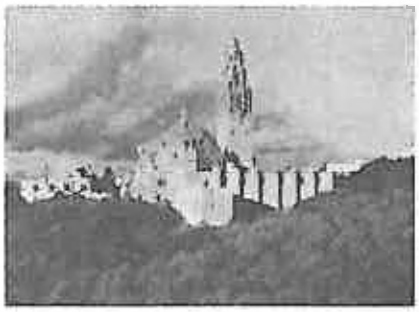
Vision

Vision Statement

The Central Mesa should be a place set apart for the purpose of appreciating the priceless heritage of the past, admiring the cultural resources and natural environment of the present, and inspiring the dreams that will shape San Diego's future.



The California Quadrangle rises majestically from an expanse of foliage-1915.

Origin of the Vision

The Central Mesa was born of a dream. The dream had its origin in 1868 when 1400 acres of city land was set aside for a public park. The city trustees had the great foresight to anticipate the value of a natural preserve in the midst of an urban environment, but they could not have predicted the great significance the central portion of the Park was destined to achieve. To understand the priceless nature of the Central Mesa one must understand the extraordinary vision that catalyzed the transformation of a dusty mesa on the outskirts of town to a magical city of tiled domes, fanciful towers, and exquisite gardens.

This vision was brought into focus when the Central Mesa was chosen as the site of the 1915 Panama - California Exposition. The decision to place buildings in the midst of open park land was rooted in the extravagance of a romantic dream. The topographically isolated mesa would be the site of a shining Eldorado which could be viewed only at a distance from the real world. This romantic city of new Spain could be reached by traversing a gleaming bridge that spanned the chasm between the real and the ideal. As the Exposition visitor strolled across this bridge and gazed at spires and domes rising above an expanse of lush foliage, it became clear that a magical synergism between architecture and landscape had been created. It was this beautiful interplay between the art of man and nature that gave the "Garden Fair" its enormous appeal.

This balance has endured and gives the Central Mesa an idyllic quality that continues to draw Park visitors across the bridge into another world. It contains wonderful museums and galleries, but they do not alone determine

the Mesa's unique attraction. The intangible power that draws us to the Central Mesa is our intuitive sense that we are catching a glimpse of the potential greatness of the human spirit and its harmony with the natural world. The romantic vision engendered by that ideal resonates with our collective spirit and motivates our aspirations for the future.

Our challenge today is to build on the guiding principles that gave birth to the Central Mesa's greatness. We must do this in the context of the changes and opportunities which began to occur the moment the perimeter fences of the first Exposition were dismantled and the real world flowed in. Our opportunity is to reconcile the real and the ideal and provide a place for all people to enjoy. We must preserve the qualities that make the Central Mesa unique, enhance its present value and usefulness, and transfer the vision to succeeding generations of San Diegans.