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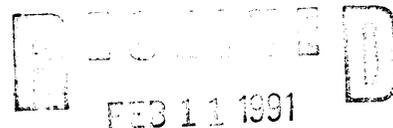
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OHP

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Exposition Park Rose Garden

other name/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number: Exposition Park

not for publication: NA

city/town: Los Angeles

vicinity: NA

state: 06 county: Los Angeles code: 037 zip code: 90007

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-State

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>6</u>		objects
<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: NA



Current: display garden/park

Sub: Landscape Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description  
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Architectural Classification:

No style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation NA roof NA  
walls brick other wood  
concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance  
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: at the state level.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1926- 1940

Significant Dates : NA \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person(s): NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.



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The remainder of the garden interior consists of 166 concrete-lined flower beds (1927) in various shapes and sizes, 83 on each side of the center walkway, which form a pattern symmetrical to the other side. In the beds are a total of 19,000 rose bushes of various hybrids and colors. Additional flowers, green bushes, and trees line the garden's interior borders, especially in the four corners.

Outside of the decorative walls, the rose garden is bordered on the east side by Kinsey Drive, the curb of which almost abuts the garden wall, and on the west side by a concrete sidewalk which abuts the base of the wall. On the south side, a concrete sidewalk extends across the full length from Kinsey Drive to the walkway on the west end. Between the sidewalk and curb of State Street (the southern boundary of the garden property) is a grassy strip punctuated across the center by the walkway leading from State Street to the main entrance gate. On both sides of the walkway near the State Street curb are rectangular concrete bases with Art Deco lightposts (1932) extending from the center with inscriptions chiseled into the base.

The north side of the garden is more ornate. The walkway from the north gate to Exposition Boulevard is flanked by walls with reliefs of Olympics-related figures (1932) connected to long concrete benches which end in lightposts and bases identical to those on the south side. Next to the rose garden decorative wall is a sidewalk extending across the outside length of the garden, then a large lawn with trees, a monument with plaque, benches, and an assortment of large rock boulders as sculpture (1980s) on the east side. Another sidewalk near Exposition Boulevard extends across this lawn a few feet from the curb.

The rose garden is surrounded on three sides by large museum buildings and is open on the north side along Exposition Boulevard. It is situated in the northern portion of Exposition Park which is located in a highly developed residential neighborhood about five miles south of downtown Los Angeles.

### Historical Appearance

The appearance of the garden at the beginning of its historical significance as a display garden is virtually the same as it appears today. Since the completion of its transformation in 1926-1928 the only alterations are the addition of the lightposts, benches, and walls with Olympics-related figures (1932), the "Repose" statue in the northwest gazebo (1946), the storage facility/office and bin (1960s), and the grouping of rock boulders (1984). All of the original rose bushes have been replaced with later plantings. Other than these changes and minor damage to the 1913 wall, the garden is identical to its appearance in 1928.

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Upon its completion in 1928, the Exposition Park Rose Garden was the earliest municipally-operated public display rose garden in California and one of the largest and most notable in the nation at the time. Planned and executed in the heyday of the City Beautiful movement in Los Angeles, the rose garden was both a well-planned public park and a functional display garden offering visitors the opportunity to study the growth of various roses for suitability in private gardens. In this capacity the rose garden symbolized the image of Southern California as a horticultural paradise where anything could grow. Besides its historical importance, the rose garden is an urban oasis of open space in a densely populated area of the city.

The Exposition Park Rose Garden initially evolved from the redevelopment of what was known as Agricultural Park early in this century. In 1909 California's Sixth District Agricultural Association (owner of the property) and the county and city of Los Angeles agreed to a plan to transform Agricultural Park (renamed Exposition Park in 1910) into a cultural center. The state would build an exposition building and armory there if the county would construct and operate a history and art museum, and the city would maintain the grounds.

Early plans for the arrangement of the new structures included a sunken garden situated on the northern portion of the old Agricultural Park race track. On this site the garden formed a quadrangle flanked by the county museum on the west, the armory on the east, the state exposition building on the south, and open on the north side. The three major park structures were completed between 1910 and 1914, when work on the sunken garden had begun. The garden interior was lowered and the entire area was surrounded by a red brick wall that blended well with the adjacent buildings. The wall was formed by columns in the shape of an hourglass, opened in the centers of all four sides by wrought iron gates. On November 6, 1913, the official opening of the museum and exposition buildings, plans were announced for a memorial fountain which would include "a shaft rising more than a 100 feet in the air, flanked by groups symbolic of the history of the city" to be built in the center of the garden to commemorate the completion of the Owens River Aqueduct. This ambitious project apparently died with the approach of World War I.

From 1913 to 1920 the "sunken garden" was merely a large field of bermuda grass with a few trees and two oiled walkways which met in a central circle. The following year witnessed the beginning of the garden's use as an actual garden, rather than just an open space. The California Association of Nurserymen scheduled the "California Flower Show and Horticultural Exposition" for the garden in mid October 1921, and vastly improved the garden for this event. A circular lily pond was built in the center of the garden, and thousands of flowers and trees were planted, many of which remained after the show was over.

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The sunken flower garden was converted into its present appearance when it was transformed into a display rose garden in the period from 1926 to 1928. Under the direction of rosarians George C. Robinson and Fred H. Howard, a consultant for the American Rose Society, the city's Parks Department embarked on a project to create the "largest and most magnificent public rose garden in the United States." Parks Department landscape architects designed a symmetrical garden containing 166 concrete-lined beds surrounding a large circular fountain in the center. City workers removed eight inches of topsoil from the area to be planted with roses and replaced the earth with leaf mold and soil from the canyons in Griffith Park. Colored lights were added to the fountain and lily pond. Four wooden gazebos "with comfortable seats" were installed, one in each quadrant of the garden, a common feature of ancient Persian gardens. By April 1928, the garden was complete--15,793 rose bushes donated by local nurseries were in full bloom.

The finished product fulfilled its planners' dreams. It was reported in the American Rose Annual of 1929 that of the several municipal rose gardens established as part of city park systems in the last few years, "the most notable of them is the rose-garden in Exposition Park." Although many other rose gardens would be established in subsequent years, the Exposition Park garden was the largest of the public gardens for quite some time. Since 1928 it has been surpassed in size by the Tyler Municipal Garden in Texas and the Park of Roses in Columbus, Ohio. Private gardens in Southern California such as those of the Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino and Rose Hills Cemetery in Whittier are comparable, but neither are publicly owned and operated. As a public display rose garden the Exposition Park garden is comparable in California only to the Morcon Amphitheater of Roses in Oakland and the Berkeley Municipal Rose Garden, and it is older and larger than both.

At the time of its completion the Exposition Park Rose Garden was a product of the prevailing City Beautiful movement in landscape architecture. Initiated after the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, this national movement spurred architects, urban planners, and community boosters to improve the aesthetics and amenities of cities by providing more open spaces and parks, more rational placement of civic buildings and more landscape features such as rows of trees, and more pleasing designs in civic architecture and street furniture. The City Beautiful movement stretched into the 1920s in Los Angeles as administrators continued to plan major city improvements such as a new civic center and a park expansion program. At the urging of community leaders and nurserymen, the rose garden project was planned and executed in the spirit of the City Beautiful movement and became one of the last important contributions of this era in Los Angeles.

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In Southern California the rose garden was completed late in what historian Victoria Padilla described as the "Golden Age" of the history of landscape architecture in that area. The City Beautiful movement had helped to spur a plethora of civic developments in the 1900-1930 period as cities such as Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Pasadena, Beverly Hills, and others initiated numerous park and other urban planning projects. At the same time, a host of citizens were creating and publicizing their own elaborate private gardens. The Southland was rapidly increasing in population at the time, and it was especially in the booming 1920s that newcomers wanted to experiment with horticulture in the paradise they now called home. At the new public display rose garden in Exposition Park visitors were offered the opportunity to study the growth of currently-available rose cultivars so that they could decide whether or not to grow these cultivars at home. This function was especially suited to the garden's location in Southern California, long characterized as a Garden of Eden, a romantic "Lotusland" where anything could grow. For flower specialists and rose lovers the rose garden presented the opportunity to examine the hardiness and budding beauty of various roses before planting them in their own private plot in the Southern California paradise.

Along with the construction of the Memorial Coliseum, the Exposition Club House, and the Los Angeles Swimming Stadium, the creation of the new rose garden was one of the major projects which improved the entire park in the decade before the commencement of the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Just in time for these festivities, the city added long concrete benches and walls with Olympics-related figures in relief on the north side, and the elaborate Art Deco light posts on the north and south sides as grand entrances for the many athletes and spectators who visited Exposition Park in 1932.

For a number of years the garden was decorated with several sculptural pieces. In 1936, four statues by Thyra Boldsen were loaned and dedicated in the garden, only to be reclaimed by one of her descendants in 1968. Two sculptures by Caroline A. Lloyd were donated to the city by her daughter in 1946. Placed in the gazebos in the western half of the garden, one of them ("Repose") still remains, the other became a victim of thieves.

Although the original rose bushes of 1928 have long since been replaced, a number of plantings from the 1940s and 1950s still survive. It was at this time that Southern California became even more important in rose hybridization, ("the most productive region in the world in the development of new varieties of exceptional quality") and the Exposition Park Rose Garden became "the foremost rose garden in the home of American rose breeding." As new hybrids became available, the older bushes, particularly those that developed poorly, were removed. Space also had to be secured for the annual planting of the All-America Rose Selections winners. The rose garden is one of the earliest of the twenty-three AARS test gardens in the United States and the recipient of over 2000 of these new cultivars in the last thirty years.

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Today the Exposition Park Rose Garden is one of the three major rose gardens in Southern California and one of the few publicly-operated display rose gardens in the state. A retreat from the surrounding hustle and bustle of urban activity, it is still the scene of a myriad of activities: educational pruning demonstrations, photographic sessions for wedding parties on the weekends, and casual strolls through the garden by museum visitors, rose lovers, and others who appreciate the beauty of this urban oasis. It also serves the function as an open space which orients the visitors in the northern half of Exposition Park and provides a quiet, aesthetic foreground for the major museum and sports structures. In spite of 1980s suggestions that it be recycled into a football practice field or multi-level parking lot, the Exposition Park Rose Garden remains one of the most historically important horticultural resources in California.

The rose garden continued to have importance after 1940, however, nothing of exceptional significance has occurred within the last 50 years, and the arbitrary date of 1940 is chosen as the terminating date for period of significance.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Natural History Museum of L.A. Co.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 10.7

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>11</u>	<u>381200</u>	<u>3764620</u>	B	<u>11</u>	<u>381480</u>	<u>3764620</u>
C	<u>11</u>	<u>381380</u>	<u>3764560</u>	D	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

     See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:      See continuation sheet.

A rectangular portion of Exposition Park beginning at the southwest corner of Exposition Blvd. and Kinsey Drive and extending about 541' south to State Dr., then about 866' west to the concrete walkway between the rose garden and Natural History Museum, then about 541' north to Exposition Blvd., then about 866' east to the original point.

Boundary Justification:      See continuation sheet.

Boundaries for the property follow city streets on three sides and a sidewalk just outside of the garden wall on the west which separate the rose garden area from adjacent buildings; the street on the north side is a major thoroughfare and a border of the entire park.

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11. Form Prepared By  
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Name/Title: Tom Sitton, Associate Curator

Organization: Natural History Museum of L.A. Co. Date: 8-6-1990

Street & Number: 900 Exposition Blvd. Telephone: (213)744-3358

City or Town: Los Angeles State: CA ZIP: 90007

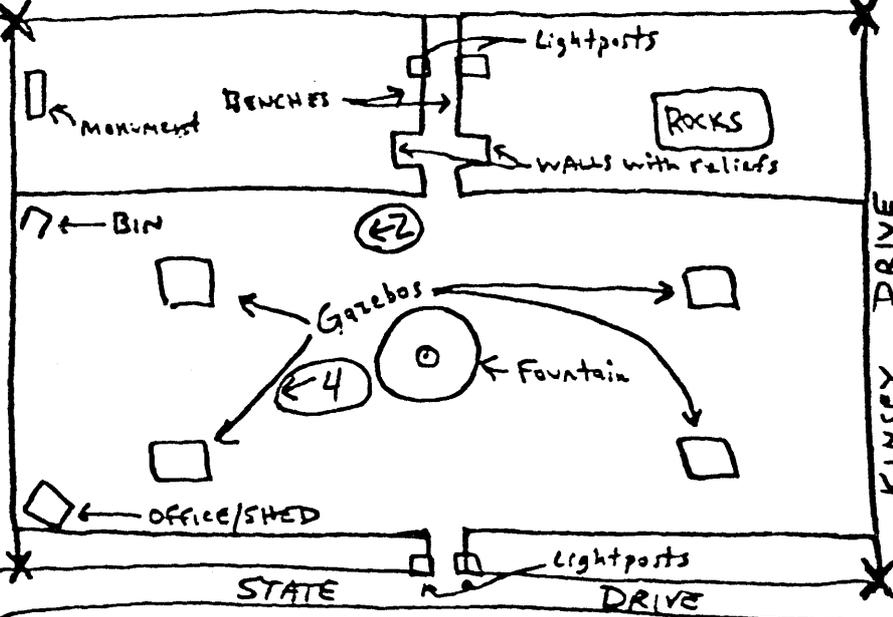
EXPOSITION BOULEVARD

MENLO AVENUE

KINSEY DRIVE

STATE  
ARMORY  
BLDG.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM  
OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY



CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF SCIENCE + INDUSTRY

*Exposition Park  
Exposition Park  
Los Angeles  
California*

MEMORIAL COLISEUM