



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: July 5, 2025

REPORT NO.: 102

ATTENTION: Parks and Recreation Board  
Agenda of September 25, 2025

SUBJECT: Sessions - Brandegee San Jose Hesper Palm Groves an Official Garden of  
Balboa Park

### SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Parks and Recreation Board recommend approval of the naming of Sessions - Brandegee San Jose Hesper Palm Groves in Balboa Park.

Department Recommendation – Recommend approval of the naming of Sessions - Brandegee San Jose Hesper Palm Groves in Balboa Park.

Other Recommendations – The following groups have reviewed and considered the proposed project. Actions taken and recommendations made by these groups are listed under Discussion below.

Approved on November 4, 2021 by Balboa Park Committee

Fiscal Impact – None

Water and Energy Conservation Status – The proposed comply with all water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Climate Action Plan (CAP) Impact – None

Strategic/Tactical Equity Plan Impact – None

Environmental – None

### BACKGROUND

This topic was presented to the Balboa Park Committee in Nov. 2021 and unanimously approved. See the BPC minutes attached.

DISCUSSION

This proposal would recognize the Sessions – Brandegee San Jose Hesper Palm Groves an Official Garden of Balboa Park.

ALTERNATIVES

None

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Richards

Jon Richards  
Deputy Director, Balboa Park Division

JR

Attachment(s):

1. BPC Minutes November 4, 2021
2. Carter Sessions- Brandegee Hesper Palm Grove Nov 2021

cc: Council District 3 Office

# MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board  
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE  
November 4, 2021**

**Meeting Location:**

Online Meeting

**Mailing Address:**

Balboa Park Administration Building  
2125 Park Boulevard  
San Diego, CA 92101-4792

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Members Present**

Molly Chase – Chair  
Katherine Johnston  
Howard Blackson  
Dang Nguyen  
Makeda Cheatom  
Allison Soares  
Chris Eddy  
Brer Marsh  
Sarah Dawe  
Micah Parzen

**Members Absent**

William Aaron Jr  
Victoria Curran

**Staff Present**

Codi Vierra  
Christina Chadwick  
Victor Nava  
Johnny Chou

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Molly Chase called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Johnny Chou read the statement listed on the agenda that this Committee meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the California Executive Order 29-20 which suspends certain requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES October 7, 2021**

**MOTION:      MOVED/SECONDED   MR. EDDY / MS. SOARES**

A motion was made by Mr. Eddy and seconded by Ms. Soares to approve the October 7, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion carried (8-0-2) Dang Nguyen and Sarah Dawe abstained

**REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES – None**

**NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

Daniele Laman HPR International Cottages thanked City staff for fixing all the broken windows at the HPR cottages. Working with City staff to add new lights at the cottages. An Active shooter training will be coming to Balboa Park Institutions will be coming soon.

Paul Kruger – Resident in Talmage, commented on the number of vendors in the Prado, referenced the December 14 council agenda item, suggesting limiting the number of vendors in the park. Urged the BPC to endorse sensible restrictions to vendors.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** – Chairperson Molly Chase thanked nonprofit partners and Christina's staff for the explainer sessions and the new members who participated. Looking for additional ways to engage with partners in addition to the member updates that they are

providing at the committee meetings to find out more regularly what they are doing outside of the park through different opportunities. Highly recommends the Vicky Estrada's upcoming briefing session on the Balboa Master Plan. Upcoming items: Design review, currently evaluating the proposal internally and will bring this item for future consideration. Mobility, starting a conversation with the mobility director Alyssa Muto and Parks and Recreation staff. They will be presenting mobility concepts for the park from the feedback in January. A Workshop item from the City's independent budget analyst will be moved to a future meeting. Wants to make sure that this committee has a handle on the City's budget process and begin to tackle the funded and unfunded list of the park and how the committee can participate in advocating for our projects in the upcoming budget cycle. Recognized the passing of Jim Dawe a dedicated park servant. Jim loved our library's system. He was a board member of the Park Conservancy and would like to honor and remember him for his dedication to our City.

#### **STAFF REPORT –**

City Council Third District – Codi Vierra reported the street vending draft ordinance will be coming forward in December and they have taken input from constituents and visitors of the park. The Council member was pleased to participate in the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership board meeting. Where topics discussed included Arts and Cultural funding and the council member reaffirmed his commitment to the penny for the arts and other arts and cultural funding. The IBA presentation was moved, however they are starting to receive outreach from folks regarding the council member priorities which are due in January.

Assistant Deputy Director – Christina Chadwick reported that Council President Campbell recently announced her intent to bring forward a legislative change to address the street vending ordinance. For everyone that is interested in the street vendor ordinance we will provide information to you as we receive it and the timeline for this is December. The comic-con exterior restoration is complete, thanks to the committee of 100 for helping with a new paint on comic-con and in anticipation of the museum opening in weeks. The Botanical Building restoration phase one; Parks and Recreation Department together with Engineering and Capital Projects is now working internally to prepare for phase one construction with contractors. The details on park impacts and the construction will start coming to you publicly on an ongoing basis beginning now and continuing through the completion of the project in spring 2023. A presentation will be in the coming months to share more details. The Botanical Building will close January 1, 2022 and the City will begin to relocate the plants to the Balboa Park Nursery. Currently in the Botanical Building is the Fall display and Forever Balboa Park is planning its holiday display of Poinsettias to be installed in mid-December and will be on display until January 1, 2022.

District Manager – Johnny Chou reported the recreation staff from Municipal Gym and Balboa Park Activity Center did a Halloween Drive through event at Morley Field on October 22. There about 100 participants that drove through the event. Taste of December Nights be held from Friday, December 3 to Sunday December 5. The event will utilize all 3 lots at Inspiration Point. The event runs from 11am – 10 pm each day. The Notice of Right to Appeal for Exploratory Evaluation of Balboa Park Municipal Gym has been posted.

**BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES** (Time allotted to each speaker is determined by the Chair; however, comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes)

Forever Balboa Park – Jackie Higgins reported that the Botanical Building Phase 1 is moving forward, thanks to Parks and Recreation, the City Engineering Group and all City employees. Forever Balboa Park is continuing to work on Phase 2 and finalizing the scope for phase 2 for

the restoration of the Botanical Building. Park wide signage and wayfinding initiative did take a pause during the pandemic, however, with that pause it gave an opportunity to be more inclusive with the signage and to include bilingual options, the implementation of phase 1 will be in the summer of 2022. Shout out to all volunteer programs, Park Ambassadors, Volunteers, Garden Stewards, Tree Stewards. They donated over two thousand hours of work in September which equates to over sixty-five thousand dollars of service hours for Balboa Park. There are tree planting coming up in the Fall and newly planted trees are updated in the tree plotter inventory. The full inventory includes over seventeen thousand trees in Balboa Park. Tree Stewards and tree Steward maintenance parties maintain over eight hundred trees in Balboa Park and there is a success rate of eighty-six percent. This is the thirty-fifth annual of the Poinsettia display in the Botanical Building. Currently collaborating with SDG&E for the third annual Plant it Forward event.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey congratulated the House of Korea for the Korea Day on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Currently has an RFP in the experience plan for the Balboa Park Cultural District. November 12<sup>th</sup> RFP's will be due and hopes to announce the finalist at the next meeting. They are not doing this alone but with over a hundred stakeholders engaged including a highly representative advisory board of representatives throughout the county. Each year the Cultural Partnership advocates for funding for the arts and culture, they are fighting to ensure that funding returns to at least pre-pandemic levels. Thanks to the Council Member for their support and looks forward for the support of the committee. The Cultural Partnership is starting to plan the trustees connected event which encourage everyone to join as one and celebrate the park. It is yet to be scheduled but likely to be held in the Mingei Museum in early March.

Balboa Park Online Collaborative – No report.

Committee of 100 – Roger Showley reported the new exterior paint of the Comic Con Museum. He showed the winner of the winner of the AIGA poster contest. There were 17 entries for the contests. Introduced the “IDEA District+” concept.

Save Starlight – Steve Stopper reported more supporters and board members have come on.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

**101. Kate Sessions Grove renaming Presenters:** Nancy Carol-Carter and Audrey Tamayo

**MOTION:      MOVED/SECONDED   MR. BLACKSON / MR. NGUYEN**

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson and seconded by Mr. Nguyen to approve the Kate Sessions Grove. The motion carried unanimously (10-0-0)

Public Comment: Mr. Marsh, Mr. Eddy & Mr. Parzen

- Mr. Marsh thanked Nancy and learned more about the palms from the presentation.
- Mr. Eddy inquired about the plaques and introduction of the recognition of the Brandegee Palms. He also inquired about how we know the seeds were gathered by Mrs. Brandagee.
- Mr. Parzen inquired about what research has been made about the Brandagees. He did not want anything bad to turn up in the future.

## **ADOPTION**

**201. None**

**Special Events**

**301. None**

**WORKSHOP ITEMS** (No action taken; subject discussed by the committee and staff.)

**401. IBA Budget Explainer Presentation.**

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**501. Parks and Recreation Fee Schedule Update.** Presenter: Shelly Stowell, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department and Sarah Erazo, Program Manager, Parks and Recreation Department.

Public Comment: Ms. Johnston, Ms. Cheatom, Mr. Marsh, Mr. Eddy, Mr. Comiskey, Mr. Showley and Mr. Rene Smith

- Ms. Johnston was inquiring if there were any changes to renting out parking lots and if charges for traffic control and staff cost are included.
- Ms. Cheatom was inquiring if the service cost at Mt. Hope had gone up. She also asked for clarification on the volleyball leagues charges.
- Mr. Marsh inquired if there would be any reductions. Wanted to see if there was any consideration for at base mobility providers (scooters) or other revenue generating opportunities.
- Mr. Eddy inquired if adjustment are being made going forward and the review should be looked at every few years.
- Mr. Comiskey commented about golf carts charges and usage in Balboa Park.
- Mr. Showley inquired if the fees are per person or group. He also wanted to know if all the rental fees go to the General Fund.
- Mr. Smith wanted to have more time to review items. He commented about cost recovery of user groups and how it works.

**502. Balboa Park Quick Build Roundabout.** Presenters: Philip Rust, Associate Engineer, City of and San Diego

Public Comment: Mr. Eddy, Mr. Marsh, Ms. Johnston, Mr. Blackson, Ms. Chase, Ms. Higgins, Mr. Showley and Mr. Smith

- Mr. Eddy inquired about the striping of the roundabout and why is the project restricted to the current footprint.
- Mr. Marsh commented without knowing the bigger picture it is hard to understand the total safety of the area. He also inquired about the landscaping and if there has been any other consideration for traffic calming. Want to see if information of the project could be placed by the intersection to inform community members.
- Ms. Johnston commented she really hopes it fits in with everything. She also mentioned most roundabouts have something in the middle of them.
- Mr. Blackson commented he loved it. The roundabouts are great. He supports the quick build and the bike lanes.
- Ms. Chase agreed with Mr. Blackson's comments.
- Ms. Higgins inquired about plantings in the roundabout.
- Mr. Showley commented there should be more done to beautify the roundabout.
- Mr. Smith inquire if the footprint size of the project and the drainage of the intersection. He also inquired about adding sidewalks to the project.

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS** – None

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORTS** – None

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:**      January 6, 2021  
6:00 P.M.  
Virtual Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Nava  
District Manager



# **Balboa Park's San Jose Hesper Palm Grove**

**A “Lost” Kate Sessions Garden**

*Nancy Carol Carter  
November 2021*

# Kate Olivia Sessions -- a life in horticulture

1885 -- 1940



# Sessions' three specialty gardens in Balboa Park:

**Aloe & Agave**

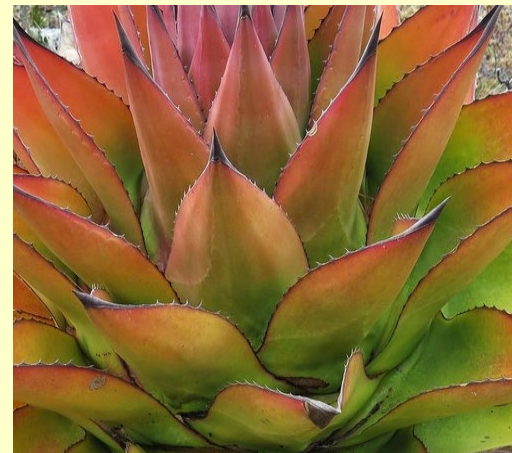


**Cactus**



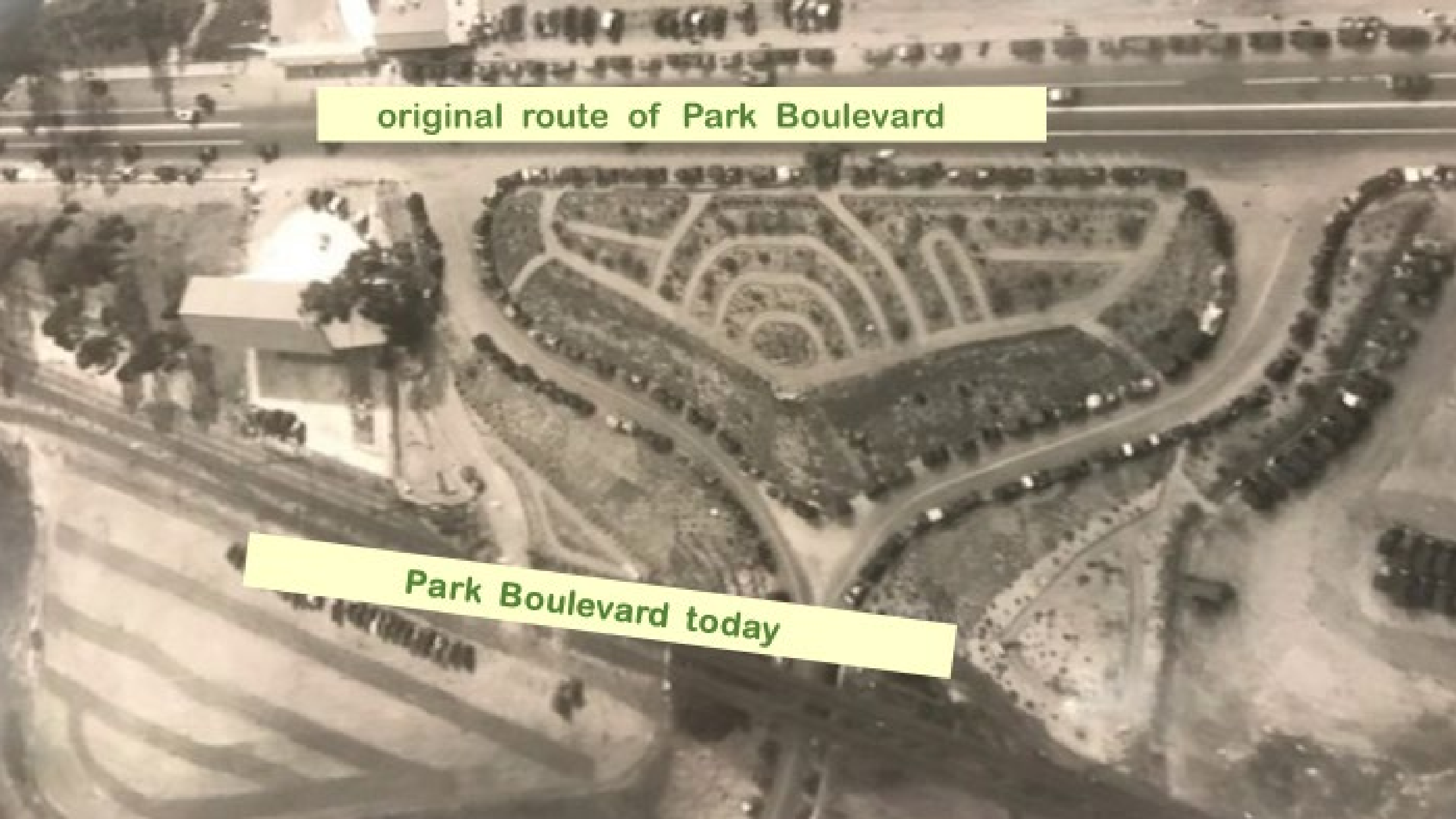
**Palm**





**Kate O. Sessions Aloe and Agave Garden  
Established 1932 -- Dedicated 1935**

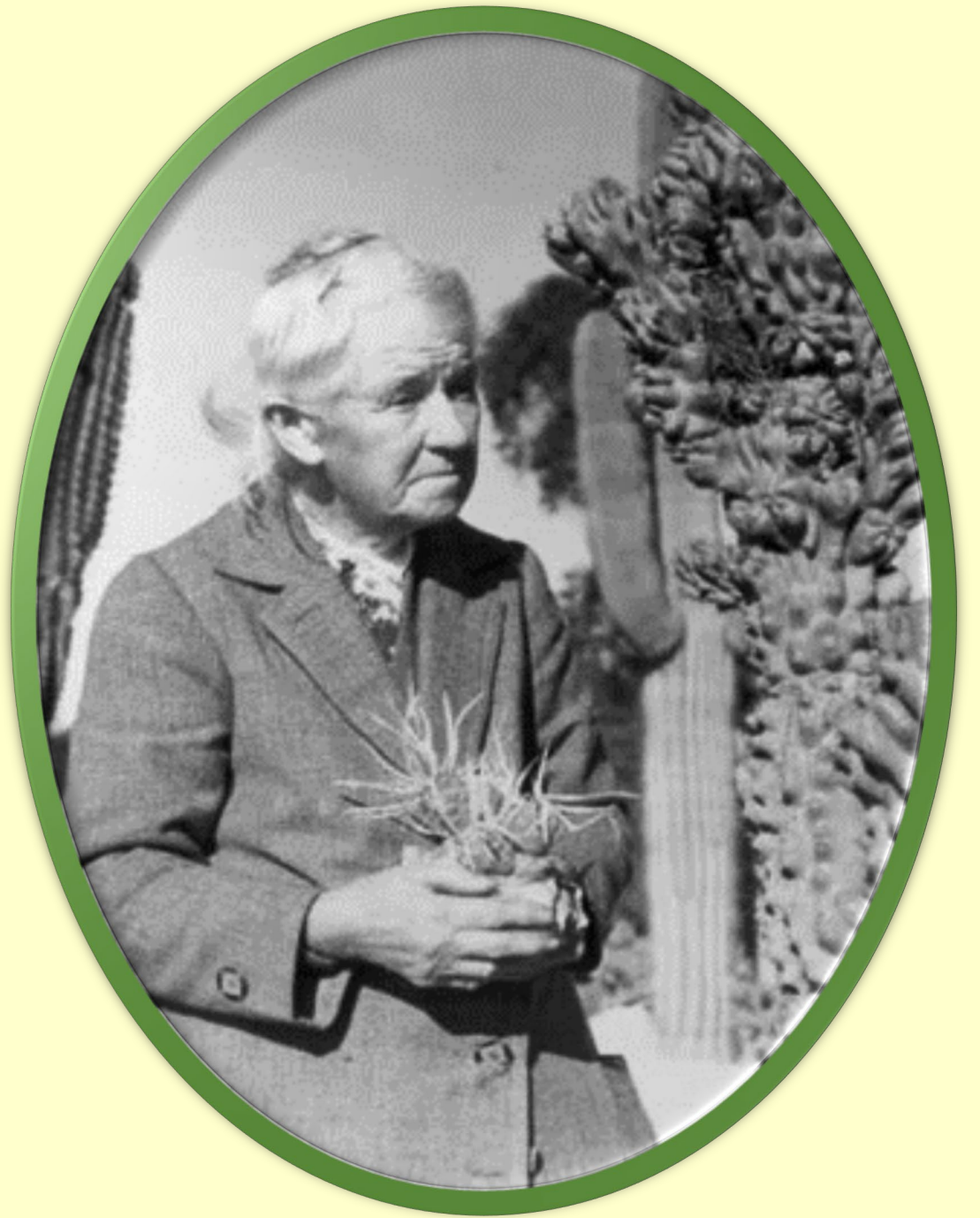
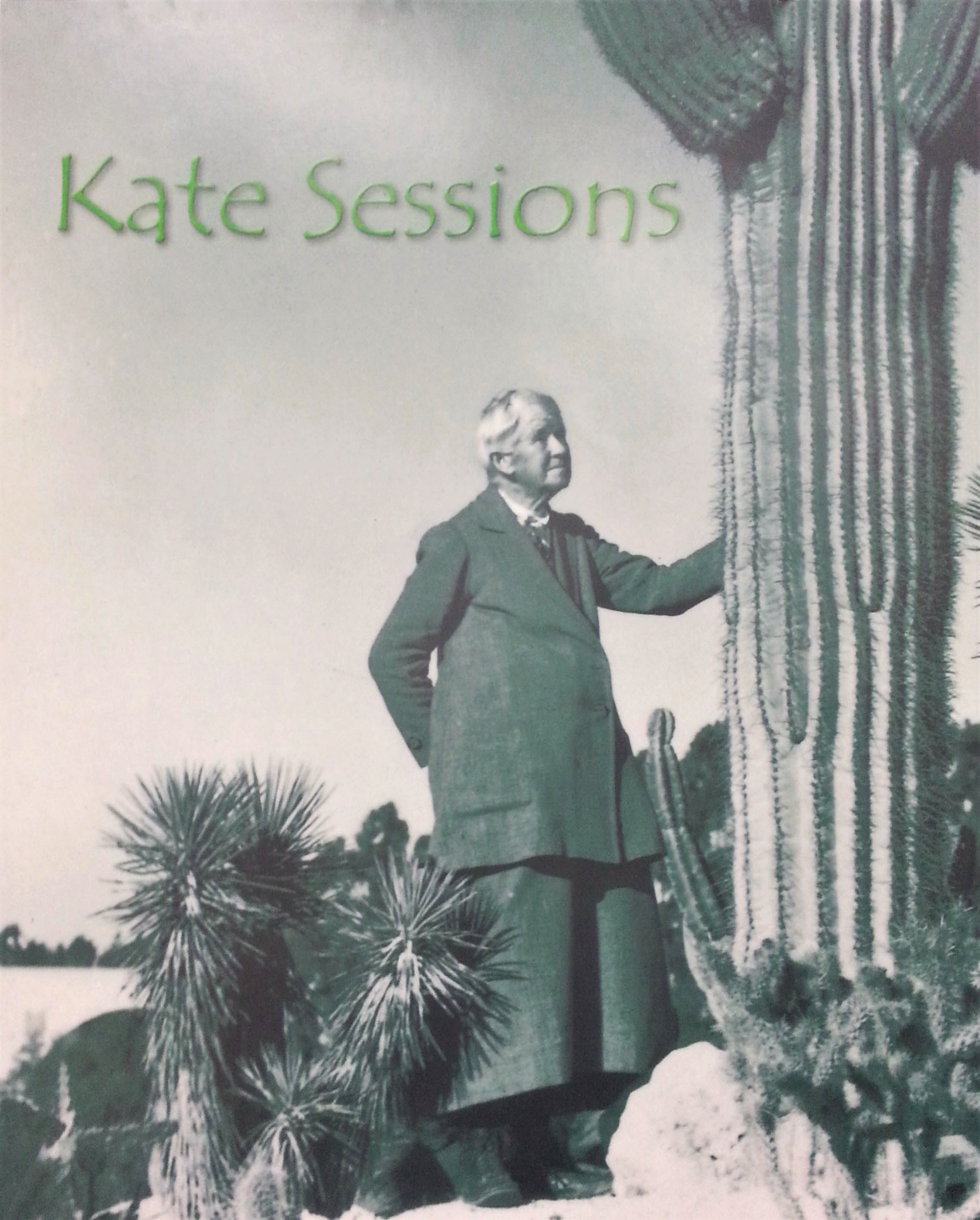


An aerial photograph of a park area. In the center is a baseball field with a diamond and bases. To the left of the field is a large, light-colored building, possibly a clubhouse or administrative building. The park is surrounded by roads and parking areas. A yellow text box is overlaid on the image, pointing to a specific road.

original route of Park Boulevard

Park Boulevard today

# Kate Sessions





## Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden



# San Jose Hesper Palm Grove

**1902** Palm introduced by Sessions

**1914** Palms planted in Balboa Park



# Ensenada



1902

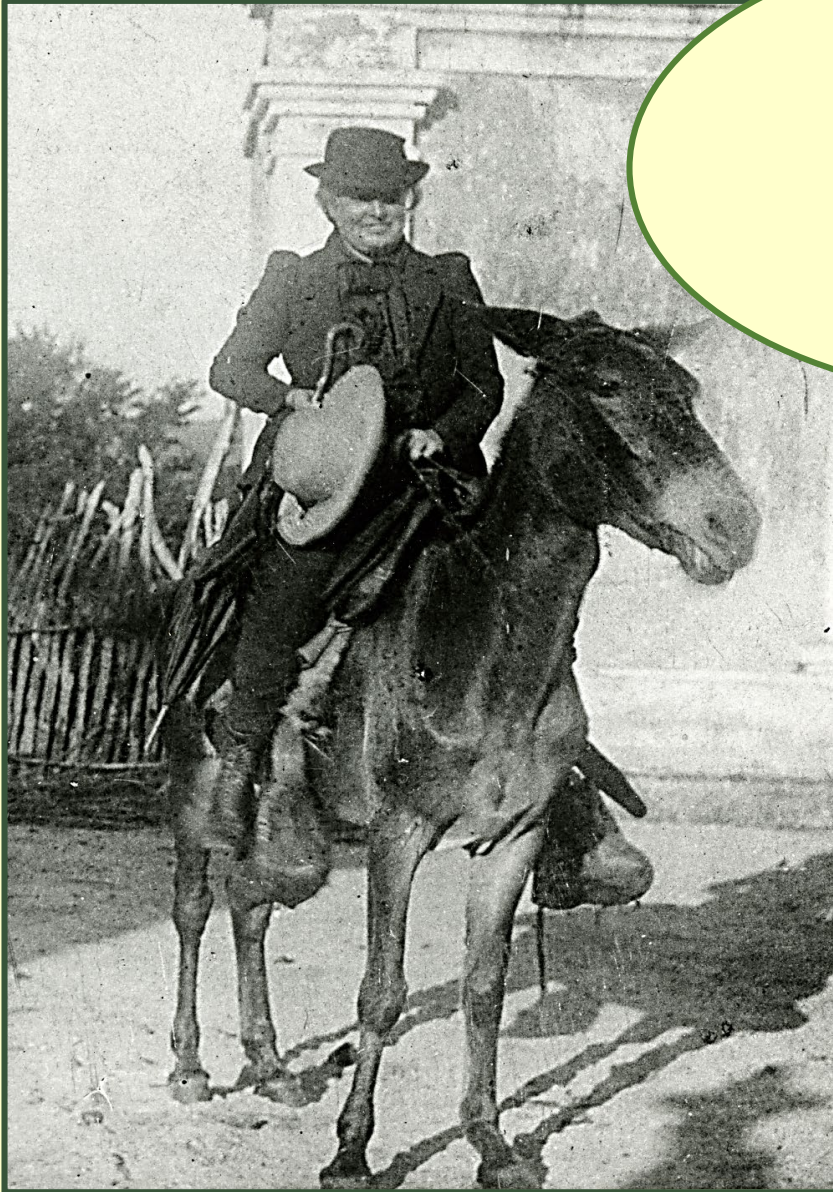
Kate Sessions plant  
hunting expedition

Seeking a new  
palm species

San Jose  
del Cabo



**The  
Brandegees  
botanizing  
in Baja**



**Katharine Curran Brandegee (1844 - 1920)**



**T. S. Brandegee (1843 – 1925)**



**Katharine and T. S. Brandegee**

**Brandegee home & herbarium**  
**Bankers Hill**  
**First Avenue (1890s)**



**Katharine Brandegee in her  
botanical garden.**



# San Jose Hesper Palm

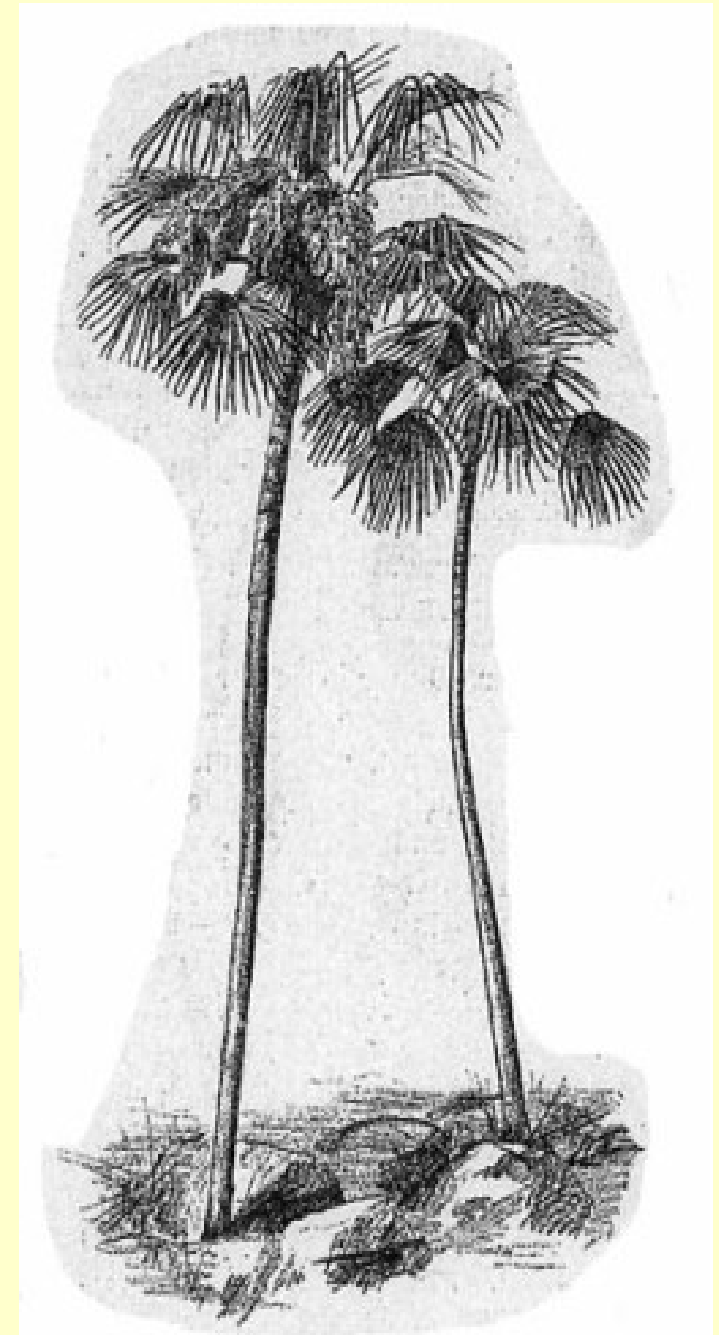
*Erythea brandegeei* now *Brahea brandegeei*

Kate O. Sessions wrote in *California Garden* :

*I dug from the field five small palms . . . and brought them to San Diego . . . . Later a few thousand seeds were planted.*

*In 1914, 325 were planted in Balboa Park . . . just outside of the Rose Garden . . . . The Park bought 175, and I donated 150.*

*This group was planted in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Brandegee . . . .*



4425 West Entrance and Panama-California Exposition,  
from Rose Gardens, Balboa Park, San Diego, Cal. 1915.





PHOTO BY RACHEL COBB

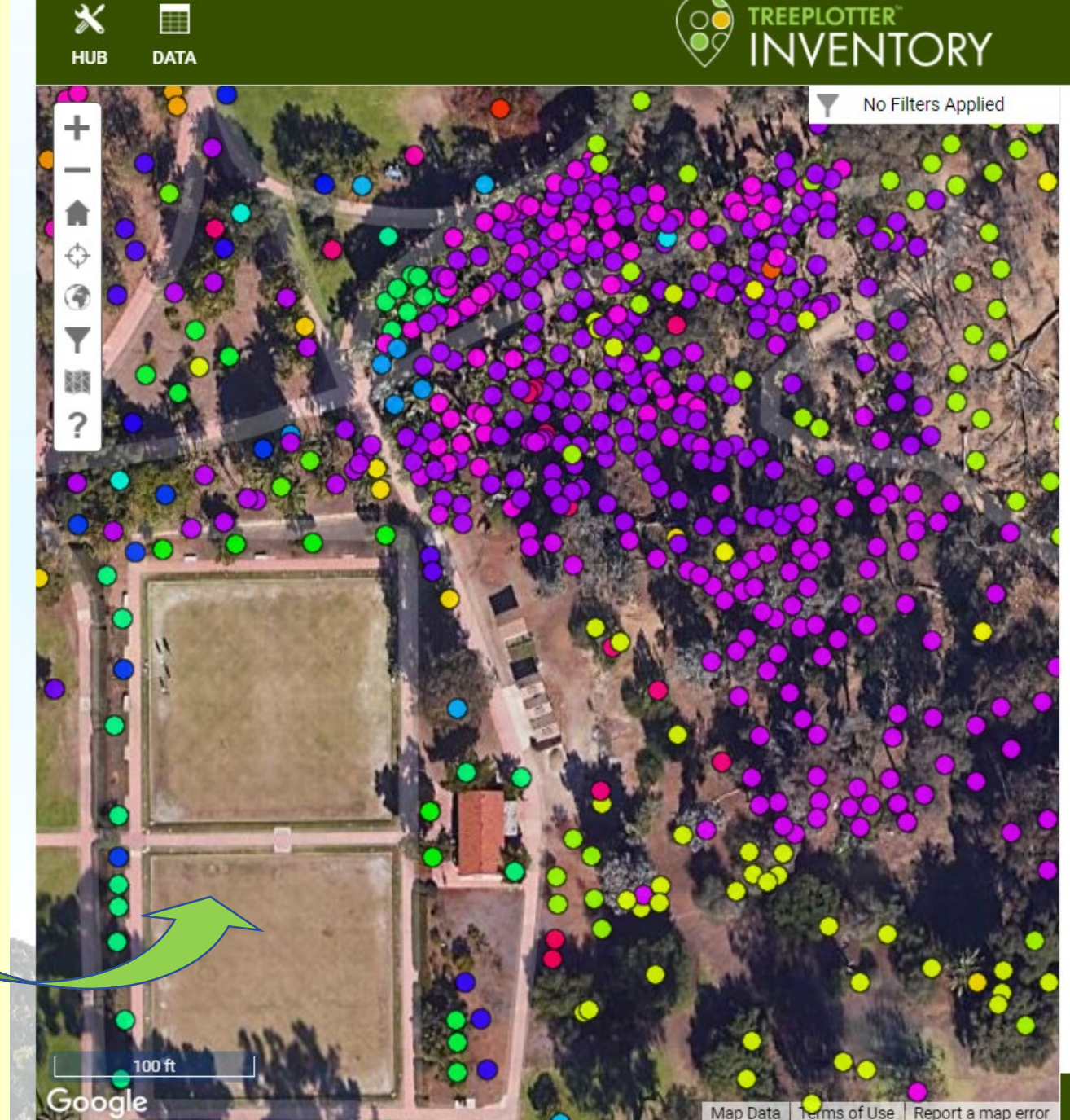
# Balboa Park

## Tree Inventory Aerial Map

● = San Jose Hesper Palms

188 in this grove  
(325 planted 107 yrs. ago)

Bowling greens









**A  
missing  
connection**



## PROPOSAL:

Recognize the

# Sessions – Brandegee San Jose Hesper Palm Grove

as an official garden of Balboa Park.

- > Sign-post and interpret the garden.
- > Add the garden to Balboa Park maps & website.



## **Recognition of the Sessions – Brandegee Grove will:**

- 1. Recapture a lost Balboa Park story;**
- 2. Link an anonymous planting with Kate Sessions;**
- 3. Celebrate Sessions' only plant hunting expedition;**
- 4. Acclaim Sessions' skills as a plant propagator;**
- 5. Honor the Brandegees who created San Diego's first botanical garden and assisted in the early development of Balboa Park;**
- 6. Alert park gardeners to the importance of these palms; and**
- 7. Contribute to the preservation of a rare and endangered plant.**



**Sessions – Brandegee  
San Jose Hesper Palm Grove**

**Thank you.**

**QUESTIONS ?**