

Arroyo Seco Parkway

Recording Project 1999
Final Presentation



California State Office Building
Los Angeles, California
August 12, 1999



Order of events:

Welcome and Introductions Raja Mitwasi
Division Chief of Planning and Public Transportation
California Department of Transportation, District 7

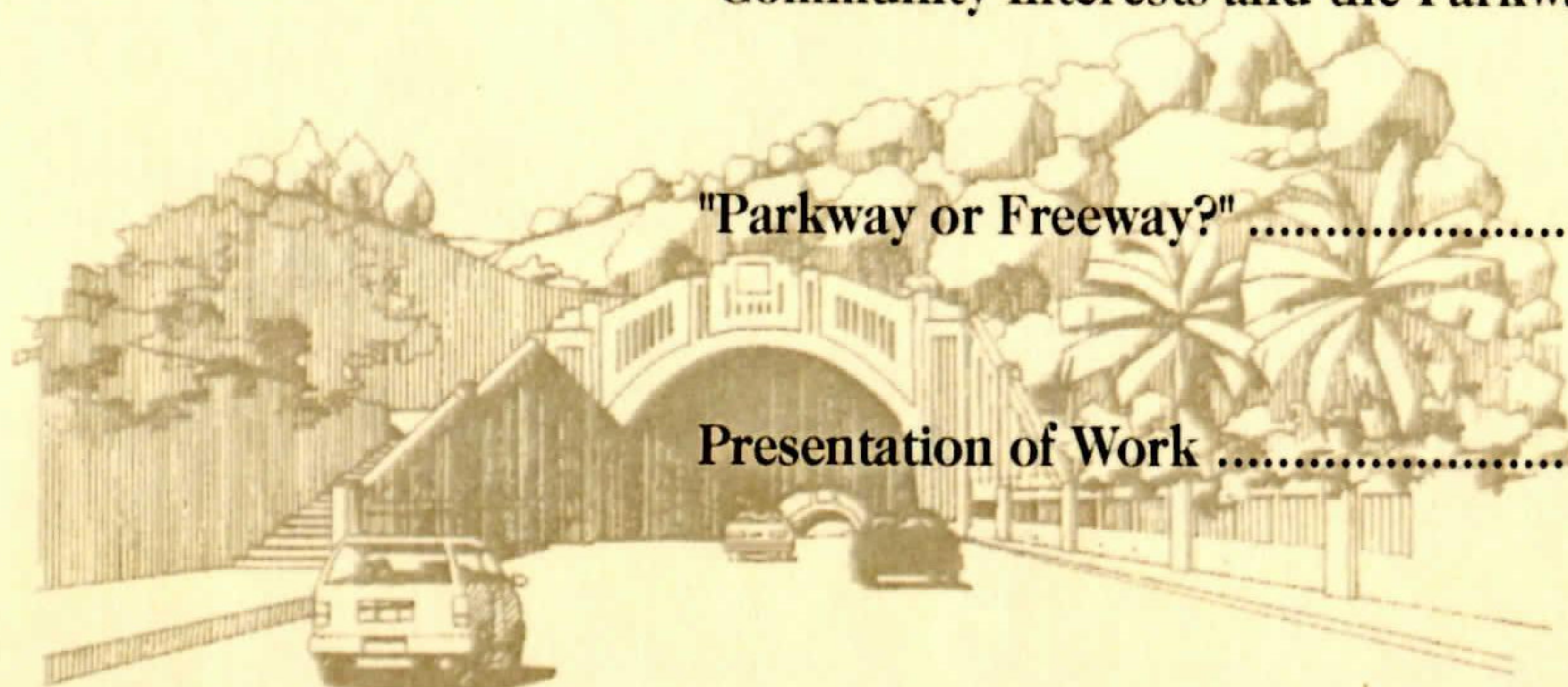
"The Historic American Engineering Record" Eric N. DeLony
Chief
Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)
National Park Service

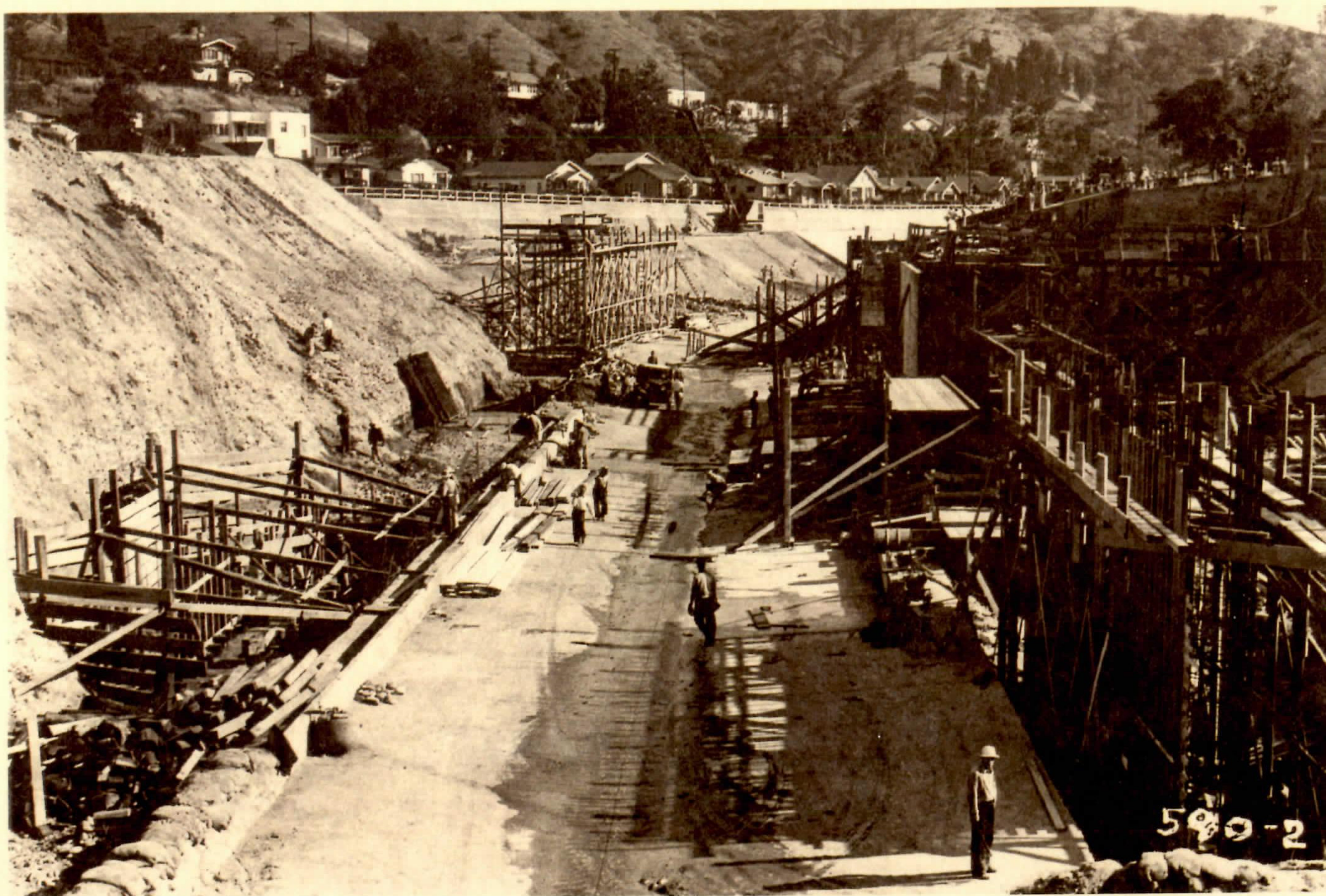
"The HAER Parkway Experience" Andrew Johnston
Supervising Architect
Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project

"Community Interests and the Parkway" Portia Lee
Historian
Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project

"Parkway or Freeway?" J. Philip Gruen
Project Historian
Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project

Presentation of Work Eric N. DeLony
Chief
Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)
National Park Service





Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project Team:

Supervising Architect: Andrew Johnston, University of California, Berkeley

Project Historian: J. Philip Gruen, University of California, Berkeley

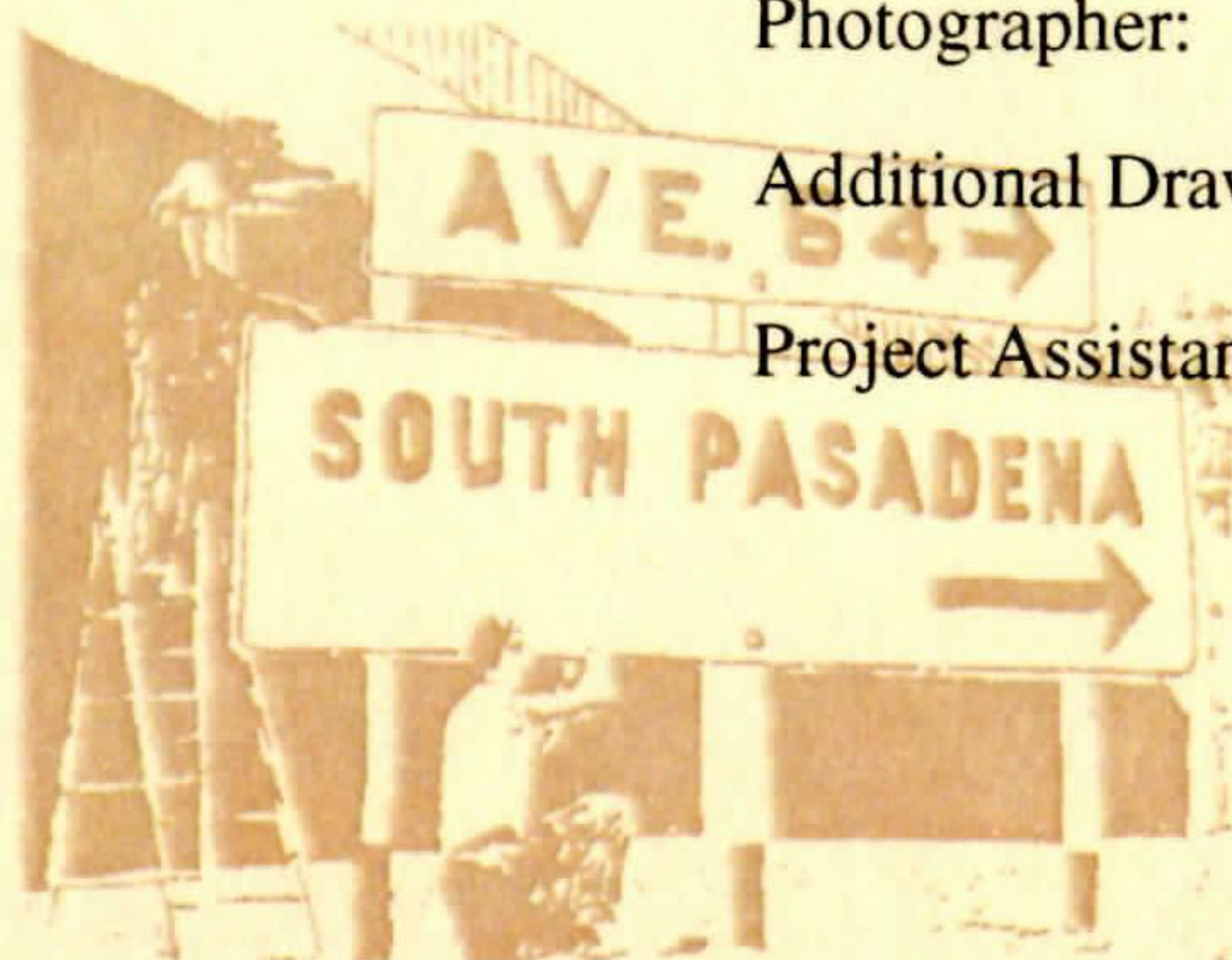
Architects: Christopher B. Brown, Seattle, Washington
Christopher Dalbey, Santa Ana, California
Arabella González, United States/International Council on
Monuments and Sites US/ICOMOS, Guadalajara, Mexico
Sydney Mainster, University of California, Berkeley

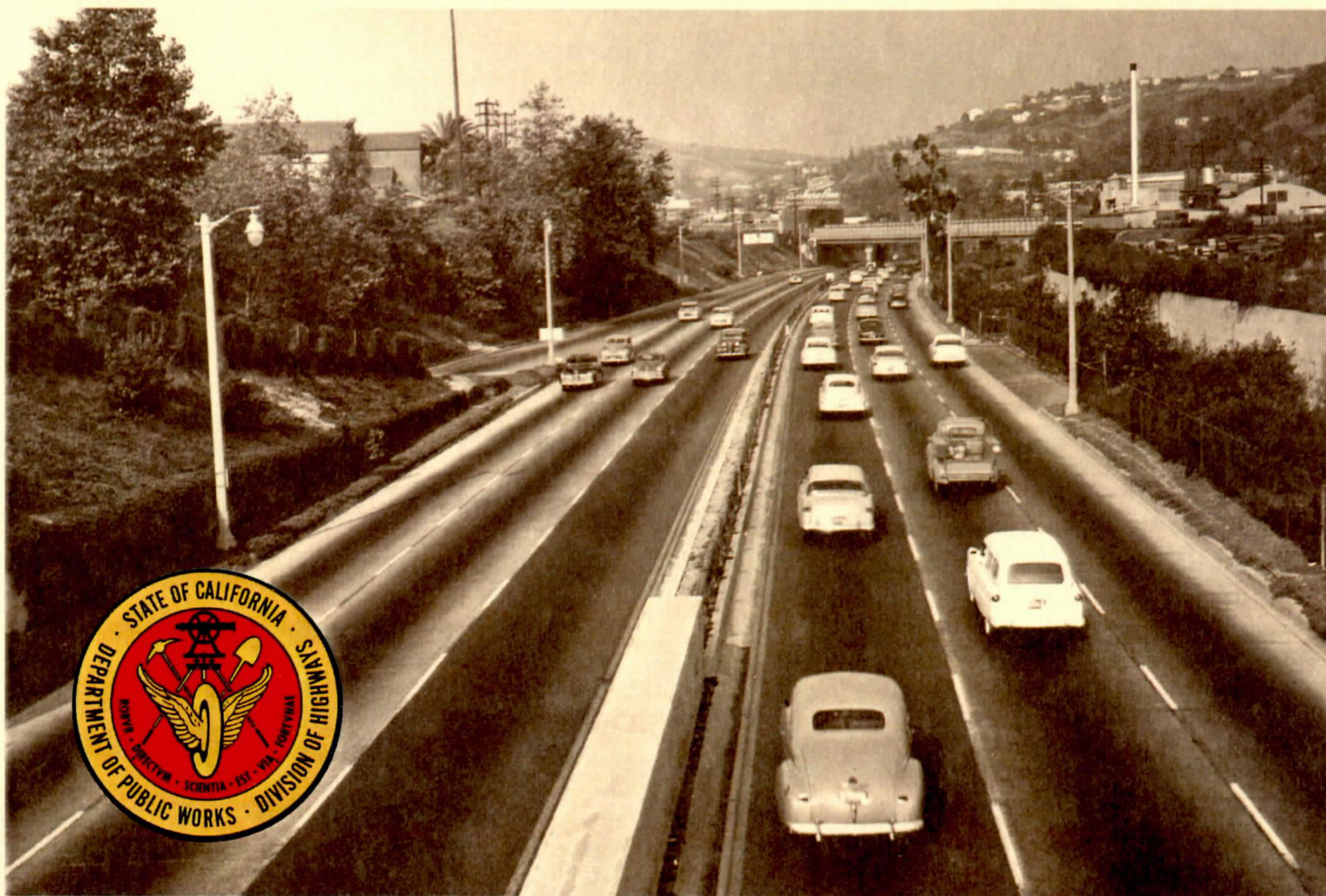
Historian: Portia Lee, California Archives, Los Angeles

Photographer: Brian Grogan, El Portal, California

Additional Drawings: Peter Hao, Meléndrez-Babalas Associates, Los Angeles

Project Assistance: Diane Kane, Architectural Historian, Caltrans District 7
Charles J. O'Connell, Retired Deputy District Director,
Caltrans District 7
Todd Croteau, HAER Architect, Washington, D. C.
Tim Davis, HAER Historian, Washington, D. C.
Lauren Meléndrez, Meléndrez-Babalas Associates, Los Angeles





The Arroyo Seco Parkway (Pasadena Freeway) was the first grade-separated, limited-access, high-speed divided road in the urban western United States and it was the initial stretch of road for what would become the world-renowned Los Angeles metropolitan area freeway system. Built in three major stages from 1938 to 1953, the 8.2-mile parkway was envisioned both as a scenic pleasure road traversing the Arroyo and a vital traffic conduit linking the expanding cities of Pasadena and Los Angeles. Combining ideas reminiscent of an older parkway tradition and those more appropriate for modern freeway design, the Arroyo Seco Parkway marked an important transitional moment in the history of American engineering and transportation.

The roadway as completed in 1953, extended from Glenarm Street in Pasadena to the Four-Level Interchange just northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The approximately \$11 million roadway includes over thirty bridges and underpasses, four tunnels, and numerous safety features. Its construction was facilitated by the installation of the concrete Arroyo Seco Flood Control Channel, completed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) relief project. The initial six miles of road, completed from 1938 to 1941, were described by engineers as picturesque and it benefited from a comprehensive landscaping program that included a palette of native plants.

Historical Background

The connection of the parkway in 1953 to the Four-Level Interchange and to the larger Los Angeles regional freeway network marked the final chapter in a decades-long series of plans and proposals for an automobile road connecting Los Angeles and Pasadena.

The first spade of earth was turned for the Arroyo Seco Parkway in March of 1938 under the aegis of the State Division of Highways (California Department of Transportation, District 7). Although a large and unwieldy coalition of state and local lawmakers and planners, as well as the cities of Pasadena, South Pasadena, and Los Angeles, the Automobile Club of Southern California, the Union Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads and residents along the right-of-way agreed to support the road's construction, its route selection did not entirely avoid controversy.

The Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project took place in 1999 when the parkway, built originally to handle 30,000 automobiles per day, carries more than 120,000 vehicles a day. With some exceptions, the Arroyo Seco Parkway has been altered very little since its initial construction. It paved the way for the more than 4,000 miles of California freeways that have come after it and it was a prototype for urban freeways throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

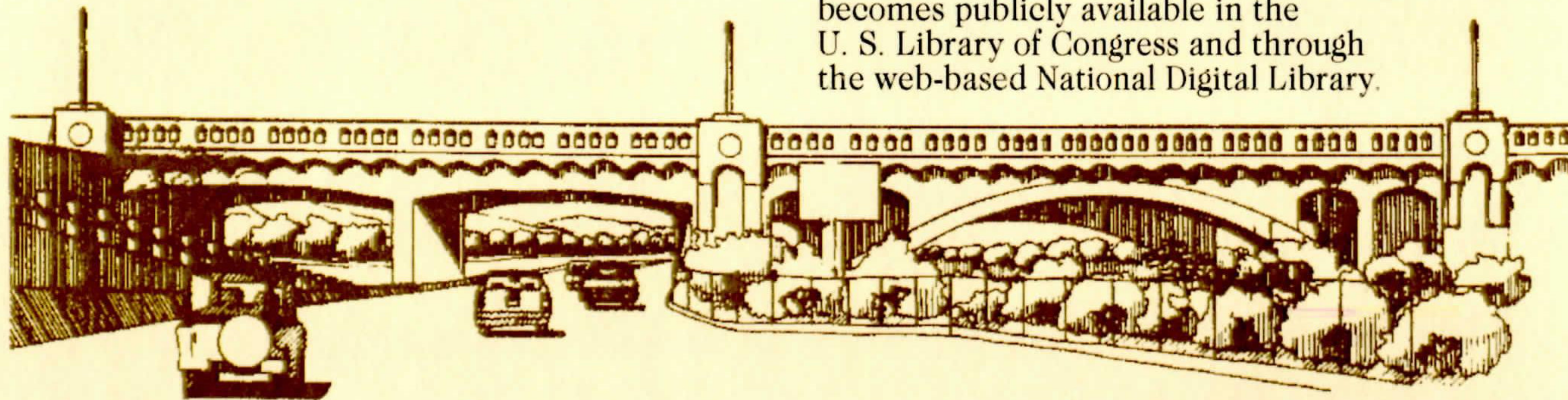


Project Information:

The Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program that documents historically-significant engineering, industrial and maritime sites in the United States. The HAER program is administered by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

The recording project was co-sponsored by HABS/HAER and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 7 and it operated under the general direction of E. Blaine Cliver, HABS/HAER Chief; Eric N. DeLony, HAER Chief and Bob Sassaman, Acting Caltrans District 7 Director, Raja Mitwasi, District 7 Division Chief of Environmental Planning and Public Transportation and Ron Kosinski, District 7 Chief of Environmental Planning.

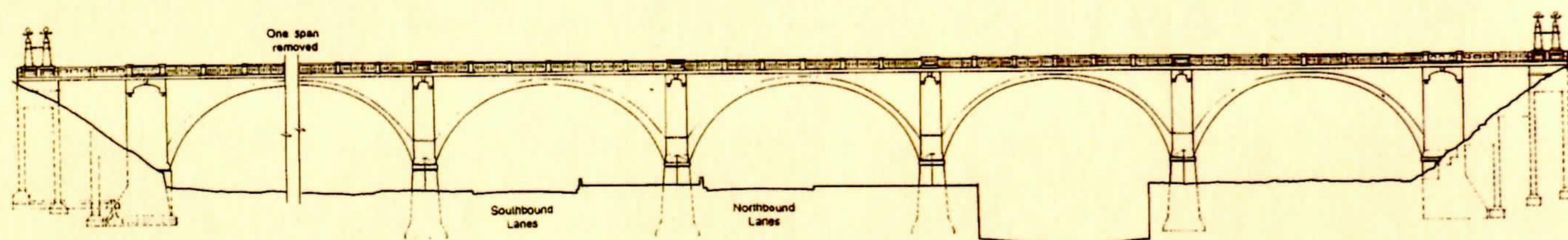
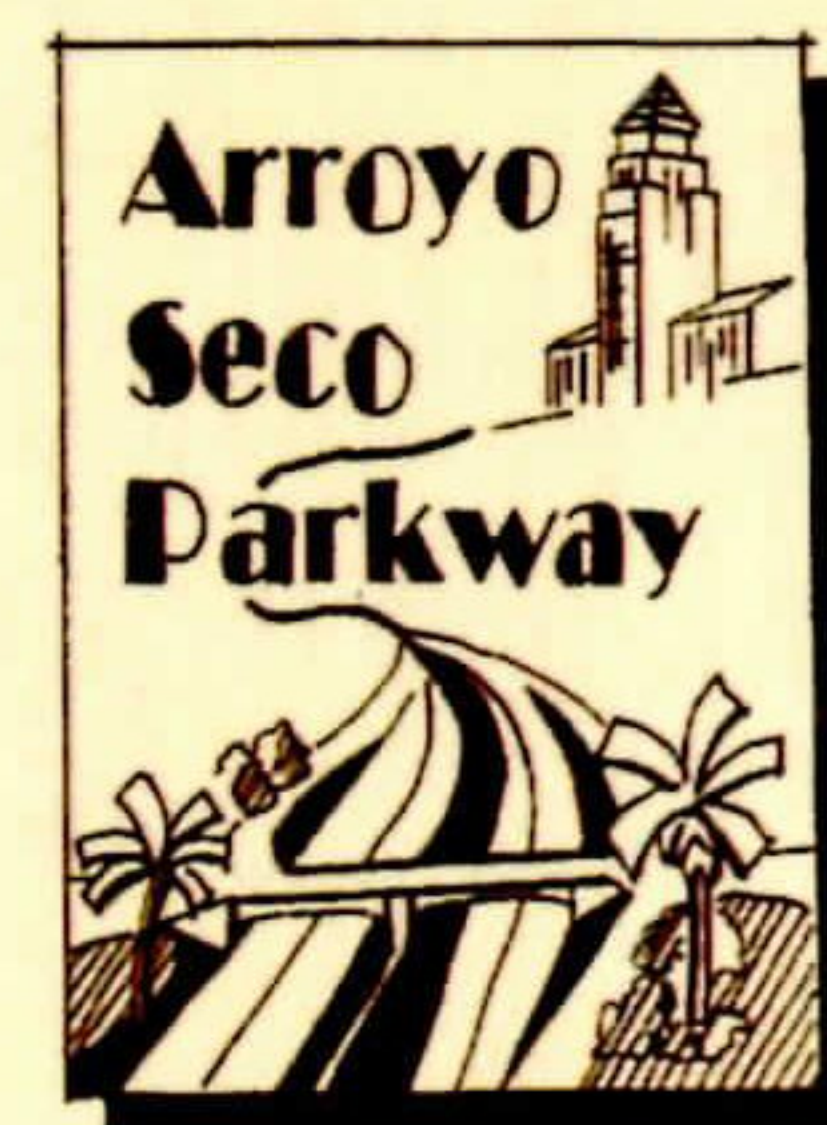
The interpretive drawings, historical report and photographs produced by the HAER summer team will now be sent to Washington, D.C., where they will be edited in the HABS/HAER office before the work becomes publicly available in the U. S. Library of Congress and through the web-based National Digital Library.



Questions or comments?

If you have something to add, or find something in error with this recording project, please write to:

Arroyo Seco Parkway Recording Project
Historic American Engineering Record
HABS/HAER Division
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW, NC 300
Washington, D.C. 20249



York Boulevard Bridge