

San Francisco, 3rd June, 1911

Mr. Geo. W. Marston:

My Dear Mr. Marston:

I want to thank you most heartily for all your kindnesses and for your constant and able support of me in professional matters. I owe you besides my most sincere apology for having put off attending to the subdivision of your land across ~~the~~ canyon from your house. It did not occur to me that it was possible that the Park Board would be completely changed. I am used to Park Boards continuing in the main so that a consistent policy can be pursued.

In writing a memorandum for insertion in Mr. Munroe's record as to Mr. Allen's proposed site, I took the liberty of suggesting, as my second choice, the grouping of the buildings on the ridge between 6th. St. and Canon Cabrillo. I did this in order that if the High School Hill site is not approved by the Mayor and Park Commission you would perhaps be better able to keep the choice from being swung by Mr. Sefton to the mesa in the middle of the park. Anything would be better than that. If the people who want an electric railway through the middle of the park succeed in that outrage upon the park landscape, I should advise that every possible effort be made to locate the exposition close up against the north boundary, especially the permanent buildings.

As well as I can make out, Col. Collier appointed Mr. Sefton to take his place, for the express purpose of getting the electric railway through the middle of the park and I fear that Mr. Sefton will agree to dividing the exposition and park work among local contractors and local architects and to the Unionizing of the whole work, in return for harmony and the granting of the right-of-way up through the middle of the park for an electric railway. Mr. Sefton told me the electric railway people favor the scheme which surprised me as I should not suppose such a line would pay for many years. However, it would pay the land owners north of the park to pay the whole cost of building the electric railway and to guarantee the running expenses and a profit for a long term of years, and that may be the understanding. From the point of view of park design and park value, the scheme would result in a horrible waste of park opportunity. It would certainly be far preferable to have the exposition on the 6th St. border than to let it go on the central mesa with the inevitable consequence of an electric railway through the most valuable part of the park.

I do wish you could prevail upon Mr. Sefton to stop advocating that site and for the sake of harmony, if he can agree to no better reasons against that site, to accede to and argue for the site in the vicinity of the High School. The only pressure that can be brought to

bear upon him to do so that I can think of is to get the Mayor and Park Commission to say that if the site near the High School is not used that the **site** on 6th St. hill must be. I dont know that it would be possible to convince them of the undersirability of the electric railway through the middle of the Park. I fear it would not be by appeal to their aversion to injuring park landscape. They would sacrifice the park cheerfully as they have already by renewing the Pursell franchise which I am told includes the right to run steam locomotives and ordinary freight trains. But there may possibly be some other argument that would appeal to them. Mr. Braly told me he thought it would not do to have the exposition near the High School because it would divert the students minds from their work and he was going to get Mr. McKinnon's and Mr. Gould's opinions to that effect to back **up** his own. He would sacrifice the park for all time rather than lessen the efficiency of the High School for one year! He said he preferred to have the exposition on the 6th. St. hill. I would cheerfully agree to that rather than have it on the mesa with the then inevitable electric railway. The trees are only 6 years old I believe. Those destroyed could be replaced in 6 years and 6 years is as nothing in the life of the park and city. Besides, formal gardens and playgrounds

there would be all right as a matter of park design, although doubtless objectionable to neighboring residents by drawing a crowd.

I do wish you could devise some way of making Allen and Goodhue "shut up." I suggest, and I hope you will think it advisable to pass a resolution at the next meeting of your Committee something like this:-

Resolved, that the thanks of this Committee be conveyed to the Director of Works for his suggestion that the exposition be placed on the line of Laurel Street extended and that he be informed this Committee has decided against the idea and requests the Director of Works to cease arguing for it and against the site heretofore adopted by this Committee.

I also suggest that even if you do not pass the above resolution, you write to Mr. B. G. Goodhue, 170 Fifth Ave. requesting him "not to elaborate nor even present any sketch plan already prepared, to the Committee or to the Director of Works or to any one else for the exposition on the mesa east of Laurel Street and north of the proposed emergency reservoir or for any other site other than that near the High School until requested to do so by vote of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds," nor to argue for any other site meanwhile.

I spent the best part of a week arguing with Mr.

Allen against his idea before he brought it to the attention of the Committee, but with absolutely no effect.

I have since proved that his main contention of less cost at that site was wrong by making my plan to cost much less than his. He has already backed out of having any buildings in his scheme west of Cabrillo Canon and I think I have convinced him that his bridge would cost too much. Anyway he knows Braly is against it and some others. So now he favors the electric railway through the middle of the park. He will not yield to any argument of park design because he is so absolutely ignorant of park design that it seems to him all "tommy-rot." He will yield good naturedly to authority and that is why I deem it important to shut him up by resolution of the Committee followed by a talk by you.

It is the same with Goodhue and for the same reason-absolute ignorance of the fundamentals of park design and thorough contempt for any statement of them. It is necessary to request him, preferably by vote of the Committee, to desist from considering any other site than that near the High School, until requested to do so by vote of the Committee.

I should be interested to learn what action is taken in this matter.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) John C. Olmsted.