

Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden Naming Proposal

March 4, 2021

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Why Rename the Cactus Garden?

1. Remember Kate Sessions' contributions to the garden
2. Signify the direct relationship between the garden and San Diego's early known horticulturist
3. Honor Kate Sessions' role in introducing cacti and succulents to Balboa Park
4. To recall the Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden
5. Reduce naming confusion of other gardens

Kate O. Sessions

- Honored with “Kate O. Sessions Day” on Sept. 24, 1935 as part of the 1935 Exposition
- Called “Mother of Balboa Park”
- Early known horticulturalist in San Diego
 - possessed valuable understanding of San Diego’s climate and exotic plants



History of Kate O. Sessions' Advocacy for a Cactus Garden

- 1899, Kate Sessions said cacti in Balboa Park would “flourish and bloom and be more of interest to all travellers than almost any other order of plants”
- 1918, Sessions wrote that San Diego could be the “world’s cactus center”
- 1926, Sessions wrote that San Diego could have an open-air cactus garden that “outrivaled any in the world” and would help advertise Balboa Park and San Diego



Sessions' Persuasion for a Cactus Garden for the 1935 Exposition



Balboa Park Cactus Garden April 1935

- *California Garden Magazine* 1935 edition--“earnest efforts” of Sessions to “finally persuade” the Exposition Company to create the cactus garden
- “Coaxed and pleaded” with the Exposition Company

Sessions' Role in Cactus Garden



Cactus Garden San Diego Union 1935

- California Garden 1935 & 1936-- Sessions cited as coordinating donations of cacti specimens
- Jerabek, City horticulturist, also credits Sessions for “making the contacts of majority of the donations”
- Oversaw development of extensive collection of “over a thousand varieties”
- Received donations throughout southwest including fine specimens from Arizona



Kate O. Sessions' Role in Cactus Garden (cont.)

- Jerabek designed the Cactus Garden as a tribute to Sessions
- *California Garden Magazine* 1935 cont. Sessions “gave her entire collection of cacti to the garden”
- Frequently offered her advice and suggestions to those working in the garden

The Garden's Impact During the 1935 Exposition



- *San Diego Union*: Cactus Garden is named one of the top three “most interesting permanent gifts to park landscaping from the California Pacific International Exposition.”
- 1936: Sessions says Cactus Garden is “the only real contribution made by the Exposition to the park.”

Findings on Cactus Garden Naming

- Called “Cactus Garden” in 1935 postcard
- Called “Cabrillo Cactus Garden” in a published article
- Often called “Old Cactus Garden” today
- An Official Balboa Park map from 1999 completely excludes the Cactus Garden

These names do not reflect nor preserve Sessions’ role and importance in advocating for cacti and succulents, and in creating the Cactus Garden



Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden 1935

- The Kate O. Sessions Aloe and Agave Garden was established in 1932 and dedicated in Balboa Park on March 23, 1935
- Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden and Cactus Garden specimens had a relationship to where the specimens Cactus Garden as intentions were to phase out the Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden (San Diego Union 1970)
- The Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden location was paved to create the Spanish Village parking lot in 1971



Confusion on the Desert Garden & Cactus Garden

- Nothing remains to tie Kate O. Sessions to her advocacy for cacti and succulents
- The distinctive “Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden” name will clearly distinguish the garden from the Desert Garden, reducing ongoing confusion





Conclusions

1. Sessions made substantial contributions to the Cactus Garden from her advocacy, expertise, and coordination skills to even donating her own personal inventory of cacti and succulents to the garden
2. The Cactus Garden has a direct--but largely unknown--relationship with San Diego's most imminent early known horticulturist

Conclusions (cont.)

3. Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden tied Sessions to cacti and succulents in Balboa Park, but it was removed 50 years ago .
4. Renaming the garden will finally link Kate O. Sessions to cacti and succulents other than trees and other horticultural life and signify her importance in introducing this flora to Balboa Park.
5. This will reduce confusion on arid climate flora gardens in Balboa Park ultimately enhancing the visitor experience and preserving the park's history.

Thank You!

Thank you for your time and thoughts.

Special Acknowledgements to Nancy Carol Carter and Christine Abrell for their extensive research, as well as the San Diego History Center Archives for their assistance in research.

Feedback & Questions



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Photo Links:

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