of Los Angeles to nearly 350 square miles, all of which made use of the aqueduct's water.⁴² The annexations were beneficial for all parties involved; Los Angeles wanted to annex its surrounding areas in a bid to gain complete control over the distribution of its newly acquired water and the surrounding areas were interested in being annexed by Los Angeles out of a desire to gain access to the city's water resources, especially during dry conditions and for irrigation in the more agricultural regions.

According to Mulholland's original estimates, with the water from the Owens River Valley, Los Angeles would now be able to fully support the water needs of its growing population. Unfortunately, his predictions were inaccurate and the rate of population growth in Los Angeles far surpassed Mulholland's assumptions. By 1910, before the aqueduct began pumping water from the Owens River Valley, the population had already increased to 319,000 residents, "the level predicted for 1918."⁴³ In 1913 the population had reached 500,000 and was still growing rapidly. The annexations accounted for some of this growth, but not enough to make a big difference since it was mostly rural areas with few residents that were incorporated into the city. Mulholland's projections for domestic and irrigation water demand were

⁴¹ City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering, *Annexation and Detachment Map* (1978).

⁴² Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 156-157.

⁴³ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 228-229.

far lower than the actual usage. Mulholland predicted that by 1919 the city would be using 90 cubic feet per second of water per day, but in actuality Los Angeles was consuming around 220 cubic feet per second each day.⁴⁴

In response to the unexpected rate of growth, both in population and acres of irrigated land, Los Angeles and William Mulholland came up with two plans to increase the city's water resources. The first plan was to create a dam in the Owens River Valley to store water. Mulholland previously opposed the idea of dams since they allowed evaporation off the surface and the loss of water and, as late as 1906, he felt that a dam to stabilize and store the city's water supply was not necessary.⁴⁵ But, by 1920, Mulholland conceded that a dam was necessary and decided that Long Valley in the Owens River Valley would be the best location. The only problem with building a dam at the Long Valley site was that Los Angeles did not own all of the land there. Fred Eaton had refused to sell Los Angeles all of the rights of purchase and so Los Angeles owned only 20 percent of the site.⁴⁶

Mulholland's attempts to negotiate with Eaton were unsuccessful and forced him to make plans to build a much smaller dam on the part of the site that Los Angeles owned with the capability of enlarging it when Eaton died and the land could be purchased by the city. Eaton fought against even the little dam, convincing other land owners near Long Valley to fight for control of the valley. Due to the inadequacy of the potential size of the dam and legal complications, the project was abandoned.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Louis C. Hill, J.B. Lippincott, A.L. Soderegger, *Report on Available Water Supply of City of Los Angeles and Metropolitan Area* (City of Los Angeles, 1924), 193.

⁴⁵ William Mulholland, *Testimony of Mulholland to the Aqueduct Investigation Board Report* (City of Los Angeles, 1906), 41.

⁴⁶ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 248.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 259.

The only other way of ensuring that Los Angeles would have sufficient water supply was to tap the Colorado River. It was a far reaching plan, both spatially and conceptually.

The Colorado River seemed like the perfect solution to Los Angeles' water needs, but there were many obstacles to obtaining its waters. Without the support of the surrounding communities, the cost to Los Angeles of building an aqueduct was prohibitive. There was also significant political and public opposition to Los Angeles obtaining water from the Colorado. Despite an impassioned plea to the United States Congress, declaring that Los Angeles needed the water from the Colorado River to survive, Mulholland failed to secure the rights or the funds necessary for the project. By using the specter of drought that he had employed to get the first aqueduct built, Mulholland appealed to the residents of Los Angeles, but even the fear of a drought did not succeed in convincing enough people to support the Colorado River project.⁴⁸ Construction on a Colorado River aqueduct for the benefit of all of Southern California would finally begin in 1933, but in the mean time, Los Angeles needed another source of water.⁴⁹

In 1923 and 1924, a consultant named Thomas H. Means made two recommendations to the Los Angeles Board of Public Service Commissioners to solve their water resource problems. He suggested that in the short term Los Angeles should buy the Bishop area of the Owens River Valley and sink two hundred wells in it. Means described how the new land and wells could increase and stabilize the

⁴⁸ Ibid. 268.

⁴⁹ Department of Water and Power, "The Colorado River: A Regional Solution," City of Los Angeles, <http://wsoweb.ladwp.com/Aqueduct/historyoflaa/coloradoriver.htm>.

aqueduct's supply as well as protect its water supply.⁵⁰ He also suggested that in order to assure enough water for continued growth, Los Angeles should acquire the water supply of the Mono Basin, just north of the Owens River Valley. It would be costly to the city, but it would provide a minimum of 140 second feet of additional water to Los Angeles.⁵¹ Means contended that this amount of extra water could support a population of up to 4.7 million people.⁵² Faced with uncertain water resources and considerable potential for growth, in 1930 Los Angeles' voters endorsed a bond for 38 million dollars to construct the new aqueduct.⁵³ Water from the Mono Basin first reached Los Angeles in 1940. Although the Colorado River would eventually provide more water to Los Angeles than the Owens River Valley and the Mono Basin combined, those two sources were able to supply Los Angeles during its largest period of growth.

Los Angeles' acquisition of additional water resources was not without consequences. In 1917, Mary Austin, a novelist from the Owens Valley, wrote *The Ford* (1917), a fictionalized account of the battle between the residents of the Owens Valley and the city of Los Angeles over the valley's water rights; "Austin was convinced that the valley had died when it sold its first water rights to Los Angeles – that the city would never stop until it owned the whole river and all of the land."⁵⁴ Supposedly, after an interview with Austin, Mulholland commented that she was the

⁵⁰ Thomas H. Means, *Additional water supply for City of Los Angeles in Owens Valley and Mono Basin* (Los Angeles, California, 1924), 6-9, 24.

⁵¹ Robert M Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 99.

⁵² William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 248.

⁵³ Robert M Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 99.

⁵⁴ Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking Penguin Incorporated, 1986), 82.

only person who knew what was going to happen to the Owens Valley.⁵⁵ In the book, Austin predicted that Los Angeles would eventually take all of the valley's water.⁵⁶ While Austin's prediction did not come to fruition immediately, as Los Angeles looked to the Owens River for more and more water, it became clear that the valley would eventually dry up. Los Angeles' acquisition of the property in the Bishop area to get its groundwater meant that the prophetic message of Austin's book would come true.

As the Bishop area's groundwater was drawn up into the aqueduct, there was very little left for irrigation in the Owens Valley and the once fertile region was no longer able to support much agriculture at all. Thomas H. Means, the water consultant for Los Angeles, felt that the depletion of the groundwater in the Owens Valley would cause people to abandon the valley, meaning that there would be more water available for Los Angeles.⁵⁷

Since its inception, agriculture had been Los Angeles' chief industry. The city's original *zanja* system was developed to provide water for irrigation. William Mulholland's plan for annexing undeveloped areas and supporting them with water from the aqueduct for irrigation was devised as a profitable means of using the excess water from the aqueduct. By supplying water to undeveloped areas, populations in those areas could grow and develop agriculture through irrigation that would eventually lead to commercial development and then urbanization and

⁵⁵ Ibid. 82.

⁵⁶ Mary Austin, *The Ford* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1917).

⁵⁷ Thomas H. Means, *Additional water supply for City of Los Angeles in Owens Valley and Mono Basin* (Los Angeles, California, 1924), 8, 24.

industrialization which could, in time, displace the farms.⁵⁸ In the early part of the 20th century, annexed territories, with the largest annexation being the San Fernando Valley, were important sites of new irrigation projects for Los Angeles. With increased amounts of irrigated land, crop production in Los Angeles increased significantly. In 1914, before the aqueduct began providing water for irrigation there were 3,000 acres of irrigated land. By 1917 there were 30,000 acres of irrigated land, growing crops including sugar beets, beans, potatoes, citrus trees, deciduous trees, and alfalfa.⁵⁹

The acquisition of additional water resources from the Owens Valley and the Mono Basin primed Los Angeles to be able to absorb the large quantities of people who were being attracted to Southern California. The city's acquisition of new water resources was a fairly unique phenomenon in Southern California and in the other southwestern regions. Acquiring an ample supply of water allowed Los Angeles to accommodate a much greater population than it would naturally have been able to and than other arid areas could support.

The increased population and water supply of Los Angeles helped it urbanize and industrialize more quickly than neighboring cities such as San Diego. Los Angeles' overwhelming population growth "frequently exceeded the requirements for local employment, necessitating the expansion of industry and commercial enterprises

⁵⁸ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 160-161.

⁵⁹ William Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 227; Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 160-161.

to absorb the surplus labor force.”⁶⁰ F.A. Seiberling, the president of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, was the first major industrialist to notice this growth and place a factory in Los Angeles. The size of the possible workforce was important to him but so was the abundance of water.⁶¹ Following Goodyear’s example, other industrial concerns began to locate branches in Los Angeles. Competing rubber companies opened plants, making Los Angeles the second largest rubber producing city in the United States, but other industries also moved their factories to Los Angeles. In 1927 and 1928, Ford Motor Company and Willys Overland Motors, Inc. built their first automobile assembly plants in the Los Angeles area. By 1930, “the Texas Company, Radio Corporation of America, Columbia Recording Corporation, Procter and Gamble Manufacturing...United States Steel Corporation...and many others had located major branch facilities in the Los Angeles area.”⁶² By the 1930’s, in Los Angeles, industry had usurped the economic dominance of agriculture, but was just as dependent on water.

The acquisition of water resources in the Owens River Valley, and later in the Mono Basin, to supplement the Los Angeles River was crucial for the growth of Los Angeles. Without an increased supply in water, the population and spatial dimensions of Los Angeles could never have grown at the same exponential rate that they did between 1890 and 1932. By 1929, Los Angeles was ninth in the country in industrial production and still a major agricultural center, despite the fact that it had very

⁶⁰ Vincent Ostrom, *Water & Politics: A Study of Water Policies and Administration in the Development of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Haynes Foundation, 1953), 165.

⁶¹ Ibid. 165.

⁶² Ibid. 166.

limited natural water resources.⁶³ Thomas Workman Temple wrote that “the ultimate limitation on the population of Southern California is probably water...up to the limits of the water there is no reason why Los Angeles industry should not continue to grow.”⁶⁴ Water resources controlled the development of Los Angeles. The city’s original lack of water resources posed a threat to Los Angeles’ growth and development, but through the actions, ingenuity, and influence of a handful of individual players, it was able to overcome its obvious deficit and acquire enough water resources to allow it to grow and prosper in a desert. The foresight and maneuvering of these individuals, notably William Mulholland, helped Los Angeles obtain the necessary water resources to place itself in a position to become the major city in Southern California and even challenge San Francisco for being the largest and most economically productive city in California.

⁶³ Ibid. 166.

⁶⁴ Thomas Workman Temple, “The Undiscovered City,” *Fortune* XXXIX (1949).

Chapter 2: Getting There

As a region, Southern California only encompasses a small strip of coastal land, “approximately 11,726 square miles.”¹ The San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains create a barrier to the east, while the Tehachapi range connects the Sierra Nevada Mountains with the coast, effectively closing off Southern California from the north. These mountain ranges help give Southern California its distinctive climate but, at the same time, were a major obstacle to traders, travelers, and settlers in accessing the region prior to the opening of a southern transcontinental railroad route.² The coastal geology of California also left Los Angeles without a deep-water bay. While San Francisco and San Diego each have bays which provide safe and easily accessible anchorage to ocean going ships, vessels desiring to go to Los Angeles had to anchor in San Pedro Bay and then transship cargoes through shallower waters to the town of Wilmington.³ These factors meant that Los Angeles was particularly isolated from the rest of the country.

The evolution of Los Angeles as a major metropolitan city was dependent on the development of several different modes of transportation to allow barrier free access to, and within, the city. The creation of a southern terminus for the transcontinental railroad and the annexation of the man-made harbor at San Pedro were essential to overcome the natural geographic limitations on land and sea accessibility. While Los Angeles was ultimately able to expand its infrastructure

¹ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 5.

² Ibid. 5.

³ William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 93.

providing water resources, ease of accessibility was a necessary condition to facilitate the arrival of a substantial number of new residents and industries. Consequently, the extension of the transcontinental railroad along with the creation and annexation of a deep water harbor at San Pedro were key components in the growth of the city, both in population and in capital investment. Later, in the 1920s, the popularization of the personal automobile developed a whole new means of migrating to Los Angeles that brought a more mobile and expansive population.

Wide scale settlement of the west was the ultimate goal of the proponents of Manifest Destiny in the United States during the 1850s and 1860s, but the distance and the difficulty involved in moving large numbers of people across the country left it underdeveloped. On May 10th, 1869, the Central Pacific railroad was completed with the last nail being driven in at Promontory Summit in Utah by the president of the Central Pacific, Leland Stanford.⁴ The Central Pacific was owned by four wealthy Northern Californians known as the “Big Four”: Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker, and Leland Stanford. They logically chose Sacramento as the western terminus for their transcontinental railroad, as it was the capital of California and near San Francisco, the major port on the west coast as well as a location where the “Big Four” all had business interests.⁵ Due to the Gold Rush, the northern part of California was already somewhat more developed than Southern California, especially Los Angeles, which seemed far less attractive for potential settlement and development. At the beginning of the 1870s, it appeared that when the transcontinental railroad did reach Southern California, it would end in San Diego;

⁴ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17.

⁵ *Ibid.* 7.

for travelers in the 1870s, “Los Angeles was hardly deemed worthy of a visit of inspection.”⁶

Nevertheless, Los Angeles entered into direct competition with San Diego to become the potential terminus for the southern part of the transcontinental railroad. The Texas Pacific railroad, owned by Thomas A. Scott, began to be built with San Diego as its western terminus in 1872, but its expansion was hindered by two separate factors. The first was the economic Panic of 1873 which significantly slowed the pace of construction on the Texas Pacific, but the other factor was much more crucial in limiting the growth of the railroad.

The “Big Four,” in particular Collis P. Huntington and the Central Pacific were opposed to the Texas Pacific becoming a transcontinental railroad because it would break their monopoly over transcontinental travel and trade. Not only would a southern terminus at San Diego be a competitor to San Francisco and the Central Pacific’s land dominance, but also a competitor to its control over the major western port since San Diego had an excellent natural harbor.⁷ Huntington used his connections in the United States Congress to stall governmental aid to the Texas Pacific, claiming that the Southern Pacific, which was owned by friends of the “Big Four,” could complete a southern route without government subsidy.⁸ Scott and the Texas Pacific argued that Huntington was merely trying to get the Southern Pacific built to stop the Texas Pacific from becoming a competitor with the Central Pacific.⁹

⁶ *Los Angeles Herald*, August 11th, 1878.

⁷ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 50-1.

⁸ *Ibid.* 51.

⁹ “Aid for Pacific Railroads.; The Texas Pacific Road and its Wants Argument Before the House Committee What Gov. Brown and Thomas A. Scott have to Say in Favor of a Subsidy.” *The New York Times*, January 27th, 1878.

Yet, despite Scott's protests, Huntington and the Southern Pacific were able to stall the Texas Pacific and force Scott to concede the Texas Pacific's western terminus to the Southern Pacific.¹⁰ Once Huntington got his way, Scott's original plan for San Diego to become the western terminus of his transcontinental railroad was effectively stymied by its intrinsic competitiveness with the Central Pacific and its terminus in San Francisco.

Los Angeles, not truly a serious contender for the southern terminus of the transcontinental railroad, became viable only when the better competitor, San Diego, had been removed from contention. Once Los Angeles became a viable option for the Southern Pacific, the city and its representatives began to pursue the possibility in earnest. The city's Board of Supervisors was convinced by a representative of Collis Huntington named William B Hyde to present a bond issue to the voters for \$610,000. This bond would be a subsidy to the Southern Pacific to build fifty miles of railroad line towards San Francisco in order to connect it to the Central Pacific's transcontinental railroad.¹¹ Thomas Scott attempted to convince the residents of Los Angeles to vote against the subsidy to the Southern Pacific and instead to support the Texas Pacific which could integrate Los Angeles into its system. A prominent judge in Los Angeles named Robert M. Widney came to the defense of the Southern Pacific, summarizing the benefits of subsidizing it over the Texas Pacific. He argued that a branch line of the Texas Pacific to San Diego would be worthless since San Diego already purchased many of its supplies from Los Angeles while Los Angeles residents rarely traveled to San Diego. On the other hand, many settlers arrived in Los

¹⁰ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 53.

Angeles from the northern part of California and a connection to the largest economic center in the state would be beneficial to both trade and tourism.¹² After a long debate, Los Angeles' citizens voted to give the Southern Pacific a subsidy. The construction of the Southern Pacific's line to Los Angeles was difficult, as it included both the rapid construction of an ascending 4000 foot pass as well as digging a 7000 foot long tunnel. On September 5th, 1876, Charles Crocker connected Los Angeles to Northern California's railroad system and the Central Pacific's transcontinental railroad.¹³ By the end of the 1870s, the Southern Pacific Railroad had acquired most of the local railroad lines around Los Angeles. This included the Los Angeles & San Pedro which ran from the city's downtown to its harbor more than twenty miles away and the Los Angeles & Independence which went to Santa Monica and eventually the Owens Valley.¹⁴ The extension of the Southern Pacific to Los Angeles opened the door for increased travel and settlement, but it wasn't until the 1880s and the arrival of a second transcontinental railroad branch that settlement and travel to Los Angeles accelerated.

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad was the second major line to arrive in Los Angeles. The competition that developed with the Southern Pacific caused a price war which eventually facilitated large scale migration to the city. Thomas E. Nickerson was the president of the Santa Fe. During the economic Panic of 1873, he guided the Santa Fe through Kansas and into Colorado, eventually

¹² R. M. Widney, "Los Angeles County Subsidy. Which Subsidy Shall I Vote For, or Shall I vote Against Both? Discussed From a Business Standpoint for the Business Community" (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Star Print, 1872).

¹³ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 20.

extending it to Albuquerque. In 1879, Nickerson convinced Collis Huntington to allow him to connect the Santa Fe to the Southern Pacific in New Mexico. By 1882, the Santa Fe had reached the Pacific at Guaymas on the Mexican coast, but Nickerson never thought of it as an appropriate terminus for the Santa Fe.¹⁵ Additionally, Nickerson wanted to build the Santa Fe's transcontinental line as a separate entity from Huntington's Southern Pacific, and to do that he would need to build a new line from New Mexico and pick an adequate transcontinental terminus.

Nickerson and the Santa Fe made a deal with the St. Louis and San Francisco, another railroad trying to build an independent transcontinental line. Frank A. Kimball, the president of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, wanted to locate his terminus in San Diego. Kimball convinced San Diego to raise money and promise land for the railroad construction, but by the time they were ready to donate the property in 1880, the new president of the Santa Fe, William B Strong, had decided to build the railroad to San Francisco.¹⁶ Huntington attempted to stop the Santa Fe from reaching San Francisco by purchasing controlling rights to the St. Louis and San Francisco. Strong and Huntington finally compromised on San Francisco, but Strong still wanted to control a transcontinental railroad independent of Huntington. As a means to this end, he bought the defunct California Southern railroad which ran to San Diego and created his own transcontinental railroad in 1885.¹⁷

The Santa Fe, however, had no intention of maintaining its western terminus in San Diego. By the time the railroad arrived in San Diego, the city was much

¹⁵ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 60-61.

smaller and less economically significant than Los Angeles. Their goal therefore was to eventually create a terminus in Los Angeles. The Santa Fe leased the Southern Pacific's Los Angeles line in 1884 and then bought the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley to create an independent connection to Los Angeles.¹⁸ In addition, they expanded their local lines in Los Angeles in order to compete with the Southern Pacific and, in 1885, made the California Southern to San Diego into a spur line, leaving Los Angeles as their main western terminus.¹⁹ With the arrival of the Santa Fe, Los Angeles became the dominant city in Southern California and finally had the infrastructure necessary to serve both large numbers of immigrants and transport large quantities of goods.

The availability of two transcontinental railroad termini in Los Angeles proved to be a boon to radically increasing the population through immigration. In 1887, a price war sprang up between the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe and escalated to the point where, for a few hours in 1887, the fare from the Missouri River to Los Angeles cost only one dollar.²⁰ While the fare eventually evened out to around twelve dollars for a one way ticket from the Missouri River to Los Angeles, the dramatic decline in the cost of transportation encouraged many people to immigrate.²¹ Combined with the efforts of the city's promoters, the railroads facilitated a population increase in the city; "between 1880 and 1890 its [Los Angeles'] population increased from 11,183 to 50,395" and doubled over the next decade to

¹⁸ Ibid. 61.

¹⁹ "All Aboard! Solid Through Trains from Los Angeles to St. Louis." *Los Angeles Times*, November 29th, 1885.

²⁰ Richard Barsness, "Railroads and Los Angeles: The Quest for a Deep-Water Port," *Southern California Quarterly* 47:4 (1965): 380.

²¹ Leonard Pitt, "The Midwesternization of a Cowtown," *California History* 60 (1981): 45.

102,000.²² The railroads provided the city with a convenient and inexpensive means of access which facilitated an exponential growth between 1880 and 1930.

The majority of these migrants came mostly from the midwest but the build up of railroads in Southern California also opened up the area to a stream of immigration from Mexico. The railroad lines in Southern California connected with lines in Northern Mexico and created a seamless path for Mexican immigrants to travel to Los Angeles. Many Mexican immigrants did not go directly to Los Angeles, but subsequently ended up moving there since there was an abundance of available work. Early on, labor recruiters brought Mexican immigrants to the city for unskilled agricultural work but, by the 1920s, the city's mild climate and growing population of Mexicans encouraged a migration stream independent of the recruiters.²³ Mexicans, like American tourists and settlers, relied on the railroads to open up routes of transportation to Los Angeles.

The arrival of the transcontinental railroads made Los Angeles into the dominant city in Southern California, but it was still less attractive than its northern neighbor, San Francisco. Los Angeles was entirely landlocked; without a deep-water harbor to facilitate ocean going commerce and immigration, it could not rival San Francisco. The closest harbors to Los Angeles were at San Pedro Bay, Redondo Beach Shore, and Santa Monica, none of which were deep enough for large

²² Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 67.

²³ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 68.

freighters.²⁴ The nearest deep-water harbor was San Diego and the last thing that the citizens of Los Angeles wanted was to have to rely on San Diego.

In the late 1860s, Phineas Banning built Southern California's first railroad between the San Pedro harbor and Los Angeles.²⁵ Once the line was complete, he asked Congress and the California State legislature to improve the port. In response they created a 6,700 foot jetty which created a current to dredge the channel to a depth of ten feet. While an improvement, it was still not very deep so, in the early 1880s, Banning got Congress to extend the jetty in order to deepen the channel to sixteen feet.²⁶ At this juncture, the Southern Pacific acquired Banning's railroad in order to secure a monopoly over harbor facilities in the Los Angeles area.

The Southern Pacific left San Pedro Bay idle in the early 1880s but, as Los Angeles began to grow and its commerce expanded, the railroad became much more involved in operating the harbor and the rail line connecting it to the city. At the same time the other railroads in Los Angeles started to vie for control of access to possible harbors. The Santa Fe built an extension line out to Redondo, a location which, in contrast to San Pedro, was closer to San Francisco for shipping and enjoyed an underwater canyon that allowed ships with deeper bottoms to dock along the iron pier. In 1890 another railroad created a line to Redondo and, in 1891, the Santa Fe built a wharf to capture more of the trade coming into the Los Angeles area. In November of 1891, the Los Angeles Terminal Railway built a line to San Pedro

²⁴ Leonard Pitt, "The Midwesternization of a Cowtown," *California History* 60 (1981): 48.

²⁵ William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 93.

²⁶ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 108.

across the bay from the Southern Pacific and in direct competition with it.²⁷ The Southern Pacific, however, did not simply surrender its control to these other lines. In order to counter the other lines, Collis Huntington, president of the Southern Pacific in 1890, decided to shift his focus to Santa Monica. He elected to expand the Southern Pacific's line to Santa Monica, previously a passenger line, and also to build a huge wharf at Santa Monica Bay. Dubbed the "Long Wharf," it was 1,500 feet long and had "coal bunkers, cargo-handling equipment, warehouses, and a depot."²⁸

In response to the evident need for such a facility, the United States Army Engineers were charged with recommending where the U.S. government should build a deep-water harbor in the Los Angeles area by the end of 1891. Huntington hoped that they would pick Santa Monica, while many Los Angeles business people preferred that the harbor be built at San Pedro in order to break the Southern Pacific's monopoly over transit between the coast and Los Angeles. In January of 1892, the Army engineering report recommended to the United States Congress a government appropriation for the deep-water harbor to go to San Pedro.²⁹ That was far from the end of the discussion; Huntington and his connections in Congress were prepared to fight the decision with the influence fueled by their wealth and power.

Huntington's congressional allies, including the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, Senator William P. Frye of Maine, convinced Congress that another survey of possible locations for a deep-water harbor in the vicinity of Los Angeles

²⁷ Richard Barsness, "Railroads and Los Angeles: The Quest for a Deep-Water Port," *Southern California Quarterly* 47:4 (1965): 383.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 385.

²⁹ United States War Department, Engineer Department, *Deep-water harbor on Pacific Coast...January 5, 1892. -- Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed* (Washington D.C.: Executive Department Publications, January 5, 1892), 52nd Congress, 1st Session, H.Exec.Doc. 39.

was warranted. Under the direction of Colonel William P. Craighill, the Army Corps of Engineers began another comparative survey. The Los Angeles business community, opposed to the Southern Pacific's bid to both monopolize transportation as well as the flow of commerce through Los Angeles via the railroads and harbor, was relying on the engineers' recognition that the physical advantages of San Pedro outweighed the facilities that the Southern Pacific had already constructed in Santa Monica. Craighill's committee of engineers decided in favor of San Pedro.³⁰ While Congress, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the local community were now aligned in supporting the development of a deep-water harbor at San Pedro, Huntington and the Southern Pacific would not concede defeat.

Between 1893 and 1898, Huntington worked with a few Los Angeles business men and his friends in Congress to stall the appropriation of funds for the harbor at San Pedro. They petitioned Congress and caused a rift in the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, even attempting at one point to get federal funding for deep-water harbors to be developed at both San Pedro and Santa Monica.³¹ This proposal was summarily dismissed.

Huntington and his friends delayed the appropriation of funds and construction of the deep-water harbor at San Pedro until 1897. In 1897, they got yet another federal commission to review all of the likely locations for a deep-water harbor in the vicinity of Los Angeles. This time, the examination was led by Admiral John G. Walker with the help of a five-man board. They concluded on March 1st,

³⁰ Richard Barsness, "Railroads and Los Angeles: The Quest for a Deep-Water Port," *Southern California Quarterly* 47:4 (1965): 387.

³¹ Charles Dwight Willard, *The Free Harbor at Los Angeles: an Account of the Long Flight Waged By the People of Southern California to Secure a Harbor Located at a Point Open to Competition* (Los Angeles: Kingsley-Barnes & Neuner Company, 1899), 139-140.

1897 that the best location for the harbor was San Pedro, citing many of the same reasons given for the previous examination board's decision.³² Even with this panel's decision, Huntington was not yet done. Through various political maneuvers, he was able to delay the construction of the harbor until 1899.³³ The eventual construction of the harbor was celebrated by most Los Angeles business leaders as a victory over the Southern Pacific's monopoly. Unfortunately for these businessmen, the Southern Pacific still owned a large percentage of the land and railroads around San Pedro and exercised a virtual monopoly over the harbor through the 1910s. The Southern Pacific shifted most of their shipping from Santa Monica to San Pedro and withdrew from the "Long Wharf" entirely.³⁴ Their monopoly was finally broken by the growth of Los Angeles' shipping and foreign commerce, not by the encroachment of other railroads on San Pedro.

By 1912, a breakwater had been constructed in San Pedro, creating a large and protected deep-water harbor. But the harbor still lacked many capital improvements, such as piers, docks, and warehouses that would allow it to become a major harbor, though by 1909 Los Angeles had developed a plan to build them. In order to leverage the capital resources of the city of Los Angeles, the Chamber of Commerce and other commercial associations promoted the municipalization of the harbor.³⁵

The towns of Wilmington and San Pedro, where the harbor and its infrastructure were located, were not a part of Los Angeles and so the city was unable

³² Richard Barsness, "Railroads and Los Angeles: The Quest for a Deep-Water Port," *Southern California Quarterly* 47:4 (1965): 389-390.

³³ William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 120.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 391.

³⁵ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 114.

to develop the necessary improvements for the harbor. Under California law, in order to annex Wilmington and San Pedro, Los Angeles had to be contiguous with them. Regrettably, they were twenty miles away. In order to address this problem, a Consolidation Committee was formed. The committee suggested forming a narrow “shoestring district” between Los Angeles and the harbor towns, a scheme readily approved by the city’s voters and then by the California legislature.³⁶ The next step for the Consolidation Committee was to convince Wilmington and San Pedro to vote for annexation. As an incentive to annexation, the city of Los Angeles offered them ten million dollars in harbor improvements and several other minor considerations, such as a truck highway between Los Angeles and the water front and public works equal to their taxes. In August of 1909, Wilmington and San Pedro agreed to officially become part of Los Angeles.³⁷ Once Los Angeles had gained control over their own harbor at San Pedro, they began to petition the United States government for aid to make capital improvements.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to improve Los Angeles’ port at San Pedro. Major improvements included: deepening the entrance to the harbor, widening the channel, and constructing a turning basin; “the corps spent \$6 million to duplicate at Los Angeles what nature had created gratuitously at San Francisco.”³⁸ By 1932, the federal government had spent around 12.5 million dollars to turn San Pedro into one of the most important and largest harbors in the United States. In 1888, Los Angeles was only handling 518 thousand tons of goods a year; that number increased to 20,098

³⁶ Ibid. 115.

³⁷ Ibid. 117.

³⁸ Ibid. 117.

thousand tons by 1932.³⁹ With the construction of a deep-water harbor at San Pedro, Los Angeles was enabled to become one of largest ports on the Pacific coast and transform itself into a national manufacturing and industrial city.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Los Angeles was also developing an interurban street car line to provide its residents with transportation around the city. Akin to the eastern cities, Los Angeles had a highly centralized downtown area served by industry, shopping, and business, with electric rail lines radiating out from it.⁴⁰ The Pacific Electric Railway Company, run by Henry Huntington, nephew of Collis P. Huntington, and the Los Angeles Railway Company, which was later acquired by the Pacific Electric Railway Company, were the two major interurban rail systems. The railways were overcrowded, did not expand nearly fast enough to keep pace with the city's population boom, and were often deeply in debt.⁴¹ Nevertheless, their role in real estate promotion and sales led to a sprawling development pattern extending out from the center of the city and helped the city decentralize much quicker than had eastern cities which focused largely on vertical expansion. During the 1910s, the expansion of the interurban railway system represented a crucial step towards the decentralization of Los Angeles, a process that sped up rapidly with the advent of the private automobile, which would define Los Angeles from the 1920s until today.

³⁹ Board of Economic Survey, *Economic Survey of the Port of Los Angeles, July 15th, 1933*, table 54. in Robert M. Fogelson's *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967) 119.

⁴⁰ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 29.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 40-41.

Until the United States government created the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1938, there were no plans for a national highway system. Actual funding for the system was not approved until the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1952 and construction did not start in earnest until 1956.⁴² Before the United States initiated its national highway program, Los Angeles had already become dominated by private automobiles. During the 1920s, the availability of private automobiles provided a welcome substitute to the problems posed by the electric railways. In response to the public's dissatisfaction with the railways, Los Angeles turned its attention to facilitating automobile movement around the city.⁴³ Los Angeles' dependency on the automobile for transportation began in the 1920s and leveraged the expansion of the city to accommodate the changes it caused in society and daily life.

After World War I there was a major influx of immigrants to Los Angeles. Whether or not they came by car, they quickly embraced the private automobile as the best means of transportation in and around Los Angeles. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the famous urban planner and landscape architect noted the features of Los Angeles that suited a culture based around the automobile: "the widely scattered population, and the almost universal housing in detached single-family dwellings."⁴⁴ In his remarks, Olmsted noted that, in the 1920s, real estate developers in Los Angeles no longer felt constrained to build housing developments within walking distance of streetcar lines and were instead promoting residential subdivisions located

⁴² Federal Highway Administration, "Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways," United States Department of Transportation, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/interstate.cfm>.

⁴³ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 54.

⁴⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, Harland Bartholomew, and Charles Henry Cheney, *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Committee on Los Angeles Plan of Major Highways of the Traffic Commission of the City and County of Los Angeles, 1924), 11-12.

many miles from any rail lines. These developers recognized and adapted their strategies to Los Angeles' growing dependence on automobiles. In the 1920s, Los Angeles' city planners and leaders acknowledged the significance of the changes that the prevalence of private automobiles was creating and began to embrace a decentralized pattern of development.⁴⁵ This represented a major departure from their previous intention of creating a centralized city similar to the eastern industrial cities, but was necessary due to the electric rail line issue and the newfound popularity of the private automobile.

In 1920 there were 3.6 people per car in Los Angeles and that number would shrink to 1.5 people per car by 1930.⁴⁶ This translates to a growth roughly from 141,000 cars in 1920 to 777,000 by 1930.⁴⁷ Several factors led to this phenomenal growth in the ownership of private automobiles in Los Angeles during the 1920s. The inability of the electric railways to provide reliable, efficient service prompted many Los Angeles residents to choose the automobile as their primary means of daily transportation. Another factor in the growth of automobile popularity was that, by the 1920s, automobile manufacturers were able to produce and sell cars for a much reduced price. Henry Ford's new assembly line process in 1917 lowered the cost of the Model-T to 345-360 dollars, making them much more affordable for the middle and lower classes.⁴⁸ Additionally, the creation of installment plans for purchasing automobiles made ownership for the middle classes much more achievable,

⁴⁵ Mark Foster, "The Model T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles' Urban Growth: The Decentralization of Los Angeles During the 1920s," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44:4 (1975), 462.

⁴⁶ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 93.

⁴⁷ Mark Foster, "The Model T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles' Urban Growth: The Decentralization of Los Angeles During the 1920s," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44:4 (1975), 464.

⁴⁸ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 55.

transforming automobiles from a luxury item to almost a necessity of life in Los Angeles.⁴⁹

As one of the fastest growing cities in the 1920s, Los Angeles' streets, especially in the downtown area, already were overcrowded and antiquated before private automobiles began flooding them. The center city's roads built for horse-drawn carriages were narrow and often abruptly ended.⁵⁰ And yet, the city made no major improvements until the middle of the 1920s, despite the population's growing reliance on automobiles.

Two major problems were congested traffic conditions and limited parking. As more automobiles filled the roads, traffic and congestion in the city increased exponentially. Many groups, including the Automobile Club of Southern California, an automobile promotion group, believed that the traffic problem would sort itself out, but as time went on it only got worse. There were numerous proposals suggesting solutions to the traffic problems. These included the creation of new streets and the widening and straightening of older ones, as well as changes in the rules of the road.⁵¹ The other prominent problem resulting from the increased number of automobiles in the city was the lack of sufficient parking. There were simply too few spaces for parking and residents began to park their automobiles almost randomly. Automobiles parked on both sides of the already narrow roads left too little room for other automobiles to move through the streets. The city's leaders, with the support of the electric railway companies, attempted to solve the parking problem with a restrictive

⁴⁹ Mark Foster, "The Model T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles' Urban Growth: The Decentralization of Los Angeles During the 1920s," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44:4 (1975), 464.

⁵⁰ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 59.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 59-63.

parking ban. It was designed to take many of the automobiles off the road and encourage people to use the railways again to get around the city. Los Angeles' residents opposed this plan since they had no faith in the interurban railway system and also preferred the comforts of their own automobiles to the overcrowded streetcars.⁵² By 1924, the city fathers realized that the automobile was there to stay, and decided to make improvements in the road system.

In November of 1924, the voters of Los Angeles were presented with a plan to improve the traffic situation in the city and a bond issue worth five million dollars to begin the necessary improvements. The plan would create new extension roads into the center of the city to reduce congestion, widen existing streets and, in its biggest undertaking, build a one hundred and fifty foot tall highway that would span the city. The promoters of the plan described it as the final step in changing Los Angeles from a horse and cart city to a metropolis.⁵³ The city's voters approved both the plan and the bond issue, allowing construction to begin. The city planner's main objective was to create a highway system which would service the city's periphery. Most of the road development took place around the city rather than in its central business district.⁵⁴ The creation of a highway system outside of the central business district greatly increased the degree to which Los Angeles was becoming decentralized.⁵⁵ The decentralization of the city afforded by the creation of a highway system allowed for a mass residential migration out of the central part of the city to outlying suburban areas. Businesses and professional offices relocated to the suburbs due to the

⁵² Ibid. 68-69.

⁵³ Sumner Hunt, "Vote Traffic Plan Tuesday!" *Los Angeles Times*, November 2nd, 1924.

⁵⁴ Mark Foster, "The Model T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles' Urban Growth: The Decentralization of Los Angeles During the 1920s," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44:4 (1975), 472.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 473.

relocation of working people to these areas. Thus, the interdependent cycle of business and residential development spurred continuous decentralization.

Creating a highway system in the Los Angeles area was not a simple task. The physical reordering of the natural environment necessary to build the highway system throughout Los Angeles County was comparable to that done for the creation of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Its construction required cutting into hills and along heavily graded mountains.⁵⁶ The act of building the highway system in itself was a major triumph of the city over nature.

While people still resided in the center of the city, the number of residential subdivisions in the outlying areas expanded enormously in the 1920s. Open land for all kinds of development outside of the business district of the city was both readily available and relatively inexpensive, prompting many people and businesses to relocate to the suburbs. Much of the development outside of the central portion of the city was devoted to single family homes for the growing number of people leaving the inner city.⁵⁷ The extent of the highway system eased the decision of Los Angeles residents to live much farther away from their places of work than ever before. The real estate developers played to the strengths of these outlying areas by describing them as secluded from the dirt and noise of the city but still only twenty-five miles away and as a home in the country with all the benefits of a city.⁵⁸ The highway system and the real estate development it fostered led to the rapid development of the

⁵⁶ Matthew W. Roth, "Mulholland Highway and the Engineering Culture of Los Angeles in the 1920s," in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, ed. Tom Sitton and William Deverell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 47.

⁵⁷ Mark Foster, "The Model T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles' Urban Growth: The Decentralization of Los Angeles During the 1920s," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44:4 (1975), 475.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 479.

city's suburbs while the central part of the city became increasingly focused on expanding business and industry at the expense of residential growth.

By 1930, Los Angeles was the country's biggest automobile city, with far more automobiles per person than in Detroit, the next largest automobile city.⁵⁹ Los Angeles' culture and associated growth in the 1920s was shaped by the automobile. The city grew rapidly with the introduction of the transcontinental railroads, but the introduction of the private automobile enabled unprecedented growth. The barriers that made immigrating to the city so very difficult in the late nineteenth century made no difference in the city's expansion outwards; "no natural barriers concentrated settlement."⁶⁰ The decentralization that occurred in Los Angeles in the 1920s due to the popularity of the private automobile and the creation of a suburban highway system directly fueled the city's adaptability to horizontal expansion, in contrast with many other cities in the United States with similar sized populations.

Automobiles did not create a complete suburbanization of the city. A large number of the Mexicans, Japanese, and African Americans living in Los Angeles still resided in the central sections of the city. The developers of the suburban areas created deed restrictions to keep ethnic "others" out, but some of the more exclusive suburbs also had fixed costs for houses to keep people with low incomes out. Despite the racial and economic segregation that restricted resettlement, millions of white Los Angeles residents were able to move to outlying suburban areas.⁶¹ By 1930, through the creation of various modes of transportation developed in spite of definite natural

⁵⁹ Ibid. 483.

⁶⁰ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 143.

⁶¹ Ibid. 147.

disadvantages, Los Angeles had managed to become a vast metropolis with a great deal of residential dispersion and commercial decentralization, making it geographically one of the largest cities in the country.

The geography of Los Angeles was not conducive to sustaining the physical needs of a mass migration of people. Surrounded on two sides by mountains and on another by the ocean (but with no natural harbor), Los Angeles had no easy options for routes in and out of the city. In order for the city to become a major metropolis, it had to exert considerable effort in constructing the necessary infrastructure and overcoming natural constraints to facilitate large scale immigration. Los Angeles competed fiercely to become the second major west coast city. While San Francisco was preeminent and the obvious choice for the first western terminus of a transcontinental railroad, Los Angeles was a less obvious choice than San Diego for the second city. Los Angeles, with all of its natural disadvantages, had to compete with the better situated San Diego, seemingly a much superior option for a transcontinental terminus (and port), for the opportunity to become the largest and most significant city in Southern California.

In vying to become an important western metropolis, Los Angeles had to overcome several obstacles. It first needed to join the transcontinental railroad system in order to be able to bring large numbers of people and quantities of goods and equipment across the country and into the city to allow for industries to develop. With the arrival of a second transcontinental railroad, Los Angeles was poised to capture a significant immigrant stream since a price war dramatically lowered the fare of train travel to the city to a price point affordable for the masses. Railroads opened land

access, but Los Angeles had no natural harbors like San Diego, so one had to be created before it could become a fully industrialized city with a major shipping port. Los Angeles' final step to overcoming its obstacles to growth was the creation of a street and highway system.

The availability of mass produced, affordable automobiles served to decentralize the city of Los Angeles making it the sprawling metropolis that it is today. Once the roads were improved and a highway system was created, Los Angeles' residents were able to move around the city with relative ease and spread both residentially and commercially to the outlying areas. These improvements allowed Los Angeles to become an alternative to the congested, vertical cities of America's past.

The opening of Los Angeles to migration from the rest of the United States, to ocean shipping, and to interurban movement was a collaborative effort of large companies generally supported by the city's populace. The railroads played a crucial early role in raising the accessibility of the city for large-scale immigration and in developing a major port, but it was the people of Los Angeles who determined the contours of settlement. While the city of Los Angeles was responsible for improvements to the roads and the creation of the highway system, those initiatives were a direct response to the demonstrable needs and desires of its residents who chose the efficiency and comfort of private automobiles over a crowded streetcar system. Los Angeles was shaped by the complementary forces of railroad executives, entrepreneurs, and residents. The extension of rail lines, creation of a deep-water harbor, and development of a system of highways and roads to match the growth of

the private automobile resulted in a complex and interdependent transportation network. In light of its natural geographic limitations to growth the formation of one of the largest and most developed cities in the United States clearly owes much to the cumulative momentum of strong willed people and modern technologies.

Chapter 3: Seeing America First

Los Angeles is located in an environment almost completely lacking in the natural geographic advantages that are conducive to large scale human development. The previous chapters have outlined two of the major factors that should have hindered the growth and prosperity of Los Angeles: its inadequate water supply and the natural barriers that made the city inaccessible to migration. Much of Southern California, including Los Angeles, is semi-arid, making farming without irrigation almost impossible. Los Angeles also lacked any navigable rivers or natural harbors; this, combined with being surrounded by mountains to the east and north, made it fairly remote from the rest of the country. Effective isolation, until the 1870s and the coming of the transcontinental railroad, made it so that most of the country had scarcely heard of the backwater that was Los Angeles.

Between 1880 and 1930, Los Angeles created the infrastructure necessary to surmount these environmental hurdles to growth. The construction jobs associated with this new infrastructure generated some population increase, but the biggest impetus for growth did not come from the need for laborers on the railroads or the aqueduct. Immigrants flocked to Los Angeles without immediate jobs or other security largely due to the massive promotional campaigns of the city's promoters and boosters. Without the efforts and enthusiasm of the boosters, Los Angeles might have remained a minor cow town as so many other western cities did, but through the combined attention of industry and city promoters and tourism boosters, Los Angeles became one of the largest cities in the United States.

With the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the Southern Pacific Railroad's Tehachapi Loop in 1876, Los Angeles was opened up to the rest of the country and was finally included in the promotional campaigns that were encouraging the development of the "far west."¹ During the Gold Rush, many Americans traveled to Northern California but it wasn't until the creation of the Southern Pacific's Tehachapi line through Los Angeles that large scale immigration to Southern California became feasible.

Boosterism for Los Angeles occurred in two distinct phases, an early one that stretched from the arrival of the transcontinental railroads in the late 1870s and early 1880s to the turn of the 20th century. This first phase played a critical role in transforming Los Angeles into a major agricultural and manufacturing center. The second phase, from the turn of the century to the eve of the Great Depression, further transformed the city into one of the nation's major metropolises. The two periods are distinguished by the types of promoters and the means they employed to attract settlement. In the earlier period, boosters included railroads, tourism companies, and travel writers working directly for the railroads or as freelancers for national magazines such as *Harper's Monthly*. Later boosterism still featured travel writers but they were now writing for magazines dedicated to the promotion of Southern California and Los Angeles. The large scale agricultural and industrial concerns in Los Angeles also began to generate promotional materials in the later period.

Boosters during both periods utilized similar strategies for promoting the region and the city but, in the early period, they tended to concentrate on inviting

¹ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

travelers to visit and settle. In contrast, promotional materials during the later period frequently brought the Los Angeles experience to Americans through promotional campaigns that conveyed the city's agricultural, commercial, and cultural products to exhibitions throughout the country, though predominantly in the midwest. In addition to the traveling displays which characterized the later period of boosterism, Los Angeles became a major exporter of goods which, in turn, created an even greater awareness of the city and its products. There was less direct attention to generating migration and more of an effort to promote the region's commercial growth. Nevertheless, these later strategies were largely effective due to the foundation laid by the earlier boosters who had worked so diligently to introduce the unique attributes of Los Angeles to the rest of the country.

Some of the earliest promotional campaigns for westward tourism and settlement came from the railroads, as well as from tourism advocates. The transcontinental railroads had a vested interest in convincing Americans to accept "national tourism" as a viable alternative to popular northeastern and European tourist destinations.² In the 1870s and 1880s round trip fares for transcontinental travel were still prohibitively expensive for the lower classes, and middle and upper class Americans preferred the fashionable northeastern and European attractions. The railroads and tourism promoters had to do a great deal of persuasive work before Americans would accept transcontinental travel and tourism.³

Early guide books, like one published by George A. Crofutt in 1869 for the Union Pacific, were crucial in promoting the west. Many of the pre-transcontinental

² Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 17.

³ *Ibid.* 17.

guides to the west were merely first hand accounts of individual travels. Crofutt's guide book included train schedules, fares, advice to travelers on where to visit, and "what is worth seeing – where to see it – how to go – and whom to stop with while passing over the Union Pacific Railroad...from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean."⁴ Guide books promoted transcontinental westward travel as an expression of Manifest Destiny, promoting tourism, settlement, and investment in an expanding nation.⁵ A new picture of transcontinental travel emerged from the guide books, but their focus was on tourism across the whole country. Given their prevalence, guide books were hugely influential in determining how average Americans viewed the west and cross country travel. Crofutt can be credited with popularizing the term "transcontinental."⁶ More regional and eventually city specific promotion emerged only as a function of the competition between the railroads.

At the beginning of the 1880s, as the number of railroad lines and companies multiplied in the west, increased competition for passengers caused fares to fall and marketing to rise as railroads created promotional campaigns advertising the attractions along their lines. At the same time, the tourism industry began to independently promote the west. Touring firms in the northeast created rail travel packages to various destinations in the west. One of the most famous of these firms

⁴ George A. Crofutt, *Great Trans-Continental Railroad Guide* (Chicago: Geo A. Crofutt, 1869), title page.

⁵ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 20.

⁶ Valerie J. Fifer, *American Progress: The Growth of the Transport, Tourist, and Information Industries in the Nineteenth-Century West, seen through, The Life and Times of George A. Crofutt: Pioneer and Publicist of the Transcontinental Age* (Chester, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 1988) 170.

was the Raymond and Whitcomb Company.⁷ Some trips sponsored by the touring firms were lengthy, with multiple stops at scenic locations in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, while others toured areas in the northwest stretching all the way up to Alaska.

In conjunction with these new tours of the country, a system of hotels and resorts were created to serve the passengers. Railroads and touring firms frequently built their own resort hotels near their railroads. Walter Raymond, of the Raymond and Whitcomb Company, built a massive hotel in Pasadena, California in 1883 to support his tours. Yet, even as the tourism infrastructure in the west developed, many wealthy Americans still wanted to stay in the east or go to Europe for their vacations.⁸ In order for the American west to become a major destination for tourism, and settlement, it had to be developed more, both structurally and in the national imagination.

Transcontinental travel had become a tourist possibility when the Central Pacific's transcontinental railroad made traveling overland to San Francisco much more appealing. Transcontinental travel to California, specifically to Northern California, was established as a feasible alternative to eastern and European tourist destinations. Therefore, Los Angeles was not faced with convincing easterners and midwesterners of the ease and comfort of transcontinental railroad travel; they merely had to find ways to promote Los Angeles over any of the other cities that the transcontinental railroads served. The city not only desired to attract tourists, but also

⁷ Raymond and Whitcomb Co., *Raymond's Vacation Excursions, New Orleans, Mexico, and California: Three Grand Tours, Jan. 17, Feb. 7, Mar. 8* (Boston, MA: American Printing and Engraving Co., 1893).

⁸ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 26.

settlers. The railroads and touring firms were bringing people westward for tourism and settlement but in order for Los Angeles to truly thrive, the city had to convince Americans that traveling to Los Angeles was an attractive alternative to Europe and the rest of America. The one highlight that Los Angeles' promoters featured in almost every single publication and campaign was the favorable climate.

Tourism was the major focus of the boosterism and promotional campaigns for the western United States during the 1870s and beginning of the 1880s, but in the late 1880s and early 1890s, as Los Angeles developed the infrastructure essential to growth, its boosters and promoters began a campaign for settlement. This promotional push came in two stages. Due to their crucial role in the development of Los Angeles, the railroads and tourism companies were committed to playing a significant role in the early promotional campaigns for Los Angeles. But the major railroad of the time, the Southern Pacific, focused most of its attention on either the state as a whole or on San Francisco and Northern California. As a result, promoting Los Angeles as a distinct place required other stakeholders to play a large role in Los Angeles' promotional campaigns. One of the most important of these players was the city promoter; city promoters were typically umbrella organizations whose constituents wished to attract immigrants to the city in order to expand the city's commercial ventures. One of the most prominent of the city promoters was the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, established in 1888 by some of the city's most influential citizens.⁹

⁹ Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (1985), 24-25.

The primary objective of both the railroads and the Chamber of Commerce was to overcome the general ignorance of the merits of Los Angeles throughout the rest of the country. In the 1880s, the city was a relative backwater to the greater population of the United States. In an effort to combat this image, the railroads employed popular travel writers to introduce the United States to the benefits and ease of vacationing and settling in Southern California and Los Angeles.

In the earliest stages of promotion, the city's promoters and boosters were in competition with Europe and its strong hold on wealthy American tourists and, to a lesser extent, with other developing tourist areas in the country.

“There have been Americans who saw Rome before they saw Niagara; and for one who has visited Yosemite, a hundred will tell you about the Alps, and a thousand about Paris. Now, I have no objection to Europe; but I would like to induce Americans, when they contemplate a journey for health, pleasure, or instruction, or all three, to think also of their country, and particularly California, which has so many delights in store for the tourist and so many attractions for the farmer or settler looking for a mild and healthful climate and a productive country.”¹⁰

This assessment was written in 1873 by Charles Nordhoff for his travel account and promotional book, *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence, A Book for Travelers and Settlers*. Beginning in the late 1850s, Nordhoff became one of America's preeminent authors of travel literature. As a younger man Charles Nordhoff was a member of the United States Navy, an occupation that allowed him to

¹⁰ Charles Nordhoff, *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence. A Book for Travelers and Settlers* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1873), 11.

travel all around the world and visit exciting and exotic locations which he described in his earliest travel narratives for *Harper's Magazine*.¹¹

Founded in 1850, by the late nineteenth century *Harper's Magazine* was one of the foremost national magazines, especially for the middle and upper classes. It had a national audience and a very high circulation, steadily rising from 50,000 after its inception.¹² It was known as an intellectual journal but also appealed to a broader middle class audience. Next to the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Magazine* was perhaps the premier journal in the United States at the time. The writers who were published in *Harper's* had a national audience. Harper Brothers was also a major book publisher, familiar to a broad national audience. Nordhoff's travel essays in *Harper's*, later collected and supplemented in book form and published by the Harper firm, reached a massive audience with his very positive assessment of California.

Nordhoff's earliest articles for *Harper's* were spent guiding the readers through his adventures around the world, providing them with vicarious experience of fantastic travel as an escape from the monotony of their daily routines and the fears and dangers of the Civil War. In many of these earlier pieces, Nordhoff chose to recall locations that were as far away from America as possible. He wrote about seeing elephants in Sri Lanka.¹³ He described the sights and sounds of Africa as well as the luxurious time that could be spent in places like Point Royal, Jamaica.¹⁴

¹¹ Charles Nordhoff, "Autobiography and Reminiscence of Charles Nordhoff, (Deceased), 1901," *Institutional Records Digitization Project: Reminiscences of Early Pioneers: 1900-1904*, <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt7d5nc99c/?order=3&brand=calisphere>.

¹² About *Harper's Magazine*, "The History of *Harper's*," *Harper's Magazine*, <http://harpers.org/harpers/about>.

¹³ Charles Nordhoff, "A Peep at the Elephants," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 20 (1859:Dec.-1860: May): 455-467.

¹⁴ Charles Nordhoff, "Two Weeks at Point Royal," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 27 (1863: June/Nov.): 110-118.

Nordhoff gained a large following by appealing to his readers' desires to escape from their lives into his descriptions of travel.

By the 1870s Charles Nordhoff had shifted the focus of his travel literature to the United States with its own tourist destinations and exotic locales. A few of his articles were about eastern destinations such as Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard.¹⁵ They were places that, given the state of the transportation system in the United States, his readers could easily visit. However, most of Nordhoff's travel writings in America were centered on California. Nordhoff made it his goal to educate the rest of the country about California, particularly as a tourist destination. He recognized that Southern California was as foreign to his eastern and midwestern readers as Africa and Sri Lanka were. Between 1871 and 1874, Nordhoff wrote at least six major articles for *Harper's* and a whole book on the benefits of visiting and settling in California.

Prior to the prominence of national travel writers like Charles Nordhoff and later Charles Dudley Warner there was not much known about Southern California; previously most Americans only knew about San Francisco and the Gold Rush. National travel writers were the first to introduce Southern California to a wide audience. *Harper's Magazine*, which published travel accounts from Nordhoff and Warner, exposed a broad national audience to the benefits of tourism and settlement in Southern California.

Nordhoff wished to convince his readers that visiting and settling in California was an acceptable alternative to traveling to foreign cities and exotic locations. The

¹⁵ Charles Nordhoff, "Cape Cod, Nantucket, and the Vineyard," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 51 (1875: June/Nov.): 52-66.

key to Nordhoff's success was that in the eyes of his readers he was an experienced traveler; his previous writings had allowed them to travel to distant lands in their imaginations. In writing about California, he provided readers with more moderate incomes with a destination that they could afford to visit. The ability to actually follow in his foot steps and experience the sensation of traveling abroad without ever having to leave the country was attractive. Nordhoff's writings created and nurtured a desire in Americans to visit California.

One of the first articles that Nordhoff wrote for *Harper's* on California was titled, "California: How to Go There, and What to See By the Way." In it, he did exactly as the title promised; he painstakingly detailed the train trip from New York to San Francisco, explaining what the traveler would experience and be able to view along the route. He took care to set readers' minds at ease about the trip's safety and comfort. In assuaging potential travelers' anxieties about the trip, he compared it to an ocean going voyage. "I suspect that part of our discomfort in making a railroad journey comes from its brevity. You are unsettled...the journey to San Francisco takes not a few hours, but a number of days...you leave care behind in the depot, and make yourself comfortable, as one does on a sea voyage."¹⁶ Nordhoff closed the piece with a list of things he wished he had known when he took his first transcontinental trip, imparting useful pieces of advice to his readers that would help make their own journeys much simpler; for example, he recommended that the traveler "exchange your greenbacks for gold notes, which are more convenient than coin, and just as

¹⁶ Charles Nordhoff, "California: How to Go There, and What to See By the Way," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 44 (1871:Dec.-1872: May), 869.

serviceable.”¹⁷ On the final page he lists various possible tours in California, noting the length and potential cost of each one, thus encouraging his readers to plan their own trips by providing them with the necessary information.¹⁸

In other articles, Nordhoff discussed the benefits of California for the tourist and the settler. His focused on a few major themes which he hoped would have the greatest appeal to his readers. They echoed the techniques he employed earlier in writing about his experiences in foreign lands. His strategy was to conjure the image of traveling to an exotic place in his readers’ minds. However, unlike his earlier travel literature which never intended to convince people to actually follow in his footsteps, Nordhoff encouraged readers to take the trip to California. He emphasized three aspects of California that could draw tourists and settlers: the majesty of its natural beauties as tourist destinations, its vast agricultural potential, and its warm climate with attendant health benefits.

Most Americans had never seen many of the natural sights in America, let alone California. Wealthier Americans frequently traveled to Europe and wrote about its historical sites, natural and architectural wonders, and art. Nordhoff set about remedying this deficiency by vividly describing some of the natural wonders that California had to offer and how best to view them as a tourist in the west. He boasts about the benefits of having the Central Pacific Railroad in California as a means of transportation between the cities and tourist destinations, but the most persuasive parts of his narrative are the descriptions of the natural sights.¹⁹ Among the sights

¹⁷ Ibid. 879.

¹⁸ Ibid. 878-880.

¹⁹ Charles Nordhoff, “California: What to See There, and How to See It,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 45 (1872: June/Nov.): 65.

Nordhoff that claims should not be missed are Yosemite Valley and the Big Trees; he describes them as a “wonder and delight.”²⁰ Nordhoff also comments briefly on man-made tourist destinations in California, taking note of the San Gabriel and San Diego missions.²¹ His short comments on the Missions as a tourist destination in 1872 demonstrate interest in California’s Spanish and Mexican past well before the popularization of the missions by Helen Hunt Jackson in her novel, *Ramona*, in 1884.

Europe was full of architectural artifacts from ancient civilizations. They inspired tourists to visit and Romantic authors to write about them, encouraging even more tourism. The remains offered concrete testimony to Europe's long history. In comparison, California was relatively devoid of architectural artifacts. Nordhoff, and later Jackson, focused on the Missions since their presence infused California with a rich history, making it a rival to Europe and to the Eastern United States.

Nordhoff’s popularity as a travel writer and his descriptions of California’s potential as a tourist destination probably convinced many people to visit, but his bid to convince people to settle in California came through his examination of the state’s agriculture and climate.

Nordhoff took great pains to attract settlers to California by describing the agricultural potential of the state and its ability to provide an ample living for a family. In very plain terms he depicts what a typical growing season is like in California and why growing there is much easier than in the east; “thus it is evident the farmer had, in the long, dry California summer, an immense advantage over his

²⁰ Ibid. 79-81.

²¹ Ibid. 78.

eastern competitor.”²² He takes great pride in listing the numerous agricultural products one can grow in California with minimal effort. Nordhoff devotes a lot of space to writing about many of the fruits and vegetables grown, including pears, olives, English walnuts, but most of all oranges and lemons.²³ He also describes how easy it is to obtain land in California, should his readers choose to move there. He even goes so far as to suggest that multiple families move together and live on adjoining farms. Just as he made suggestions about how to most comfortably take a trip to California, he also suggests several ideas that will make starting a farm there much simpler. After describing the benefits of farming on flat land, he also suggests that “the foot-hills have a particular value of their own, which has been overlooked by eager California farmers...the subtropical fruits grow best on the foot-hills.”²⁴

The final major theme that Nordhoff stressed for his readers was California’s climate. He touched on the climate in his description of the state’s agricultural potential, noting how the mild climate and short winters extend the growing season, but one of his most important selling points for the climate was its health benefits. The United States was beginning to go through a health resort craze around the time that Nordhoff was writing, with sanitariums springing up in the east. Florida was also being promoted in the same glowing terms around this time. Nordhoff seized on this idea and began to promote the benefits of California’s climate and its effects on health. Nordhoff found that the climate which was so advantageous for farming was

²² Charles Nordhoff, “California: Its Products and Productiveness – Information for Farmers,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 45 (1872: June/Nov.): 256.

²³ *Ibid.* 262.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 265-266.

also invigorating to the people who lived in it.²⁵ In addition to healthy people being energized by the mild climate, the more stable warmth of the climate over the course of the year and from day to night was beneficial to invalids.²⁶ Nordhoff's depictions of California, from the best way to travel there, to its destinations, agricultural benefits, and healthy climate developed California as an attractive alternative to European tourism and as a viable location for settlement. He also created a pattern for many of the strategies for promotion that would be employed later by other boosters. The paradigms that Nordhoff created for promoting California persisted long after he stopped writing.

Charles Nordhoff was one of the earliest boosters employed by the railroads to attract easterners and midwesterners to California. He wrote this first travel book on California, *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence, A Book for Travelers and Settlers* (1874), for Collis P. Huntington and the Central Pacific Railroad. His writings set a standard for how the railroads and other booster groups would use promotional materials. The success of Nordhoff's travel account prompted the railroads to commission other writers to promote interest in California.²⁷

Beginning in the 1880s the railroads began to much more aggressively promote tourism and settlement in Los Angeles. The railroads heavily promoted travel to Southern California and Los Angeles for two very pragmatic reasons. The first, and fairly obvious reason, is that the railroads profited when ridership was

²⁵ Charles Nordhoff, *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence. A Book for Travelers and Settlers* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1873), 121.

²⁶ Charles Nordhoff, "California: What to See There, and How to See It," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 45 (1872: June/Nov.): 78.

²⁷ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 133.

increasing. When the Santa Fe Railroad reached Los Angeles in 1884-5 and began to compete with the Southern Pacific, cross country rates began to fall and transcontinental travel became much more affordable. Sometimes the fares fell as low as two-thirds of the original price.²⁸ The railroads had to compete for the privilege of transporting people and had to induce them to choose their railroad over that of their competitor.

The railroad companies also promoted immigration to Southern California and Los Angeles because the railroads, specifically the Southern Pacific, were among the largest land owners in the region.²⁹ The railroads' desire to promote immigration and, thus land sales to immigrants in Southern California was motivated by extending their business interests. The promotional campaigns of the railroads focused on the benefits to the small farmer. They presented small farms as a means to building wealth and order in California that large mechanized farms could not bring. The railroads promoted high density settlements and would sometimes develop the infrastructure of whole areas with irrigation and housing before they advertised the parcels of land. They built these developments through subsidiary companies, such as the Pacific Improvement Company, owned by the Southern Pacific.³⁰

During the 1880s, in the early days of western promotion, the northern parts of the state tended to be the focus of most boosters. The Southern Pacific assigned a great deal of its resources and promotional materials to the north with lesser sections of its literature devoted to the south. The Santa Fe railroad was much less invested in

²⁸ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 66.

²⁹ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 72.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 112.

the north and concentrated its promotional campaigns on Southern California.³¹ Following the precedent set by the Central Pacific and Charles Nordhoff, the Santa Fe employed well known authors of the day to create their promotional material. One such author was Charles Keeler who wrote *Southern California* as well as several other publications for the Santa Fe.³² In his book, Keeler described the various areas of Southern California, from the Sierra Madre Mountains to Santa Barbara to Los Angeles, and what a tourist might want to do while visiting each area. Keeler's written descriptions were complemented by vivid line drawings of the region's natural wonders and various other sights. While the Santa Fe was influential in promoting Southern California and Los Angeles, it was the Southern Pacific's promotional campaigns, stressing travel to Northern California which was the most widely distributed and responsible for attracting the most Americans to California. With competition and profit in mind, the Southern Pacific's Passenger Department became one of the largest western promotional bodies.

Most of the authors who were employed by the railroads to promote Los Angeles focused on its climate and as a result, many of the tourists and settlers attracted to Los Angeles and Southern California were most strongly influenced by the content of these promotional campaigns. The city's boosters presented it as equal to Mediterranean tourist destinations. One of the earliest and perhaps the most famous booster publication to accomplish this was Charles Dudley Warner's *Our Italy* (1891). Warner's book compared the climate and attractions of Southern California to Italy's and found California superior; "it is a Mediterranean with a more equable

³¹ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 51.

³² Charles A. Keeler, *Southern California* (Los Angeles: Santa Fe Passenger Department, 1899).

climate, warmer winters and cooler summers...it is an Italy whose mountains and valleys give almost every variety of elevation and temperature.”³³

Using comparisons to the Mediterranean, the French Riviera, Greece, and frequently romanticizing its mountains as the American Alps, Warner and other Los Angeles’ boosters attracted well-to-do midwesterners and easterners as settlers when they tired of the hard work required by farming in less temperate climates. However, those drawn by promises of an American Mediterranean also included many who merely vacationed in Los Angeles, the wealthiest using it as a winter resort for months at a time. The middle classes began arriving in large numbers in the summer for short vacations.

Charles Dudley Warner was one of the earliest boosters to heavily promote Los Angeles and Southern California’s climate. As one of the foremost boosters for Southern California and Los Angeles in the 1880s and 1890s, Warner followed in Charles Nordhoff’s footsteps, writing travel literature in an attempt to convince Americans to travel to and settle in Los Angeles. Like Nordhoff, Warner was a prominent writer for *Harper’s Magazine*.

Warner’s literary pedigree facilitated his prominence as a travel writer and promoter for Los Angeles and Southern California; one of his first books, *Saunterings* (1872), was an account recalling his travels throughout Europe, where he paid special attention to Italy and its attractions, including the favorable climate.³⁴ He wrote travelogues for several other destinations, such as Nova Scotia and the Southern United States. Travel writing was hugely popular in the United States. People were

³³ Charles Dudley Warner, *Our Italy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1891), 18.

³⁴ Charles Dudley Warner, *Saunterings* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1872).

enamored with reading about adventures in exotic locations. Warner's other early travel accounts include a second trip through Europe which he recorded in *A Roundabout Journey, in Europe* (1883) and an account of his adventures in Egypt in *My Winter on the Nile* (1876).

Warner, like Nordhoff, was a major travel writer but he also wrote novels including, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, co-authored with Mark Twain. It is a story of greed and corruption in post Civil War America, satirizing the drive to get rich through land speculation and political power.³⁵ Americans could relate to the themes of the story having witnessed them in their own lives, but still laugh at the satire.

Having gained a national audience through his travel articles and books, Charles Dudley Warner was able to market his promotional materials on Los Angeles to an established readership. Unlike many of Los Angeles' boosters in the 1880s and 1890s who followed Nordhoff's precedent of describing a trip to specific locations in Southern California and Los Angeles and then expounding on the benefits of travel and settlement in that area, Warner was much more direct in his promotion of the city and region. Warner did not write about the journey or the sights and destinations along the way. He focused instead on describing the reasons why people should visit and settle in the area; "I [Warner] think it demonstrable that a person would profitably exchange one hundred and sixty acres of farming land east of the one hundredth parallel for ten acres with a water right, in Southern California."³⁶ Warner used his

³⁵ Charles Dudley Warner and Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1873).

³⁶ Charles Dudley Warner, "The Outlook in Southern California," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 82 (1890:Dec.-1891: May): 167.

articles to promote the benefits of life in Southern California and Los Angeles. He discussed the region's agricultural potential, land prices, availability of water, and potential for gainful employment in farming and other industries.

Warner included illustrations in his articles and books on Southern California in order to depict the natural beauty of the region and its similarities to Italy and the Mediterranean region. Warner's readers would have been familiar with images of Italy and other foreign destinations through other travel narratives and would have been able to visualize the similarities between them and Warner's illustrations of Southern California. To encourage such comparisons, he included images of the region's ample plant life, with many different trees and flowering plants, and picturesque landscapes. Some of Warner's other illustrations were of the specific benefits that Southern California had to offer, such as artesian wells and pipes for irrigation and people working at various tasks from curing grapes into raisins to packing cherries.³⁷ Warner also depicted people participating in luxury activities such as taking a stroll in the park and visiting tourist destinations.³⁸ These non-California specific benefits demonstrated that tourists could participate in activities in California similar to those at other tourist destinations. Illustrations were important in helping the reader really connect with the locations and activities that Warner was describing.

Much of Warner's promotional writings treated Southern California as a region, but he commented specifically on Los Angeles' prominence in the region. He described it as the "the metropolitan centre of all this region."³⁹ In writing about the

³⁷ Charles Dudley Warner, *Our Italy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1891), 101-105, 130.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 21, 27.

³⁹ Charles Dudley Warner, "The Outlook in Southern California," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 82 (1890:Dec.-1891: May): 184.

city, Warner pays particular attention to its rapid growth in population and commercial wealth. He also briefly discusses the improvements to its infrastructure that were taking place in the 1890s.⁴⁰

Warner dwelt at length on the benefits and pleasure of spending time or living in a mild to warm, year round climate. He is at his most eloquent in his descriptions of the area's weather, inducing people to visit and settle the region through ample descriptions of the beautiful climate. He describes spending time in the mountains around Los Angeles "which are green from the winter rains and gay with a thousand delicate grasses and flowering plants."⁴¹ Accompanying these flowery descriptions are facts on the yearly temperatures and amount of rain fall that the region receives.⁴²

Through the promotional work of the railroads, tourism companies, and the writings of nationally known boosters like Charles Nordhoff and Charles Dudley Warner, Los Angeles was able to attract thousands of people to come as tourists and contribute to the financial growth of the tourism industries while also exposing the charms and practical benefits of the city to the rest of the country for the first time. Nordhoff stressed the reasons why Americans should want to "See America First" instead of visiting Europe.⁴³ He described the ease of traveling to California and the sights along the way. Nordhoff focused his travel writings on the benefits of tourism in California but he also made a strong case for settling there. His descriptions of the natural beauty, climate, and agricultural potential were likely responsible for a great deal of settlement. Writing a little later than Nordhoff, Warner was more direct in his

⁴⁰ Ibid. 184-185.

⁴¹ Charles Dudley Warner, "The Winter of Our Content," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 82 (1890:Dec.-1891: May): 50.

⁴² Ibid. 39-41.

⁴³ Charles Fletcher Lummis, *Mesa, Cañon, and Pueblo* (New York: The Century Co., 1925), 3.

promotion of Southern California and Los Angeles and was equally as effective. He described the benefits of living in Southern California, concentrating on its mild climate and year long growing season and paid special attention to Los Angeles as the major city in the region.

This early stage of promotion urged people to both visit and settle, enticing them through the glorification of the city's agricultural potential and climate. The boosters during the early period of Los Angeles' promotion were largely gifted travel writers. They concentrated on evoking strong imagery of the climate and agriculture and dispelled many of its perceived weakness, such as the difficulty of traveling to the city. Through this shared vision, they countered the presumption that western tourist destinations were inferior to European and eastern destinations. During a time when few in our country knew much about Los Angeles, the early boosters constructed a virtual city for the rest of America, anchored, ironically, in our national fascination with fashionable European travel. These early themes would echo through the next phase of Los Angeles boosterism when the city, and especially its agricultural and commercial sectors, would actively promote itself, rather than waiting for tourists and settlers.

Chapter 4: Selling Los Angeles

In the late 1890s, Los Angeles entered into a second booster phase which was defined by dedicated magazines and promotional campaigns mounted by large agricultural and manufacturing companies. The early period of boosterism, which built upon the network of essential improvements to the underlying infrastructure of the city, advanced a strong, positive vision of Los Angeles. Those campaigns drew settlers, but in order for the city to truly grow and develop, larger, more sophisticated promotional bodies and campaigns were essential to establish a critical population mass and commercial base. Now that the city's new water resources and delivery system were in place and the transcontinental railroad links and deep-water harbor were fully integrated, Los Angeles had developed an environment where large agricultural and industrial concerns could thrive. But, to capture that growth a proportionate expansion in the supply of human capital was essential. To encourage such growth, both business and municipal interests instigated several promotional campaigns that would make Los Angeles into one of the largest cities in the United States by the 1930s.

During the early 1890s, the Passenger Department of the Southern Pacific was the company's major promotional unit, directing almost the entirety of the railroad's boosterism. One of the Passenger Department's main contributions to Southern California's promotional surge was its expansion of the railroad's publication program. By the end of the 1880s, in order to increase the flow of tourists as well as

settlers to California, the railroad launched numerous pamphlets, magazines, and books.¹

The Passenger Department also supported the Sunset Homeseeker's Bureau, which was designed to stimulate settlement and development of less densely populated regions of California.² They instituted special "colonist" rates, which were heavily discounted and advertised rates for one-way tickets for people who intended to move to California. The Southern Pacific sold 140,000 of the "colonist" tickets in 1903; that number had increased to 795,000 by 1916.³ The railroad's magazine, *Sunset*, and the Southern Pacific's attempts to bring colonists to California were crucial to the development of the state, but while their efforts occasionally concentrated on Los Angeles, their scope had a northerly focus. Nevertheless, they did make an effort to assist regional boosterism groups, which included the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, one of the earliest promotional bodies to be solely focused on the growth of Los Angeles. By leveraging this assistance, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other Los Angeles specific boosterism groups were able to establish Los Angeles as one of the best publicized parts of the country by the 1920s.⁴

¹ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 157.

² Southern Pacific, Passenger Department, *Homeseekers' Excursions to California* (Southern Pacific Co., 1901).

³ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 163.

⁴ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 70.

The first Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1873 but only lasted four years. Reorganized in 1888, it became a lasting promotional entity.⁵ The Chamber of Commerce was formed not only to support business and industrial growth in the city, but also to attract settlers. Two of the most prominent early members of the Chamber were Colonel Harrison Grey Otis, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, and Charles D. Willard, an early Secretary for the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber was able to widely distribute promotional information to a national audience, though their focus was primarily on the midwest.⁶ Willard was crucial in the production and dissemination of Los Angeles promotional material. One of Willard's most famous promotional works was *The Herald's History of Los Angeles* (1901).⁷ The Chamber partly relied on members, like Otis and Willard, to publish promotional material, but it also engaged in a great deal of boosterism publishing. It focused on attracting farmers and laborers from the midwest and the south for settlement and disseminated tens of thousands of publications to them.

The Southern Pacific Passenger Department's magazine with the widest circulation in the early twentieth century was *Sunset*. Its circulation in 1899 was only 15,000 subscribers, but with the turn of the century it changed its format and added more pictures so that "by 1911, the journal averaged more than 100,000 copies and 500,000 readers per month."⁸ The magazine promoted all of the attractions that California and the western United States had to offer. It included pieces on the area's

⁵ Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (1985): 24.

⁶ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 58-59.

⁷ Charles Dwight Willard, *The Herald's History of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Kingsley-Barnes, and Neuner Co., 1901).

⁸ *Ibid.* 159.

history, agricultural development, industries, and anything else that the Passenger Department felt would attract visitors.⁹ *Sunset* and various articles in the most popular magazines and journals of the day, including the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's* and *Harper's*, totaled thousands of pages of promotional material for California. The influence of the promotional articles in these magazines demonstrated to Los Angeles' boosters the benefits of visibility in nationally distributed magazines and, in the case of *Sunset*, the essential logic of having a magazine of their own.

In the late 1860s San Francisco and Northern California had experienced the lack of national profile and recognition that Los Angeles and Southern California were attempting to deal with beginning in the 1880s. They had experienced an explosion in population growth and regional development during the Gold Rush but, by the 1860s, fewer settlers were arriving and Northern California had to find a way to promote itself without the allure of gold. One response to this problem was the creation of a magazine dedicated to promoting San Francisco and the region as a whole. *The Overland Monthly*, created in 1868, was modeled after the *Atlantic Monthly* in size and design but its content was almost completely geared towards western themes.

The magazine would not have been such a success without Bret Harte as its editor. One of the first pieces he wrote for *The Overland Monthly* in 1868 was titled "The Luck of Roaring Camp." It depicted the life of an infant in a gold prospecting camp. The story quickly achieved major acclaim in the United States and Europe and "some of this new-won fame was communicated to the magazine."¹⁰ *The Overland*

⁹ Ibid. 159.

¹⁰ Ernest R. May, "Bret Harte and the Overland Monthly," *American Literature* 22:3 (Nov., 1950): 262.

Monthly became hugely popular and introduced many Americans to the culture and social life of San Francisco. The magazine folded in 1875, partially due to the panic of 1873 and the inept editors who followed Harte, but it created a clear precedent which Los Angeles promoters could follow.¹¹

The more popular boosters, such as Charles Nordhoff and later Charles Dudley Warner, were able to publish their promotional literature in the major literary magazines of the day but these venues were not focused on promoting Los Angeles. They were national magazines and had to serve national interests; promoting California and Los Angeles was just a small part of their enterprise. Los Angeles boosters recognized the advantages of creating a dedicated magazine similar to *The Overland Monthly*. With a dedicated magazine, they could distribute concentrated and targeted promotional materials without relying on national magazines that might not give them the necessary latitude to fully promote the city.

That magazine was *The Land of Sunshine*. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce was confident of the advisability of a dedicated magazine so they underwrote the first few issues of *The Land of Sunshine* until it was able to start generating its own revenue from advertising.¹² *The Land of Sunshine* was a promotional magazine based on the template of *The Overland Monthly* and, to a lesser extent, *Sunset*, in the manner in which it presented a wide range of topics. *The*

¹¹ Ibid. 271.

¹² Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 60.

Land of Sunshine, however, was designed specifically as a promotional tool for Los Angeles.¹³

It began as a small magazine but, when Charles Fletcher Lummis took over editorship in 1895, he was able to greatly expand its readership due to his popularity as an author. Lummis had been a newspaperman for most of his career; he walked to Los Angeles from Cincinnati in 1885 in order to take a job as a writer for the *Los Angeles Times* and its editor Harrison Gray Otis, a booster himself. Some of his earliest articles for the *Times* were travel accounts of his walk across America. His articles were presented as a diary but he used them as propaganda for making the trip and settling in the west.¹⁴ Lummis also wrote for other magazines, such as *Harper's* and *Scribner's*. With these credentials, Charles Fletcher Lummis was an excellent choice to become the editor of *The Land of Sunshine*. It would become one of the major promotional magazines for Los Angeles, Southern California and, due to Lummis' love of Native American cultures in the region, the Southwest in general.

The Land of Sunshine billed itself as the only exclusively western magazine.¹⁵ It featured articles on the history of Southern California, topics in current cultural and political areas of life, and short stories about living in the region. As a magazine it was a catch all for promotional literature about the Southwest, Southern California, and Los Angeles. One its more important functions was to promote settlement in the

¹³ Charles Fletcher Lummis ed., *Land of Sunshine: A Southwestern Magazine* (Los Angeles: Land of Sunshine Publishing Co., 1895).

¹⁴ Charles Fletcher Lummis, "Lum's Diary: The First Lead in the Ledger of 1885," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1885, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed February 14, 2010).

¹⁵ Charles Fletcher Lummis ed., *Land of Sunshine: A Southwestern Magazine* (Los Angeles: Land of Sunshine Publishing Co., August-September 1901).

Los Angeles area. To accomplish this, there were frequent articles on how to purchase the best land in the area and make it profitable.¹⁶

In conjunction with these promotional efforts to increase settlement, *The Land of Sunshine* made use of photographs to depict the splendor of the region. This was a departure from many of the earlier booster materials which only used drawings. Viewers perceived photographs as accurate representations of the region's attractions, not subject to the alterations that visual artists might employ to enhance nature and the built environment. Boosters in *The Land of Sunshine* showed their readers photographs of the cities that they were trying to attract them to visit and settle in. Booster relied on the authoritative status photography enjoyed to display the charms of Southern California and Los Angeles in a way that even the most graphic descriptions and charming drawings failed to convey.

The title of *The Land of Sunshine* was changed to *Out West* in 1902 but it remained one of the most prominent booster magazines for Southern California and Los Angeles into the 1920s.¹⁷ The format remained largely the same but, as time went on, Lummis began to include more and more on Native Americans, both from a cultural and an archeological standpoint.¹⁸ Like Helen Hunt Jackson in *Ramona*, Lummis was interested by the plight of Native Americans. Both Jackson and Lummis hoped that their work would spark an interest in Native American cultures that might help save them from impending destruction. However, Lummis was not exactly like Jackson; Jackson believed that her book could effect change that would protect the

¹⁶ Ibid. 165.

¹⁷ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 61.

¹⁸ Charles Fletcher Lummis and Charles A. Moody ed., *Out West: A Magazine of the Old Pacific and the New*, (Los Angeles: Out West Magazine Company, January-June 1909), index.

Native Americans or at least their culture. Lummis did not seem to have the same lofty ideas of what his writing could do. He was participating in a form of salvage anthropology more than a political campaign. Lummis investigated the Native Americans in a much more scientific way than Jackson, who used her novel to romanticize their history and current plight.

Lummis' attraction to Native Americans seems to have come from an urge to record and preserve what he understood as a culture disappearing in the face of encroaching development. Native Americans represented an exotic legacy and, like the Missions, gave Southern California an air of history that it otherwise lacked. In conjunction with providing an element of history to the region, Lummis' writings about the Native American cultures also evoked a certain degree of nostalgia. Since he assumed that Native Americans were largely gone from Southern California and that the remaining ones were harmless, he could adopt a nostalgic tone toward them, just as Nordhoff and Jackson had done in writing about the missions which had fallen into disuse. Lummis' writings in *The Land of Sunshine*, *Out West*, and in other books and articles about the Native Americans recreated an idyllic world prior to the United States' acquisition of California and the destruction of the Native Americans' way of life. While Lummis did not participate in nearly the same sort of romanticizing of the Native Americans as Helen Hunt Jackson did, his depictions of them as a people were definitely pitched that way; "the American Indian is a fine, unspoiled human being, from whom we have much to learn – and to whom, at least, we should give what is due to all men, fair play."¹⁹

¹⁹ Charles Fletcher Lummis, *Mesa, Cañon, and Pueblo* (New York: The Century Co., 1925), 256.

To illustrate his works on Native Americans, Lummis used drawings and pictures depicting their homes, culture, art and, most of all, he placed pictures of the Native Americans themselves in his works.²⁰ Lummis felt that the role of illustrations was not merely to attract curious readers, but to “answer the questions that the text provokes.”²¹ Lummis’ work on the Native Americans, Southern California, and the Southwest in general provided many Americans with much more detailed accounts than they had been provided with by previous boosters. He focused on a softer sell, describing life in the region, rather than direct persuasion solely focused on attracting as many migrants as possible.

Based on the precedents of San Francisco and Northern California publications, the dedicated magazine became an essential tool for the promotion of Southern California and Los Angeles. It provided a forum to focus on the unique benefits of the area, bringing multiple different types of promotional materials, from short stories to direct ads for real estate, together in one convenient and attractive package for potential visitors and settlers.

In addition to circulating tens of thousands of pamphlets and buying advertising space in newspapers and magazines across the country, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce established exhibits of agriculture in the city for potential tourists and settlers to experience. They encouraged local Los Angeles farmers to ship their produce and goods to fairs and expositions in New Orleans, Omaha, Chicago, and even San Francisco.²² The Chamber funded a touring railroad car filled with the

²⁰ Ibid. 268.

²¹ Ibid. ix.

²² Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 70.

region's fruits and vegetables, accompanied by spokesmen. One of these touring exhibits was called "California on Wheels." Starting in 1888, it traveled from town to town in the midwest displaying the products of Southern California. The Chamber's director of publicity in 1891, Frank Wiggins, redesigned "California on Wheels" making it hugely successful.²³

With the turn of the twentieth century, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other booster groups realized that their promotional work needed to broaden beyond the primacy of the city's agricultural advantages. They needed to supplement their existing touring exhibits and promotional literature. This alteration in promotion techniques was partially due to a new and different stream of immigration. Immigrants to the city were now arriving primarily from the midwest. As midwesterners became the main target for immigration promotion, agricultural boosterism became much less pronounced and the promoters began to concentrate yet again on the benefits of Los Angeles' climate. During the early part of the twentieth century through World War I, there was widespread economic prosperity for midwestern farmers, many of whom made enough money to quit farming and retire to the milder climate of Los Angeles.²⁴ But, not only wealthy farmers were enticed by Los Angeles' new promotional techniques, by the 1920's, thousands of midwesterners were migrating to Los Angeles to experience the warm climate and exotic landscape of ocean and mountains.

²³ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 49.

²⁴ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 74.

The success of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce's boosterism campaigns set the tone for several other promotional groups, including the All Year Club and, once the private automobile gained large-scale popularity, the Automobile Club of Southern California. The All Year Club was created with help from the Chamber of Commerce to promote year round travel to Los Angeles. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, tourists to Los Angeles arrived mainly in the winter. The goal of the All Year Club was to convince people to travel to the city all year round, hence the name. The All Year Club was founded in 1921 as a way to attract more tourists and tourist dollars to the city.²⁵ They produced promotional material meant to be dispersed at railroad depots, hotels, and tourism conventions. These promotional materials were some of the most grandiose in presenting the benefits of Southern California, with titles such as *Southern California, Year 'Round Vacation Land Supreme*, and slogans promising the ability to "sleep under a blanket every night all summer in Southern California."²⁶ Their main goal was to build up the city's tourism industry by telling potential tourists about the pleasures of visiting Los Angeles.

The new popularity of the private automobile in the 1920s brought thousands of new immigrants flocking to Los Angeles, possibly the first great migration of the automobile age.²⁷ The Automobile Club of Southern California, formed in response to this influx of immigrants, provided them with promotional maps guiding them around Los Angeles and its attractions. They also took it upon themselves to put up

²⁵ Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (1985): 26.

²⁶ C.G. Milham, *Southern California, Year 'Round Vacation Land Supreme* (Los Angeles: All-Year Club of Southern California, 1928); Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 137.

²⁷ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 135.

street signs around the city and distribute road maps to make travel in the city safer and more convenient.²⁸ With the decreased cost of travel by private automobiles, Americans who traveled to Los Angeles were less invested since they could always return home cheaply.²⁹

The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other city promoters emphasized diverse aspects of the city in their booster campaigns in the hope of both attracting settlement and promoting the city's business interests. The Chamber of Commerce had an Industrial Bureau which was tasked with convincing manufacturers to shift their plants to Los Angeles; one important part of their campaign to attract industry was depicting the city's workforce as being far more contented than its eastern counterpart.³⁰

The city's major agricultural and later industrial concerns devoted a great deal of time and money to attracting immigration and, more importantly for the companies, growing the economy. Until the 1910s these boosterism groups came from the city's agricultural companies since Los Angeles did not develop a large industrial base until after that date. The most prominent agricultural group to promote the city and its goods was the citrus industry, in particular the Southern California Fruit Growers Exchange.

The Southern California Fruit Growers Exchange was formed by southern Californian fruit growers in 1893 to combat depressed citrus prices in the 1890s. By

²⁸ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 115.

²⁹ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 74.

³⁰ Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (1985), 29.

1905 they had incorporated growers in the Northern part of the state and eventually adopted the name “Sunkist.”³¹ Sunkist’s first promotional campaign targeted the midwest in a manner similar to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce’s “California on Wheels” exhibit. They started a newspaper campaign and sent thousands of pieces of literature on oranges to Iowa, declaring a special “Orange Week in Iowa.”³² The entire campaign was called “Oranges for Health – California for Wealth.” Even though Sunkist was specifically marketing oranges, their efforts promoted an image of Los Angeles as a place for superior agricultural products. Sunkist’s promotions worked to make oranges synonymous with the sunny, sub-tropical climate of Southern California. By the 1920s, agriculture became much less important to the Los Angeles boosters and, while companies like Sunkist continued to tie their promotional material to the Southern California environment, industrial growth achieved a much greater importance in the promotion and growth of the city.

Los Angeles’ businessmen and industrialists, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, began to develop the city’s industries in the 1910s. Their goal was to bring industry to Los Angeles with as much intensity and effectiveness as they had promoted settlement. Some of the earliest industrial concerns to arrive were tire and automobile companies, but Los Angeles was most fortunate when the movie industry located in the city. They were also lucky to discover oil which gave rise to a booming petroleum industry.³³ The movie and oil industries provided jobs for thousands of

³¹ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 71.

³² Josephine Kingsbury Jacobs, “Sunkist Advertising – The Iowa Campaign,” in *Los Angeles: Biography of a City*, ed. John Caughey and LaRee Caughey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 217.

³³ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 124.

people. The film industry in particular was its own form of promotion since, as movies became the most popular form of entertainment in the United States, people began to obsess about movie stars and where they lived, which was largely Los Angeles. But the film industry did not provide enough jobs for a rapidly growing city. Los Angeles needed to become a major industrial center in the 1920s in order to be able to support its large, and still growing, population.

In their promotional campaigns, industrial boosters focused on two of Los Angeles' benefits, its anti-union environment and, yet again, the climate. One of Los Angeles' major selling points for industry was that it was a completely "open shop," anti-union city. The Chamber of Commerce took great pride in the fact that their workers were "content" without unions; R.W. Pridham, the president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1926, called the city "The Citadel of the Open Shop."³⁴ The Merchants and Manufacturers Association in the city believed that Los Angeles' lack of organized labor was its greatest asset. Industry was largely able to sustain open shop policies as a result of the supply of unskilled Mexican laborers willing to take almost any job open to them.

The city's antipathy to organized labor was not, however, its only draw for industrialists. The promoters also focused on the climate as beneficial to industry. Willis Owen made it his goal to convince business men that Los Angeles' climate was perfect for a factory. The semi-tropical climate was advertised as being able to keep heating and cooling costs in factories down and also to make workers more efficient. The city was also billed as being much cleaner than eastern manufacturing

³⁴ Ibid. 130.

cities.³⁵ By the 1930s, the city was able to attract enough industries, including “oil refineries and motion picture studios, branch automobile and rubber plants, and local furniture and clothing factories...slaughterhouses, publishing firms, and lumber mills,” to become one of the largest industrial cities on the west coast.³⁶ Due to the boosters’ intense promotion of immigration to the city, there was never a lack of labor for the industrial concerns. A major goal of the Chamber of Commerce's and other groups’ promotions was to bring more industries and more capital into the growing city.

Los Angeles promoters had to compete with other areas of the country which were promoting tourism and settlement. San Diego had been the city’s main regional competitor for settlement prior to Los Angeles becoming the southern terminus for the transcontinental railroad. In the 1880s, San Francisco was the major city on the west coast of the United States, but Los Angeles and San Diego were both poised to challenge San Francisco’s dominance if they could become the southern terminus of the transcontinental railroad. Once Los Angeles gained the terminus for both the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe railroads, it became the main city in Southern California.³⁷ Los Angeles also competed with Florida as a destination for tourism and settlement. Florida was an alternative prominent destination for winter tourism in the early 1920s and Los Angeles promoters, especially the All Year Club, fought hard to convince people that their city was the preferable destination. With all of its avenues of promotion, Los Angeles was well positioned to become a major metropolis but its

³⁵ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 94.

³⁶ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 132.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 62.

promoters still had issues to overcome, most notably the visibility of its Mexican population.

In their attempts to promote Los Angeles to the outside world for tourism and growth, the boosters needed to find ways to cope with the Mexican immigrants who were adapting to life in Los Angeles. Boosters and city promoters viewed Los Angeles' Spanish history as one of the most beneficial selling points that they had. They were able to promote the Spanish missions by restoring and romanticizing the past with literature like Helen Hunt Jackson's novel, *Ramona*, originally published in 1886.³⁸

The boosters, however, had much more difficulty presenting the city's Mexican past. They decided to appropriate only the parts of the Mexican history they could use and to downplay everything else, including the immigrant population currently living in the city. George Sánchez describes the process of deconstructing the city's Mexican history and rebuilding it in a more marketable manner; "by depicting the city's Latino heritage as a quaint, but altogether disappearing element in Los Angeles culture, city officials inflicted a particular kind of obscurity onto Mexican descendants of that era by appropriating and then commercializing their history."³⁹ Promotional material for the city only presented its ethnic past in an effort to create an aura of an exotic, semi-topical fantasy, or when it wanted to depict visiting Los Angeles as a way to visit a foreign city while remaining in the United States.⁴⁰

³⁸ Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona* (New York: Signet Classics, 2002).

³⁹ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71.

⁴⁰ Henry Holt, "A Foreign Tour at Home," *Putnam's* 4 (April-September 1908): 154-161.

The boosters hoped the Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles would disappear in a manner similar to the way the Native American populations were presumed to have disappeared years earlier.⁴¹ The Mexicans were supposed to fade away and have their former presence only brought up briefly to inspire tourists. Los Angeles' Mexican history was meaningless to new residents who felt no connection to the city's past. The Historical Society of Southern California decided in 1884 that saving anything from "earlier periods" in the area's history was not important. The president of the society told his members that the city's Mexican heritage was no more than a dozen or so names and crumbling adobes. He felt that Los Angeles' development really came from its imagined Anglo-Saxon roots.⁴² The message from the president of the historical society was harsher than the city's promotion attempts, but it still echoed the feelings of the city's promoters. Los Angeles' Mexican history was only valuable when it could be used in romantic, palpable fantasies.⁴³ As Los Angeles grew and become more "American," the city and its promoters were able to almost completely eradicate its true past in their promotional material and focus on minimizing the visibility of its current population of Mexican immigrants.

The proportion of Mexicans in Los Angeles was substantially diminished by the 1920s, but they were nevertheless present even though boosters depicted it as a fading presence. In fact the Mexican population in Los Angeles during the 1920s was actually growing due to the city's necessity for unskilled labor; "the Mexican population of the city, which had numbered around 30,000 in 1920, rose dramatically

⁴¹ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 28.

⁴² *Ibid.* 29.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 29.

in the decade to at least 97,000 by 1930.”⁴⁴ With Mexicans increasingly necessary as unskilled labor in the agricultural fields and in metropolitan Los Angeles, it became difficult to hide them away, even in promotional materials. Thus, the boosters and city promoters needed to find a way to present the Mexican population without overly emphasizing their presence; the question was “how could [they] be pictured in the quaint rhymes and images of Los Angeles boosterism?”⁴⁵ Two separate techniques for dealing with the Mexican working population arose in response to this problem.

The strategy of some boosters was to belittle the actual involvement of Mexicans in the city. They trivialized the influence of Mexicans on the city’s economy and instead promoted concepts of prosperity based on Anglo-American migration. They further described the presence of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles as a bare minimum who only crossed the border when there was unskilled labor for them to do.⁴⁶ Alternately, the boosters claimed Mexico as their own. This was very different from embracing the city’s Mexican population since it involved characterizing Mexico, particularly Northern and Western Mexico, as a subset of California and Los Angeles.⁴⁷ It was an effort to enhance the image of Los Angeles’ influence over Mexico and the Mexicans who moved north. By promoting the dominance of Los Angeles over Mexico, the boosters transformed the Mexican

⁴⁴ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 90.

⁴⁵ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 31.

⁴⁶ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 83.

⁴⁷ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 33.

population into their own and by that logic, the Mexican immigrants changed from being “the Mexicans” to “our Mexicans.”⁴⁸

In order to accept the Mexican elements of Los Angeles, the boosters were forced to alternately marginalize and romanticize them in their promotional materials. Both strategies worked, and Los Angeles’ Anglo-American populations grew and prospered despite the fact that many American residents believed Mexican immigrants to be a blemish on the city.

In the 1880s, “that only a few thousand of the many million American and European immigrants came to Southern California was not surprising.”⁴⁹ Southern California was one of the last destinations that immigrants from the east reached since they had to pass through the Great Lakes, Prairie, Rocky Mountains, and Southwest before they reached the region. When immigrants did journey to the “far west,” they tended to migrate to the northern part of the state or the Pacific Northwest, rather than Southern California. The early migrants to Southern California and Los Angeles were predominantly white Americans and western Europeans; Chinese immigrants preferred San Francisco to Los Angeles and almost no African Americans left the Deep South for Southern California prior to 1900.⁵⁰ Los Angeles remained a predominantly white, American, city between 1880 and 1932, but in the 1900s it began to become more diverse.

By the 1900s, a stream of Japanese immigration to the city had begun but the United States cut it off in 1924 by prohibiting Oriental immigration. In the 1920s,

⁴⁸ Ibid. 33.

⁴⁹ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 64.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 75.

after World War I, African Americans began to immigrate to the city, but not in large numbers, “by 1930 they numbered 39,000 in the city.”⁵¹ The largest immigrant group came from Mexico. Beginning in the 1900s, more and more Mexicans arrived in city, making them the largest minority group, with 97,000 residents, in Los Angeles by the 1930s.⁵²

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Los Angeles had become the major population and commercial center that its boosters desired. They had made it well known to the rest of the country, and transformed it into a world class city. But, while it had attracted more than enough industry and settlement to make it an economically significant city, Los Angeles was not seen as a cosmopolitan location like its eastern counterparts or even San Francisco. Los Angeles’ boosters no longer had to promote the city for settlement. They now needed to build the city into a cultural center. To transform its reputation, they focused their attention on tourism and, like the early boosters, they produced travel guides to the city, depicting the cultural sights. Guides like Lanier Bartlett and Virginia Stivers Bartlett’s *Los Angeles in 7 Days* (1932) described various architectural and cultural aspects of the city for tourists to visit during their stay.⁵³ The Bartletts' and other guide books like theirs described places like the Los Angeles County Museum of History and Art, where there was many different exhibits on Los Angeles’ history and artistic pieces, including many skeletons of prehistoric animals; “museums from all over the world have been

⁵¹ Ibid. 77.

⁵² Ibid. 77.

⁵³ Lanier and Virginia Stivers Bartlett, *Los Angeles in 7 Days: Including Southern California* (New York: Robert m. McBride & Company, 1932).

supplied from here, but the best finds have been kept for local exhibition.”⁵⁴ In addition to museums and sporting arenas, boosters emphasized the glamour of Hollywood in promoting the city. Even though Los Angeles had become a major metropolis, it still needed to do a good deal of work before it could be recognized as a cosmopolitan city. Hosting the 1932 Summer Olympics was a first step.

In the 1920s, Los Angeles decided it would bid to host the 1932 Summer Olympics, but realized that it lacked a major sports stadium. In response, the city built the Coliseum in order to increase their chances of hosting the Olympics. Completed in 1923, the Coliseum seated 101,000 fans.⁵⁵ The city expected over a million visitors during the Olympics, a perfect opportunity to present itself as a cosmopolitan city to the rest of the country and the world. It constructed extensive accommodations for all of the athletes and spectators.⁵⁶ Hosting the Olympics and building museums gave the city some credentials as a cosmopolitan city, but it still needed to focus on developing its cultural base.

Los Angeles boosters and city promoters had a difficult job; they had to promote immigration and industrial growth in the city and at all times suppress any information that might dissuade tourists and settlers.⁵⁷ Many cities other than Los Angeles had heavily promoted themselves in a bid to become the major western metropolis, but failed to fulfill their promises.⁵⁸ Los Angeles’ promoters were able to sculpt a “promised land” to which settlers flocked in an area that was largely bereft of

⁵⁴ Ibid. 68.

⁵⁵ Tom Zimmerman, *Paradise Promoted: The Booster Campaign that Created Los Angeles, 1870-1930* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2008), 190.

⁵⁶ Lanier and Virginia Stivers Bartlett, *Los Angeles in 7 Days: Including Southern California* (New York: Robert m. McBride & Company, 1932), 66.

⁵⁷ David M. Wrobel, *Promised lands: promotion, memory, and the creation of the American West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 74.

natural geographic advantages. Once Los Angeles overcame natural obstacles to its growth, it became the job of the promoters and boosters to ensure that the city would become populated and live up to the press that they created for it.

Through the work of both phases of Los Angeles' boosterism, the boosters and city promoters were hugely successful in their campaign to build Los Angeles into one of the country's major metropolises. Working within the confines of the city's lack of natural geographic advantages, the early boosters were able to exploit the few benefits that the city could provide while building a base for the later generation of promoters. The later boosters were able to take the work that the earlier promoters had done and build on it by creating whole new avenues for promotional materials in the dedicated magazines, and developing new booster groups in agricultural and industrial sectors. Los Angeles' boosters came from many different backgrounds; together they constructed and circulated an image of Los Angeles that attracted more than a million residents by the 1930s.

Conclusion: Impoverishing the Future

Prior to 1880, Los Angeles' natural geographic limitations functioned as a major barrier to development. With the exception of its inviting climate, "Southern California lacks nearly everything: good soils; natural harbors (San Diego has the one natural harbor); forest and mineral resources; rivers, streams, and lakes; adaptable flora and fauna; and a sustaining hinterland."¹ However, through the ingenuity and perseverance of its residents, between 1880 and 1932, Los Angeles was able to grow and develop into a metropolitan center. Carey McWilliams described the city and region as being "man-made, a gigantic improvisation."² Through the maneuvering and work of its residents and migrants, despite an altogether inhospitable geography, Los Angeles was able to dominant Southern California and become a sprawling megalopolis.

The patterns of growth and development for Chicago, in the 1820s and 1830s, and Los Angeles, between 1880 and 1932, were not diametrically opposed, despite Chicago growing with lavish geographic advantages and Los Angeles with none. As in Los Angeles, William Cronon noted the significant role that boosters played in the urban development of Chicago. Cronon suggested that Chicago was not pre-destined to become a metropolis; boosters were certain that the "west" could support a major urban city, but were unsure of where that city would be. St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Denver all competed with Chicago for the title "gateway to the west." As would be the case with Los Angeles, boosters propelled Chicago into the lead for urban

¹ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 6.

² *Ibid.* 13.

dominance. According to Cronon, Chicago's boosters saw "the engine of western development in the symbiotic relationship between cities and their surrounding country sides. So powerful was their vision that it became a self-fulfilling prophecy."³ The boosters latched onto Chicago's natural geographic advantages and filled their promotional literature with descriptions of them. They focused on the region's "fertile soils, forests of commercial timber, mines, coal fields, waterpower sites."⁴ Chicago was promoted as nature's metropolis.

Robert Herrick, a novelist who wrote about the turmoil of industrialized society around the turn of the 20th century, described Chicago as a "city made of man...where men and women in their passions shall be the beginning and the end."⁵ Herrick's comment places greater stress on human labor in the growth of Chicago than on nature. While his comment, written in 1898, came much after the development of Chicago, the city's original boosters would certainly have objected to it. They described the development of Chicago as if the city's residents had to do nothing to create a metropolis, nature provided everything to them. Given the late date when Herrick was writing, his remark about a city "made of man" seems more apropos of the growth of Los Angeles.

A historian of the American west named David Emmons wrote that "settlers transform places, not the other way around."⁶ He was describing how the American west developed from the ideas, preconceived notions, and prejudices of the societies

³ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 34-35.

⁴ Ibid. 36.

⁵ Robert Herrick, *The Gospel of Freedom* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1898), 103-104.

⁶ David Emmons, "Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 25:4 (1994), 458.

the colonizers came from, but in doing so Emmons belittled the role of the environment in the growth of the west. In a response to Emmons' article, Cronon wrote that by diminishing of the role of the environment in the historical development of the west, Emmons "obscures the fact that the environment is itself historical, caught up in the flow of time and no less a historical construction than human cultures are."⁷ While Cronon is justly celebrated for recognizing the importance of the environment as a historical force, when it came to the development of the west, at least in the case of Los Angeles, human activity appears vastly more important than environmental factors. As Emmons notes, the far west was settled during a period of industrialization in the United States and had to conform to what this necessitated; growth could only be provided by human activity, not by the environment.⁸

Due the inadequacy of its geographic location, Los Angeles required much more work to form a metropolis than other American cities had previously. If urban development in Southern California had followed Cronon's model for the development of a city in the most geographically advantageous location, then San Diego would probably have dominated the region. Whether fortunate or not, given its current unsustainable situation, Los Angeles' human element overcame the environmental factors working against it and became the largest and most populous city in California.

There were several major environmental hindrances to growth in Los Angeles; the city's water resources were insufficient, barely able to support its small

⁷ William Cronon, "The West: A Moving Target," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 25:4 (1994), 476-477.

⁸ David Emmons, "Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 25:4 (1994), 458.

population in the 1870s, let alone a population of over a million by the 1930s. For the better part of the year, the Los Angeles River scarcely amounted to a stream but during the short rainy season it was prone to flash floods. The city was finally convinced to acquire the rights to a much larger watershed through the work and inspiration of several important individuals, including William Mulholland and Fred Eaton. Mulholland was able to obtain the necessary water resources from the Owens River Valley and to convince Los Angeles to raise the funds necessary to build an aqueduct to transport the water to the city. Many scholars and ordinary people have questioned the legality and morality of Mulholland's endeavor, but he was able to acquire enough water to support Los Angeles' growing population and industrial sector until 1933 when an even greater water supply was deemed necessary to support the city.

The other major geological obstacle to Los Angeles' growth stemmed from its remote location and the associated difficulty of traveling to the city. The city is surrounded on two sides by mountains and on a third by a coast without a natural deep-water harbor. For Los Angeles to grow, it needed to lessen the cost and complexity required in traveling to the city. The railroad companies, notably the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe, were crucial in easing the difficulty of travel to the city. With two transcontinental railroads serving the city and a price war that reduced the costs of a train ticket, visiting and moving to Los Angeles became much more affordable for middle-class Americans. The railroads also played an important role in the construction of a deep-water harbor near Los Angeles. However, in the end, the residents of Los Angeles were able to break the Southern Pacific's monopoly and

obtain government aid to construct a deep-water harbor at San Pedro, making the city into a west coast commercial center able to rival San Francisco.

These infrastructural developments, in conjunction with other minor improvements, facilitated the city's ability to handle a population and commercial boom. The work of boosters and city promoters was critical in creating the massive migration that would turn the city into one of the largest in the country. The railroads were early promoters of migration to Los Angeles since they had the most invested in transporting people there. Their biggest challenge was convincing people that Los Angeles was an equal to European and eastern tourist destinations and that its climate and agricultural potential made it an excellent location for settlement. Several authors, including Charles Nordhoff and Charles Dudley Warner, were enormously important in writing promotional material for the city. They invited people to come to the city and see its benefits for themselves. Until the turn of the 20th century, the main focus of these promotional campaigns was Los Angeles' climate and agricultural potential since they were its primary draws.

In the later promotional stages, dedicated magazines came to dominate as the main means of disseminating booster materials for Los Angeles and Southern California. The largest of these dedicated magazines, *The Land of Sunshine*, edited by Charles Lummis, published articles of many different types on the region, from its history to its geology, and of course also included pieces on the benefits of migrating to the area. This second period of promotional activity brought Los Angeles to the rest of the country instead of merely urging people to come and discover Los Angeles for themselves. The city and its major agricultural and industrial companies created

touring exhibits of the city's products in an attempt to display its potential to the rest of the country. Los Angeles' boosters were hugely successful in utilizing the city's man-made improvements and advantages and promoting them to the rest of the country in the same way that other cities promoted their geographic advantages.

By 1932, Los Angeles had overtaken San Francisco as the largest city in California; its population reached 1,238,048 residents with hundreds of thousands of tourists visiting the city year round.⁹ Los Angeles was also a major manufacturing center with annual production worth 1,319.4 million dollars, employing a workforce numbering over half of a million.¹⁰ In addition to having an ample workforce, Los Angeles had attracted numerous industries to the city; "Los Angeles County [dominated by the city] led the Nation in motion-picture production, oil refining, airplane manufacture, and secondary automobile assembly."¹¹ By this time, the city had also become one of the most diverse and productive agricultural areas in the United States. Much of the agricultural land was not in the city itself, but in Los Angeles County; however, the improved irrigation and transportation that the city developed supported the county's agricultural output. Its focus was on citrus fruits,

⁹ The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, *Los Angeles, A Guide to the City and Its Environs: Compiled by the Workers of the Writer's Program of the Work Projects Administration in Southern California* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), 57-58.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States. Manufactures: 1929. Volume III* (Washington, 1933), 61, 69, 72, 82, 87, 250, 258, 294, 402, 434, 441, 454, 539, 561, 568. in Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 132; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 Population. Volume IV* (Washington, 1933), 22-23. in Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 132.

¹¹ The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, *Los Angeles, A Guide to the City and Its Environs: Compiled by the Workers of the Writer's Program of the Work Projects Administration in Southern California* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), 62.

such as oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, but hay, grain, cabbage, celery, lettuce, tomatoes, as well as many other types of crops were grown there.¹²

All of these factors combined to help cement the decision to have Los Angeles host the 1932 Summer Olympics. This honor meant that the city was finally being recognized as a major world city. By hosting the Summer Olympics, Los Angeles was able to show to the country and the rest of the world exactly how far it had come. In the 1880s, barely anyone knew anything about the city but, by 1932, it had become one of the most important cities in the United States.

Hosting the 1932 Summer Olympics marked the city's position as a major metropolis but its rapid growth and development in the face of a lack of natural geographic advantages raise concerns about its sustainability and whether the human ingenuity and engineering that created the city can save it. In building the city without help from the environment, Los Angeles became "the Anti-Nature – the American city with brown air, fouled beaches, pavement to the horizon, and a concrete river."¹³ The success of Los Angeles' residents in creating a massive city with almost no help from nature is remarkable, but in circumventing its natural disadvantages the city developed in opposition to nature, as a man-made city. Los Angeles has continued to grow since the 1930s and the infrastructural improvements that facilitated the city's explosive growth no longer suffice and are creating new problems.

The massive population growth that turned Los Angeles a megalopolis has become its main challenge. In acquiring the water resources from the Owens Valley

¹² Ibid. 59.

¹³ Jennifer Price, "Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in LA," in *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles*, ed. by William Deverell and Greg Hise (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005) 222.

to support its growing population, the city doomed itself to the continuing necessity of obtaining water from farther and father away. If Los Angeles' water consumption continues to grow at historical rates, it could soon absorb the flow from all of the rivers west of the Mississippi. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Los Angeles was able to obtain enough water to support its needs, but in the 21st century the Southwestern United States has also grown and developed. Now states such as Arizona and New Mexico are vying for water resources, making it much more difficult for Los Angeles to acquire new water sources. The current level of water usage in Los Angeles is unsustainable and very soon the city will need to contend with the issue or begin to experience devastating droughts.

Los Angeles' highway system allowed its massive population growth to expand outwards transforming it into a largely decentralized city. This decentralization created the conditions for the massive traffic congestion and smog that the city experiences today. The decentralized nature of Los Angeles and the huge number of cars causes daily bumper to bumper traffic and generates tons of smog, making it into one of the cities in the United States with the worst air pollution. The city has instituted some measures, such as frequent emissions checks for automobiles, to attempt to lessen the problem, but the problem persists and will as long as the city remains so enormously congested.

Between 1880 and 1932, Los Angeles relied on its boosters and their promotional materials to generate spectacular growth through convincing people to come to the city for tourism and settlement. However, they did too good a job, and Los Angeles overflowed with people. Over the past century the city has been able to

sustain continued population growth, but in this new century it has begun to push its limits. Los Angeles' future looks less like the utopian vision that the boosters disseminated to the rest of the country and more like a doomsday scenario, as the city is now frequently portrayed in literature and movies.

The destruction of Los Angeles from both natural and man-made sources has featured in at least a hundred novels and movies since the early part of the 20th century; Mike Davis makes the claim that “the entire world seems to be rooting for L.A. to slide into the Pacific or be swallowed up by the San Andreas Fault.”¹⁴ While a majority of this disaster fiction seems to focus on atomic or nuclear destruction, “eco-disasters” represent a large portion as well. Many of these imagined “eco-disasters” stem from human intervention in the region's environment.¹⁵

Los Angeles is a polarizing city. Its boosters espoused the benefits of the city as only true believers in a cause could. They worked long and hard to develop the city into a major metropolis by the 1930s, yet their endeavors may have all been in vain. The city they helped build seems to be unsustainable, with modern writers envisioning its destruction by atomic bombs, earthquakes, and alien invasions.

Los Angeles proved that humans could create a city in the absence of natural geographic advantages. It persevered when it should have failed but, the question remains, will it continue to win against nature and fulfill the utopian vision of its proud boosters, or will it fall into one of the dystopian destruction fantasies that circulate today?

¹⁴ Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 276-281.

¹⁵ David Fine, *Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 256.

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