

OLMSTED BROTHERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, BROOKLINE, MASS.

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31st August, 1911.

Mr. Harold H. Blossom,

621 Tinken Building, San Diego, California.

My dear Mr. Blossom;

I have received your telegram of the 29th instant as follows:

"If trolley had to be in Park what location should you suggest? Might it be planted out in Serra Canyon?"

I replied as follows:

"Advocates railway across park should negotiate with railway company who would, if favorable, petition commission for route to be determined by latter who would ask us to report if they are unfavorable or to submit plan and estimate if favorable. Will write."

I have no doubt that Mr. Sefton and others are now pushing all they know how to get the railway up through the middle of the park, not only because there are real estate interests which will be benefited by it but also because it will be very much easier to shift the site of the Exposition to the middle of the

Mr. Blosson - 2

park if they have the definite assurance of this electric railway for access. The two projects, of course, greatly help each other. If the Exposition could be moved into the middle of the park, it would be essential to have the electric railway run through the park in order to afford proper transportation to the Exposition, and if they can get the real estate interest to pay for the railroad and the street railway company agree to run it, they would find it much easier to move the Exposition to the central site.

My suggestion to you is to confer with Mr. Marston and, if he advises it, subsequently with Mr. Wangenheim, and try to persuade them to head off and delay the electric railway project and even, if possible, any general discussion of it, until after the work on the Exposition at the southern site is so far advanced that there will be no danger that it will be moved. It seems clear to me that there can be no urgent necessity for the park commissioners to grant the electric railway route through the park at the present time nor for a year or two.

Before Allen had conceived of the Exposition site opposite Maple Street, I discussed with him this project of an electric railway through the park. As you know, it had been urged by Colonel Collier for consideration at the meetings of the committee, but I opposed it as strongly as I could, and the committee did not give it any general discussion, probably thinking that it was not a matter which need be entered into immediately. In my discussions with Mr. Allen he was very strongly of the opinion that such a railway could not possibly be undertaken as a business proposition by the San Diego Street Railway Company. He said he knew a good deal about street railway management and finances, and he knew the railway company would not like to construct and run this railway of a mile and a half or more in length, with practically no business in that length, and a railway which would develop comparatively little residential territory north of the park which is not already fairly well developed or sufficiently so by the present conditions or from the railway point of view by the railway running east and west north of the park. There appeared to be only two advantages which could be

claimed for it, one that it would shorten the running time for people living north of the park and east of the golf club to the business center of the city, and the other that it would enable more people to visit the middle portions of the park. It was perfectly obvious, he thought, that neither of these considerations would weigh much with the railroad as money-making propositions, nor would they even begin to pay the running expenses let alone the interest^{and} depreciation on capital account. He assured me that there was no danger that the street railway company would undertake the job. Mr. Sefton, on the contrary, has assured me that the railway people would certainly undertake this route, but he offered no supporting financial argument. I could only infer that the real estate interests would offer the necessary inducements to the railroad, which, so far as I can see, in addition to standing the whole cost of the route would involve a guarantee of running expenses for a term of years on the assumption that the line could eventually be made to pay the running expenses or a little more.

In talking with me in this office last month, Colonel Collier renewed his assurance that this railroad was necessary and would certainly be provided, whether I advised it or not. He talked very boldly about the small amount of money it would cost, evidently having it in mind to lay only a single track with turn-outs practically on the surface and immediately adjoining Midland Drive. He said the railroad to Ocean Beach cost him and his associates only \$13,000.00 a mile. I told him that in my judgment the Park Commission would not be justified in accepting any such kind of railroad, and the best guess that I could make, without plans, would be that this railroad would cost about \$150,000.00. I told him my idea, if it was necessary to have such a railroad, would be to run it along the east side of the straight drive east of the group of exposition buildings in the southern site, but separated from it by a plantation, and so along the curved drive to the vicinity of the eucalyptus trees on Howard Hill, then to run it into a deep cut so as to cross under a concrete arch the drive that runs south on this hill from Midland Drive, and so out through the nursery ground to the brow of the hill overlooking Serra Canyon. I said I thought that from there to the north

boundary of the park it should be kept about 25 to 30 feet below the level of the Mesa and almost everywhere in cut, which would be largely rock cut, so that the west bank would be in part nearly vertical. At suitable points there would have to be concrete foot bridges to connect with the walks descending into Serra Canyon. I did not know how many, but certainly one and probably two and possibly three.

I have no doubt that upon study we should recommend a lot of retaining wall along the railroad. I said that it would be absolutely essential to provide an archway to carry the railroad over the north circuit drive. Then there would have to be a long concrete viaduct with arches across the ravine north of the circuit drive. Then there would be about one-half a mile of track north of the park to connect with the existing street railway. I thought this railway would certainly have to be built as a double track railway if it was to be used to bring people from north of the park to the Exposition with any satisfaction, and of course a lot of cars would have to be provided. On the whole I thought

\$150,000.00 would very likely not cover the cost. Of course there would have to be planting, fencing, culverts, shelter stations and various other items of expense. I repeat that to carry the railway through in a cheap manner on the surface of the ground and on the Mesa would be such an outrageously injurious thing from the park point of view that no park commission could be justified in consenting to it.

At times I have discussed the idea, which seems to have been the original idea, of having this railway in the bottom of Serra Canyon, but whenever this was mentioned I always stated that it was a very poor project as it would fetch people from the north of the park to Eighteenth Street south of it instead of to Twelfth Street, and the cars would be of little use to visitors in the park as few visitors would care to undertake the climb from the bottom of the canyon to the mesa, and still fewer would care to confine their visit to the park to the bottom of Serra Canyon. To be of use to visitors to the park the railway certainly

would be better on the mesa, but that would damage the park landscape and the safety and comfort of visitors to an unwarrantable degree. It might be that the railway would be as a whole less objectionable in Serra Canyon, but it would practically eliminate Serra Canyon from the park as a place of agreeable resort. Therefore, I decided that the best route on the whole would be that which I ^{have} described, about 30 feet below the mesa on the west side of Serra Canyon.

In conclusion I repeat that this matter should be discussed with Mr. Marston with the idea of getting him to do what he can to suppress the ^{discussion of this} railroad matter until after the exposition is so far along that it could not be moved.

I have received your letter of the 22d which greatly relieves my mind. I will write again shortly.

Yours very truly,

John C. Ousted