

**Matthew Bokovoy.** *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. xx + 352 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8263-3642-2.



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Matthew Bokovoy brings San Diego into scholarly conversations of urban history and civic identity formation with his study of the San Diego expositions held in 1915 and 1935. His argument begins boldly with his assertion that "in Southern California and the Southwest, no two events shaped the modern Spanish heritage more profoundly than the San Diego Expositions of 1915-1916 and 1935-36" (p. xvii). With the first exposition, according to Bokovoy, San Diego was able to present Southwest cultures and peoples to the world and show itself as a multicultural and pluralistic region. In 1935, the second exposition "promoted the future industrial might of the Pacific Slope" (p. xvii). Taken together, the two world's fairs succeeded in defining the region's cultural identity and in linking San Diego to the nationalistic themes at the time of "American institutions and life" (p. xx). From those premises, Bokovoy weaves a complex and satisfying narrative that explores the intersections of "public heritage and social reform" that emerged from the imaginations and sometimes the inventions of San Diego's civic boosters and cultural promoters between 1880 and 1940 (p. xx). Bokovoy expands

upon previous scholarship that examined the myth and fantasies of an imagined past in Southern California. Bokovoy's work fills a gap in the urban history scholarship on Western cities by selecting San Diego for his study since, unlike Los Angeles and San Francisco, California's southernmost city has enjoyed less scholarly attention. More importantly by placing his lens on San Diego's world's fairs and expositions, Bokovoy offers a new and intriguing analysis that connects public heritage and celebrations in the urban West to broader themes of regional and national identity.

Bokovoy's prologue presents a concise background of San Diego history through 1880. More importantly, the prologue introduces the idea and reasons for San Diego's romanticized "colonial legacies" of Spanish explorers and settlement as well as of its presidio and California mission era (p. 13). The first exposition, in 1915, came during a major shift in San Diego history because, after 1860, the city relocated its central business district, then called "New Town," to Broadway Boulevard from the Spanish-settled presidio area a mile

or so to the north, still identified as "Old Town" today. As such, in early-twentieth-century San Diego, the historic and romantic connection to "Old Town" was not only recent but nearby, mythically and geographically. As a result, the historical reference point for exposition planners became anchored in the city's discovery and settlement eras and in celebrating them as an "Eden Lost" (p.13). Finally, the prologue's succinct history of San Diego increases the accessibility of this work to a wider audience and makes it especially useful for undergraduate or graduate courses in urban or Southwestern history. The remainder of the book is divided into two parts that Bokovoy calls "History as Myth" and "Myth as History."

In "History as Myth," Bokovoy chronicles the 1915 Exposition from its origins through its conclusion and legacies. The San Diego fair incorporated some novel features not seen in other expositions held in the United States before 1915, particularly to distinguish itself from the exposition being hosted in San Francisco at the same time. These included contributions by anthropologists that promoted the value of a "social environment" that reflected many cultures in exhibit designs that veered away from the popular notions of eugenics and Social Darwinism. Bokovoy capably explains how Anglo (white) perceptions and popular mythology resulted in romanticized inventions of Hispanic and Native cultures being placed on exhibit. For example, he illuminates the ways in which "Show Indians" hired to be in exhibits managed to manipulate representations of Spanish heritage from comical interpretations to serious critiques. Moreover, Bokovoy peels back the layers of cultural identity being presented as well as hidden in the exhibits and posits that Pueblo Indians hired for the Painted Desert Exhibit, including famed potter Maria Martinez and her family, were able to "create economically useful images and shield their real way of life from audiences" (p. 117). Their ploys allowed them to control what parts of their own culture were revealed to audi-

ences without inviting the ire of exposition managers.

The "Science of Man" displays were among the most popular series of displays presented at the 1915 exposition and Bokovoy's analysis here is one of his strongest and most innovative. Relying on primary documents and the notes and personal communications among scientists, Bokovoy illustrates the fervor with which "Science of Man" designers countered the eugenics theories of their day. Physician and display manager Ales Hrdlicka's "Races of Man" chart, which was heavily influenced by anthropologist Franz Boas, defined the "white" race to include groups that, in 1915, were certainly not accepted as "white" in most circles, scientific or social: "Southern Europeans, Latins, Southern Asiatics, Jews, Arabs, Moors, Egyptians and Central and Western and North Africans" (p. 93). Bokovoy skillfully argues that these displays signaled a major departure from the widely accepted and advanced theories of the day. "Man's Progress," another of the science exhibits at the exposition, suggested that Spaniards, Indians, and Mexicans were "founding fathers and first Americans in the greater Southwest," an idea that also challenged a growing anti-immigrant and anti-European sentiment in other parts of the country and in the midst of a European war. Further, the presentation revealed an early and organized concept that the American West, and in particular the Southwest, had an historical narrative of its own, one very different in its outcomes than Jamestown or early Colonial New England.

In the second part of the book, "Myth as History," Bokovoy moves on to the 1935 exposition that set out to promote California and the Pacific Rim as a future home and center of industry. One weakness of this book lies in the very short and incomplete transition from 1916 to 1930. Only a few pages at the beginning of part 2 set up and explain the changes in San Diego after the 1915 exposition and World War I. While most of the ma-

major events are briefly mentioned, a reader not acquainted with San Diego will feel rushed into part 2 and the 1935 exposition. In spite of this small drawback, Bokovoy places the city into the national contexts of the Depression and labor unrest. But it is Bokovoy's discussion of the New Deal that really shines as he positions San Diego within the national agenda of New Deal ideologies. San Diego, he argues, made a good model for federal programs due to its fairly liberal social and political climate and an eagerness to promote the city.

New Deal programs created employment opportunities and brought myriad New Deal projects to San Diego and, with them, new residents and business leaders. In 1935, the "California dream," and "dreams of industrial development" seized the imaginations of exposition planners (p. 167). Most of these planners were not native San Diegans, a fact that caused tremendous tension during the first year of the 1935 exposition. The California "culture of abundance" had been almost entirely developed through "federal sponsorship of widespread home ownership" and, along with other federally-influenced social programs, made San Diego's second exposition an ideal instrument for communicating these ideals to visitors (p. 185). But, as Bokovoy points out, the visions with which fair planners started out and the realities that ended the 1935 fair were strikingly different.

Using the 1935 exhibits as context, Bokovoy convincingly argues that the racy and often erotic exhibits of the 1935 fair led to a transformation in San Diego from progressive identity to one that was increasingly conservative. Although the public seemed to enjoy exhibits of nudist colonies in the second fair, local media and politicians waged a campaign against the "immorality" on exhibit and set out to "reform" the exposition during its second year. Bokovoy posits that the success of those opposed to the exhibits in turn achieved a larger, perhaps even unintended, goal of triggering change in Southern California in which "mid-

dle class values, white entitlement and Protestant piety defined the culture of abundance in California" (p. 221). Mirroring national norms, instead of challenging them as the first exposition had done, the second fair revealed growing sentiments against Mexicans and immigrants in Southern California. Favoring European "Spanish fantasy heritage," and almost completely discarding the recognition of contributions by Indian and Mexican cultures, the second fair redefined the city's past once again and set the stage for World War II and the years to follow.

The 1915 fair helped San Diego to attract the Navy and many new residents. The second fair laid the groundwork for the military-industrial model of the city that in turn fueled suburban growth and created racial, ethnic, and class divisions. Together, the legacies of the fairs left a rich geographical and cultural heritage in Balboa Park and a science-based research community. But, as Bokovoy capably concludes, by 1940 the fantasy of an imagined past also became embedded in the history and culture of Southern California and particularly in San Diego. *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* makes an important contribution to the urban and cultural history of the Southwest and of San Diego. Bokovoy adds the San Diego's fairs to the scholarship of expositions as well as to the study of heritage celebrations. Thought-provoking and engaging in its prose, this book will not disappoint.

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