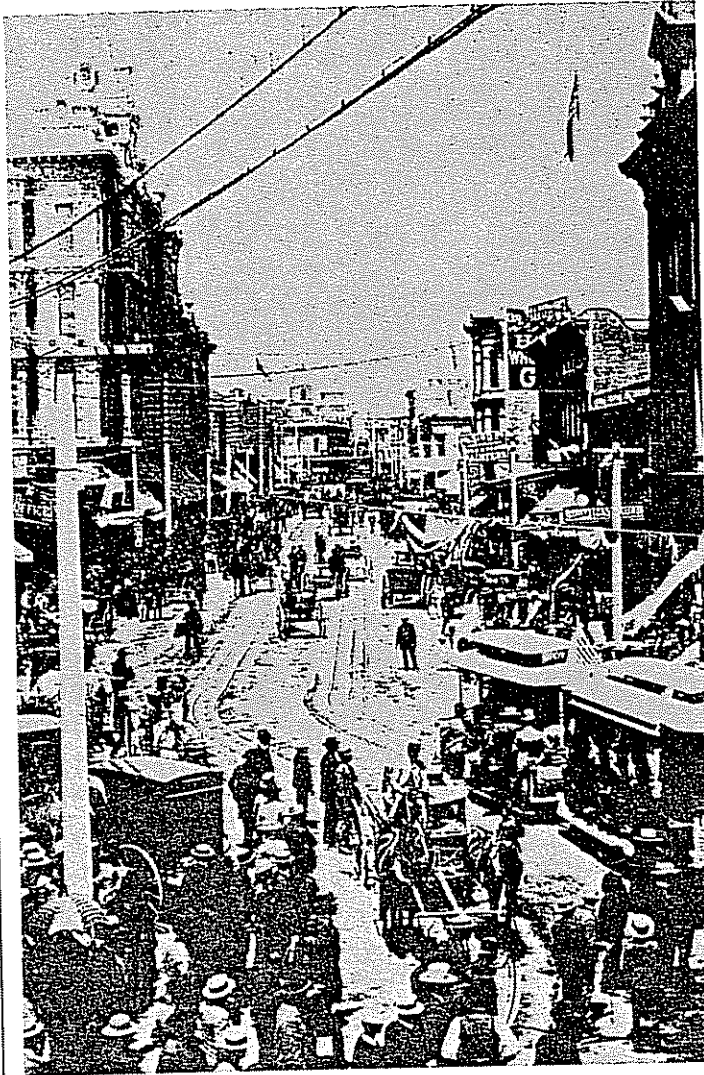
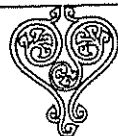




THE JOHN C. BOLLENS  
LECTURE SERIES



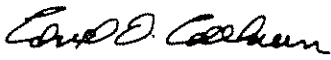
*Strategic Decisions That Molded Los Angeles:  
Could They Be Made Today?  
James Q. Wilson*



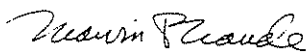
## THE JOHN C. BOLLENS LECTURE SERIES

The aim of the John C. Bollens Lecture Series is to bring together the worlds of academic exploration and practical politics so that the work of those who serve the public will be illuminated by discussion of the broader principles and ideas of representative government. Such a synthesis is true to the spirit of the lecture's namesake, the distinguished Professor of Political Science at UCLA, John C. Bollens. Born in 1920 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, John Bollens earned his bachelor's degree at the College of Wooster, his master's degree at Duke University and his doctorate at the University of Minnesota. He began his association with UCLA in 1950 and became a full professor in 1960. He established himself as a most productive and influential thinker on local government. Not only did he write 26 books, including profiles of Mayor Sam Yorty and Governor Jerry Brown, and inspire hundreds of students, but he also held important positions with Los Angeles County, Los Angeles City and the cities of Seattle and Chicago. These positions included Civil Service Commissioner, Los Angeles County, member, Los Angeles Citizens Committee on Zoning Practices, and director, Town Hall Study of the City of Los Angeles' Charter and Governmental organization, which led to many changes in the City's charter.

We who know and worked with Professor Bollens as students, colleagues and friends began this lecture series as a legacy not only to the man, but to his unique brand of scholarship.



EDMUND D. EDELMAN  
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Los Angeles City Council



MARVIN HOFFENBERG  
Professor, Political Science

## JOHN C. BOLLENS MEMORIAL LECTURE

*Strategic Decisions That Molded  
Los Angeles:  
Could They Be Made Today?  
James Q. Wilson*

Thank you, Professor Hoffenberg, Chancellor Young, Supervisor Edelman and, above all, Mrs. Bollens. I am deeply honored by the invitation to deliver the inaugural John C. Bollens Lecture. I did not know Professor Bollens personally but, of course, I knew him by reputation and it is a distinct pleasure and privilege to occupy this podium on this occasion. My wife, Roberta, and I after growing up in Southern California and after thirty years of exile in distant places, have returned to our home. We bring with us a feeling about Southern California which will become evident to you in a moment, perhaps excessively evident. You also must understand that for the last thirty years we have not been able to follow the details of Southern California life because, except for Hollywood and the cocaine trade, they are not reported in the Eastern press. We have, however, endured over thirty years' worth of Eastern contumely heaped upon Western life and so this inaugural lecture in honor of John Bollens is my effort to tell you what Easterners think of you and why they are wrong.

The Eastern view of Southern California and especially Los Angeles goes as follows. Los Angeles grew up unplanned around the demands—the incessant demands—of the automobile. It never had a true central city and hence a true urban character. With proper planning the city could have been better, but not very much better because the holiday climate of Southern California discourages serious human activity whether commercial or intellectual, and its relentlessly white middle-class population is the enemy of that social diversity upon which urban vitality and human creativity depends.

Nonsense. The facts: The city was planned, from its first beginnings as a pueblo down to the present day. The region was not shaped by the automobile but by rail-based mass transit. Los Angeles did have a central city complete with traffic congestion, but Los Angelenos decided that was a bad way of running their lives. Los Angeles is perhaps the first multi-ethnic, multiracial metropolitan area in the continental United States in which whites are in the minority and yet population growth and economic activity is high. As far as having a kooky, unstable family life, Los Angeles ranks forty-second in cities in divorces per 100,000 population—well behind such swinging towns as Little Rock, Arkansas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. And as far as its commercial and intellectual life are concerned, I will let you who are drawn from those lives answer that question for yourselves.

My thesis this evening is this: Los Angeles was a planned city. It did not just happen, it was intended this way. But it involved a special kind of planning, one that was carried out largely under private auspices and that worked because it was consistent with the core preferences of the people of the area. We sometimes deny this assertion. Even Los Angelenos deny it because they are ignorant of their own history, because they dislike those human preferences which planning was at such pains to realize, or because they disapprove of any planning that depends on self-seeking motives.

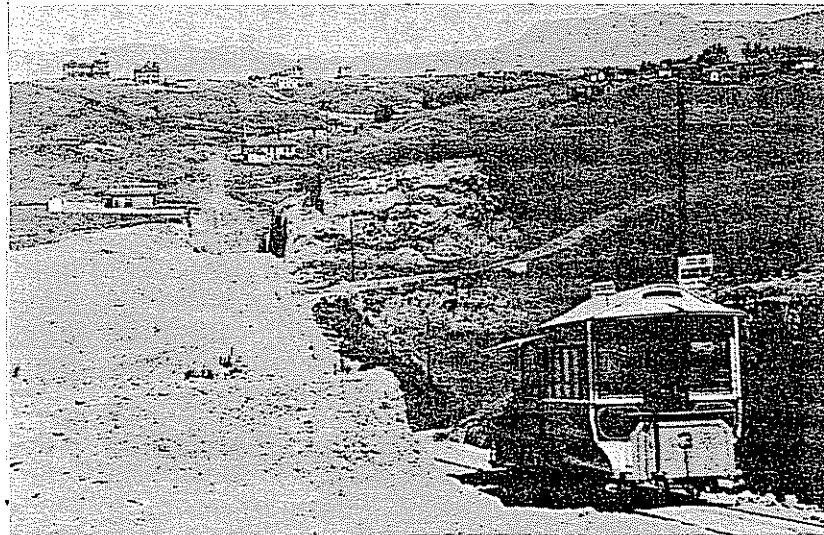
In dealing with Southern California history, I confess myself to be somewhat anxious. I am not a professional historian. Many persons are far better qualified than I to speak on the history of Los Angeles. I met my friend Eric Monkkonen of the UCLA History Department not long ago and I told him what I was speaking about and how worried I was that his colleagues in the History Department would think ill of me for being so bold as to adventure into their domain. He reassured me by saying, "It doesn't make any difference what you say about Los Angeles, it is all true,"—pause—"or possibly false."

Let me divide my remarks into three areas: planning the land, bringing in the water, and transporting the people. These three things—land, water and transportation—and not Hollywood—shaped Southern California. First, planning the land. The great puzzle was this. How can you have planning without planners? As Reyner Banham, the architectural historian who wrote probably the best short book on Los Angeles that has ever been written, said this has always been a planned city. The first pueblo was planned by the government, but the planning after the pueblo era was accomplished by encouraging private entrepreneurs to invest at their risk in the urban infrastructure that was necessary for the city to grow.

Planning comes in many forms and there are more planners than planning. Most plans are dusty documents that gather cobwebs on the shelves of planning offices. Planning is difficult because it must reasonably anticipate the future. Usually, planners are trying to catch up with events that have long since passed the window of opportunity. When planning works it is because it anticipates change. It is in advance of development. But who can predict the future? That is the fundamental problem for planners.

Planners have a vision of the future but they do not know whether the imminent forces in society are tending toward that vision or towards something else. Who can predict development? No one. It is hard to do and, therefore, if you really believe in the rationality and wisdom of planning you should reward people for taking risks by encouraging them to bet their personal fortunes on the future and punishing people who have taken those risks that fail. This is easier to do in the market than in government. Let me give you three examples: one in which somebody bet on the future, planning resulted, and he won, and two other cases in which the actors bet on the future and they lost. In recounting these stories, especially the story of the acquisition of the San Fernando Valley, bear in mind what somebody once said: politics is much like sausage; if you are to enjoy either you should not inquire too closely into how it is made. But it is not the motives that count, it is the results.

The San Fernando Valley story is familiar to many of you. Henry Huntington failed to win control of the Southern Pacific Railroad, sold out his shares, and created instead something called the Pacific Electric railway. It operated all those little red cars that used to run over Southern California. He got together with Harrison Gray Otis, who had founded and was directing the *Los Angeles Times*, to form an entity called the Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company. This company bought up apparently useless land in the largely uninhabited San Fernando Valley area. Then the *Los Angeles Times* began to run stories advertising the beauties of San Fernando Valley and it began to use its extraordinary political skills to lobby for water to be brought into this virgin paradise. Henry Huntington ran his little red cars out to it. Then when water came in from Owen Valley in 1913 land values shot up. As Kevin Starr puts it in his book, *Inventing the Dream: A History of Los Angeles*, "A small oligarchy put together press, transit, water and politics in the service of real estate speculation. Los Angeles grew, it prospered and they prospered."



CABLE CAR HEADING WEST ON 2ND STREET, LOS ANGELES  
(PHOTO—U.C.L.A. ARCHIVES)

But it didn't always work out so well. Abbott Kinney decided to create something called Venice. He bought up some coastal marshland around the turn of the century and built a fantasy suburb—America's first theme park complete with canals, singing gondoliers, an opera house, and an amusement park with a Ferris wheel imported from the Chicago World Exposition. The Pacific Electric Railroad once again built a track on which those little red cars could run out to the Ferris wheel. But he failed. It turns out that the canals he built stank. They filled up with sewage. The smell of the sewage could not be obscured by the singing of the gondoliers and so the canals were filled in and Venice became just another suburb, or today something a little bit more (or less) than just another suburb. Abbott Kinney lost.

The third example: Horace Wilcott and his wife bought land out around the Cahuenga Valley, planted two holly bushes there—hollies were a great favorite of Mrs. Wilcott—and called the land Hollywood. The bushes wouldn't grow and for a long time



CECIL B. DEMILLE (PHOTO-HOLLYWOOD HERITAGE)

not much else would grow either, especially homes, even though the developer, as with Henry Huntington and as with Abbott Kinney, built at his own expense the roads and persuaded the Pacific Electric Railroad to run a track out there so the little red cars could get there. Perhaps nothing grew there because of some of the restrictions that Mr. and Mrs. Wilcott put on the development in the area. It was to be a dry town with no saloons, a Christian community with free land for any Protestant church that would build there.

It is hard to believe that Hollywood was once conceived of in such terms. It finally succeeded because the movie business located there, especially Cecil B. DeMille, an Easterner who came West and created a striking figure by wearing high boots and jodhpurs and riding around on horseback. DeMille and others located in Hollywood where Mr. and Mrs. Wilcott had hoped that a Protestant Christian community would grow up. Why did he locate there? There were a variety of reasons. One was the land was inexpensive, the roads were already in, and the extras could be brought in on the Pacific Electric cars. The other advantages of Hollywood was that it was remote from the law offices of San Francisco and downtown Los Angeles—a thing that was very important at the time because Thomas Alva Edison out in the

East had formed a movie trust and announced that anyone who used his process to make motion picture film had to pay him a royalty. Now DeMille, to say nothing of the other Hollywood moguls, was in no mind to pay. The only way they could avoid paying the fees was to stay out of the grasp of the process servers whom Thomas Edison would regularly dispatch from the law offices of San Francisco and Los Angeles. Hollywood was sufficiently remote and forbidding so the process servers couldn't get there, and if they were seen on the horizon the entire company could easily pick up, load into a few trucks, and skip across the Mexican border shooting a western until the heat was off in the big city.

Land grew in value when people wanted it and could build on it. If they wanted it and would build on it, these speculators profited. If the people did not want to build or could not build, the speculators lost. In the process of winning and losing, the speculators put in the urban infrastructure of Southern California: they built the roads; they built the trolley car tracks; they planted the trees; they put in the utilities. The necessary home building was naturally aided by one of the great innovations brought to banking by an Italian emigrant, A. P. Giannini who founded the Bank of Italy (later renamed the Bank of America). The innovation was branch banking in the interest of small home builders who wanted mortgage money. His was one of the few banks that would issue mortgage money in small amounts to modest home builders. Thus, a combination of the monetary interests of Henry Huntington and Harrison Gray Otis, the aspirations of people such as Abbott Kinney and Horace Wilcott, and the wise business strategy of A.P. Giannini made Southern California possible.

It wasn't all planning by speculators, however. There was also planning by idealists and utopians. We think of the Utopia movement as something that occurred in the East, but there was such a movement in southern California as well. A colony of Germans settled and named Anaheim and tried there to organize their life around vineyards and cooperative principles. Mormons settled San Bernardino and organized early life there along cooperative principles. The Danes settled Solvang north of Santa Barbara. Most of these ideal communities didn't last, but the idea

BRINGING WATER TO LOS ANGELES (PHOTO-U.C.L.A. ARCHIVES)



of cooperative ventures caught on in another way—the great agricultural marketing cooperatives such as the California Fruit Growers Exchange that brought oranges to the eastern markets.

The second great issue was water. This story is even more familiar than that of land. Land could not be developed without water, but by the middle 1850s Los Angeles was running out of water that could be extracted from the Los Angeles River. The response of the city was not to create a municipal entity. It was to license a private firm to bring water under contract. Unfortunately, the early contractors weren't very successful. They built pipes, but of wood and the wood soon rotted. One supplier, so despondent over becoming bankrupt in the effort to supply water to the city, killed himself in the City Council chambers of Los Angeles. For forty years the city gave up on the question of water and, until around 1900, decided that each developer would have to find water himself by digging artesian wells. The city would have no part of the water business. In fact, the Council declared in 1868, in a phrase that I am sure makes the hearts of my colleagues in the Graduate School of Management beat quicker: "It is well known by past experience that cities and towns can never manage enterprises of that nature as economically as individuals can and besides it is a continual source of annoyance."

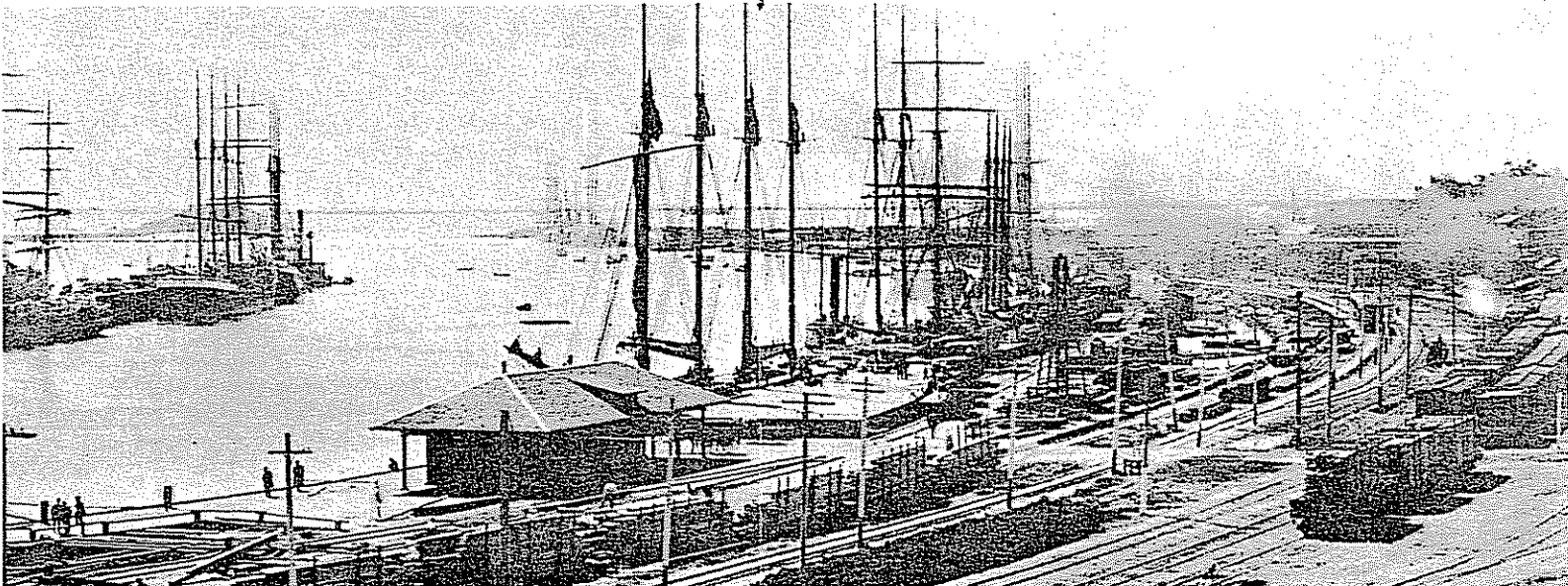
By the twentieth century however, it was evident that private-enterprise water was not working and so in 1902 and 1903 the city purchased the private Los Angeles City Water Company. Perhaps the chief asset of this firm was its Superintendent, William Mulholland. He now became the superintendent of the Los Angeles Department of Water. Mulholland began the effort to bring in water from the Owens Valley. The history of this effort is filled with one calamity after another, yet so popular was he that Mulholland Drive was named after him. In those days people recognized that calamities were often the price of success. When he opened his first aqueduct in 1913, the aqueduct overflowed, a tunnel through the mountain burst, and a mud slide began. In 1928, on the day on which he had pronounced St. Francis Dam to be intact, the dam burst and killed 400 people in

the Santa Clara Valley. Despite everything, Mulholland became a hero and the water arrived. The water, of course, increased greatly the value of the San Fernando Valley to Henry Huntington and to Harrison Gray Otis, as it increased the value of land all over Southern California. The need to pay Mulholland and the City Water Department for the enormous cost—\$25 million—of this aqueduct led the city to annex San Fernando Valley in order to enlarge its tax base and carry the cost of the aqueduct. Thousands of new acres of homeland and farmland were created, as a result Los Angeles surpassed San Francisco in population, and the hydroelectric power generated by the water from the Owens Valley made it possible to generate electricity without producing smoke and pollution. Agriculture on a large scale became possible and Los Angeles became the leading agricultural county of the nation. Further steps to bring in water did require government action: building Boulder Dam, later Hoover Dam, and the All-American Canal, and the creation of the Metropolitan Water District. In time, the city was able to do some things very well indeed.

Transportation is the third part of this story. The city grew up because of railroads, not because of automobiles. It grew up because the Southern Pacific Railroad brought a line from San Francisco down to Los Angeles, linking Los Angeles with the railroads that spanned the continent. That happened in 1876. Five years later the Southern Pacific brought its own direct transcontinental line into Los Angeles and in 1885 the rival Santa Fe Railroad brought a line into Los Angeles from Santa Fe and Albuquerque. As a consequence of the competition between the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe, there was a rate war. The price of a train ticket to Los Angeles fell; at some times it was as low as \$1.

The city grew up around railroads, not only the transcontinental lines but of course the interurban and intraurban lines operated by the Pacific Electric Railroad and the Los Angeles Railway Company. By 1910 Los Angeles had the largest rail-based mass transit system in the world—1200 miles of railway lines. Now the puzzle: if the city was shaped by railroads, why are the

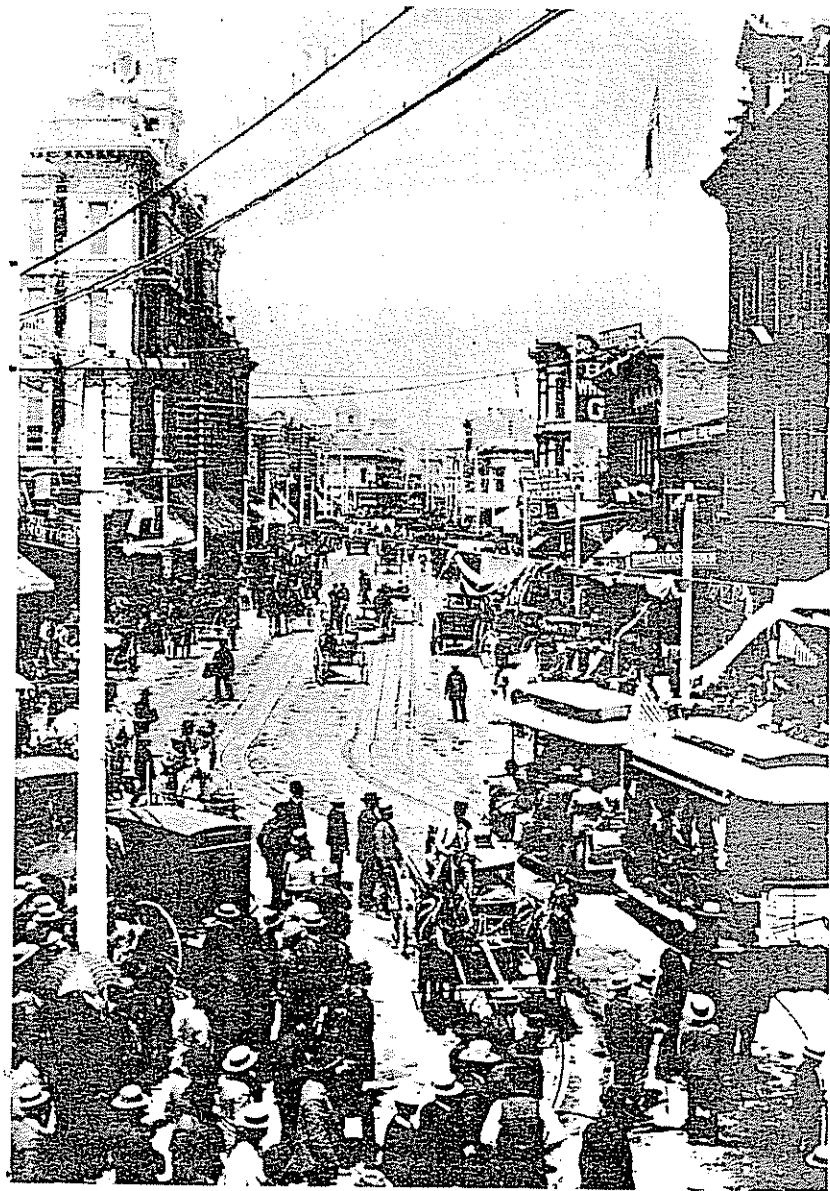
SAN PEDRO HARBOR, 1903, PRIOR TO BREAKWATER'S COMPLETION (PHOTO—U.C.L.A. ARCHIVES)



population densities so low? The answer is: unlike in the East, railroad development in Los Angeles preceded rather than followed population movement. In the East people moved out and the railroads struggled to keep up. Indeed, railroads were built in the East only after railroad builders were confident that there were enough persons along the line to make the railroad profitable. But here people built railroads long before anybody lived at the end of them. They were built as part of a real estate speculation; the object was to get people to leave the terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad in downtown Los Angeles and go out and buy land in Venice, Hollywood, or the San Fernando Valley. Sometimes the subdividers subsidized the railroads and paid the PE system to bring the line in; other times railroad owners themselves became subdividers. This would only work if investors could gain in increased land values more than what it cost to build the railroad lines. Many did; many did not. Many railroad lines went bankrupt or never covered their operating costs.

This pattern of prospective transportation development was but a special case of the general phenomenon in Southern California of prospective rather than retrospective planning, anticipating the future and putting the infrastructure in place rather than despairing of the present and attempting to correct it by altering the physical structure of the community. Prospective planning could only occur if people were willing to take risks, and that would happen only if there were substantial benefits for taking risks. This railroad development explains why it was later so easy to build the streets and the freeways. The paths that were created for the railroad lines created large right-of-ways beside which, or on which, roads could be built. Indeed, many of the early railroad companies were required by city ordinance to pave the adjoining right-of-way as a condition of getting a city franchise. When the first grand boulevards were built, they, too, were often built by private developers. Huntington Drive and San Vicente Boulevard were both all built by persons who thought that broad roads would increase the value of the land at the end of the road.

The result of rail-based mass transit in Los Angeles was the same as the result of rail-based mass transit in any other city. Central Los Angeles became congested. Photographs taken of downtown Los Angeles in 1910 and 1920 look much like photographs of the Lower East Side of New York in terms of the number of people trying to move through gridlock. In April 1920 daytime parking was, for a while, banned in downtown. At the same time, business and population were beginning to grow rapidly in the outlying areas of the city. Industrial plants, such as the tire companies, the oil refineries and, most importantly, the retail stores were beginning to locate away from the downtown area. The railroad owners naturally sought to protect their position. That meant trying to protect downtown Los Angeles. One way was to get the city to restrict the use of the car in downtown Los Angeles. They did succeed in getting limitations imposed on downtown parking and in persuading the city to make illegal certain alternative forms of transportation. Since not everybody could afford an automobile, people who owned automobiles or small trucks would often operate them as jitney cabs on which for a nominal fare you could ride all over the city.



OPENING DAY OF CABLE ROADS,  
DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1889. (PHOTO-U.C.L.A. ARCHIVES)

Railroads got the cities to ban the jitney cabs just as franchised taxi companies get cities to ban jitney cabs all over the United States today.

The public rationale for what was in fact a narrow business decision was the same rationale that we have heard since the beginnings of mass transit. It is based on the following myth: If auto traffic is made as difficult and as costly as possible by limiting parking, banning cars, and drawing diamond lanes in the highways, you will get people to return to mass transit. They never do. These methods failed and so ultimately the street railways failed. Some people urged the cities to take over the street railways and run them. The city refused. If it had done so, it would not have prevented these lines from failing. It would

have only made the failure more costly. The simple fact was that the automobile was a more efficient mode of transportation than the railroad, and everybody knew it.

If you do not believe it, consider the experience of San Francisco and the Bay Area Rapid Transit System. It was built in an ideal location. Population densities are much higher in San Francisco than they are in Los Angeles. To inhibit automobiles as a source of competition for rail-based mass transit, freeway construction in San Francisco was banned in 1959. Yet the cost per trip by BART is much higher, by many multiples, than the same trip by car with the added disadvantage that part of the cost of the trip by BART is hidden subsidy taxed away from those people who never use BART and who in many cases could not afford to use it. Nor does BART save energy. Under current operating conditions, if Charles Lave and David Brodsky are to be believed, it will take 535 years to repay BART energy consumption assuming that cars get only 14 miles per gallon. If automobile mileage per gallon raises to 27 miles per gallon and BART will never pay for its energy costs, even if BART manages to increase its load factor and double the number of trips it runs. The reason for this cost disadvantage of rail-based mass transit is simple. Mass transit does not take people from home to work or from home to shopping center, or from work back home or from shopping center back home, it takes them from one fixed point to another fixed point. Automobiles take them from home to work or from work to shopping center and back home again. It is this flexibility that accounts for its efficiency. It is this efficiency that explains its grip on the American psyche. You need know nothing about Freudian psychology to explain our fascination with the automobile.

Under these circumstances the freeway became the rational way to move people around. If densities were too low to permit mass transit, then it was rational to speed the movement of automobiles. The freeway system was not proposed by car crazy representatives of the Southern California Automobile Club or by avaricious General Motors executives eager to sell their products. The freeway system was proposed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and his colleagues who had earlier designed Palos Verdes Estates. The first freeway, as you know, was the Arroyo Seco in Pasadena which opened in 1940. The great boom in freeway construction began when the gasoline tax was partially dedicated to freeway construction. Today, of course, the tax is too low to support continued construction at a high level, and the political power probably no longer exists to make the decisions to continue to build.

Out of these three great sets of events—water, transportation, and land use—Los Angeles was shaped. Its appeal was to people who, if they lived in the East would be in six-flat tenements in the Bronx, but if they lived in the West, they would be in small detached bungalows. These bungalows inspired Eastern writers to talk about ticky-tacky suburbs. (They somehow never talked about ticky-tacky cold-water walk-up flats in the Bronx.)

There are two great risks in having all this planning done under private enterprise. The first was that it might lead to a monopoly. If private enterprise were so successful in planning the use of land and the use of transportation, it might monopolize the political power which otherwise could challenge it. The other risk was

that private planning would often neglect—I would say almost invariably will neglect—those externalities that are associated with achieving a given market objective.

In response to the first problem, the monopoly problem, there occurred two things: first, business competition and, second, the Progressive movement. The Progressive movement helped prevent business from acquiring a monopoly position as a result of its skill in assembling land and subdividing it for popular consumption. But in the process of solving the monopoly problem it may have lessened its ability to solve other problems. To deal with those externalities that are caused by the market, one must have sufficient political power to impose policies that deal with externalities. But the Progressive movement weakened political power.

The Progressive movement in the West was essentially a Southern California phenomenon. In 1910, when Hiram Johnson was elected Governor on the Progressive slate, he carried every county in Southern California but only half the counties in Northern California. The movement was able to organize around the specter of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which had become the only important political force in the state. It controlled large parts of the state Legislature and large parts of the councils in many of the most important cities. The Progressive movement was also able to gain support because it acquired an important ally, the Prohibition movement. Many of the votes that brought Hiram Johnson to power were votes cast by people who wanted the sale of hard liquor banned.

The Progressive movement completed the political destruction of the Southern Pacific railroad, but other forces were at work which may have been more important. Perhaps the most important of these was the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad in Los Angeles. By bringing people transcontinental to Los Angeles without having to ride on the Central Pacific or the Southern Pacific, it created a great economic rival to the Southern Pacific Railroad. And as I said earlier, the rate war that ensued sometimes brought down rail prices as low as \$1. The entry of the Santa Fe Railroad into Los Angeles meant that the Southern Pacific could no longer have a monopoly position over one of the three great strategic decision points, namely transportation, in Southern California. But there was another economic force at work as well. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, led by some remarkable persons of Progressive orientation, won a great fight against the Southern Pacific Railroad over where the Port of Los Angeles should be located. There were two possibilities: Santa Monica and San Pedro. The Southern Pacific Railroad wanted Santa Monica, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce wanted San Pedro. The fight went all the way to Washington, D.C. where the senator from California, Steven White, carried the case on behalf of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. But he didn't have the votes in the Senate. The Southern Pacific Railroad's tentacles reached well into the United States Senate as well as into the state legislature at that time. But White had an inspired idea: if you don't have the votes, create a commission. He suggested a blue-ribbon panel of experts decide which city would make the best port. Engineers were hired and they brought in a report that said it made more sense to make San Pedro the harbor than Santa Monica. As a result the federal

government helped pay for the enormous breakwater at San Pedro and Wilmington.

The legacy of the Progressive movement was a reformed political system. These reforms were designed to ensure that never again would any private force, railroad or otherwise, dominate California politics. Its legacy was the direct primary election, initiative legislation, and a system of governance that relies on decentralized boards and commissions and a strong civil service system. The Progressive movement was successful. It dismantled political authority. It was not important political authority that was dismantled, because at the time not much was decided in the public sector. The big decisions were made in the private sector. But now we live in an era in which we expect the public sector to make large decisions to deal with those externalities, such as pollution and the protection of open space, which are not often managed adequately by the process of private planning that I have described.

The government in my judgment lacks the capacity to act coherently and promptly on such matters. At this point I speak with some personal feeling. I am currently trying to build a home near the coast of California. I did not know it at the time but shortly before my agent appeared at the offices of the Los Angeles County Engineers to request a building permit, some 200 homes in the Big Rock area of Malibu began to slide toward the sea. Soon everybody was suing everybody else, including the local engineers. That was a year ago. Roberta and I still do not have that building permit, but we have learned a great deal about public administration in Southern California. We have learned that there are so many agencies in charge of the use of the land that it is impossible to assemble them in a room much smaller than this. We have learned that each agency is concerned with implementing its mandate, never mind the mandate of other agencies. And, finally, we have learned that in order to protect themselves, they have all insisted that each agency shall have the right to issue the last permit. That creates a problem in public choice which we have not yet solved. These problems, of which my problem is an unimportant example, can only be remedied by either deciding to do less or by achieving greater coherence, coordination, and capacity in government. I suspect we shall do neither. I suspect that we shall continue to have an activist government concerned about achieving a great variety of not always consistent objectives.

There is a third way out. Roberta and I lived for five years in Chicago during the administration of Richard J. Daley. What I have learned from that experience and our experience in living in Los Angeles can be summarized in the following rule. A regime may have complex laws, or a regime may have honest public administrators, but God help it if it has both.

Fortunately the problems facing Los Angeles today are in one sense easier than the problems that once faced it. Protecting the environment, difficult as it is, is easier than creating that environment in the first place. The former—protecting the environment—requires laws, good will, money, and sophisticated technology, but it can be done and I am convinced it will be done. But the latter—creating that infrastructure, creating a city where people want to live—requires enterprise, imagination, risk-taking, success stories, and catastrophic failures. I am not

confident that enterprise and imagination and risk-taking are in as abundant supply as money and laws and technology.

Los Angeles still provides the most extraordinary environment to live of any we know in the United States. There was a story about the founders of Massachusetts describing the city that ultimately was to be constructed there, Boston, a city upon a hill. Their language reflected the moral passion that had brought them to that shore and their moral certainty that a city could shape the character and virtue of its people. John F. Kennedy repeated the "city on the hill" speech not long after he was elected President and was invited to speak to the legislature of Massachusetts. But the metaphor of a city on a hill, compelling as it is on moral grounds, also says something about the relationship between the people and those who govern them. The relationship that is implied by that metaphor is of a people huddled within the walls of the city at the foot of great buildings that look down upon them and control them, that shape their lives and indeed are their lives. In Los Angeles no city has been built on a hill. Here people have assembled on a plain to find a life they did not know before. They found it.



James Q. Wilson holds a joint appointment at the University of California at Los Angeles Graduate School of Management and Department of Political Science, and is the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University. He is a noted political scientist, widely published in both academic and popular journals. His many books include *Thinking About Crime* (1975), *American Government: Institution and Policies* (1980), *Political Organization* (1973), *City Politics* (with Edward C. Banfield, 1963), and as editor, *The Metropolitan Enigma* (1968) and *The Politics of Regulation* (1980). "Strategic Decisions That Molded Los Angeles: Could They Be Made Today?" was the inaugural lecture in the John C. Bollens Lecture Series, and was given at the Dickson Arts Center Auditorium at UCLA on April 11, 1985.

\*I wish to acknowledge my debt to the following superb accounts of Los Angeles—its history, culture, and style:

Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1971).

David Brodsky, *L.A. Freeway: An Appreciative Essay* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1981).

Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

William L. Kahrl, *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982).

Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

FRONT COVER:

OPENING DAY OF CABLE ROADS,  
DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1889.

(PHOTO—U.C.L.A. ARCHIVES)