

Civic Accomplishment and Liberal Civic Cultivation: The Construction of Casa del Prado from 1968 to 1971

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Abstract: Casa del Prado as a duplication is a typical Spanish-Colonial and Mexican building. Its' construction from 1968 to 1971 was a thought-evoking story with twists and turns plots. The Casa del Prado is a near-reproduction of the Food and Beverage Building in Expo 1935, keeping the exterior in same decoration but the size, structure, building materials and interior are different. As a public building it mainly serves the youth groups in performing arts. Meanwhile the youth are cultivated toward good citizens. So Casa del Prado build a civic space, where the liberal democratic society sprouts and is cultivated.

Keywords: Casa del Prado, Committee of 100, Public Space, Civic Cultivation

1. Introduction

Balboa Park, with the glory of 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition and modern facilities, located in the downtown San Diego and as a cultural heart of the city, is a Spanish-Colonial and Mexican style garden and park. If Balboa Park can be figured as an elegant lady with historical taste, Casa del Prado will be her head with elaborate decorations. The lady with charming smile and brilliant eyes welcomes the visitors from all of world, also nourishes the San Diegans.

The current Casa del Prado used to be Foreign and Domestic Products Building, a temporary one in 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, later as Food and Beverage Building in 1960s. How can the temporary building stand for more than 100 years? San Diegans rebuilt it in 1960s and 1970s. The rebuilding story is thought-provoking.

2. The Twists and Turns in the Process of Rebuilding

2.1. Uncertainty: The Future of the Old Building

After the Expositions, the Food and Beverage Building became a cultural activity center, mainly for youth, housing the San Diego Youth Symphony, the Junior Theater, the

Youth Ballet and the Youth Chorale, also folk dance groups.

As a temporary one, the Food and Beverage Building in 1950s and 1960s were in bad condition. Floyd R. Moor, a retired civil engineer, remembered that at that time birds and beehives were frequently in the walls, plus a leaking roof.¹ Mrs. Donn H. DeMarce, president of the ballet group, said in detail, "The roof is in such bad condition that on rainy days, large garbage cans are placed at strategic spots throughout the rooms to catch the torrents of water. But even the garbage cans often are inadequate and the little girls in their brightly colored leotards have to dance around large puddles on the floor."²

Even though it was in shabby condition, the cultural groups used the building daily in good order, in tranquility with sun-rise and sun-set. What broke the peace?

Mrs. Frank Evenson, Chairman of the Committee of 100, told councilmen that the committee realized that the Prado buildings were built as temporary structures and eventually would have to be replaced. "The people of San Diego have a deep feeling of civic pride in these buildings, which they consider a part of their heritage"; "We are asking that as each building is replaced, the same type of façade be maintained so that El Prado will continue to present the same well-loved

¹"A Tapestry of Time", Balboa Park 1997, 105. In Richard W. Amero, *Casa del Prado*, book 1, in the research library of San Diego History Center.

²*San Diego Union*, March 4, 1968.

appearance to appreciative citizens and visitors”.³ Why did she make the request? Because “Bartholomew 1960” decided that the Food and Beverage Building, a temporary building built for the 1915 Exposition, should be replaced as soon as possible by a new building. The master plan recommended that the present site of the Food and Beverage Building be used for the construction of a garden center. So it seemed that the Food and Beverage Building would be razed. It was in the worries and love of the building that the Committee of 100 was established, which included architects, businessmen, members of the clergy, women’s club leaders and others. This organization acted as the pillar in the civic engagement. The establishers thought the number of the members of it would be 100. Soon the member surpassed it.

At this time, the disputes about the fate of the building did not widely spread. In the spring of 1968, a piece of explosive news irritated the public and the discussion about the future of the building became overwhelming. The proposal for the demolition and \$61,000 parking lot was introduced at a meeting of the Balboa Park Committee of the city Park and Recreation Department in March 1968.⁴ The elegant and functional building v.s. Parking lot, to be further, the heritage v.s. profits.

Different organizations and persons expressed their ideas. The immediate response was from Mrs. DeMarce, “Where else could we put 500 ballet students here in the park?” “On the new parking lot?”⁵ Actually she had heard the news and said a few days before. “We have all the plans drawn up already. The building would be exactly the same from the outside but the inside would be converted to handle all the youth groups”. She said the parents would launch a drive soon to convince city officials to save the buildings. “We plan to appear at the meetings, write letters and circulate petitions”.⁶ On March, 10th, representatives of 10 San Diego cultural groups met in the Food and Beverage building to plan a campaign to fight demolition of the building for a parking lot.

Robert Wallace, a professor of Art History, expressed his academic view, “The current proposal to celebrate San Diego’s 200th anniversary by replacing the Food and Beverage Building along the Prado in Balboa Park with a parking lot, seems to show a shocking lack of knowledge of what we are celebrating. As soon as possible after the celebration, the building should be rebuilt preserving its exclusively detailed exterior and giving it a worthy interior, so that it can continue for generations to be an ornament to our city and a reminder of our rich heritage.”⁷

Byrl D. Phelps, an assistant city engineer since 1939, recommended that no further destruction of these buildings in Balboa Park be done but a concentrated effort should be made, as was done in 1939, to repair any of the dangerous construction. “I believe juvenile delinquency is partially overcome by the use of these buildings by the young people of

San Diego. Balboa Park is the greatest asset we have in San Diego.”⁸

Marilyn Hagberg, a reviewer, described “Removing the majestic Food and Beverage Building for automobiles would be like knocking out the top front teeth of a beautiful woman.”⁹ He thought that the most possible measure was to take molds from the decorative facades of the present palace, then tear down the structure and get a permanent building.

Mrs. Florence Christman, who worked in the information desk in the House of Hospitality for the Junior League, said, “the building must be saved”, “It would take \$3million to build another like it”.¹⁰

Faced with the fiery love¹¹ for the building and different suggestions, the government formed a task force¹² to investigate the building. On April 9, 1968, following the City Manager Walter Hahn’s order, the Food and Beverage Building was closed to the public as unsafe, and park events moved to the other sites. About one week later, the task force made the recommendations:

(1) “the public use of the Food and Beverage Building cease”.

(2) “the Park and Recreation Board and the City Council allow a 6-month period for interested citizen groups to raise funds to carry out desired objectives. In the event such action does not take place in this period of time, that the City demolish the building and landscape the area”.

(3) “...that the architectural ornamentation be preserved for any future building on the site. Steps should be taken to have molds prepared to preserve the ornamentation or investigate the possibility of preserving the ornamentation intact.”¹³

The Task Force also presented 4 alternatives and their expenses:

(1) “Demolish the building and landscape the area. Provide other facilities for groups that are presently using the building. Estimated cost: \$75-80,000.”

(2) “Clean exterior surface, patch the stucco and ornamentation, paint the facility, make minimum repairs to roof and roofing, and close the building for any public use. This would allow the building to stand during the 200th Anniversary Celebration. Estimate cost: \$80,000”.

(3) “Rehabilitate the building to meet minimum requirement for occupancy of 15-20 years. Estimated cost: \$930,000”.

8 *San Diego Union*, March 25, 1968.

9 *San Diego Magazine*, May, 1968, p. 53.

10 *San Diego Union*, Thursday morning, April 18, 1968.

11 Of course, there would be exceptional. One lady, who declined to give her name, circumnavigated the outside of the building, snapping pictures at every vantage point. When asked, “You’ve known and loved the building for years and want a pictorial keepsake?”, she said, “Not at all. I figure if the building is torn down and they put a parking lot on it, maybe the picture will be valuable some day so people can see how it used to be”. *San Diego Union*, Thursday morning, April 18, 1968.

12 The task force was composed of 2 architects, 2 contractors, 2 structural engineers, the Director of Building Inspection, the Fire Marshal, the Chairman of the Facilities Committee, the Chairman of the Park and the Recreation Board, the Chairman of the Balboa Park Committee, the Director of Public Works and the Assistant City Manager.

13 Park and Recreation Board Minutes, April 17, 1968, in Richard W. Amero, *Casa del Prado*, book 1, in the research library of San Diego History Center.

3 *San Diego Union*, November 9, 1968.

4 *San Diego Union*, March 11, 1968.

5 Ibid.

6 *San Diego Union*, March 4, 1968.

7 *San Diego Union*, March 9, 1968.

(4) "Remove the existing building and construct a new facility. The estimate of the Botanical Society for the building they are presently proposing at this site is \$1,750, 000. The estimate to demolish and reconstruct this building is the same size and type of use is 2.5-2.75 million dollars".¹⁴

Now, with the closed door the future of the Food and Beverage Building seemed gloomy. The authority made the timetable but no concrete decision. The disputes about it came into a new phase, which focused on the expense, that is who should pay and how much.

2.2. Actions Began: Removed the Decorations, the Litigation and Bond Issue

Roughly, there were 3 opinions about the expense.

First. City Manager Walter Hahn said cost of any remodeling or reconstruction work should not be shouldered entirely by the city. "We have suggested that the groups interested in preserving this building share in these costs, at least on an equal basis".¹⁵ About 3 months later, the Park and Recreation Board Chairman Douglas Giddings said "we are not in a position to recommend reallocation of funds from the \$8 million park bond issue for this project", these funds had been earmarked for other park projects.¹⁶

Second, the radical ideas from the public. By the pseudonym "San Diegans", the writer said, "It does seem strange, though, that the city has shifted the burden to concerned citizens, saying, in effect, if you want a new building, put it up yourself. We do not suggest how the burden should be shared. But we do know that a new building of equal beauty must rise upon the site of the one to be torn down. The City Council must see that this is done, whether by public donation or by a bond issue, or by both."¹⁷ The reviewer, Marilyn Hagberg, expressed the milder idea. He said, "The City, which because of its neglect I believe to be responsible for the shocking state of the old palace, should shell out the money ---whatever.....---to repair and repaint the building so that it can be temporarily preserved, and presentable until plans can be completed and funds obtained for a permanent structure."¹⁸

Third, the Committee of 100 made plans and took actions. It hoped to make an appeal to the citizens of San Diego through a bond issue to fund. Also it required that city funds originally allocated for a "patch and paint" job on the old building (about \$24,000) should be used in removing and duplicating the ornamental molds and statues. Additionally, it voted to organize a 'Friends of the Committee', at \$1 per person contribution, as a sort of booster club. A fundraising party was scheduled on June 1 in Balboa Park Club. Proceeds from the event, to be called "1915-Fiesta", would go toward reconstruction of the building.¹⁹

It seemed that the disputes above were so different that

could not compromise with each other. Who would pay for the remodeling or reconstruction? No answer. The turning point came out on July 18th. On this day the Committee of 100 was given permission by the City Council to remove specimens at its expense. The Chairman Mrs. Evenson said the removal of the specimens would begin early in August, and the building to be demolished in November. Meanwhile the city Council voted to contribute \$5,000 in city funds to aid in the preservation of the specimens and their cataloging and storage.²⁰

The workmen gently removed the decorations in 3 weeks. Mueller, the consultant for the removal, described that during the removing, "many people stopped and asked me, 'what is happening to the building? Are they destroying them or saving them?' Children stopped and asked the same question. I told them they were being saved, and they said, 'good', brisk and businesslike, and walked away. I hope they (city officials) do not make a liar out of me".²¹ At the same time, Mrs. Evenson used the smart words to put pressure on the government. "We have received the assurances of the City Council that the landscaping of the area now occupied by the Food and Beverage Building will only be a temporary measure", "We have been told the city intends to put up another building on this site and not mar it with another parking lot".²²

With the rebuilding unfunded and decorations moved out, another trouble came out. 5 groups (Teamsters Union Local No. 36, Labors Union Local No. 89, South Bay Demolition & Excavating Co., John Hansen Companies, Inc., and Safeway Demolition & Wrecking Co) obtained the writs of mandates against the city officials. The writs ordered them to rescind the sale of the building and to ask for competitive bids for the sale and demolition of the building. They claimed that that it was illegal for the city not to ask for competitive bidding in advertisements setting forth prevailing wage scales to be paid different classes of workers on public works project.

Robert A. Fitch, a chief deputy city attorney representing the city officials, said the city's contention was that the building without the decoration was valued at less than \$1,000 and therefore it was not necessary to seek formal bids of sale. He said the building was valued at almost nothing, but was sold to the Wolman firm for \$25. He said other firms were asked if they were interested in buying the building, but only the Woolman firm expressed interest.²³ One week later, plaintiff Attorney David B. Moon said that declarations filed on his clients' behalf indicated that Woolman was employing Mexican nationals and paying them by trading scrap material for their labor.²⁴

It seemed to be a political affair with international background! So complicated! But the Judge's final say was short and clear: home rule laws permitted the city to proceed as it had---awarding the contract without seeking bids if less than \$1000, using Mexican nationals did not give the court

14 Ibid.

15 *San Diego Union*, March 21, 1968.

16 *San Diego Union*, June 12, 1968.

17 *San Diego Union*, April 28, 1968.

18 *San Diego Magazine*, May 1968 p. 53.

19 *San Diego Union*, March 21, 1968.

20 *San Diego Union*, July 19, 1968.

21 *San Diego Union*, August 17, 1968.

22 *San Diego Tribune*, August 1, 1968.

23 *San Diego Union*, August 30, 1968.

24 *San Diego Union*, September 7, 1968.

cause to question the sale.²⁵ So it was legal for the selling even though in incredible low price.

While the suing was on, the council dealt with the money matter also in a dramatic way. The Committee of 100 ever proposed a bond issue. Mayor Curran agreed and mentioned it during an informal meeting of top city officials in summer. He subsequently had the resolution of intent drafted and listed on council meeting agenda on. When councilmen took up the item, Curran apologized for not bring the matter before them during a conference first. Curran explained that August 29th was the deadline for adoption of the resolution to get the bond issue on the Nov. 5 ballot.

"We can just file it if you do not want to get along with it", Curran said. The councilmen indicated that they liked the proposal, and hastily called an afternoon conference, deferring action on the resolution until after the session.²⁶ On Sep 3rd, 1968, the council decided that a \$3.5 million bond issue to finance a replacement for the Food and Beverage Building (Proposition M) would be placed before city voters on Nov. 5.

To issue bond, yes or no?

Paul E. Leyton, president of Taxpayer Unit, gave a denial and offered the arguments. He said the opposition to the Balboa Park bond issue was tied to the \$47,665,000 city bond issue package approved by voters in 1966. Leyton said that when the package was presented to voters "it was stated that the program would cover and meet city priority needs over the next six-year period." He also said the City Council in placing the issue on the ballot, failed to give the city park and Recreation Board, the taxpayers association, and other civic organizations, the opportunity to evaluate the priority of the new bond issue in relation to all other park or capital needs of the city.²⁷

Stacy Sullivan, an attorney, retorted that this was an emergency, "you can't always plan for emergency", while admitting that the measure was "hastily" placed on the ballot. He said city officials felt "we'd be throwing good money down a rat hole by trying to rehabilitate the old building."²⁸ So to rebuild and make it permanent was a wise idea.

Many youths involved in the various programs conducted a door-to-door campaign to urge the passage of Proposition M. Numerous flyers were handed out. It supported the Proposition M for three reasons. The Food and Beverage Building was and would be: available to all citizens, young and old; central meeting place for civic, cultural and Youth group; dollars for San Diego with its great attraction for tourists.

The result was yes 152,509 v.s. no 70,148. Proposition M was passed. So fund would not be a problem. In the winter of 1968, the site was cleared and ready for the ground-breaking in next spring. Did everything go as smooth as expected? No.

2.3. Original Site or New Location

Some people suggested a new location for the building with

convincing reasons.

Philip L. Gildred, Allen J. Sutherland and Walter Ames representing 22 citizens submitted their petition in June 20th 1969, urging location of the proposed new building on the site of the old Ford Building²⁹ or some other site in the park. They claimed themselves to be vitally interested in the city and in the beauty, usefulness and further development of Balboa Park. "We believe that because of parking, traffic and other reasons the rebuilding of the structure in the identical location may be a grave and serious mistake resulting in irreparable damage to the park"; "We believe that the placement of the proposed new building upon the site of the 'Old Ford Building' where it would occupy one of the most dramatic view of this or any other city, or at some other location in the park, should be thoroughly considered by a qualified planning expert".³⁰ The site of the old building should be maintained as a permanent open space and developed as a "historical and Spanish type garden".

Very soon, the opposite idea came out. 9 organizations³¹ united to support replacement of the old building on its original site. What was the most interesting was that they would use informal way to make their ideas known by the city officials. Peter Ellsworth, Vice president of the Committee 100, said, "We are recommending a private and not a public campaign to let the proper officials know our position. We think letters from all interested groups to the mayor and councilmen will adequately inform them of the facts. Our prime concern is getting the facts of our position to the mayor and councilmen, which the letters will accomplish".³² Mrs. Marguerite Schwarzmen, representing San Diego's senior citizens, said the Ford Building was too far removed from public transportation. "The original site is much more convenient. That is what we voted for and that is where it should be."³³

There was a clear voice coming from John P. Starkey, building site chairman for San Diego Aerospace Museum. He said, Aerospace Museum had been working to move into the Ford Building for several years and got a lease option from the city. And earlier this year directors of the museum voted to proceed with plans to renovate the building and lease it from the city. He said an architect reported that the building could be restored to house the museum for about \$735,000, while the cost of demolishing the Ford Building would be about \$250,000. "It doesn't make sense to spend that kind of money to tear down a building which can be fixed up for only \$735,000 to last another 50 years".³⁴

29 The Ford Building was at the south end of the park, east of U.S. 395. It was built by the Ford Motor Co. for the 1935 exposition for exhibits. It fell into disrepair after the exposition and had been used as storage space by the city and by cultural groups.

30 *San Diego Union*, June 20, 1969.

31 They were the Committee 100, the Civic Arts for Youth, the Sierra Club, Balboa Park Folkdancers, Historic Sites Boards, San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation, the Aerospace Museum, the League of Women Voters, Save Our Heritage Organization.

32 *San Diego Union*, June 24, 1969.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *San Diego Union*, June 20, 1969.

25 *San Diego Union*, September 11, 1968.

26 *San Diego Union*, August 30, 1968.

27 *San Diego Union*, October 3, 1968.

28 *San Diego Union*, October 17, 1968.

Faced with the ideas above, the Mayor Curran denied the petition. In his replying letter, Curran explained that City Council had a moral obligation to keep its previous commitment. This commitment was outlined in a June 1968 council resolution which authorized the Committee of 100 to take molds of the exterior décor of the building. The resolution stated that, “the molds (are) to be stored at the city’s expense and make available at the time when a new structure is approved for the site where the Food and Beverage Building is presently located, it being the intention of the City Council that the present Food and Beverage Building will be demolished and the site will be cleared and temporarily landscaped.”³⁵

After quite long debates in more than one year and half, the ground broken ceremony finally came. Was this the end of the building story? No.

During the construction, the loggia was planned to be excluded from the building because of the cost. Mrs. Frank Evenson responded, “We are deeply disturbed by the substitute of a rather solid arcade for the exuberant loggia...one of the most distinctive features of this building”, “now we hope for another miracle in trying to raise \$70,000 by mid-August. We will name the entire loggia in honor of any public-spirited person who will donate a major portion of the total cost.”³⁶ They made it, just as before.

Till now, the story of the rebuilding process came to the end. There could not be too much praising words for the civic engagement in the rebuilding. As for the significance of it, in the opening ceremony the words from Richard Pourade, an editor emeritus of The San Diego Union and author of several books on San Diego history, were penetrating, “I hope this marks the end of an era of counting progress by population.”³⁷

3. Differences: the Casa del Prado and the Food and Beverage Building

On November 13th, 1971, the new structure officially opened. It got the name Casa del Prado (House of the City Walk), suggested by artist-educator George Worthington, a long-time San Diegan and member of the Balboa Park Committee.³⁸

The Casa del Prado is a near-reproduction of the Food and Beverage Building, keeping the exterior in same decoration but the size, structure, building materials and interior are quite different.

The Food and Beverage Building was one-story (It appeared to be two stories, but the interior had five huge one-story rooms with small galleries.), loft style, occupying around 90,000-square foot. The Casa del Prado is two-story, around 60,000 square. The apse and choir section, which was

a northwestern corner of the east part of the old building, just behind the auditorium were missing because of cost cutting.



Figure 1. The missing apse photographed by the author.

Both of the two structures are L-shape. The Food and Beverage Building was completely enclosed. The Casa del Prado is innovatively designed with two patios. One is 110 by 128 foot courtyard surrounded by arched walkways facing Village Place. The other is enclosed, as a part of south branch of the building along the El Prado. Actually the two-story south branch was designed as a hollow rectangles, featuring a 136 by 84-foot landscaped open courtyard with first floor rooms opening out onto it and second-story rooms opening onto wrought-iron decorated balconies surrounding the upper story.



Figure 2. The south patio photographed by the author.

The second patio can be and actually used as a theater. The audience can watch from the surroundings. This feature is similar to the Colosseum. But the audience in this patio-theater can enjoy more freedom, especially for the audience in the second story. They can move around or leave as they will. So compared with the normal theater, the patio-theater provide a freer space, and less formal.

The Casa del Prado was designed as permanent. So the main building material is concrete, instead of chicken wire, hemp and plaster, which supported the Food and Beverage Building. The most charming part of the old building was its delicate decorations. In order to duplicate the originals in detail, the workmen invented a new technique. The first step

35 *San Diego Union*, July 3, 1969.

36 *San Diego Union*, July 23, 1970. The largest single donor was Mrs. Jeannette Pratt, who contributed \$50,000.

37 *San Diego Union*, November 15, 1971.

38 The Balboa Park Committee is a citizen advisory organization, offering advice to the Mayor and City Council on policy issues relating to the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of Balboa Park.

was to restore the old plaster piece to be copied close to its original condition, since many of them were severely deteriorated. The second step was to make the mold. The piece was covered with a half-inch to one inch layer of modeling clay. Then a plaster mold was poured over the clay. When the plaster was hardened the clay was removed and there was space between the mold and the original. Then the super hot liquid vinyl material was poured into the space. When the vinyl cooled and hardened it was locked into the plaster case. After the original piece and plaster were removed, the vinyl mold was done. The third step was to pour the concrete into the vinyl mold. The attachments and anchoring devices could be placed in the concrete for holding the completed ornament to the new building. The vinyl molds could be reused. So numerous cherubs, bishop's heads and elaborate scrollworks were produced. This method greatly reduced the cost of the rebuilding and save the churrigueresque style as a last resort.

The new building continued to be a garden-youth- center, and with modern facilities, such as elevator, air-conditioner, kitchen. Some of the facilities fit the dancing well. Four of the second-story rooms were equipped with floor to ceiling mirrors and bars for ballet practice. In the south part, the floors were covered with asbestos tile except a hardwood floor in one room. In the north part, an auditorium with 952 seats, 80×35 foot stage, 10×40 foot orchestra pit was built as a theater behind the two bell towers. So the Casa del Prado is a historic site with modern facilities. Its heritage is of the past, while its function is of the future.

4. Public Space: The Regulations

The Casa del Prado, established by bond, should be city property and open to the public. That is exactly correct. But the question is that if there are too many applications for the usages of the rooms and facilities in the building, who will get the priority and why.

Actually, there was controversy about the usage of the building before it was completed. In the spring of 1971, Larry Sisk, vice president of the Botanical Foundation, asked for exclusive use of three rooms, totaling 4,886 square feet and a first priority use on a fourth for monthly meetings. Curran advocated that 4,100 square feet of floor space be given to the Botanical Foundation for their exclusive use for a library and office to house the California Garden magazine. There were opposite ideas. Pauline des Granges, director of the Department of Recreation, worried, "the room would not then be available to the public". William Gerhardt, Park and Public Building director also believed that the building designed to accommodate no one group, but rather to serve as many used as possible.³⁹

Mayor Curran said the proposed use of the building by youth-oriented activities on a reservation basis to be "in effect, an exclusive use of the building".⁴⁰ But later, he said, "We don't want to freeze it (Casa del Prado) into youth use".⁴¹ He

ever complained that the cost of a wooden floor and full-length wall mirror to be installed for use by the Junior Ballet was high. Tom Meade, the projects' engineer for the city, comforted him, "Just because the floor is different and there's a mirror doesn't mean the room can't be used for the other purpose".⁴²

With the door open, the operation policies and procedures were effective. All the disputes were settled. The overall saying, "Exclusive use of certain Casa facilities have been assigned certain designated organizations and activities sponsored by the City of San Diego's Recreation Department",⁴³ could be explained by following table.

	designated organizations	non-designated organizations
Priority rooms	Priority in reservations, 18 month in advance of requested activities date	Reservations, if available, 60 days prior to the date of the activity.
Non- Priority rooms	Reservations, 18 month in advance of requested activities date	Reservations, 18 month in advance of requested activities date

Figure 3. The operation policy framed by the author. Origin from 'Operation Policy, from City of San Diego Recreation Department: Casa del Prado---Operating Policies and Procedures', Nov, 1971.

So it was clear that it was by reservation, the only method that all the organizations and groups could use the rooms and facilities. No organizations permanently got the exclusive usage. The designated organizations had priority in certain rooms, not all the room. As for the non-priority rooms, the designated organizations and non-designated organizations got the equal rights. Thus the privilege of the designated organizations was limited and clear. The non-designated organizations could use priority rooms in certain conditions. Thus the non-designated organizations were not under-privileged. As for the division of the designated organizations and non-designated organizations, it came from the history of the building. The designated organizations included San Diego Botanical Gardens Foundation, San Diego Floral Association, Junior Theater, Youth Ballet, Youth Choral, Youth Symphony. They had been the main users and the building was designed as a garden-youth-center. In a word, the Casa del Prado was a public architecture, offered equal access to all while favoring some organizations.

The Regulation stipulated that the designated organizations could have free use of facilities if meeting requirements in Council Policy 700-4. All other organizations would pay the use of facilities in accordance with rates established by the City manager. The auditorium, the biggest space in the building could be rent to three categories of activities (organizations) and in three conditions.

³⁹ *San Diego Union*, March 29, 1971.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *San Diego Union*, May 3, 1971.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ City of San Diego Recreation Department: *Casa del Prado---Operating Policies and Procedures*, Nov, 1971. In Richard W. Amero, *Casa del Prado*, book 2, in the library of San Diego History Center.

	Free, no Admission	Charity, non-profit, admission	Commercial, admission (10% of gross admission sales but not less than)
Clear floor	\$75	\$130	\$195
Flat floor with chairs	\$130	\$195	\$260
Full riser	\$195	\$255	\$320

Figure 4. The auditorium rent fee framed by the author. Origin from 'City of San Diego Recreation Department: Casa del Prado---Operating Policies and Procedures', Nov, 1971.

The charge for the commercial activities without admission in clear floor was 2.6 times of the free activities without admission in clear floor (195/75). That was a quite high rate. These classification and comparatively high rate for commercial activities proved that the building built by bond aimed to serve the public, not for someone's commercial profits. As the public property of the city, it could be rent and then the funds could be used to maintain the building. That was the way to protect the building, which made it serve the public as long as possible. So in a sustainable way the Casa del Prado was of the San Diegans, by the San Diegans and for the San Diegans.

5. Casa del Prado as a Civic Space: Training, Cognition and Cultivation

The process of rebuilding was zigzag. Multiple forces including the Committee of 100, leaders of the youth cultural groups, ordinary persons, guilds, government officials, and even judges were involved in the process. Was that a confrontation between the public and government? It seems so. But in view of civil society, the process was more complicated. The initial clue was the re-planning of the Park and the building was in danger of landscaping. When the old building v.s. parking lot appeared, the public was enraged and more persons involved in. In a sophisticated way, the mayor accelerated the bond issue. Even though there were some sober questions about the proposition, it was passed. The story went on with the litigation of sale and demolition of the building, and then the location of the new building, and the loggia design. So many surprising plots! The story was attractive because no one could foretell the result. To be more important, no one could control the process and the result could not be designed or manipulated. This was a good example of 'Spontaneous Order'⁴⁴, which was the essence of liberal democratic society.

⁴⁴ Spontaneous Order, a word in physical, biological and economics, is typically used to describe the emergence of various kinds of social orders from a combination of self-interested individuals who does not intentionally try to create order through planning. In political theory, Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992) defended classical liberalism by using this word as a foundation to criticize the collectivism based on central planning authority. See Friedrich Hayek. *The Constitution of Liberty*, University of Chicago Press, 1960.

'What concerns all should be determined by all', an old saying in Roman Law, was carried out in the process. The old building, as public treasure, concerned everyone. So the process of protection and rebuilding was a drill of citizens. It was by this drill and practice that the civil society was trained and the 'Spontaneous Order' could refresh itself. The Committee of 100 played decisive role in this process, not only as a determined fund raiser, but also as a noble group, illustrating the connotation of positive liberty and citizenship. The commitment and devotion expressed by the Committee of 100 was the cornerstone of civil society.

As a public architecture, the Casa del Prado tells the visitors about the history of San Diego by the exquisite decorations. These gallery-like decorations reveal the San Diegans' self-cognition, which is fundamental in the affection. That is the reason why Casa del Prado was built by almost copying the old building. The public cherished the spiritual treasure in history and wanted to keep it.

The relief-history tells about where the San Diegans came from and how they made living. At the corner of the El Prado and Village Place, the east side of the building shows a hieratical sculptural group. At the bottom, it depicts a head of Spanish conquistador wearing a plumed caballero's hat. In the middle, there are 5 figures, divided in 3 niches with floral base and a shell tympanum. The larger central niche holds a buxom female with two small children. One child looks like an Indian and the other looks like an Anglo. They are representing the contribution of the two races to California history. The three hold bunches of fruits, symbolizing abundance. The south figure wearing a cuirass and holding a shield is thought to represent the Spain. The north figure holding a globe and cross is thought to represent the Anglo-Saxon. At the top of the ornamentation stands a female figure, thought to represent religion.



Figure 5. The 5 figures for historical cognition photographed by the author.

In a fictional and vivid way, it shows “main historical demographics of the state of California: a population of Hispanic, native American and Anglo-Saxon heritage co-existing under the unifying influence of a common religious heritage”.⁴⁵

In the whole building, the pillars in the façade of auditorium and in the two entrance pavilions of the southern part are entwined with grape vine. The two highly ornamented entrance pavilions in the southern part are identical and decorated with cherubs, crowns, urns, shields, olive leaves, grapes and other fruits and vegetables. The grape and olive are significant motifs, which was brought by the Spanish to California and became important in state’s agriculture. The loggia between the two entrance pavilions is a typical style of Mexican patio portals. The loggia in the middle depicts six discs, holding a sheaf of bound wheat, a grape vine and a trio of gourds.



Figure 6. *The loggia photographed by the author.*

These agriculture products reveal the early life of San Diegan.

Here, there is an interesting question. Why was the apse missing? Cost cutting. Faced with the same situation, the loggia was saved by money drive. There was no money drive for the apse. Why? What did the apse depict? One of the reasons is that the apse was in the corner of the northwest, an inconspicuous spot. A more important reason can be that the apse only delivered the information about the Spanish empire. The castle, the lion, the bust portrait of Frather Junipero Serra (1713-1794)---founder of Franciscan missions in San Diego, were the symbols of Spanish imperial era.



Figure 7. *The apse in detail photographed by the author.*

They were so far away from the San Diegans in 1970s. As the founder of San Diego, Serra was memorized in the west end of arcade of south building, a standing position carrying a cross.



Figure 8. *The relief of Serra in arcade photographed by the author.*

In the decorations of Casa del Prado the Spanish elements, such as head of Spanish conquistador, Serra, are minor in size and location. The apse was not duplicated. So it can be deduced that in the duplicating San Diegans filtered some historical information and made the Casa del Prado more amiable to the locals. As a public architecture, the Casa del Prado crystallized the public’s sentiment in 1970s, symbolized their love toward the local, while intelligently balanced the Spanish colonial origin. Anyway, the prosperous Spanish era had been a golden page in the San Diego history, worth of being proud of.

Casa del Prado features not only the memorial function in its symbolic decoration, but also the civic space in the cultivation of youth. The new building and the regulations are a great blessing to the youth groups, including Junior Theater, Youth Ballet, Youth Choral, Youth Symphony. They can continue their practice, rehearsal and show in the auditorium, called Casa del Prado Theater, and the south patio.

Is this performing arts education related with liberal civic cultivation? Performing arts education can exit in every political system. Actually, the music and dance as an easy way to be accepted by the public can be utilized by the collectivism government to mobilize the public and shape and strengthen the ideology. A good case in point is Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1960s and 1970s, that was a nightmare of totalitarianism. It robbed the people’s rationality and kidnapped their emotion. So an independent clearing in the mind is of great importance.

45 Panama-California Sculpture Court, in the south patio of Casa del Prado.

As for the performing arts education in Casa del Prado, this after-school activity offers an independent area which is immune from the school education. School education more or less bears with political ideology. The independent and free space for a liberal democratic society is like the salt for a human body, a necessity even though not too much. By learning the classic repertoires can the youth acquire some eternal and universal truths and sentiments, such as love, courage, integrity, responsibility and so on, which can help them to develop an open and inclusive mind which offers them a perspective to think about the life. These repertoires tell the stories which are independent sometimes contradicted with school education. It is these eternal and universal truths and sentiments that enlighten the youth minds and make the space meaningful. Additionally, in the groups, socialization can be realized by cooperation. In cooperating with each other, the youth will recognize his or her role, sense their unique value and set up positive attitude toward the life. These youth can be more likely to attend the community and city activities than the youth who all day long crouch in the sofa watching TV. Lastly, performing arts needs long time practice. The glory in the stage is fostered by the much effort in practice room. So persistence is required by these performing arts. Persistence as a virtue is a character of an excellent citizen. So the young performers bear the potential of a good citizen.

Another important thing is that Casa del Prado offers a space, affordable and well-regulated. So the classes of the performing arts can be accessible to almost every youth who like it. Besides the youth in these groups, the young audience can benefit from the contents of the play, as well as the rules they should obey and the courtesy they should show in public space. That can be a kind of rehearsal for the citizenship in the future, empirical even though nominal. So Casa del Prado as a youth center acts as a arena cultivating the “twig”, which will be the truck of liberal democratic society in the future.

6. Conclusion

Casa del Prado stands in the Balboa Park as a model of

aesthetic maintenance, a monument of civic accomplishments and a cradle nurturing the future citizen.

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