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# **From Test Plots to Large Lots: The Gardens of San Marino, California as Natural and Social Laboratories**

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“I am a foresighted man,” declared Henry E. Huntington at the turn of the twentieth century, “and I believe that Los Angeles is destined to become the most important city in this country, if not the world.” According to Huntington, two blessings of nature ensured the city’s future prosperity. Proximity to the Pacific Ocean made it possible for Los Angeles to “supply the wants of Asia,” and Southern California’s exceptional climate allowed for the production of almost anything. As he explained, “there is nothing that cannot be made and few things that will not grow there.”<sup>1</sup> Huntington backed up his bold predictions with large investments, including long-term support for botanical research to discover exactly what would grow in Southern California.

Huntington’s optimism about Los Angeles was, of course, partly salesmanship. Like other LA boosters, he speculated on local real estate and hoped to convince wealthy out-of-towners to purchase some of his land. His investment in botanical experimentation was related to his effort to sell Southern California, not only because he hoped that it would lead to new agricultural products for the region, but also because such experimentation would likely introduce new ornamental plants. Thus, Huntington thought, testing a large selection of decorative species would provide gardeners with more material to beautify the landscape. The resulting diversity in flora would also serve as evidence of Southern California’s mild climate, a feature that made it especially habitable for prospective residents.

Huntington delegated responsibility for this experimentation to William Hertrich, a landscape gardener whose long career in Southern California will be the focus of this article. In 1905, Hertrich became the lead gardener for San Marino Ranch, Huntington's Los Angeles County estate located near the city of Pasadena. Hertrich later became the superintendent of the estate, the core of which was transformed into the Huntington Art Museum, Library and Botanical Gardens. He also helped landscape the city of San Marino, an upscale garden suburb carved out of the Huntington estate and surrounding properties.

Shortly after hiring Hertrich, Huntington promised him that he would have the extensive lands of San Marino Ranch "to play with" for the rest of his life. While Huntington gave him a great deal of latitude, Hertrich acted within the general guidelines issued by his employer and, after Huntington's death in 1928, Hertrich expressed a determination to "carry out his ideas and wishes pertaining to San Marino Ranch."<sup>2</sup> Thus, Hertrich's experimentation needs to be contextualized within Huntington's master plan for reshaping that which environmental historians and geographers call the "cultural landscape" of Southern California.<sup>3</sup> Along with his other complementary investments in electrical power, electric-powered trolleys, and real estate development, Huntington's funding of botanical experimentation was an important element in his geographical plan for Los Angeles. Huntington wanted to disperse the metropolis in a way that would fragment the working class, thereby thwarting labor organization, while also rendering slums and industrial workplaces invisible to residents of upscale subdivisions. These exclusive communities would be far enough away from the urban core to allow for large lots with ample garden space, wide, tree-lined streets, and spacious parks. Since a great deal of outlying land had already been planted with citrus, it was relatively easy to transform some of this land into garden suburbs.<sup>4</sup>

Historian Ian Tyrell has argued that the roots of suburban development in Southern California trace to a "garden ideal" expressed by turn-of-the-century environmental reformers. These reformers glorified small-scale, irrigation-intensive agriculture by white, middle-class families. As business interests consolidated agricultural production and moved it to more remote areas of California during the twentieth century, suburban garden homes were idealized in much the same way that productive family farms and gardens had been in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> As Huntington and Hertrich had planned, the city of San Marino represented an early attempt to create a community of model garden homes. In a 1945 speech to the San Marino Garden Club, Hertrich wrote that the city had "shared in the development of Southern California," while at the same time striving to "maintain its high idealism."<sup>6</sup> Gardens were at the center of this idealism.

While the origins of the garden ideal extended into nineteenth-century California, Hertrich had foreign roots. He arrived in Southern California in 1903 as a "young landscape gardener" with agricultural training in Austria, as well as in his native Germany. He possessed a desire to "make a success in the field

of [his] profession.” At first, he was unable to find a landscaping position that offered the possibility of advancement, so the ambitious Hertrich made plans in the spring of 1904 to investigate an “attractive offer” at a private estate in Connecticut. According to his memoirs, he cancelled these plans on account of Huntington’s investments in local transportation. On the day he planned to leave Los Angeles, Hertrich had a conversation with two other men at a restaurant near the train station. They discussed Huntington’s recent expansion of trolley lines and how this infrastructure development would attract capital and people. In particular, they believed that wintering “wealthy Easterners” would decide to “build permanent homes in or near the metropolis,” creating plenty of work for landscape gardeners.<sup>7</sup>

Instead of waiting for these newcomers, Hertrich set his sights on Huntington himself as an employer. He befriended the chief engineer of Huntington’s Los Angeles Railway Company, who introduced him to George Patton, the father of the famous Second World War general who worked as the manager of the Huntington Land and Improvement Company. When the landscape gardening position at San Marino Ranch opened in December of 1904, Patton appointed Hertrich on a temporary basis, pending the approval of Huntington. Eager to impress Huntington, Hertrich recalled that he spent the next two months familiarizing himself “with every section of the ranch property,” as he “attempted to visualize possible landscape improvements.”<sup>8</sup> When Huntington returned from an extended trip, he hired Hertrich, launching him on a long career that involved transforming not just the physical landscape of the ranch, but also the cultural landscape of Southern California.

As both an experimental gardener and a social engineer, Hertrich operated three laboratories, which this article defines broadly as sites of experimentation. The first was a natural laboratory that tested new plants for the Southern California climate. Superimposed on this natural laboratory was a social laboratory. Hertrich tested racist notions regarding Asians and Latinos in the management of employees while embedding imperialist messages in the layout and design of the gardens themselves. The third laboratory, also social in nature, was the city of San Marino. Hertrich helped set in perpetual motion a model garden community that replicated the ranch’s racialized labor system and utilized a diverse array of newly-tested plants from around the world.

### **The Gardens as a Natural Laboratory**

“The many exotic plants that had been assembled were of use and pleasure to the family, but they were also the beginning of a collection that would serve as a natural laboratory in which could be tested the adaptability of certain species to the Southern California climate.”<sup>9</sup>

Hertrich considered his role as a scientist second only to his role as chief gardener for the Huntington family. Of course, the scientific value and the “use

and pleasure” of exotic plants for the family were related.<sup>10</sup> For Huntington, the building of the perfect estate and the building of important collections went hand-in-hand. This was true not only for his gardens but also for his library and his art collection. As conspicuous features of his estate, Huntington used these collections to bolster his own dubious claims of sophistication. Coming from a middle-class background, Huntington gained most of his wealth through an inheritance from his uncle, Central Pacific Railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington, and from his marriage to his uncle’s widow. As a young man, he struggled in school and never attended college.<sup>11</sup> By surrounding himself with exotic plants, notable books and paintings, and by making plans for these collections to be available for educational purposes after his death, Huntington conducted a very expensive—but, ultimately, very successful—public relations campaign to improve his own image. His plant collection enhanced his reputation in a way that his rare books and works of art could not. Although many species failed to take root in the Southern California soil, a variety of new plants did survive Hertrich’s tests and, as a result, were soon planted throughout the region. In addition to helping him sell Southern California, these plants served as living testaments to Huntington’s boosterish confidence in and importance to the region.

Aside from Huntington’s patronage, Hertrich also enjoyed the support of federal officials interested in finding new plants for American agriculture and horticulture. Long before Huntington died and the gardens were transformed into a public institution, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began sending Hertrich plants “for experimental purposes” in order to “test their suitability to California soil” and “climatic conditions.” The USDA sent several types of “fruit-bearing trees” and ornamental plants, including a grove of eucalyptus trees from Australia. The Department’s most notable contribution, according to Hertrich, was an “avocado collection of the Guatemalan variety” that arrived in 1918.<sup>12</sup> These trees helped Hertrich replant his original avocado orchard, which was badly damaged in a 1913 cold snap.

Hertrich credited Huntington as the inspiration for the original avocado orchard, the first of its kind in Southern California. He brought Hertrich the seeds of avocados that he had enjoyed at the Jonathan Club, an exclusive social organization located in one of his buildings downtown. Huntington asked if these “alligator pears,” as he called them, could be grown at the ranch. According to Hertrich, these seeds formed the “nucleus of the first avocado orchard in Southern California.” He also recalled that Huntington was “very proud of this orchard that he was personally responsible for.”<sup>13</sup>

The Desert Garden was a different story. Hertrich claimed that he had to work hard to convince Huntington to go along with the idea. According to Hertrich, Huntington had a “dislike” for cacti; he developed this aversion as a railroad official who “frequently passed through American desert regions.” His railroad experience may have led him to see Southwestern deserts as merely geographic barriers to be overcome, rather than as desirable landscapes in and of themselves.

Huntington may have also initially subscribed to a narrower version of the garden ideal than Hertrich, one that prized irrigated gardens over desert ones. As Hertrich recalled, Huntington did not “foresee the attractiveness or the scientific importance” of the Desert Garden. Hertrich finally convinced him, however, to allow a “small scale” desert garden on a “barren hill” that was “unsuitable for most plantings.” Huntington was apparently impressed with the results of this test, since he agreed to extend the Desert Garden at the expense of an irrigation reservoir.<sup>14</sup>

In a 1937 publication on the subject, Hertrich described the Desert Garden in Darwinist language that may have appealed to Huntington. After noting the “grotesque forms” as well as the “beauty” of their flowers, Hertrich defended cacti as a viable garden plant, saying that they “are not mere freaks of nature” but instead are the “result of a tremendous struggle for existence under the most adverse conditions.” If a visitor to the garden realized this, Hertrich speculated, “he will perhaps become more interested in them.” An explanation like this may have sparked Huntington’s interest in desert plants. Ultimately, Huntington supported Hertrich’s dream of making a world-class desert garden. It eventually included “most varieties of [cactus] which can be grown in the open in southern California” as well as the “most comprehensive representation of Xerophytes [drought-resistant plants] in the world.”<sup>15</sup> Even though these plants had evolved to survive harsh conditions, they could still be marshaled as evidence to support Huntington’s claim that almost anything could grow in the region. In this regard, they represented the arid end of the plant spectrum.

Proving the adaptability of species on the other side of the spectrum was more difficult. Tropical and subtropical plants repeatedly died during the “severe cold spells” that struck Southern California at least once per decade. No “truly tropical” palms proved adaptable and tropical fruits such as papayas were, likewise, “too tender” for the climate. In a 1951 publication titled *Palms and Cycads: Their Culture in Southern California*, Hertrich admitted that his efforts to import palms had been largely unsuccessful. After mentioning that there were “over thirteen hundred species of palms currently recorded,” Hertrich listed only 26 species of subtropical palms in his collection in addition to the “only palm native to Southern California,” the *Washingtonia filifera*. Sounding somewhat defeated, Hertrich acknowledged that the “number of species and varieties suitable for use in landscaping in southern California is comparatively restricted, as the experience of the past forty years or more in San Marino witnesses.”<sup>16</sup>

Hertrich’s published writings did not deal with his plant experimentation in great detail. While he did mention several tests involving fruit- and nut-bearing trees, the experiments conducted with ornamental plants were characterized as “too numerous to describe.”<sup>17</sup> From what can be gleaned from his texts, his main priority was to provide Huntington and, more broadly, Southern Californians with a wide array of plants to both beautify the landscape and prove that the climate could support a diversity of plant life.

Greater Los Angeles was already home to a diversity of people, including substantial Asian American and Mexican American populations. As superintendent of the estate, Hertrich managed a workforce that included members of these groups, in addition to many people of European descent. An analysis of the ways in which Hertrich managed his workers reveals that the Huntington Gardens was both a social and a natural laboratory.

### **The Gardens as a Social Laboratory**

“I found that, although the workers included all nationalities, some division of work was desirable to make for the best efficiency.”<sup>18</sup>

In his 1949 memoirs, Hertrich recalled that, in his 42 years as the San Marino Ranch superintendent, he “associated with all types of personnel” and learned their “abilities, their limitations, their likes and dislikes.” Hertrich formed conclusions regarding the traits of the different “nationalities” represented in his workforce. “Western Europeans” made ideal “household employees” and “skilled artisans,” Hertrich claimed, while “American boys” were talented mechanics. On a decidedly lower rung, the “Mexicans” along with “one Chinese and one Japanese” were best suited for unskilled labor. Hertrich was clearly influenced by contemporary Western theories and hierarchies of racial difference; these theories were especially prevalent in Los Angeles, a city known as “the white spot of America” in the early twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> Hertrich’s construction of a hierarchy based on “nationality” can be seen as an attempt to test popular racial theories in the social laboratory that was the San Marino Ranch.<sup>20</sup> Far from a neutral space, this laboratory was designed to reinforce a racial worldview that exoticized and marginalized Asians and Latinos.

Although he was comfortable stereotyping his workers, Hertrich bristled at prejudice when it was directed at him. Immediately after describing the “division of work” necessary for the people of various nationalities whom he managed on the ranch, he related that during the First World War, “certain jealous and prejudiced individuals” accused him of “maintaining a large number of ex-German soldiers on the Huntington payroll.”<sup>21</sup> The charges came to nothing, but Hertrich’s hypocrisy reveals the extent to which he internalized the racist assumptions that were popular with local elites like his employer. Huntington saw his efforts to establish a library of rare English books, a British art gallery, and a distinctly English botanical garden as that which helped to establish a beachhead of Anglo-American civilization on the Pacific coast.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, this Eurocentric worldview was consistent with that of his contemporaries; for instance, Caltech professor and Huntington Library President Robert Millikan described California as the “westernmost outpost of Nordic civilization.” In 1924, Millikan made even more pointed remarks about Southern California, boasting, “The present rapid growth of Southern California, the influx into it of a population which is twice as largely Anglo-Saxon as that existing in New York, Chicago, or any other great centers of



this country, the preceding establishment of the Mount Wilson Observatory, the Huntington Library, and the California Institute [Caltech], the geographic and climatic conditions all combine to make this a time and this a place of exceptional opportunity.”<sup>23</sup>

The ideas of race and place expressed by Millikan, Huntington, and other local elites likely influenced the ways in which Hertrich approached both workforce management and the garden landscape. Although references to his German past are conspicuously absent from his published works, it is possible that claims of Anglo-Saxon superiority resonated with racial ideas to which he was exposed in his youth, when Germany became a global empire in the age of Social Darwinism. Regardless, there is no doubt that Hertrich created a hierarchy based on race, in which he justified his staff’s roles on the basis of each member’s intrinsic “abilities.” This hierarchy corresponded with the racism that ran rampant among local elites during the period.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, Hertrich claimed that his racial hierarchy led to the “best efficiency.”<sup>25</sup> He also described his minority workers as being generally satisfied with their lot. For example, he claimed that his Mexican laborers were “delighted” to plant cacti from their native land in the Desert Garden.<sup>26</sup> Despite his decidedly cheery tone, there are hints of labor resistance in Hertrich’s published writings. In one instance, Hertrich wrote, “Mexicans proved satisfactory ranch workers so long as they could work in groups under the supervision of a capable foreman.”<sup>27</sup> While this comment may simply reveal his racist assumptions, it may also point to resistance on the part of his workers in the form of foot-dragging or work stoppages.<sup>28</sup> This would not be surprising, considering that these workers probably had little in the way of opportunity for advancement. Although Hertrich claimed that “harmony and loyalty were usually evident,” theft may have also been a problem.<sup>29</sup> In his discussion of the clandestine movement of the contents of Huntington’s wine cellar during Prohibition, he mentioned that the location of the alcoholic beverages was a carefully guarded secret on the ranch and was “known to a very few of us.”<sup>30</sup>

The most intriguing episode of Hertrich’s dealings with minority employees was when “a Japanese family, including a father, mother, and three children, were hired to live in the two-story Japanese house” in the Japanese Garden. The reason for hiring this family was to have them take care of the garden while helping to “produce an Oriental atmosphere” for the pleasure of the Huntingtons and their guests. This atmosphere was “further enhanced by the family’s custom of dressing up in Japanese costume for special holidays.” Yet, the experiment of adding human specimens to the Japanese Garden soon failed. In Hertrich’s words, “So ideal a situation, both from the aesthetic point of view and the practical standpoint, could not be carried out for more than a few years.” Perhaps the family members resisted performing the “ideal” situation because it was too demanding, too demeaning or not commensurate with their pay.<sup>31</sup>



Despite these instances of possible resistance, Hertrich's experimental racial hierarchy appears to have been generally effective for his purposes. In his 42 years as superintendent before writing his memoirs, Hertrich claimed that "only once was a sudden discharge necessary."<sup>32</sup> Aside from foot-dragging and occasional refusals to cooperate, the ranch's minority workers were, in all likelihood, fairly obedient due to their precarious economic and social positions. They also had little influence in the overall layout of the gardens, a layout that appears to have been designed in part to marginalize them.

The Desert Garden and the Japanese or "Oriental" Garden are still located on the outer edges—or margins—of the property. These gardens also stand out as strikingly exotic compared to the other gardens, especially the staid Euro-American Rose Garden at the center of the property, near the European-style mansion. Hertrich clearly associated the Desert Garden with Mexico, where many of the cacti originated, as well as with his Mexican workers whom he claimed planted the cacti with delight. In addition to being associated with the bodies of Japanese and Mexican people, the placement of these gardens may have been intended to suggest the locations of Japan and Mexico along opposite edges of the Pacific Ocean. Designed amid the rise of US power in the Pacific, the layout of the gardens operated as a virtual map of the Pacific world at the dawn of the American empire. On the eastern edge of the property still stands the Desert Garden, planted mainly with specimens from the "Western Hemisphere," more specifically Mexico and the Southwest. The first major phase of US Pacific imperialism was to conquer the northern half of Mexico, thereby gaining direct access to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>33</sup> On the opposite, western side of the property is the Japanese Garden. Japan, on the western side of the Pacific, opposite California and Mexico, was forced to trade with the United States as a result of gunboat diplomacy in the 1850s.<sup>34</sup> Between the Desert and Japanese Gardens are subtropical plants of various kinds, including the palm collection. This East-to-West subtropical swath across the grounds is suggestive of the several Pacific island territories annexed by the United States, such as Hawaii and the Philippines, at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Finally, reinforcing the notion that the gardens were designed with the Pacific Ocean in mind, the Australian Garden is located directly South of the Japanese Garden in the southwestern corner of the property.

Hertrich never admitted in his published writings that the layout of the gardens was intended to marginalize minorities or represent the Pacific world in the context of the US empire, but it is hard to imagine that the arrangement of these gardens was dictated by soil and climate concerns alone. He was more upfront about his intentions with respect to planning and landscaping the city of San Marino. This experimental "city of the future," as he called it, was in many ways an outgrowth of the Huntington Gardens. In a new social laboratory, bounded by the city limits of San Marino, Hertrich strove to engineer an exclusive garden society that ultimately marginalized minorities and working people of all backgrounds.

## The Garden Suburb as a Social Laboratory

“The city of the future was to be named ‘San Marino,’ after the ranch. It was to be a city of better homes, wide streets, and large lots with provision for garden space.”<sup>36</sup>

As with his sponsorship of botanical experimentation, Huntington’s decision to support the incorporation of San Marino in 1913 was based, at least in part, on his desire to protect his real estate investments. According to Hertrich, the immediate impetus was to “forestall unfavorable actions” on the part of the surrounding cities that sought to incorporate the “attractive areas” around Huntington’s ranch. Such actions would have reduced both the value of Huntington’s holdings and his influence over the area’s development. Incorporation, on the other hand, stood to enhance the value of Huntington’s property. An upscale garden community could demand premium prices from well-to-do homebuyers who wanted to escape the ugliness of urban life. As Hertrich explained, “The ideal of the founders was to build a city of well-planned homes, of better than average homes, a city free of manufacturing, a city free of slums and even free of semi-slums.”<sup>37</sup>

Huntington placed Hertrich in charge of several aspects of the project, including gathering the necessary signatures for incorporation and landscaping both the public spaces and the private subdivisions. After Huntington’s death, Hertrich continued to play major roles in the community’s development as a Parks Commissioner, a City Councilman, a School Board member, and as a liaison between the Huntington Gardens, the city of San Marino, and the San Marino Garden Club for city beautification projects. Indeed, San Marino was probably Hertrich’s most successful experiment. Published two years before Hertrich’s death, a 1964 *New York Times* article characterized San Marino as “serene enclave,” a “municipal Shangri-La,” and “a monument to men’s conviction that modern metropolitanism can be escaped—if you have the money.”<sup>38</sup>

Hertrich’s employees certainly did not have the money for this experimental elite community, yet Hertrich was tasked with the awkward responsibility of getting their signatures for incorporation anyway. Since the area was so sparsely populated, he needed his workers’ names to meet the 500-person requirement. These workers lived in “servants’ quarters” scattered around the estate, as well as in a small company village near Huntington’s citrus packing house on the southern end of the ranch. The ranch’s transformation into both an elite garden community and a public institution in the coming decades forced most of these workers to relocate.<sup>39</sup>

Hertrich was then “delegated,” in his words, to landscape the new city. He planted “trees on all tracts subdivided by the Huntington Land and Improvement Company.” He recalled that he planted “three to five ornamental trees” on “each of the larger lots,” most of which were presumably of his own choosing.<sup>40</sup>

Hertrich also continued lining the streets around the area with trees, a practice he began in 1905.<sup>41</sup>

Plants were central to selling this new city. To bolster this garden community brand, Hertrich designed the city seal by adding palm and orange branches to the heraldic shield of the Republic of San Marino. When designing this image, Hertrich apparently did not foresee that orange trees would be gradually phased out of the local landscape once it became clear that the profits reaped from orange groves paled in comparison to the money that could be gained by selling upscale residential real estate. As part of Hertrich's citrus experiments, he considered a plan to install heaters that could protect the trees during harsh winters; however, this plan was abandoned when Hertrich and Huntington realized that the "process of smudging our groves might discourage the establishing of the high-type of residences we hoped to encourage." Hertrich's experimental interests then shifted more towards testing the "suitability" of ornamental plants to the Southern California climate.<sup>42</sup>

While continuing his experimentation at Huntington's gardens, Hertrich continued to tend the growing community of San Marino. Among other civic responsibilities, he served as Park Commissioner and helped landscape the city's largest park. A small body of water, known as Wilson Lake, was shrinking due to the increased use of local springs for irrigation. When the owner of the property proposed to drain what remained of the lake and subdivide it, local leaders organized a bond campaign to have the city purchase the land and turn it into a park. According to Hertrich, who related this history to the women of the San Marino Garden Club in 1945, the problem with subdividing the land was that "large homes could not very well be built because the lake bottom could not support such heavy foundations." As a result, the land would have to be subdivided into "small residential lots with low price restrictions." After the bond measure passed overwhelmingly in 1925, the City Council instructed Hertrich to "prepare plans and specifications" for Lacy Park, named after another founding father of the city. Ultimately, the city replaced the lake with a large, concave grass field and lined its edges with a wide variety of trees from the Huntington gardens, including palms, eucalyptus and redwoods. Thereafter, visitors' attention would not be drawn to a shrinking mud hole, but rather toward an impressive, circular display of the ornamental trees that were so important to the image of the new city.<sup>43</sup>

Hertrich also coordinated city beautification projects. In the hopes of selling more real estate, Huntington funded one such project that was designed to impress tourists visiting California for the 1915 San Francisco World's Fair. The Huntington Gardens, the City of San Marino, and the San Marino Garden Club collectively supported a later beautification project that stretched from the 1930s through the 1940s. The Garden Club was pivotal in making city beautification a self-sustaining community enterprise, instead of just a developer-driven scheme. The club mobilized San Marino women to participate in beautification

efforts and also to raise funds from city residents. Hertrich told the group that “the members of the City Council appreciate immensely the efforts on the part of the San Marino Garden Club for their splendid support in helping to maintain this project, annual contributions which have totaled up to \$1500 as of June, 1944.” This community support for city beautification was probably a source of great pride for Hertrich, as it was a sign that the experimental garden community he helped plant was beginning to thrive on its own.<sup>44</sup>

The *New York Times* piece on San Marino as a “serene enclave” included a statement from the mayor that suggests that the vision of Hertrich and the other founding fathers still guided community development in 1964. “Those living here wish to preserve it as a homogeneous high-grade residential neighborhood,” said Mayor Harry Hitchcock. He continued, “San Marino is now a mature city—but free from the deterioration that age often brings.” Like a well-tended garden, the city continually regenerated over the decades. Meanwhile, people of color continued to occupy marginal positions. Although they provided much of the gardening labor and housekeeping services, they remained excluded from the community itself. As the *New York Times* correspondent wrote, apparently without irony, “San Marino has no race problem as its population is almost entirely white.”<sup>45</sup>

High price restrictions helped keep the city white, but so did a long tradition of housing discrimination. The same article mentioned that the western regional headquarters of the ultra-conservative John Birch Society was located in San Marino.<sup>46</sup> This group joined many others in supporting a 1964 state ballot initiative—Proposition 14—that called for rolling back recent fair housing legislation and protecting the right of owners to discriminate when renting or selling their properties. Proposition 14 was approved by a large margin of voters, but it was ultimately ruled unconstitutional by the California State Supreme Court in 1966; the US Supreme Court upheld this decision the following year.<sup>47</sup> The end of legal housing discrimination, together with an upswing in Southern California’s Chinese American population following the Immigration Act of 1965, eroded San Marino’s white majority in the ensuing decades. Even though San Marino became a Chinese American “ethnoburb” around the turn of the twenty-first century, it still remains an elite garden suburb.<sup>48</sup>

Huntington told Hertrich that he would have the ranch ““to play with”” for the rest of his life, and Hertrich took him up on the offer. Hertrich pushed Huntington’s idea that almost anything could grow in Southern California to the limits by experimenting not just with plants, but also with popular notions of race and class, creating a structure for his workforce that corresponded with the composition and layout of the gardens. Both his management of employees and his landscaping served to exoticize and marginalize Mexicans and Asians. Gardening and social engineering also converged in Hertrich’s most impressive experiment, the garden-centered city of San Marino.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1946), 133–134.

<sup>2</sup> William Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1904–1959* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1949), 77, 129.

<sup>3</sup> According to environmental historian Ian Tyrell, cultural landscapes are “shaped by the natural world [as well as] the efforts of humans” and are symbolic of the “aspirations of social groups and classes”; see Tyrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: California-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>4</sup> William B. Friedrichs, *Henry E. Huntington and the Creation of Southern California* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 1–18; Becky M. Nicolaides, “The Quest for Independence: Workers in the Suburbs” in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* eds. William Deverell and Tom Sitton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 79–80.

<sup>5</sup> Tyrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*, 229.

<sup>6</sup> Hertrich, *Early San Marino* (San Marino: San Marino Garden Club), 24.

<sup>7</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 1–2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Friedrichs, *Henry E. Huntington and the Creation of Southern California*, 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 160.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–28.

<sup>15</sup> Hertrich, *A Guide to the Desert Plant Collection* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1953), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Hertrich, *Palms and Cycads: Their Culture in Southern California as Observed Chiefly in the Huntington Botanical Gardens* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1951), 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 101.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>19</sup> Harry Chandler, the publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* and one of Southern California’s chief boosters during the early twentieth century, often called Los Angeles “the white spot in America.” The city was “white” in terms of its supposed moral purity and lack of urban blight, but there was a strong racial connotation to the word, as well. For example, one group of residents, who tried to keep Japanese Americans out of their community in the 1920s, used the slogan, “Keep the White Spot White.” Although Southern California had a large Anglo-American population in the early twentieth century, continued immigration from Asia, Europe and Mexico made the population considerably more diverse. See Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 38–39.

<sup>20</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 85.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 85–86.

<sup>22</sup> Hertrich revealed in his memoirs that the bulk of his horticultural library consisted of publications from England, including a comprehensive set of the *Kew Bulletin*, the journal of Kew Gardens in London; see Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 135. Hertrich also wrote that Huntington visited many “outstanding gardens in Europe,” and that he “disliked formality in the garden plan” (*Ibid.*, 79). According to Norton and Elaine Wise, the English garden style was marked by the appearance of informality, an appearance that was very intentionally constructed; see Wise and Wise, “Reform in the Garden,” *Endeavor* 26, no. 4 (2002): 154–159.

<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Anthony M. Platt and Cecilia E. O’Leary, *Bloodlines: Recovering Hitler’s Nuremberg Laws, From Patton’s Trophy to Public Memorial* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 109, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>28</sup> Eugene D. Genovese's analysis of enslaved people's inefficiency as a form of resistance in the antebellum South has had a profound impact on American labor history. Perhaps Hertrich's comments regarding his Mexican laborers can be best interpreted in this light. See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1975). Scholars in the field have since analyzed how such acts as foot-dragging, "working slow," and running away served as resistive strategies through which subaltern people exerted autonomy; see, for instance, James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See also Leon Fink, "American Labor History," in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 339–340.

<sup>29</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 79–80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>33</sup> California was a prime target for American expansionists, including President James K. Polk, who led the United States into war against Mexico. The region was desirable because of its natural resources, especially its Pacific harbors, which would provide the United States with direct access to Asia and the whaling ports of Hawaii; see Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2012), 57.

<sup>34</sup> Navy Commodore Mathew Perry used the technologically-advanced Black Fleet to coerce the Japanese government into opening up trade with the United States. This ended Japan's centuries-old policy of strictly limiting Western influence and was an important early step in the rise of American power in Asia. For a detailed analysis of this episode and its consequences, see George Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan: Commodore Perry, Lord Abe, and American Imperialism in 1853* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> In the wake of the 1898 Spanish American War, the United States fully embraced the mantle of empire and, before the end of the century, annexed Puerto Rico, as well as several Pacific island territories: American Samoa, Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, and Wake Island; see Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 662–664.

<sup>36</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Hertrich, *Early San Marino*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Gladwin Hill, "Serene Enclave: San Marino, U.S.," *New York Times*, August 16, 1964, 76.

<sup>39</sup> Hertrich, *The Huntington Botanical Gardens*, 85.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 100–101.

<sup>43</sup> Hertrich, *Early San Marino*, 21–24.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

<sup>45</sup> Hill, "Serene Enclave: San Marino, U.S.," 76.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of California's housing discrimination issue in the post-World War II era, see Daniel HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Min Zhou, Yen-Fen Tseng and Rebecca Y. Kim, "Rethinking Residential Assimilation through the Case of Chinese Ethnourbs in the San Gabriel Valley, California," *Amerasia Journal* 34, no. 3 (2008): 55–83.

